

Christian Values in Education		
Submission to the Education Committee Inquiry: Home Education		
Christian Values and Education (CViE) is a charity established to equip children, young people, parents and teachers with relevant and timely information that will help them to stand up for their beliefs in the challenges faced in education today. Our website can be found at: www.cvie.org.uk		
The following comments are made in response to the Terms of Reference set out by the Education Committee		
	Terms of Reference	Response
1	The duties of local authorities with regards to home education, including safeguarding and assuring the quality of home education;	Not able to comment at the present time
2	whether a statutory register of home-educated children is required;	The concern over statutory registration of home educated children is that this could lead to interference and/or removal from the register. There is a very real concern that statutory registration could be a backdoor for government interference in what home educators could be permitted to teach their children and this could well include ideologies and practices contrary to their consciences. Failure to comply may also lead to their registration to home educate being removed from them. This in turn is contrary to the fundamental belief that parents are responsible for the education of their children (which is written in law) In a time when local authorities are stretched in providing essential services, questions do need to be asked about the cost effectiveness of diverting scarce resources into statutory regulation of home educated children. CViE would caution that the drawbacks of a statutory register of home educated

		children would exceed any benefit of such a scheme. This may make it difficult to promote positive relationships with the home education community and local authority.
3	the benefits children gain from home education, and the potential disadvantages they may face;	The home educators we have spoken to have made the choice to either not register or to deregister their children from formal education due to:: ➤ Concerns over bullying and the ability of the school to address concerns raised by parents ➤ Concerns over the curriculum and the moral education teaching that the children were receiving in school. This teaching, for Christian parents, being contrary to the Word of God (The Bible) ➤ Wanting their children to learn at their own pace ➤ To have much more focus on learning through play for longer(continuing throughout their primary school years.) ➤ Having more time and a greater emphasis on books and reading – reading aloud / being read to/ reading to someone/ audio books/ free choice of books ➤ More autonomy over their learning rather than one size fits all approach to learning ➤ Greater flexibility in what is taught, how and when. ➤ More opportunities for outdoor learning ➤ Building and nurturing children's characters and strengths The decision to remove a child or children from school is not taken lightly by Christians and is often a prayerful

		path for them to see what the will of God for them is. Ultimately, they see their accountability being to God yet also realise their obligations in bringing up their children to contribute to society (one of the key purposes of education). A recent home educator explained that since educating their child at home, their child has thrived and learning has started to become an enjoyable experience. Although it is acknowledged that home education is not an easy option the benefits outweigh the sacrifice and commitment needed by parents in fulfilling the role of 'teacher/educator/facilitator'. Although there were initial concerns over the child being isolated these have proved unfounded and through various networks opportunities are being afforded for the child to develop interpersonal skills which are the building blocks of healthy relationships. It is also noted that there are networks and resources available both physically and digitally that have helped in making the smooth transition to home education. There are also costs involved which the family are prepared to bear. A benefit that has accrued is that home education has led to a closer family bonding. An experienced home educator explained how their children have now made the transition into work and higher education. They commented that home education is a big decision and in their case was driven by a belief that children should be brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4) It was also noted that home education provided a vehicle for close family
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		relationships to develop. The children were educated to GCSE level and through self-help groups were able to participate in an exam centre and it was also possible to use a local school provided the GCSE aligned to the exam board used by the home schooler. When the children made the transition to post-16 education they were suitably equipped both socially and academically to succeed in their studies. Main disadvantages are lockdown related in that the learning environment becomes more limited if they are not allowed to mix with other home educating groups. Access to exams has been disrupted by Covid. CViE would firmly take a view that the education of children is the responsibility of parents and the choice that parents make for their children, whatever form they feel education should take, should be respected. (The proviso being the form of education is a legitimate one and not detrimental to the child's well-being.)
4	the quality and accessibility of support (including financial support) available for home educators and their children, including those with special educational needs, disabilities, mental health issues, or caring responsibilities, and those making the transition to further and higher education;	From the home educators spoken to their views seems to be that there is very little tangible governmental support for home educators and their children. This is accepted as there is a concern that any support may come with ties. Home educators have developed networks to support each other, provide learning opportunities for their children and share good practice. The cost is being borne by the home educator and not central or local government.
5	whether the current regulatory framework is sufficient to ensure that	From the home educators spoken to their experience with local authorities

	the wellbeing and academic achievement of home educated children is safeguarded, including where they may attend unregistered schools, have been formally excluded from school, or have been subject to 'off-rolling';	has been a positive one and there is nothing to suggest that the current regulatory framework is insufficient to ensure that the well-being and academic achievement of home educated children are safeguarded. Child abuse perpetrated by home educators is rarely or never in families not already known to the social services. This implies that the children are appropriately safeguarded. There needs to be a distinction between electively home educating families and those whose children have been formally excluded or off-rolled and therefore potentially at higher risk.
6	the role that inspection should play in future regulation of home education;	Serious and genuine concerns have rightly been raised regarding the role that inspection should play in future regulation of home education. Home educators follow differing curricula and it is hard to envisage an inspection framework that would have sufficient depth and breadth to equitably recognise these differences. Equally, there would be a need to ensure that inspectors have the necessary understanding of home education and who could be trusted by home educators to make informed judgements about the appropriateness of the approach taken and the level of attainment achieved by home educated children. It is accepted that there are principles of education and learning that are common to home education and state education, however any home education inspection framework would need to be contextualised so it is fit for purpose.

		Another dimension is the cost that would be incurred by national and/or local government in administering a home education inspection framework. The cost benefit of such a move is questionable especially in times of economic austerity. CViE would caution against any moves to impose inspection on the regulation of home education.
7	what improvements have been made to support home educators since the 2010-15 Education Committee published their report on 'Support for Home Education' in 2012; and	Not able to comment at the present time
8	the impact COVID-19 has had on home educated children, and what additional measures might need to be taken in order to mitigate any negative impacts.	Keep home education co-operative groups and classes open to ensure the children have a wide educational experience available. i.e Forest Schools, sports clubs, science groups, drama and music groups and outdoor learning groups. Although the Government has made allowances for home education settings during the COVID-19 restrictions, the guidance is unclear and has led to much debate and nervousness in the home education community as to which activities fit within the guidelines. It could be very strongly argued that 'socialisation' is part of a child's education. Indeed, many opponents of home education use this as an objection to home education: "How can they learn to socialise if they aren't in school?" And yet, the COVID-19 guidelines have tried to separate education from socialisation (education activities are allowed, social activities are not), leading to discussions such as, "Is playing at the park with another group of home educated

		children merely socialisation and so not allowed? Is it deemed education if we write a risk assessment and formally instruct the children to complete an obstacle course at the park as a 'PE lesson'? Is going for a walk with another home educating family not allowed because it is simply socialisation/exercise and not education? Does it suddenly become education if the children have a clipboard and stop to draw a leaf?" Of course, there is no simple answer to the question: What is education? Many providers of activities for home educated children have cancelled their sessions even though they would, in theory, be allowed. The providers are nervous and have had to cancel their after-school sessions and so automatically feel they should also cancel home-educator sessions (swimming, tennis, multi-sports etc). This impacts home educated children who access these sessions as an alternative to school PE lessons. One of the many advantages of home education is the ability to go on trips and learn in the community – this has become increasingly difficult through the COVID-19 restrictions. Workshops and learning experiences at museums, art galleries and places of historic interest have all been cancelled, as well as concerts. Of course, this has impacted both schooled and home educated children, but I believe the impact has been greater on home educated children who often access such learning experiences more regularly than those in school.
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