

# **Education Otherwise Response to Behaviour Support Strategy of Gloucestershire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership**

Submitted by Fiona Nicholson on behalf of Education Otherwise Government Policy Group and Education Otherwise Disability Group.

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Education Otherwise principle aims are to :

- encourage learning outside the school system
- reaffirm that parents have primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school
- establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education
- promote knowledge, understanding and acceptance of education otherwise than at school in the world at large.

For further information please visit our website :

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/>

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Education Otherwise wanted to take this opportunity to respond at national level to some aspects of Gloucestershire's consultation into the emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people.

## **BACKGROUND**

Education Otherwise ran a workshop on home education in Bromsgrove at the end of March 2007 where we spoke to a number of home educators in Gloucestershire. In early April we wrote to Councillor Jackie Hall on behalf of Education Otherwise Government Policy Group in support of local home educators wishing to meet with the authority to promote a better mutual understanding. We had an affirmative reply from Pauline Robinson and the meeting finally took place on 19<sup>th</sup> July.

## **NO RECOGNITION OF HOME EDUCATION BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

However, there seems to be no awareness or recognition of Elective Home Education in the Gloucestershire Behaviour Strategy policy documents on emotional wellbeing and the entire focus is on Reintegration, which we believe does not promote the best outcomes for all children.

It would appear from pp.21-22 of the 1.4 Mb document that parents and families are not given any information about Elective Home Education by the authority and that there is no listing of national or local support organisations such as Education Otherwise.

We should like to see information about home education added to the list of recommendations on p.6 of the 1.1 Mb document. Home education is a positive alternative to mainstream provision but it has not been included in your list of examples.

## **NO RECOGNITION OF HOME EDUCATION BY GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONNEXIONS**

Education Otherwise and home education is not mentioned on the Gloucestershire Connexions website, in marked contrast to other local Connexions websites such as Leicestershire. We believe it is particularly important for the Connexions service to be aware of home education since they will be responsible for carrying out CAF assessments and should be fully informed of the range of options open to young people.

**<http://www.connexions-leics.org/parentsandcarers/homeedpar.asp>**

### **“Parents and Carers - Home Education**

If you're thinking about educating your son or daughter at home instead of sending them to school Education Otherwise can provide you with information and resources about home education. You can also get help and support to move from your son's or daughter's learning at school to learning at home. Find out more by visiting their site at [www.education-otherwise.org.uk](http://www.education-otherwise.org.uk).

You can find out about your local Council's policy and guidance on home education by visiting [Leicester City Council's website](#) if you live in the city or [Leicestershire County Council's website](#) if you live in the county.

If your son or daughter is being educated at home Connexions can still offer you lots of info, advice and support. They can see a Personal Adviser outside of school and use the information zones at our Connexions Centres. “

Education Otherwise has also recently assisted Jenny Brown of DCSF Moorfoot Sheffield with a redraft of Connexions national website page on Home Education.

<http://www.connexions-direct.com/index.cfm?pid=85&catalogueContentID=964>

<http://www.connexions-direct.com/index.cfm?pid=85&catalogueContentID=964&render=detailedArticle>

## **HOME EDUCATION PROVIDES ONE TO ONE SUPPORT AND PROMOTES EMOTIONAL WELLBEING**

Latest figures from the Government suggest that around 40,000 - 50,000 children and young people are being home educated in England and the consistent findings are that one to one support and personalised learning opportunities are very beneficial. Here at Education Otherwise we have many reports of instances where home education has been extremely successful in promoting emotional wellbeing ( as defined from Bright Futures For All, p.13 of the 1.4Mb document )

It has been the experience of many of our members that mainstream provision does not meet the needs of all children and that therefore this is an unrealistic aim [ p.11 1.4MB document ]

It has also been the experience of many of our members that once children and young people are de-registered from the state system that it is difficult if not impossible to access specialist support or services, as recommended on p.12 of the 1.4 Mb document. Education Otherwise believes that this

is discriminatory.

## **OFSTED STANDARDS AGENDA IN COMPARISON WITH HOME EDUCATION**

We note on page 9 of the 1.2 Mb document that the EBD special school staff say that “the children and young people they support have serious and complex holistic needs and that they are trying to meet these needs within an educational context that does not have the expertise to meet these needs. These complex needs are expected to be met in a school environment that is driven and judged by OfSTED standards agenda. “

The report goes on to say :

"The Operational Briefs of the schools are not explicit about the complexity and severity of the needs the schools are expected to meet. Consequently schools feel they are resourced to meet educational and behavioural but not social and emotional needs. This promotes professional isolation in staff that mirrors the geographical isolation of the schools. Staff feel that the children and young people they support have emotional and mental health needs that they may not recognise and certainly cannot meet."

We would like to point out that home education is well suited to meeting the social and emotional aspects of children's learning and that unlike schools, home educators are not driven and judged by OfSTED standards agenda and can therefore approach education in a more holistic way.

## **SOME COMMENTS ON NAVIGATING THE GLOUCESTERSHIRE WEBSITE**

A number of my colleagues have pointed out the extreme difficulty of navigating the Gloucestershire website. Local home educating parents were not identified as stakeholders to this consultation and Education Otherwise only became aware of the consultative process via the Gloucestershire website after the meeting on July 19<sup>th</sup>.

When we go to the home page <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=13009> it is not at all clear which are the 3 documents cited in the italicised paragraph as follows :

*“Although this consultation has now closed, you can give your views on the Behaviour Support Strategy until 21st September 2007. To take part, download the three documents from the right of this page. They are: EHWB Behaviour Workstream; Behaviour Support Services Strategy June 07, and EBD Special Schools' Strategy June 07. “*

The titles in the above list are not the titles which are given to the word documents in the right hand column, nor are they the titles given to the documents on the title page. For this reason we have differentiated the documents by size, referring for example to the 1.1 Mb document, or the 1.4 Mb document.

It is necessary to have certain Microsoft programs on the computer in order to open the documents, to have a printer to print out the documents and then to read 65 pages of text plus 9 pages of tables before we can even begin to understand what we are being asked to do.

Simply inviting comments on a public website is not enough to engage hard-to-reach groups and to gather new perspectives in problem-solving.

Furthermore, although the deadline of 21<sup>st</sup> September is given on the Home Page the 1.4 Mb document says 30<sup>th</sup> September.

It took quite a long time to find the questions on page 9 of the 1.4 Mb document and we are still not convinced that we have any meaningful comprehension of the following :

“What do you think of the models proposed ?

How can we improve service configuration to improve outcomes for children and young people? “

We do not understand what these models are, except to note that Gloucestershire has a very high incidence of pupils in special schools, including residential schools but that the stated policy of the council is mainstream inclusion.

We imagine that parents who are not versed in council jargon would find it extremely difficult to comment on all these documents.

Education Otherwise main point is that Gloucestershire council written policy should reflect joined up thinking between departments. The Elective Home Education team have their own pages on the Gloucestershire website <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=16151>. <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=788> though it is factually incorrect to state that the parent must notify the LA in writing of their intention to home educate. If a child has never been to school there is no obligation whatsoever to notify the authority. If a child is de-registered from any type of school except a special school the communication is only between the parent and the school, not the LA. It is the legal responsibility of the school to notify the LA as per Pupil Registration Regulations S.I. 1751 paragraph 12 (3) <http://www.bristol-cyps.org.uk/services/pdf/pupil-registration-regs-2006.pdf>

Accurate information may be found on the legal aspects of home education from the Education Otherwise website.

<http://www.education-otherwise.org/Legal/IndexToLegalBits.htm>