

Somerset

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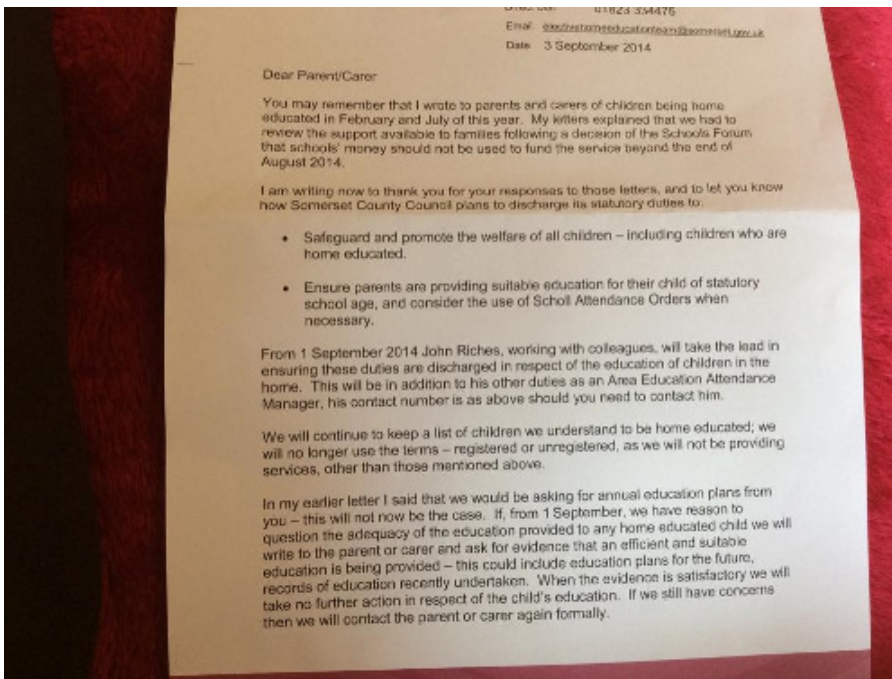
Update 2015

In March 2015, (shortly before Ofsted issued [new guidance to inspectors](#)), the following comment was included in [Ofsted's safeguarding inspection report for Somerset](#): "A total of 572 children are currently receiving elective home education, of whom 13 are subject to a child in need plan and are being regularly monitored by children's services. Twenty children are not in full-time education; none are looked after children. The Education Attendance Service is monitoring these children closely. In some cases the Traveller Education Service is supporting children of a school age to access formal education." The overall Ofsted rating for Somerset in 2015 was "inadequate."



In June 2015 the Somerset County Council Scrutiny for Policies, Children and Families Committee received [a report from the Elective Home Education Task Group \(Link\)](#) suggesting that the council should draw up a new home education policy. A **draft** is included in the report - together with a draft flowchart - with a note that it will require further updating. (Right click "open image in new tab" to see the relevant page) At the time of writing in September 2015, it's not clear what's happened with this since. Home education doesn't seem to feature in [the 2015-16 Work Programme](#)

LA Letter September 2014



This letter was sent to home educating parents in Somerset on September 3rd 2014: You may remember that I wrote to parents and carers of children being home educated in February and July of this year. My letters explained that we had to review the support available to families following a decision of the Schools Forum that schools' money should not be used to fund the service beyond the end of August 2014. I am writing now to thank you for your responses to those letters, and to let you know how Somerset County Council plans to discharge its statutory duties to: Safeguard and promote the welfare of all children - including children who are home educated; Ensure parents are providing suitable education for their child of statutory school age, and consider the use of School Attendance Orders when necessary. From 1 September 2014 John Riches, working with colleagues, will take the lead in ensuring these duties are discharged in respect of the education of children in the home. This will be in addition to his other duties as an Area Education Attendance Manager, his contact number is as above should you need to contact him. We will continue to keep a list of children we understand to be home educated; we will no longer use the terms - registered or unregistered, as we will not be providing services, other than those mentioned above. In my earlier letter I said that we would be asking for annual education plans from you - this will not now be the case. If, from 1 September, we have reason to question the adequacy of the education provided to any home educated child we will write to the parent or carer and ask for evidence that an efficient and suitable education is being provided - this could include education plans for the future, records of education recently undertaken. When the evidence is satisfactory we will take no further action in respect of the child's education. If we still have concerns then we will contact the parent again formally. We hope you will agree that this is a reasonable way to work with parents and carers who chose to home educate, protecting the child where that is needed, while fully respecting the rights of parents to educate their child themselves. Yours sincerely Dave Farrow, Strategic Manager Vulnerable Learners

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[See also [Essex Cuts](#) September 2014]

Somerset Consultation 2014

More details [here](#)

Parents valued being able to talk to the advisory teachers. However, respondents did not rate home visits as something they wanted to keep if savings had to be made. Only 3 out of 64 parents said they would consider paying for advice and visits.

Suggestions were made to operate an optional telephone/email support line instead.

In January 2014 the Somerset Schools Forum decided that due to receiving no funding for home education plus "the limited statutory nature of the work", the elective home education service should no longer be paid for out of the Schools Budget.*

Somerset council subsequently ran a consultation from February to March 2014 which explored options for the future of the Elective Home Education service and sought to identify the impact of any reduction in the service.

The responses will feed into service planning for September 2014, and an update will be provided in July. 64 responses were received, with 58 via the online survey and 6 responding on paper.

Respondents' reasons for choosing to home educate were varied with the largest number (68%) citing dissatisfaction with provision in school.

19% of respondents identified themselves as being on a low income, and there were frequent references to the cost of providing adequate resources and funding exams.

Parents appeared more comfortable with contributing towards the costs of resources and activity days, but the idea of paying for visits or services they feel they don't need or aren't good is very unpopular.

Somerset currently offers home educating families up to £300 IGCSE support in any one year. The council also has an arrangement for 2 centres to take external candidates.

Over a third of respondents listed advice on exams or financial support for exams as the service they most valued. Respondents also said they struggled to find up to date information about courses and places to sit exams.

Referrals to other support agencies, resources and the activity day were the least used aspect of the service. Some parents felt the website wasn't up to date or accurate in terms of what was on offer.

January 2014 Decision

"The Compact Executive received a paper setting out the local authority and Schools Budget funding for provision for vulnerable learners. There was discussion about proposals for LA budget savings as well as consideration of priorities for DSG spend.

In relation to support for Electively Home Educated pupils, Dave Farrow (DF) explained to the Compact Executive that the LA does not have a statutory responsibility the quality of the education, only a safeguarding role for which there is currently no LA funding. The Schools Budget funding is not supported by an allocation of DSG from the DfE for these pupils. It was acknowledged that the LA has limited powers to assess the quality of education given to EHE pupils.

[Link](#)

Link Reference

This article is <http://edyourself.org/articles/somersetconsult.php>. The following links to other websites are contained in the article, displayed as citations to aid you in printing the document.

1. new guidance to inspectors <http://edyourself.org/articles/socialservices.php#ofstedguidance>
2. Ofsted's safeguarding inspection report for Somerset <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/somerset>
3. a report from the Elective Home Education Task Group
<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board53%20Childrens/2015%20June%2012%20Item%206%20Elective%20Home%20Education%20Task%20Group.pdf>
4. the 2015-16 Work Programme
<http://www1.somerset.gov.uk/council/board53%20Childrens/2015%20September%204%20Item%209%20Scrutiny%20Work%20Programme.pdf>
5. Essex Cuts <http://edyourself.org/articles/essex2014.php>