



Key issues related to Elective Home Education in Oxfordshire case reviews

This short review is based on Oxfordshire case reviews, and themes in common with national case reviews, where elective home education was highlighted as a key factor.

The review gives an overview of findings and learning for improved practice around elective home education.

Whilst parents who choose elective home education are no more likely to abuse their children than the general population, the cases reviewed do highlight the challenges facing professionals who may not have a full understanding of the rights of parents who choose this form of education.

These cases also identify, that in some cases, elective home education can lead to the isolation and invisibility of children, through parental avoidance of services which could monitor their children's health, development and wellbeing.

What Oxfordshire case reviews tell us about elective home education

In the case reviews examined, a child or children were seriously injured due to the following;

- Neglect
- Malnourishment
- Possible fabricated and /or induced illness

Finding one

The implications of elective home education, including the lack of regulation and its limitations in safeguarding children, were not understood by the professional community.

The majority of professionals either did not know that the child/children were being home educated and/or that this meant there was no requirement for home visits from any statutory agency.

In terms of tracking the progress of children educated at home, within Oxfordshire the local education authority do their best to achieve this but have been required to develop a less intrusive approach in order to comply with legislation and guidance.

Finding two

The family dynamics were not well understood in relation to their impact on the child's wellbeing.

Lack of day to day scrutiny outside the home contributed to a failure to recognise risk of harm in home educated children. In such cases the rights of parents to home educate conflicts with the rights of children to a safe secure environment.

Professionals did not always collectively consider the role of the father in the family system or the impact of the parent's mental health on the safety and wellbeing of the child/children.

Finding three

Lack of professional curiosity about self-reported information and hearing the child's voice.

Assumptions were made about the child's wishes and feelings and there was no understanding of what life was like at home.

Effort and attention paid to the parent/carer led to the focus on the child being lost.

Learning points for practitioners

- When a child is home schooled, do not assume that any professional is visiting the home and monitoring their health, development and wellbeing since there is no legal requirement for this to happen
- Think family! Always consider the needs of all the children in the family when focusing on issues relating to one child
- Constipation in a child should never be a reason to educate a child at home. When a child is suffering from chronic constipation always consider whether there are any safeguarding concerns that need to be addressed
- Practitioners should consider convening a 'professionals only' meeting when interventions and planning have not led to effective outcomes for a child, there are concerns about drift or where adults are hostile, reluctant or failing to comply

Themes in common with other serious case reviews where elective home education a key factor

- Limitations of current legislation and guidance
- Professionals lack of awareness of the limitations of home education legislation, and roles and responsibilities with regard to safeguarding home educated children
- Gaps in meeting the health care needs of home educated children
- Child's invisibility or isolation
- Lack of professional curiosity

Actions taken in response to findings

- The [Elective Home Education Policy and Procedure](#), published in the OSCB online procedures manual, provides information regarding the legislation and guidance underpinning regulation of elective home education
- All families electively home educating children are sent information regarding the support available to them from health professionals, particularly school health nurses. This includes information on the Healthy Child Programme, immunisations, vision screening, and contact details for all teams, see attached document



OCC Information
Leaflet for Elective H

- Guidance on [Professionals Only Meetings](#) is published in the OSCB online procedures manual
- OSCB Chair raised the elective home education issues highlighted in serious case reviews with the Association of Independent LSCB Chairs to bring to the attention of Ministers in May 2018. OSCB completed the DfE consultation on Elective Home Education in July 2018