

Letters written by Alan Johnson & Lord Adonis in January 2007

This file was compiled in April 2022 following the 'rediscovery' of these letters by members of the HE Byte team.

Both letters are reproduced, with links to their current sources, on the following pages.

Background information

Alan Johnson was Secretary of State for Education and Skills from 5 May 2006 to 28 June 2007.

Andrew Adonis [Baron Adonis] was Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Schools and Learners from 10 May 2005 to 3 October 2008.

Tony Blair was Prime Minister from 2 May 1997 until 27 June 2007.

The Children Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 15 November 2004.

Further reading

A comment written at the time the Adonis letter was circulated is available on the *Dare to Know* blog:

Who is Responsible for Determining the Nature of a Suitable Education? The Argument in 2007.

<https://daretoknowblog.blogspot.com/2007/01/who-is-responsible.html>

Action for Home Education / Letter from Alan Johnson

<http://ahed.pbworks.com/w/page/1553006/Letter%20from%20Alan%20Johnson>

Letter from Alan Johnson

Thank you for your letter of 10 January, together with an enclosed email from your constituent, Ms Denise McCallum, of address about the home education consultation.

I should first clarify that the state does not currently prescribe what form of education parents should provide, whilst all maintained and independent school provision is prescribed in legislation and subject to inspection. This anomaly is at odds with Every Child Matters reforms, supported by the Children Act 2004, which set out this Government's aim to improve educational outcomes for all children, regardless of where they are educated, and to narrow the gap between those who are doing well and those who are not.

We intend that the forthcoming consultation on elective home education will be a full one, conducted via my Department's consultation website. We hope this will ensure that the documents are accessible to as many people as possible, and officials are currently compiling a list of home educators who have expressed an interest in being involved in the consultation.

The concerns about lack of Local Authority (LA) access to the child, expressed by respondents to last year's consultation on draft LA guidelines (which were not necessarily concerns about potential abuse, but rather about the general difficulty in assessing children's progress and children's views on their education being heard) is the reason this further consultation is taking place.

As the consultation will primarily be conducted via my Department's website, with support from the DfES in house Consultation Unit, the costs will be minimal and met from general administrative expenditure.

I note Ms McCallum's comments and would like to re-assure her that the intention of the consultation is to open up a constructive debate on whether or not changes are required, and if so what they might be. Following Consultation, if changes to legislation were to be introduced, they would of course be subject to the full parliamentary process.

Can I suggest that Ms McCallum gathers together her thoughts on home education monitoring, and any other aspects of home education, and submits these in due course as part of the consultation. My officials will add Ms McCallum to their consultation email list so that she will be informed of the consultation when it starts and afforded the opportunity to participate.

The above post is dated February 6, 2007 at 10:05:27 pm and was published by Denise McCallum.

AIM-Home Education Website

<https://aim1he.wordpress.com/2007/01/14/letter-from-lord-adonis>

Letter from Lord Adonis

Here is a letter written by Lord Adonis in response to an enquiry made to him about the forthcoming Consultation from an MP on behalf of a parent. This is a very important letter and really gives a clear indication that the DfES mean business.

Thank you for your letter of 12 December, addressed to Alan Johnson, about elective home education. I am replying as this falls within my area of responsibility. I should firstly clarify that there is no specific duty in statute on local authorities to monitor parents' education provision. However, it is our view that the case of *Philips vs Brown* (1980) allows local authorities to make enquiries of parents to establish whether 'suitable' education is being provided. Following consultation, if changes to legislation were to be introduced, they would of course be subject to the full parliamentary process.

The state does not currently prescribe what form of education parents should provide, whilst all maintained and independent school provision is prescribed in legislation and subject to inspection. This anomaly is at odds with Every Child Matters reforms, supported by the Children Act 2004, which set out the Government's aim to improve educational outcomes for all children, regardless of where they are educated, and to narrow the gap between those who are doing well and those who are not.

Last year's consultation on draft local authority guidelines was a targeted consultation, and included a selection of local authorities, as well as the home education support organisations which we were aware of as this seemed the most effective way of reaching the home education community. We intend that the forthcoming consultation on elective home education will be a full one, conducted via the Department's consultation website. We hope this will ensure that the documents are accessible to as many people as possible, and officials are currently compiling a list of home educators who have expressed interest in being involved in the consultation. The aim of the consultation is to open up a constructive debate on whether or not changes are required, and if so what they might be. As the consultation will primarily be conducted via the Department's website, with support from the Department's in house Consultation Unit, the costs will be minimal and met from general administrative expenditure. The consultation will adhere to the Cabinet Office code of practice on consultations and the usual lines of Ministerial accountability will apply to this, as with all work undertaken by the Department for Education and Skills.

The concerns about lack of local authority access to the child, expressed by respondents to our previous consultation (which were not necessarily concerns about potential abuse, but rather about the general difficulty in assessing children's progress and children's views on their education being heard) is the reason this further consultation is taking place.

Please re-assure your constituents that officials have added their details to our list so that they will be alerted when the consultation starts and afforded the opportunity to participate."