

REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 23 AUGUST 2010

**REPORT ON: REVISED ARRANGEMENTS TO PROCESS REQUESTS FOR
EDUCATION AT HOME: 2011-2012 ONWARDS**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 423-2010

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report proposes revised arrangements, from the beginning of session 2011-2012, for responding to requests from parents and carers to educate their child at home.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 The Education Committee is recommended to:

- i. note the content of this report; and
- ii. delegate to the Director of Education the approval of consent to withdraw children from school in terms of s35 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Current arrangements

4.1.1 The arrangements for responding to a parent/carer request to educate a child at home have been in place for several years. The normal process includes a written parental request to the Director of Education, which prompts a meeting or discussion between the parent/carer and a Quality Improvement Officer (QIO) to ascertain the range, quality and appropriateness of the planned education provision.

4.1.2 There follows a recommendation to approve the request or not contained in a report by the Director of Education to Education Committee. The report is anonymous and gives only general background information. Once approved by Education Committee, written permission to educate at home is sent to the parent.

4.1.3 Permission has never been withheld in at least the last ten years. The legal test is that consent shall not be unreasonably withheld, and that thereafter the education authority has to be satisfied that the parent is providing efficient education for the child, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude.

4.1.4 National Guidance identifies a timescale of six weeks from the receipt of the request to educate at home to final confirmation of permission or refusal. Where this timescale coincides with officer leave or where consideration of the report is delayed at Education Committee stage, it can be difficult to achieve the full process in the recommended timescale.

4.1.5 Once approved, the education at home provision is currently monitored by a QIO at least once a year, sometimes with support from partner services such as School Community Support Service (SCSS) or Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS). The current monitoring arrangements are satisfactory and should be maintained. Typically this would involve ensuring through a visit or from a report from the parents that a child's educational and social needs are being met. Where appropriate, guidance on appropriate learning opportunities can be offered to a parent.

4.2 Proposed revised arrangements

4.2.1 The recommendation is that it should now be delegated to the Director of Education to approve requests for Education at Home. The current report to the Education Committee on each individual application should be discontinued and replaced with a brief annual summary report from the Director of Education.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of sustainability, strategic environmental assessment, anti-poverty, equality impact assessment and risk management. There are no major issues. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and will be made available on the Council website:
<http://www.dundee.gov.uk/equanddiv/equimpact/>

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 The Chief Executive, the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services) and the Director of Finance have been consulted on this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Equality Impact Assessment

Jim Collins
Director of Education

11 August 2010

JC/MM