

POSITIVE MEETING WITH WESTMINSTER LA

A group of HE parents and I recently went into the Education Department in Westminster to discuss their response to the Guidelines for LAs. From the start of the meeting - and quite unexpectedly - it became clear that the LA seemed to be very pro home-ed and saw the Guidelines as a positive step. They were keen to listen to our views and opinions and happy for us to have influence on their response to the Guidelines. They are currently drafting their response - taking our views into consideration – and we have organised to see them again before they are finalised, to discuss any amendments that may be needed.

At the meeting we stressed a need for them to broaden their knowledge and they showed an interest in leaning more about home education and the various learning methods. They decided that they need to provide training for their Education Welfare Officers and Social Services Dept. and to have home educating parents involved with this. We were obviously delighted by this!

They also agreed that their current literature regarding HE needed rewording and that it would be useful for a leaflet - promoting the rights and responsibilities of HE families (produced by Home Educating parents) - to be added to any information they supply to families in the future. They seemed to agree that they needed to move from a monitoring role to the idea that they should have a supporting role.

In the meeting we also touched on areas such as GCSEs, SEN, truancy sweeps and work experience too and we will try to work with them at future meetings to form policies and agreements with regard to these issues and the Guidelines in general. In the future they will be appointing an individual within the department to be responsible for HE and this person will act as a central contact that families can deal with. It has also been agreed that we will review policies and procedures with them on an annual basis.

All in all we were pleasantly surprised at how keen Westminster were to work with us and they demonstrated a genuine desire to co-operate. We all left the meeting feeling confident about dealing with them in the future. In short I'd say, so far so good.....

(Tina Robbins 18 June 07)