

**PE1730/G**

Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills submission of 18 September 2020

Thank you for the Committee's further letter of 27 February 2020, seeking clarification on timescales for publication of the Scottish Government's revised Home Education guidance.

Please accept my apologies for the significant delay in responding to your request.

**Consultation process and timescales for revised guidance**

We are preparing a revised version of the statutory guidance and will be engaging with stakeholders as part of this process. A discussion paper was issued last year to interested parties. Local authorities, other public, community and voluntary sector bodies, and home educators and their relevant representatives bodies, were informed at this initial stage of engagement.

My officials had planned for revised guidance to be prepared for a formal consultation with the aim of publishing updated guidance this summer. However, as I am sure you will understand, this was delayed due to Covid 19 outbreak. I do appreciate that there is a pressing need to take this work forward and it still remains very much a priority in my portfolio.

**Protections for home educated children**

I note your comments regarding families of children who home educate due to particular circumstances, such as additional support needs, which they felt were not being met adequately in school for their child. Of course, it is important that appropriate safeguards are in place for home educated children, whatever their circumstances. I would like to assure you that authorities are advised to make contact with families they know to be home educating in their area and if the authority is not satisfied that a child is receiving an efficient and suitable education, they have the power to serve an attendance order notice to parents.

I expect the revised guidance to emphasise the importance of local authorities and home educators working together to develop trust, mutual respect and a positive relationship that functions in the best interests of the child. The guidance will aim to do this by clearly setting out the legislation on home education, and providing advice on the roles and responsibilities of education authorities and home educators. This should help to ensure a consistent approach to home education across Scotland.

I hope the information I have provided is helpful in updating the Committee on our plans for the review of the Home Education guidance.