

education otherwise



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**SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE EONL
TO THE FOLLOWING EDITORS:**

REGIONAL DIARY & ADVERTISEMENTS

Please send direct to NL co-ordinator until further notice: anne@annerix.demon.co.uk (postal address inside back cover)

BOOK AND SOFTWARE REVIEWS

Sally Hall, Nant-y-Gareg Farm, Saron, Llandysul, Carmarthenshire, SA44 5FJ
01559 370908 sally@aecb.net

HOME EDUCATION in the NEWS

Ann Kennedy-Smith, 21 Kimberley Road
Cambridge, CB4 1HG. 01223 356627
akennedysmith@yahoo.co.uk

SPECIAL SECTION - June

Possibly Future of EO: brief report from meeting 26th April and/or your contributions - see articles in centre pages of this issue

LETTERS AND ARTICLES

Sue White, 2 Pretoria Villas, Eye Road, Brome, Eye, Suffolk IP23 8AL
01379 870036 sue_white@tiscali.co.uk

EO BUSINESS

Martine Frampton, 3 Redesdale Mews, Hospital Road, Moreton in Marsh, Glos. GL56 0BQ 01608 812411
martine-frampton@macunlimited.net

ARCHIVE SELECTIONS

SARAH GUTHRIE. 01379 783678
(*NOT for back copies of NLS - see Publications, inside back cover*)

CHILDREN'S PAGES

Edmund Jones 44 Bloxham Rd, Banbury, OX16 9JR
01295 262306 ed.jones@serpento.co.uk
(*N.B. deadline 20th April 2003*)
(*earlier than main NL*)

DEADLINE FOR THE JUNE ISSUE IS 1ST MAY 2003

Please mark material 'for publication' and include your name, address, phone number and email (if you have it) as we may need to contact you to discuss your contribution (though details may be withheld from publication on request). **Email contributions will be acknowledged within a few days. If you require a postal acknowledgement please enclose snae.** If no acknowledgement is received, or in case of queries, please contact the NL co-ordinator. *Please also ensure your EO membership is up to date.*

Please send contributions via the most appropriate section editor above

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Thanks to Simon & Sue for cover picture

WARNING !!!

A London EO member has recently had unwelcome contact from a man calling himself John Anderson, who is known to have been a 'pest' to Christian home educators throughout USA and Canada over the last ten years. He speaks with an American/Irish accent. Some HERs may already be aware of this person, but we thought it prudent to alert people that he is active in the UK again.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOURCES

It has been brought to our attention that some of the material in the article on GCSEs published in the December newsletter previously appeared in the August Bulletin of HEAS. Unfortunately it is not possible for the newsletter team to check the source of every item. Please would members contributing material gleaned from other publications, whether to the NL or to someone who has volunteered to collate information, make it clear that this has been published elsewhere by giving as full a reference as possible. Please also give the source of quotations used.

Co-ordinatorial

The HE Gathering Season is getting under way! Lots of notices elsewhere in this NL about camps large and small, structured/themed/autonomous, basic and relatively luxurious, some run by EO members and some by other home educators or people whose interests just fit with HE - in fact, as much variation as between HE families in general. You can almost spend your summer at gatherings if you're so inclined, or pick and choose the ones that suit you. If you're new to a camp, I'd suggest you find out as much as possible about the organisation and venue beforehand so you know what to expect. Then enjoy! (Oh, and take wellies, just in case)

Spreading the word about home ed. is something which hovers around in the background of many of our minds - there was a notice in December's NL suggesting that members request leaflets for display stands in libraries, etc. from EO's stationery office (see inside back cover for address). But somehow the message that 'School Is Not Compulsory' doesn't seem to get through although we've been plugging it for twenty five years. Maybe there's a reason: 'compulsory' is a big and emotive word - 'not' is small and rather bland. Also, many theories on positive thinking suggest that the subconscious mind doesn't take account of negatives; and any parent who's ever said "don't jump in that puddle!" can vouch for that effect (OK, I know most of you probably promote puddle-splashing and I have a tendency to do it myself, to the disapprobation of teenage son, but it's a good illustration of the idea.) And again, people who think of 'education' as synonymous with 'school' could take the meaning to be that education is not compulsory - which is confusing. So I got to thinking about the message itself - how to make it positive, clear and thought-provoking. Here's my new slogan:

School is Optional !!!

© Anne Rex 16.2.3

P.S. apologies for the small typeface used in much of this NL - I'm pretty good at fitting quarts into pint pots but this issue's a gallon! And even then I've had to hold over some material for June. Don't let that stop you sending in your views on the Future of EO though - the overwork problem for people doing jobs is so huge that I fear meltdown if something doesn't change. And Council really needs all your input to help come to the most appropriate decision. So please get writing!

REVIEWS

Toy Making with Children by Freya Jaffke

Anyone who considers play a serious activity and has questioned the benefits of plastic toys with batteries and flashing lights will find this brilliant book very useful and inspiring. The book shows a wide range of toys, suitable from birth to seven that can be made with or for a child. The toys are what you might find at a Steiner groups, they are all beautiful simple objects made from natural materials for imaginative play. The aim of these toys are; that they are neutral and undefined, allowing for the dolls to be happy or sad as they don't have fixed expressions, and for the blocks and tree trunks to be ships, cars and houses – not constricting the child's imagination to one game. I have always avoided plastic toys and already have many of the suggested things such as baskets of shells and cones but have found this book full of many ideas. We liked the idea of 'play cloths' and bought some muslin to dye blue for water and sky and green for land. We have had hours of wonderful games using these; making rivers and oceans, sailing across them and arranging shells on the beach. There are some beautiful patterns for small knitted farmyard animals that I would definitely like to make and some interesting puppet making and magic wool activities for older children. If you enjoyed reading 'The Genius of Play' and have an interest in Steiner ideas you will definitely enjoy reading and using ideas from this book.

Hilary Woolf with Isaac (3)

£8.99 ISBN 0 86315 367 4 Floris

Mr God, this is Anna by Fynn

What a wonderful, wonderful book!! Any adult who has contact with a home-schooled child should read this book. It is the most uplifting, inspiring and moving study of the way a child views his/her world and fills the reader with awe at the magnificence of the innate human urge to understand and to know. If you ever have a shred of doubt that home-education is the right choice, this will banish those thoughts forever! And, being certain, it will fill you with a glow of gratitude that you can offer the gift of home-education to your child. Highly recommended!!

Sally Smith

ISBN 0345441559 paperback or 0006278914

(Hardback 1995 – worth finding for the pictures!)

Ballantine Publishing Group

From Out of the Shadows by Jamila Gavin

I have read and enjoyed other books by Jamila Gavin. This is a book of short stories of varying styles. Some stories (such as 'Mona', about a pet Vietnamese pot-bellied pig) made us laugh out loud; others made us think carefully about an issue ('Forbidden Clothes' is about a British Pakistani teenager choosing to give up a Westernised life to please her more traditional parents). The stories are

not in complex language but they do contain complex ideas, so they may be good for older children who have had a bad experience of reading in school. Some of the ideas are to do with growing up and identity, and they may be too much for younger children. This is a book that we would expect to re-read and Katherine has added another to her list of authors to watch out for.

Shena Deuchars with Katherine (10) and James (8)

£4.99 ISBN 1 4052 0280 7 Egmont

An interview with Jamila Gavin

by Joanna Carey

This book is one of a series of interviews with authors such as Anne Fine, J K Rowling and Jacqueline Wilson (and, yes, the women are very much in the majority). It is in two parts: the first 37 pages contain questions and answers about Jamila Gavin's life (she came to England from India at age 6). If you like to know something about the author of the books you are reading, this book provides plenty of information. The only complaint about this section is that the questions are in a very large font and take up about twice as much space as the equivalent answer text. The second half of the book describes Jamila Gavin's work. The overview by Joanna Carey discusses the types of book that Jamila Gavin has written and the themes that she addresses. In particular, the 'Surya' trilogy and 'Coram Boy' are discussed at great length. There is then a chronological bibliography of the books she has published up to 2002, with a synopsis of each. The book ends with the story of 'Mona', about a pet Vietnamese pot-bellied pig that likes Mars bars. This book is very good value and we will look out for the others in the series. As well as giving information about favourite authors, we feel that they would be a good introduction to authors we haven't read.

Shena Deuchars with Katherine (10) and James (8)

£2.99 ISBN 1 4052 0088 Egmont

More Naughty Little Sister Stories

by Dorothy Edwards

These stories were originally published in 1952 and seem very old-fashioned 50 years later. The stories are nostalgic and warm hearted, and are unusual in that the narrator's name and her naughty little sister's name are not revealed. This can be a bit tedious at times. Oliver, 7, enjoyed the book, finding it "nice" and "funny", whereas Emily, aged 4, did not, because the pictures are not in colour! The illustrations are typically Shirley Hughes and if you like her work as we do, you will probably enjoy these stories. A good book for those beginning to read, also to read aloud to the children as I did.

Louise Smith and Oliver (7) and Emily (4)

£3.99 ISBN 1 4052 0290 4 Egmont

The Top 100 Questions - Biblical Answers to Popular Questions by Richard Bewes

The Rector of a church who has written many other books wrote this book. It is very interesting but quite deep and I think it is more suited to adults who are either Christians or wanting to know more about Christianity. I would not think that a child under the age of 14 would be able to understand much of this. I am planning to take my GCSE in R.E. soon and so this is a very good book to dip into. You could either read this book straight through or dip in and out of it as questions arose. The book is divided into five sections, such as: *The Universe we Inhabit, The Truth we Believe and The Way we Behave*. Each of these five sections has 20 questions which people often ask. Some examples of the questions are: Who or what are Angels? What happens at Communion? Why does God allow suffering? How do you recognise the Occult? And how is Christ coming back? As you can see, a very mixed bunch and each have very interesting answers. Of course, everyone will have their own interpretations of the truth and different Christian denominations may think differently. After the five parts, there is another section about 50 Difficult Bible Questions. This is very good as so many Bible passages are difficult to understand, for instance, the passage about the talking donkey, Jonah being swallowed by a whale, and passages that seem to contradict one another. The answers given are very clear and make you think. I would recommend this book for age 14 - Adult especially people wanting to learn more about the Bible and Christianity.

Simon Hogarth (14)

£8.99 ISBN 1 85792 680 3 Christian Focus

Uncle Blue's New Boat by Elsa Beskow

An old fashioned book, first published in Sweden in 1942. This is apparently the first time it has been published in English. I think the story is set in the late nineteenth century, judging by the clothes in the full-page watercolour illustrations. I like the simple style of the paintings - I think they could be an inspiration for children to copy. The storyline is also rather simple. It is about two children, Peter and Lotta, who go on a picnic with their three Aunts and Uncle Blue. They take Uncle Blue's new boat to an island on a very large lake, build a fire, eat some food and then while Uncle Blue and the Aunts are sleeping, Peter and Lotta decide to play in the boat on the very calm lake. It all goes drastically wrong and so the adventure unravels. This involves the children being taken to the large town at the other end of the lake by a fisherman and then busking to raise the money to buy new oars. Not a very fantastic adventure perhaps, but entertaining and there are a few comical moments. A very satisfying ending with everything sorted out neatly and the children having

behaved impeccably throughout. An interesting book and one my children enjoy. I think it attempts to convey a message of how children should behave - being polite, responsible and helpful, perhaps lost on the children of our generation! This book could be used as a useful window into the past. It is suitable for children 4 - 7 years old.

Caroline Farquar

£9.99 ISBN 0 86315 364 X Floris

Feed by MT Anderson

This is a futuristic satire of American life. It is set in a high tech synthetic world where teenagers can go for holidays and get bored on a moon that enjoys artificial gravity, shopping malls and nightclubs. They fly about in cars in a world where sunlight, clouds and even the air itself is artificial. The trees have been cut down and the seas are dead from pollution. Human flesh is blistering into fissures and even giving birth has become a high-tech undertaking normally involving seven machines. There is always the constant background noise provided by the "feed". This micro-chip implant in the head acts as an internal internet providing not only a channel for "chatting" to other "feed" users without speaking aloud but also a constant feed of popular entertainment. Information can be accessed and retrieved quickly but the incessant drone of advertisements personally targeted to match past consumer history, seems to obliterate the ability to think or feel. This depressingly soulless atmosphere is compounded by the high usage of strong swear words by the teenage protagonist whose limited vocabulary and over-use of the word "like" seems to impose severe restrictions on his descriptive and emotional range. There is a boy meets girl story line. Home educated and considered slightly odd by his friends, she has held out longer than most against having the "feed". A brush with a protesting hacker damages her feed leaving her under an effective death sentence as the "feed" has also taken over the brain function and she cannot persuade anyone to repair it. The boy cannot cope with the emotional demands of the doomed girl and seeks escape but returns for her end. He likens her slow painful demise to the impending demise of the mindless consumer society itself as his feed winds down with the refrain "everything must go". Had it not been for this review I would have abandoned this book well before the end, which was its best bit as it gave some sort of resolution to the emptiness. There seems to be a trend to classify as "children's books" purely on the age of the protagonist. Whilst this book may be suitable for very "grown-up" teenagers I have no compulsion to pass it on to my 13 year old son.

Anne Longmuir

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 9085 X Walker Books

Daughter of Venice by Donna Jo Napoli

I was a bit put off by the cover as it made it look more for a grown up. My mum started reading it first and told me all about it. It sounded really interesting so I read it and I am glad I did. It is set in Venice around the late 1500s and is about a young girl, Donata, one of twin girls. She is from a large family and in those days, in order to make the family's wealth last, only the eldest son and daughter are allowed to marry. The other sons go into the business of banking or law etc. The second eldest daughter remains unmarried but stays at home to be the 'maiden aunt' to the eldest son's children. The remaining girls go into a convent. Donata and her sister have an older sister who is destined to be the one who marries and Donata knows that she is destined to be a maiden aunt or a nun. In an attempt to see life outside the walls of her home she dresses up as a young boy and escapes each morning to see the Venice she has never been allowed to see. This leads to all sorts of adventures and eventually she questions her future with her parents. She is then allowed to sit in on her brothers' lessons with their tutor each afternoon. One of her outdoor adventures leads her to learn to read and write letters. The father of the family then makes an announcement one day. Having studied the family's wealth, he has decided there is sufficient money to allow another daughter to marry and it falls upon Donata. She hates the idea and hatches a plan to disgrace herself so her twin will marry instead. The plan works, in a way, and Donata is released from having to marry and is allowed to go to university and eventually become the maiden aunt and tutor for her elder brother's future children. Once you start this book is difficult to put it down, especially when Donata is sneaking out of the house and seeking adventures in Venice. It is a good read and I felt disappointed when it finished.

Francesca Houghton (12)

£10.99 ISBN 0 7445 9059 0 Walker

Out of the Ashes by Michael Morpurgo

We have read a few of this author's books and really enjoyed them although they can be difficult to read out loud, some parts being too sad or happy! *Out of the Ashes* is no exception being concerned with the foot and mouth epidemic – a particularly emotive subject. It is written as a diary by Becky who lives on a farm with her beloved animals. When they hear of the foot & mouth outbreak in the north they never dream it will reach their farm but the inevitable happens and to make it worse Becky believes it to be her fault. The subject brought up many important issues for us to talk about; the transportation of animals, the effect on non-farming people and businesses, the mass slaughter as the government panics But there is light at the end of the tunnel and a promise of a new start. Gwenan found it

compulsive reading, though very sad and she said it made her feel sorry for farmers. We would highly recommend Morpurgo's books with the excellent illustrations. We particularly enjoyed *Kensuke's Kingdom* but Gwenan has had to get used to me saying 'You read that page' while I dab my eyes!
Susan Bain with Gwenan (9)

£7.99 ISBN 0330 397 32X Macmillan

Ribbon of Fire by Allan Campbell McLean

This book is set in 1884 on the island of Skye in Scotland. It is mainly about a 16 year old boy, Alasdair Stewart, who is involved in a struggle to defend his village and way of life. The Laird has been taking away land from the farmers and charging and more more rent which the people find impossible to pay. When the Laird builds a wall around an area of fertile land the farmers have the barren land and they decide something must be done. The farmers set out to attack the Laird and what he is doing but it would seem there is a traitor among them because the Laird finds out everything they are planning to do. A letter is sent to the Laird threatening his life if he continues his actions against the farmers and Alasdair is arrested and accused of writing the letter because he is one of the few who can read and write. Whilst under arrest he meets the Laird's daughter. He is released when he is brought up in front of the Laird and he denies writing the letter. The story then tells of the fight the farmers put up until they have to go into hiding. When there seems no hope of things getting back to normal, the Laird's daughter falls into a cave near the hiding place. Things turn nasty but Alasdair rescues her and returns her to the Laird when he has the opportunity to tell the Laird about all the problems. Alasdair becomes the new manager of the lands and it is split into smallholdings for each farmer so everyone can make a decent living. I think this book is more suited to boys. The author uses Gaelic words and long names although footnotes explain the meanings. It is good value for money.

Francesca Houghton (12)

£4.99 ISBN 0 86315 4107 Floris

The Hidden House by Martin Waddell

The illustrations for this magical story are lovely. The story revolves around an old house that had once belonged to an old man. After the old man leaves, the house lies empty and some wooden dolls he had made to keep him company sit and watch whilst the house begins to decay. One day a young family find the house and restore it to how it used to be. It is a very gentle, positive tale about life continuing and starting again. It would be suitable for a wide range of ages.

Hilary Wolfe

£4.99 Walker

Exodus by Julie Bertayhe

This book is set in the not-too-distant, horribly believable future where technology cannot save people any more. Mara Bell, a young girl, is trying desperately to find a way to continue living on the small Scottish island of Wing and every day the sea level rises higher and higher One thing I liked was the fact that there wasn't a happy ending, which I feel ruins many books by spoiling the sense of sadness. Some of this book is believable but other parts don't seem believably possible. This story really gripped me, mainly because of some of it being so terrible, and it also made me think that it could be true. My mum says "This is a fantastic, enthralling novel for mature readers. I was delighted to discover an author who can write challenging material about important issues (loyalty, love, sticking to principles etc) without having to pander to the so called demand for romance and sex that so many 'teenage' novels seem to go for. It was a stimulating and quite frightening read, particularly suitable for ages 12 plus. We'll definitely be looking out for other titles by this author who should soon be ranking with Philip Pullman, amongst others."

Kit Freiesleben (10) with his mum Kirsten
£9.99 ISBN 0330 40096 7 Macmillan

The Time and Space of Uncle Albert

by Russell Stannard

I found this book very interesting. It teaches you about Einstein's 'theory of relativity' through a story about Uncle Albert and his niece Gedanken. When Uncle Albert thinks very hard a thought-bubble appears above his head and he can beam Gedanken into it. Uncle Albert imagines Gedanken in a space-craft so that she can use the space-craft to find out the effect of travelling at almost the speed of light.

Harry Cutts (9)
£4.99 ISBN 0 571 14282 6

Black Holes and Uncle Albert

by Russell Stannard

This story explains the physics of the universe. Like *The Time and Space of Uncle Albert* a lot of action takes place in a thought-bubble. Its main subject is black holes and how they swallow up everything that gets too close; anything that goes in doesn't come out. We also learn about the Big Bang, wonky space and tape measures that shrink when you take them downstairs.

Good books for 9 - 12 age range.
Harry Cutts (9)
£4.99 ISBN 0 571 14453 5

The Dolphins of Laurentum

by Caroline Lawrence

This is all about four Roman children who solve mysteries. One of them, Lupus, has no tongue and in this book you hear how he lost it. Lupus had

been a sponge diver. Diving for treasure he nearly got killed by a giant octopus, but a dolphin called Delphinus saved him. A raggedy man appears and upsets the children's lives and Flavia finds she is about to lose her home. A man called Pliny the Younger brought the children to his home. While they were there they found there was a sunken wreck and Lupus dives for it. But someone else is searching for the treasure too - but who is it? Who is the raggedy man who has been shipwrecked? This is the best in the series I have read so far. When I first got it I wanted to pounce on it because it looked good. When I started reading, I couldn't put it down. I felt I could spring into the book and be in Ancient Rome, doing the mystery with the kids.

I loved it!
Karis Youngman (8)
£7.99 ISBN 1 84255 223 6 Orion

Through the Tempests Dark and Wild

- a story of Mary Shelley by Sharron Darrow

This is a sumptuous book, which actually mixes stories by Mary Shelley with stories of her life. The writing is big and bold, and the illustrations evocative of the gothic feel that Mary Shelley's work creates. The stories of lost loves, and drowned sailors may not be everyone's cup of tea, but Oliver thoroughly enjoyed them. The writing is concise, and the stories short, and Oliver usually managed to read one whole story in a session. His overall verdict was that the book was spooky, and I think what makes this book special is its ability to draw the child's imagination into the gothic world of Mary Shelley. I think it is a book that will appeal to a wide age range too, although maybe a bit too 'spooky' for the very young.

Gill Humphreys, with Oliver (8)
£12.99 ISBN 0 7445 5664 3 Walker

Bunny Love by Anita Jeram

Two stories are included in this book. In the first, 'Bunny My Honey', we meet Bunny, his mum and his friends, and then he becomes lost in the woods. His mum finds him and they are all happy again. The second 'All Together Now', tells us how Bunny found his friends, a mouse and a duck and how Bunny's mum adopted them. They all became her 'little Honeys'. The illustrations are wonderful, depicting the edge of a woodland with lots of ferns, roots and small flowers. Anita Jeram illustrated *Guess How Much I Love You?* by Sam Mc Bratney, and this is following that style. I would buy the book on the strength of the pictures alone.

Although I find these stories far too soppy, Leo loves them and to my dismay asks me to read them over and over again! They are safe, friendly and happy a great bedtime read for very small children.
Caroline Farquhar with Leo (3)
£7.99 ISBN 07445 9675 0

The Ice Horse by Renne

Amber and I love this book. It follows the path of a herd of wild Icelandic horses as they battle against the elements through the winter. It is a story of their survival and of how a young stallion overthrows the dominant stallion. There are footnotes throughout the book with fascinating facts about Icelandic horses. The illustrations are dramatic and very beautiful, depicting the Icelandic grasslands through the seasons. The horses too are captured particularly well. This book portrays the harsh reality of nature and is a wonderful way of sharing that with children -thoroughly recommended. It has also made me want to go and see Iceland (in the summer).

Caroline Farquhar with Amber (5)
£8.99 ISBN 0 86315 3844 Floris

Rain Forest Adventures by Horace Banner

A great book. It's full of lots of short stories, almost like Jesus' parables but related to the Amazon and the animals there. Some of the stories do seem to teach the point a little bit to achieve their objective but on the whole they are great and educational. Every story finishes with a little moral and then a Bible verse. It was also a great insight into Horace Banner's life and work in that area of the Amazon; what he did and how he coped. We read it on a train journey with little or no embarrassment, low cringe factor! Even though this is probably aimed at children under 7 or 8, both Ben, and Tabitha, really enjoyed it. A definite recommendation for any Christian kid's bookshelf or anyone who liked Aesop's fables and doesn't mind the Bible verses afterwards.

Diane Cromie with Ben (12) and Tabitha (9)
£3.99 ISBN 1 857926 277 Christian Focus

Way Home by Libby Hathorn & Gregory Rogers

Jem says "This book is about a boy and a stray cat but the boy is sort of stray too but you only find that out at the end. I like the way the pages are made to look ripped and there are views of a dark city which is unusual." Kirsten says "Jem enjoyed that fact that it's a picture book without fluffy animals for once! He was rather shocked and disturbed by the final page and the whole story has a threatening feel. It's well done though and an eye opener, but not for the under 6s!"

Kirsten Freieleben with Jem (8)
£5.99 ISBN 1 84270 2377 Walker

Helpful Henry by Ruth Brown

One of Ruth Brown's previous books won an English Association prize for Key stage one non-fiction, and I think this book has to be seen in that light. It includes the fabulous error: 'every child must go to school' and we are told that Henry's parents are 'almost glad when he is old enough to go to school' where his desire to tidy up is 'greeted with genuine

delight and understanding!' If only parents could be as good with their children as those fantastic school teachers....! Clearly school is the best place for children -- after all, family life sucks! My children loved this book and thought it was hilarious! Perhaps, though, not for the right reasons, whatever they may be...

Karen McIntyre-Bhatty with Holly (5) and Hamish (3)
£9.99 ISBN 1 84270 111 8 Andersen

Big Mama makes the World by Phyllis Root

This book is a rewrite of the Genesis creation story. Big Mama takes on the role of God, possibly in an attempt at a gently feminist inquiry into creativity, but aimed at the child or the parent? It looks like a toddler book but the issues are more suited to a broader age range that would possibly find the format too young. I found it mildly interesting, and inoffensive, but then I am non-religious. My children found it ok, but didn't rush to read it a second time. If you are exploring issues pertaining to creation myths and/or feminism, you might find it useful, but at £12.99, borrow it, don't buy it.

Karen McIntyre with Holly (5) and Hamish (3)
£12.99 ISBN 07 445 7382 3 Walker

Be Gentle by Virginia Miller

Celeste says "A book about a bear and a kitten. The small bear isn't gentle but in the end he is." George gives Bartholomew a kitten and tells him to be gentle with it. This strong book is an ideal early book. Ivo and Celeste both enjoyed the story and discussing whether or not they were gentle (unlike Bartholomew). They both jumped when George shouts 'BE GENTLE' and we talked about making small children (ie them) listen. Celeste said "Sometimes I don't want to listen when you say things but in the end you say it loudly and I listen. Next time I listen the first time." So even though the story is very simple, it brought up a lot to discuss. Ideal for 1-4 age range.

Kirsten Freiesleben with Celeste (4) and Ivo (2)

Spinning Inward by Maurenn Murdock

This book is about visualisation, meditation and how to relax and prepare for learning and creativity. There are 32 exercises that are suitable for most ages (children & adults). By using guided imagery we can relax, empty our minds and focus on creativity and development. It covers areas such as positive self-image, identity, harmony and adolescence with an emphasis on the senses and non-verbal learning using symbolism and imagery to evoke feelings not so easily roused with words. The exercises appear easy to follow and fun with the aim being to enhance creativity, resolve problems and give peace of mind.

Hilary Woolfe
£19.99 Words of Discovery

When Learning becomes Your Enemy
the relationship between education, spiritual
dissent and economics

by Clive Erricker

A very interesting though difficult read but worth ploughing through. Clive seems to have done a lot of research into this book and wants to pack it all in and uses a very intellectual argument. It is a wonderful insight into the realisation that as a system creates winners, those in powerful, high paid jobs, "successes", to do this it also has to create losers, those in the poor, badly paid jobs, less successful, less able to cope in the capitalist market. And the question is "Is this right?" and "Should we help to perpetuate this?" He draws into his argument not just education but the multi-national corporations, government, etc. - in fact every aspect of our society that controls us. Personally I found it a very hard read and really had to try to concentrate to pull out a down to earth rational argument, but when I did I realised that this is actually mine, and most of the people I know's reason for home schooling. But really apart from opting out I really cannot see that Clive reaches a conclusion. I was left very much with the feeling of "yes I agree but what can I do".

Diane Cromie

£7.50 ISBN 1 900219 25 Educational Heretics Press

Fly Away Home by Christine Nostlinger

This book is about the Second World War. Christel Goth lives in Hernalds, Vienna. One day their house gets bombed. One room survives, but a giant crack appears in the ceiling. Frau Von Braun, a posh old woman, comes round to their house and offers her villa in Neuwaldegg. Christel thinks her father is away fighting, but he is actually in a hospital in Poland. Christel, her older sister and her mother set off on foot for Neuwaldegg. Christel sees a man in a German army uniform limping towards them. It turns out this man is Christel's father, escaped from the Polish hospital. He hides in the villa. One day a sleek black car drives up to the villa, it is a rare sight. Old Frau Von Braun's daughter-in-law and family have come to stay in the villa too. The children play families and schools with the garden gnomes. People keep saying the Russians are going to come and at last they do. Two Russian men come to the villa. The Russians are very loud and raucous and sing and drink beer a lot. One day a Russian Major and his orderly and a load of Russian soldiers move into the villa too. Also a Russian cook moves into the summerhouse. Christel makes friends with the cook who is called Cohn. Christel hides in his cart one day and visits her grandparents. This story is based on the author's own childhood experiences. I enjoyed this book a lot.

Molly Whitehall (9)

£5.99 ISBN 1 8427 0227 1 Andersen

Robbers on the Road

by Melvin Burgess

This book is set in the time of Elizabeth I, and follows the fortunes of two schoolfriends who masquerade as highwaymen for a practical joke. It seems to be intended to give children a taste of Tudor life with the subtitle "see inside for the true gory details of a highwayman's punishment" but I would definitely not wish my children to read it. I found the storyline and characters to be very undeveloped, and the author devotes most of his efforts to appalling and wearisome detail of Elizabethan classroom corporal punishment. I love historical novels, especially of this era, but there are many other titles available that are far superior to this one. Sally Smith

£8.99 ISBN 071 366105 4 A & C Black

The Earth, my Butt and Other Big, Round Things by Carolyn Mackler

Virginia Shreve is a 15-year-old girl who lives in New York. She is overweight and her doctor puts her on a diet to loose weight. Virginia sticks to her diet and puts pictures of thin people on the fridge and diet tips around her mirror. One day her dad gets a phone call to say that Virginia's older brother has been suspended from college for raping another student so Byron moves back in with them until he can go back to college. Virginia is really upset and eats lots of unhealthy food for comfort. She puts on a lot of weight. While she is upset she gets an e-mail from her best friend Shannon who is in Walla Walla in Washington. She invites Virginia to stay with her for Thanksgiving. Virginia wants to go, but her mum and dad will not let her so as she is desperate to get away from all her problems at home she takes \$500 from her bank account and buys a plane ticket to Washington. When Virginia tells her mum and dad that she has bought a ticket and is going her mum is furious, but her dad says he will drive her to the airport. Virginia has a wonderful time and loses some weight because she is not eating to comfort herself anymore. Shannon and Virginia want to commemorate their time together and they decide on piercing. Virginia has her eyebrow pierced and Shannon her tongue. Virginia's mum is horrified, but she just has to get used to it. Virginia realises she always turns to food for comfort, so she starts eating more healthily and begins going to kick-boxing club. She sets up a web page called 'earthquake' for people to write things on and puts a list of her own opinions about life on it. I think this is a good book that deals with the issues of weight and food well. It shows that, with a bit of help, anyone can overcome their difficulties. It is a great story which I enjoyed reading.

Emma Whitehall (12)

£4.99 ISBN 0 7445 9077 9 Walker

Something Slimy on Primrose Drive *by Karen Wallace*

This short story is about 2 families who seem to be completely opposite, but live next door to each other. Also the daughters seem to live with the wrong families e.g. the Wolfbanes, who have dug out a mudhole in their garden as a swimming pool, have Pearl, who likes pink frilly clothes and traditional 'girly' décor. There are also two baddies, who have duped the Rigid-Smythes (the conventional family) into a money-making scheme. Kim was keen to hear this but was a bit confused by all the details, so I think it may be suited to an older child. However Hazel thought it boring, so perhaps 8-9 year olds might enjoy it. Kim was a bit disappointed because nothing 'slimy' appeared in any part of the story.

Sally Jarvis with Hazel (10) and Kim (7)
£4.99 ISBN 0 7136 5992 0 A & C Black

Flytrap *by Meme McDonald and Monty Pryor*

Set in Australia, this book has a strong Australian cultural feel to it, making it very different from anything else we've read. We had to look up what an echidna was - Stephanie thought it was a bird from the context of the story, but it's actually an egg-laying mammal with spines. Nancy is a little girl who lives with stories and for stories. Her main way of getting her mother's attention away from her work and onto herself is to get her involved in storytelling. Gee, her stepfather, also seems to spatter his conversations with stories, legends even. Maybe this is why Nancy, with her rich imagination, tells her class she has a Venus Flytrap when she does not. It makes her feel good when her teacher smiles at her. She then worries herself silly over what she will say at show and tell time when she has no Venus Flytrap to show. I remember getting myself into similar predicaments at school - another great reason for home educating! In the end, Nancy's storytelling background gives her strength, and it is satisfying that she finally feels good about herself and doesn't need anyone else's approval, although she does now have it. Stephanie says, "It was good that she told the truth at the end. Bits of it were disgusting, like the dead echidna going smelly, and Nancy imagining the Venus Flytrap bursting and bits of dead flies being everywhere. The photos were a change from line drawings."

Vivienne Hughes with Stephanie (10)
ISBN 1 86508 608 8 Ragged Bears Ltd

Bringing the best out in boys

By Lucinda Neall

This book is subtitled "communication strategies for teachers", but much of the underlying psychology is just as useful for parents and home-educators. I found this book very informative; the author outlines the great differences between the way male and

female brains work (yes, it's scientific fact!!); why boys need different approaches to learning and how to make it enjoyable for them. The most pleasing feature for me was that the text is interspersed with actual case studies and examples to illustrate a point. The author has balanced the adult views well with relevant quotes from schoolchildren of all ages.
Sally Smith

£14.99 ISBN 1 903458 293 Hawthorn Press

Conscious Parenting *by Lee Lozowick*

The author is a child advocate and is very clear on the responsibility of parents to look at their own behaviours and be aware of the models they provide for children. Parental influence has an impact on many levels: children grow to be whole adults by living with whole adults. The book covers the entire experience of parenthood from conception onwards, and for anyone needing a framework to approach this style of parenting I think this book has useful pointers, however I was rather offput by the author's dogmatic style. His convictions may be easy to apply in an idyllic communal-living environment, but I feel the whole book should be viewed as a kind of supermarket of ideas; some you will choose to take and use but some are just not the right flavour!!
Sally Smith

ISBN 0 934252 67X Words of Discovery

Note:

Prices quoted are the publishers' recommended retail prices (rrp). Shop around for lower prices - try discount book shops, mail order discount book clubs and the internet. Contact details from publishers are set out below but many titles can be ordered from your local book shop. Also try *The Book People* (tel 0870 6077780 or www.thebookpeople.co.uk) - prices well below publisher's rrp and postage / packing usually free on orders over £25. If you are ordering less tell them you are home educating and you will be able to get a discount rate.

CONTACTS

A & C Black 01480 212666
Andersen Press 020 7840 8701
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www.christianfocus.com
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www.gn.apc.org/edheretics
Egmont 020 7761 3696
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Ragged Bears Ltd 01264 772269
Walker Books 01256 302692
Words of Discovery 0845 458 1199

Send in your reviews to Sally Hall, Nant-y-garreg,
Saron, Llandysul SA44 5EJ or email sally@aecb.net

RESOURCES FOR HOME EDUCATION

DISCOUNTS FOR CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Following the meeting reported in the December 2002 newsletter between EO and the National Extension College, a non-profit-making trust dedicated to providing educational opportunities for all, we are pleased to announce the launch of a discount scheme for EO members enrolling for NEC courses. The scheme offers a discount of £30 per course, which can be claimed on enrolment by using an EO/NEC voucher available from sarah@croggies.freereserve.co.uk or (Together with the NEC's newsletter 'Home Education Matters') by sending an A5 SAE to: Sarah Cook, The Old Cottage, Croglin, Carlisle, CA4 9RZ. The NEC's newsletter is also available (by A5 SAE) for anyone considering distance learning. Please quote your EO membership number (as on the envelope your newsletter arrived in) when requesting vouchers/newsletters. (The situation with regard to Oxford Open Learning and other providers of correspondence courses is unclear - we will provide further information as soon as possible.)

LISTENING BOOKS

EO in Scotland has received notice of a limited special offer from "listening Books". Listening Books is a national charity who send out story tapes to members who have difficulty reading from normal books for physical and other reasons. They have been donated funding for some free memberships in Scotland for people or families who 'qualify'. I believe they already have a number of HE families as members. Normally membership is £50 per year for as many story tapes as you can listen to and send back in a year. So if you live in Scotland and home educate a child who has physical or other difficulties with books or the written word and think Listening Books may be a good resource phone 0207 407 9417 or email sfletcher@listening-books.org.uk to see if you qualify for a funded membership. It's on a first come basis.

Ann Samuel Till

ALTERNATIVE KIDZ

This is about a FREEBIE and other OFFERS. **Alternative Kidz** is a quarterly magazine for 7-11 year olds "For kidz, about kidz, by kidz, it includes physical pursuits, environmental issues, news, views, travel stories, puzzles, jokes, quizzes and competitions." The magazine is refreshingly non-sexist and free of advertising. It has several articles about individual children and I would like to see home educators featured there. Lucy and Clive, the magazine's producers, have four children of their own but are not home educating. I met Clive at the Alternatives in Education Fair; he is a very friendly and positive man. They are struggling to get Alternative Kidz off the ground. The offers to EO members are:

One back issue free Current issue half price £1.50 (full £3) Annual Subscription £10 instead of £12

Contact: Alternative Kidz, 47 Woodplace Lane, Coulsdon, Surrey, CR5 1NE

Tel: 01737 55 67 68 Fax: 01737 554 664 www.alternativekidz.com

I hope that some of you will find this magazine a useful addition to your educating otherwise.

Geraldine Adams

LEARN PREMIUM WEBSITE - SPECIAL OFFER FOR EO MEMBERS

Learn.co.uk, an online educational service run by the Guardian, has offered EO members a joint, low cost subscription to Learn Premium, a digital subscription service aimed at primary and secondary age children and their teachers. EO has agreed to pay Learn.co a lump sum and is making a small charge to each user to cover this cost.

Access to the service will cost EO members £10 per family, from now until October 2003.

The service is aimed at schools and is not available to private individuals. There are about 35,000 pages of online lessons, tests, and topic-based information on a whole range of subjects. This website looks particularly useful for home educators who wish to follow a more structured learning programme but at £10 it might be worth giving it a try whatever your approach. Learn Premium resources include:

Online lessons	Guardian topical lesson packs	Revision and homework guides
Three web guides	Randomly generated tests	Projects and events
	Daily news service for 9 -13 year olds	

The web address is <http://premium.learn.co.uk> where more details of the service are available.

If you would like to subscribe please send your name, address, e-mail address and a cheque for £10 made out to Education Otherwise Association to: Jill Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester, LE2 3TD.

You will then be sent details of how to log on to the service.

So what is this Council Meeting anyway?

For a while we used to include the minutes from meetings in the newsletter but they are deadly dull and fairly meaningless to most people reading them so it was decided that a more general report might be of help to members. So I am going to try and give you some idea about what went on at the most recent meeting held at Manorbier Youth Hostel on Saturday 25th January 2003.

We started late but then we often do. People drift in and out for a bit and then someone with a loud voice announces to the dining room that we are going to start and people gather up the remains of their tea or coffee and we get down to business. Much of what happens at the meeting is the routine administration, reading reports and so on, which can be read in the minutes but there were several topics which involved more discussion.

One of the items causing most debate was about the future of EO and some issues raised by the finance group. The finance group had been looking into our sources of income and following on from that we started a discussion about how we might, as an organisation, want to look into other areas of resourcing and this extended into a discussion about what our priorities are and how big we might become, whether we anticipate a full time paid staff and our own offices for example, and how might get more people involved at national and regional levels. Many thoughts had been raised also by discussions that happened at the 25th Gathering and it was felt that the council meeting does not have the time to accommodate such lengthy issues. After some discussion it was felt that we should devote more concentrated time to the ideas raised and as such a day meeting for this is going to be arranged.

Ann Samuel Till reports that work continues over the Scottish guidelines and that a Scottish version of the trifold leaflet will be available soon. More help with work in Scotland is always welcome.

After some debate it was decided SINC would be reprinted before corrections were completed as it was felt an uninterrupted supply of copies for new members should be a priority.

Penny Clarke is going to keep track of LEAs who cause problems for home educators over the truancy regulations. If anyone has experience to share please get in touch with her.

The business practice group is going to undertake a review of how the small groups are working, so if anyone would like to either join the group to assist or give us feedback on the group/s they are involved with it would be most welcome. They are also going to look again at the issue of the status of local groups, input again welcome.

There was much discussion on the issue of expenses for local contacts, and it was decided that there should be more clear guidelines for both local contacts and the finance group. Please get in touch with Keith Charlton (acting local contact co-ordinator) if you have any thoughts on the subject.

It has become obvious that in many jobs people are struggling without adequate support, be that moral or practical. We are setting up a group to look into the issue of support for volunteers and ways of sharing roles that have become too big for one person to deal with. Again if anyone wishes to input ideas for how we could better support our key workers please let us know. Contact Penny Clarke.

Other work that is ongoing as a result of this meeting: production of guidelines regarding the business list, organizing gatherings and funding of stalls, complaints procedure, a letter for dealing with requests from students doing research, and a new service provider for the website is in the pipeline

Other decisions taken at this meeting: Yvette Hartley, Jane Bathgate and Keith Charlton became council members. Jill Fisher, Isobel Bogucki, Ann Samuel Till, Anne Wade and Dawn Waddington all left the council. Council membership tenure was set at a maximum of six years or two three-

Scotland: the draft guidance update

The meetings of home educators with the Scottish Executive January 2003:

EO found the two informal meetings held in January in Edinburgh and Inverness between the Scottish Executive officers and the home education groups very productive.

Home educators were well represented by members of EO, HEAS, Schoolhouse and the newer regional Highland Home Educators.

At both meetings the highly skilled Executive Team facilitated very open discussions and the Home Educators participated seamlessly, backing each other up with examples, picking up points and expanding them, each bringing something of the case for home education, for compliant useful guidance and for best practice.

The Executive began by thanking the Home education community for its responses. They had all been read and it was acknowledged that while the organisational responses generally carried more weight, all the individual responses counted and their impact depended on the quality of the points made. They also apologised for the delays in this consultation and asked us all to join them in looking forward rather than back.

The Executive verbally summarised the results of the consultation and in brief:

- the home educators voice was pretty much of a one on all the issues.
- the local authorities were split from issue to issue with no one clear position and a lot of contradictory views.
- the voluntary sector varied but largely concurred with the home educators.

Clearly there was harmony among the home educating voices. This was echoed in both of the meetings as well and was expressly acknowledged by everyone at the end of the Inverness meeting. Informally that is the feedback we have had from most of the participants at Edinburgh too.

Most people at the meetings expressed afterwards that they felt heard and that the home education key points were understood. Some participants remained sceptical that we have "been here before". But the difference is that since last time we have put in many written responses and lobbied hard against the present draft guidance for a year.

The main areas covered included:

- The consent issue (The present anomalous requirement under s35 for local authority consent to withdraw a child from school in order to home educate)
- Satisfaction with provision and efficient education.
- Welfare.
- Children's rights and the possibility of an education child helpline being set up.
- Best practice: examples were given and ideas were aired and some examples of bad practice described.
- Tracking: a voluntary notification scheme (by home educating families themselves to their local authorities) was discussed but the point was made that until relationships were improved with local authorities there was not likely to be much uptake.

Discussions were, as you would expect if you had read any of the main organisations' responses, of the positions familiar to all home educators. These were made clear and expanded.

The point was made repeatedly that Home education is given equal weight in statute with school education and parents choosing to home educate their children should be assumed to be acting reasonably and responsibly.

Similar discussions have now taken place between the Executive and local authorities and we have heard that as expected, these have gone well, with much common understanding.

The published consultation report is ready (end of Feb) and about to be distributed. **The guidance is now to be redrafted taking account of the concerns of home educators and education authorities and will be issued for further consultation, soon.** (There is a general election in Scotland in May and this affects any timetable.)

THE 'GLOBALISATION' OF HOME EDUCATION.

Amanda Petrie 2003 ©

Easter 1999 - there was a steady stream of email contact from France, mostly from people I had been in contact with for a number of years. The inferences were the same - the French government were discussing changing the education law of 1882. Why? A sect had been 'found' to be operating a small school and they cited the law as it refers to home education. Home education had become confused with a small extreme religious school and the fate of home education was sealed when the draconian law was passed only nine months later in December 1999. A relaxed, fertile approach to home education is no longer permitted in France.

One of the French members of the Assemblée during the debate claimed that children who did not attend school were subjected to the influence of sects and that the children were at risk of being marginalized and incapable of developing an independent spirit. When he finished his speech, the whole of the parliament erupted in lengthy applause. The voice of home educators was completely lost and consequently the law, which applies to home education, makes the practice of home education as akin to schooling as possible. Registration is compulsory and inspectors, educational sociologists, and psychologists have a right of entry to the home. There is a fundamental belief in many regions that a home educating parent has chosen this form of education for dubious reasons - there is a strong possibility that they are harming their children and limiting their life experiences. Having met some of these families, nothing could be further from the truth. As the current law imposes a list of curriculum criteria and one of these is French Literature, there is no leeway for non-French speaking people to home educate. A 'French experience' for German or English home educators is inevitably out of the question.

Not six months later, home educators in Ireland contacted me. There, too, the Government was changing the education law as it applies to home educators. In this case, the new law was principally concerned with children who were truanting from school. Despite the setting up of the Home Education Network and the support of some members of parliament and a prominent barrister, the case for the freedom to home educate according to the needs of the child was barely heard. The new law, requiring compulsory registration and visits from the social services, came into force at the end of last year. The content and assessment of home education will be determined by regulations.

In both these countries, the law had remained unchanged for decades, why change things at that point?

The next surprise was that the DfEE was prepared to fund a study to assess whether it was possible to calculate how many children were educated at home in England and Wales. This was finished in December 2000 and concluded that not only was it impossible to assess the number with any accuracy, but that LEA staff felt compulsory registration was a bad idea, as constructive relationships between home educators and LEA staff could be harmed. They pointed out that it would be difficult to create a compulsory registration law that could only be enforced by depriving the family of money, as in the payment of a fine, or by imprisonment, depriving the child of a parent. Not only was this research conducted by people experienced in home education, but those LEA staff who took part were aware of home educators, the variety of education which home educators provide and of many other issues surrounding home education. This shows that when minority issues are considered, government policy needs to be based on in-depth information rather than popular media-fuelled politics.

New guidelines restricting home education have been written in Scotland. It has become more difficult to home educate in Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

On surfing the Internet, I realised that all these changes were not a coincidence. The OECD* publishes comparative annual reports of school attendance and achievement. Before the changes to the law in France and Ireland, there had been a series of meetings of government staff of European countries in Geneva, ostensibly about truancy. A Swedish home education researcher accessed the minutes of the meetings - it appeared that home education was not discussed. Could this meeting have been the impetus for government investigations into all children who are not in school and therefore not necessarily receiving a school-type curriculum? Who knows?

Recently, a fellow-researcher contacted me with details of a research proposal that was submitted last year in the hope of obtaining European money. It was to assess the feasibility of setting up a register for all home-educated children in Europe. It was prepared by IT people who were not cognisant with home

educators, although one of the universities involved professes to be a part of 'the European Homeschooling Community network'. The two main proposers were in Israel and Germany - two countries where it is almost impossible to home educate. They believed that home educators feel 'alienated, isolated [and] left out of their community' and that the home school population is 'slowly distancing itself from those families who send their children to educational institutions' creating 'the first sign of social alienation of the two groups'. People working within the education sphere for European institutions will have read this proposal.

I would think that any genuine researcher into home education would gainsay the fundamental premises of this proposal and of the arguments put forward by the French government. They certainly bear no similarity to home education - the area of research which I have been involved in throughout Europe for the last seventeen years.

Whether it is a good thing or not, home education has suddenly become globalised - like many other things. Home educators often do not have time to notice, they are heavily involved in the time it takes to facilitate their children's education. Members of home education support networks devote many hours to supporting specific families within a particular geographical area; when possible they give support to other organisations as has happened over the recently published draft guidelines in Scotland. There is rarely the chance to look at home education in the wider world perspective.

In an attempt to broaden the debate, I created a website in 2000 called International Home Education - which can be found at www.worldzone.net/lifestyles/homeducation. It is a site where contact can be made between home educating groups in different countries, and researchers new to home education can be encouraged to become fully aware of the real issues. People who have a mindset of schooling can use this resource to dispel some common misconceptions, and access alternative thoughts and concepts; they can contact home educators and people who know what home education is really about. The website has certainly created a pool of home education researchers who want to give active support to the excellent variety of home education as it is actually practised by home educators.

Dr Amanda Petrie is a Research Associate at the Institute of Education, University of London. Amanda is a highly respected researcher internationally (as well as within EO), who is primarily concerned with education policy which affects home educators in different countries.

She is currently involved in an International project, involving researchers in the UK, France, Ireland, Germany, Norway and Sweden. The aim is to evaluate the similarities and differences between several aspects of home education in various countries in Europe and the US. It is hoped to assess the relevance of home education research results across national boundaries. This is important as legislators referred to above did not acknowledge the body of home education research, believing that home education was very different in their respective countries and that home education research conducted for example in the UK or the USA was not relevant to their own circumstances.

* OECD: The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development is an international organisation formed in 1961 to promote trade, economic growth and aid for developing countries. Member countries include much of Europe as well as North America, Mexico, Australia, NZ, Japan and the Republic of Korea.

Membership Database

As most of you will be aware, Education Otherwise is a growing organisation, so much so that we now employ an agency to manage the memberships so that those applying to join aren't having to wait for several weeks due to volunteers being hard pressed.

We have also split up all the other jobs as far as possible to reduce the pressure on just a few individuals. This does mean however that we need more people to access parts of the database to do their jobs.

It is proposed that we store the database information on a secure server on the internet. This means that all those who need up to date information may get it without delay.

For anyone unfamiliar with this, this means that the information is encrypted and stored behind passwords so that it is not available to unauthorised personnel (a similar procedure is used by banks, building societies, etc. to store financial information and share it between branches).

We propose having different levels of access to the information so that those people accessing the database, only have access to the levels of information needed. Therefore the Database Secretary, for example, will have full access so that s/he can update any areas, whereas another person can only access names and address - sufficient information to carry out their roles.

The Council would like feedback/comments from members before going ahead with this system so that, wherever possible, any pitfalls can be looked at before they happen. Please send comments either to the newsletter or to Jacqui Houlding (contact details on back page of newsletter).

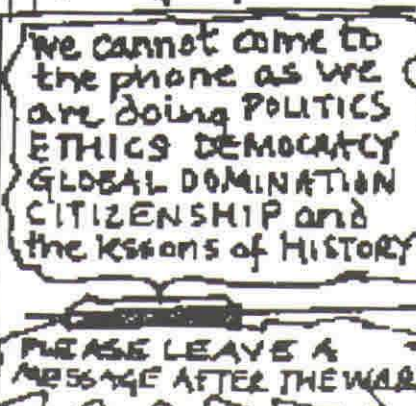
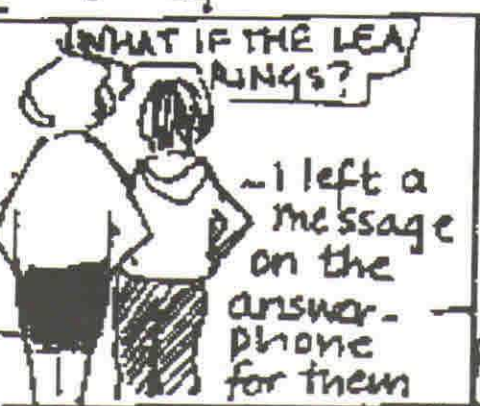
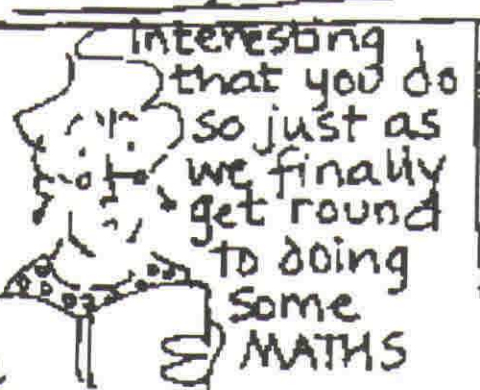
EDUCATING ARCHIE

Not in my ~~name~~ name!

by SBA

Mrs G and Archie decide to do some "EO" when

RIGHT I'M OFF



SPECIAL SECTION - LEAs

TRAILBLAZING WITH WARWICKSHIRE LEA

Having just read December's newsletter I thought I'd write to you about my contact with my LEA. I haven't had much contact but what little there has been over the last 5 years has been awful. I de-registered my special needs son nearly 4 ½ years ago. Two really nice ladies came round to see me first as he had been in a special school. They were supportive and said they would come and see me after half term to see how we were doing and to offer advice and practical tips. Wonderful. We started off doing school at home, one term then two went by and we settled into a very unstructured way of doing things. I didn't see anyone from the LEA for 2 ½ years. The two nice ladies have retired but the two inspectors who came out seemed equally nice. The inspection seemed to go well, the report that followed seemed reasonable. It was not until several weeks later that I received a letter from Educational Social Worker (ESW) also with a copy of report but this time with another page that I had never previously seen, despite having been sent 2 copies by 2 different people. So this was the 3rd copy I received and the extra page simply stated that Edward was not receiving a suitable education.

This sent me into major panic but apart from a nuisance phone call once in a while asking if Edward was at school yet, nothing has ever happened. Another 2 ½ years have gone by with nothing being done to help this child who is not receiving a suitable education. Suits me but LEA are failing in their legal duty to Edward if I am neglecting my duties. At the time of the inspection 2 ½ years ago, inspectors found out about my younger child who was then 5, who until then I had kept secret. To bring things up to date, the LEA decided last summer to inspect the younger child, wanting to send the same inspector as before. I objected to this same inspector being sent as the issues raised are still not resolved and I felt it would be unfair to all concerned. I suggested that on this occasion I felt it would be more appropriate if I sent in a written report.

I didn't know that Warks LEA do not recognise any form of monitoring other than home visits. The inspector informed me that she would have to report me to a Mr Sullivan for even suggesting such a thing, didn't I realise it was illegal to refuse a home visit? So immediately I wrote to Mr Sullivan explaining my reasons for my decision and sending him various helpful info including the DfES own guidelines stating that LEA do not have automatic right to home visits. This was in June 2002 and this letter has never been acknowledged although I know it reached the right person. I instead received a letter commenting on my refusal to accept a home visit and giving me 10 days to reconsider. I rang the contact number, spoke to a very reasonable admin assistant who confirmed that the letter I sent had arrived and after a long conversation she persuaded me that as this was a different child with different needs then perhaps it would be nice for a different inspector to come with a clean slate, no history, etc. I agreed and the inspection duly took place. Below is copy of my report on this meeting. Anne Wade has very kindly been helping me to deal with Warks LEA but is finding out how stubborn and inflexible they can be. I hope that what I have to go through over the next weeks/months will benefit others in the HE world just as I am benefiting from the trailblazers who have come before me. These include my own parents who helped make life a lot easier in their county. I am the sort of person who is more than capable of standing up for her rights but always secretly hope that I don't get the opportunity.

Warks LEA has a history of refusing to acknowledge or answer letters and refuses to accept written reports as an alternative to home visits. I hope over the next few months a lot of issues can be resolved. It has made me think about where EO would be now if everyone had been passive and waited for someone else to do all the dirty work. If I can do anything that is going to help make life easier for all of us, then I shall.

December 2002

Mr Malcolm Wray came from Warks LEA dept to inspect the provision of education provided by me for my daughter Danielle. I had a friend present mainly for companionship as I was nervous, having never had an inspection for Danielle before. The only other inspection I have had was in September 2000 - relating to my special needs son, Edward. There are still unresolved issues dating back to that visit which is why I was nervous about this visit. My daughter is not special needs and the rational part of me was sure I had no reason to be nervous as Danielle produces so much physical evidence that she is receiving an education. Mr Wray was late. He rang me from 6 miles away having been given the wrong address by the education dept. When he arrived I asked him how long he'd been doing this job as no other home edders I had spoken to had never heard of him. He has spent 14 years as a school inspector and for the last 2 years has also been doing home ed inspections.

Another inspector had requested that she visit my home in June 2002 but I declined her visit as this was the same inspector who had misrepresented me (lied) over my son Edward. I told her at that time that my chosen method of monitoring Danielle's education would be to send in a written report, to which she replied that was not legal and she would have to inform John Sullivan, head of education in Warks. I immediately wrote to Mr Sullivan explaining my position and asking for advice as to who my contact should be for the purpose of sending in a written report. This letter was never even acknowledged. In Sept I received a letter from the education dept. commenting on my refusal to allow an inspector to visit and giving me another chance. After a long telephone conversation I finally agreed to visit but with a different inspector, which is how Mr Wray came to visit. To this date my letter has never been answered although a secretary was able to confirm that it had reached the relevant dept.

All of Danielle's most recent work was on the kitchen table so when he asked to see what she was doing it was all readily to hand. She enjoys working in Letts and similar workbooks so I allow her to do this and it is my opinion that the work in these books is more than sufficient to show that she is indeed learning. Mr Wray was not satisfied with the books. He wanted to see all the supporting work that led up to Danielle being able to do the work in the books. This I didn't show him. Then he wanted to see last years work. As it was all readily available, I pulled last years Letts workbooks off the shelf and showed him those as well. I was sure he would now be impressed with how organised we are, my daughters work, etc. He was upset that she had not finished last year's books, KS1 and was now working on KS2. I explained that this was because she was ready to progress to something more challenging. He commented that what it showed him was that she did not understand the earlier work and so had left it. (So what if that was the case?) but it wasn't, she just found it boring and un-stimulating and wanted to move on. It is Danielle's choice to use workbooks and we only use these in Maths and English. He would like to see Danielle go back to KS1 and finish the uncompleted work. He did not like the fact that I do not date any of her work or keep planning and assessment records.

He asked to see her reading book. Her present book is Edward Lear's book of nonsense, which she enjoys and understands. He asked to see what else she reads. So I attempted to show him. He wanted to know the title of every book that she had read since September. I told him that this was not possible as she reads so much but I started pulling books out that I knew she had read such as Beatrix Potter, Barbie annual and many others fiction and non fiction. He made lots of notes but kept asking to see more so I called to Danielle and asked her to bring all the books she had been reading recently. Among others she brought in two books of the type she would probably be reading at school - large writing, lots of pictures. Mr Wray seized these and said "this is what I

want to see." I asked him why, as she already is able to read anything she chooses, but it was very important to him that he could see how she arrived at being able to read Edward Lear. He was at last happy to see something more age appropriate.

Throughout the whole of the inspection he was keen to know how she learnt this or that. I reasoned that surely it was more important to see what she is actually capable of now, not how she got there. But for every example of her capabilities he wanted written evidence going back at least a year. I told him that I thought this was unreasonable. I also explained briefly the law and how a suitable education is defined in law and how I was providing far more evidence of my daughter's education than I needed to and yet he was still asking for more.

Still he ground on like a stuck record. We moved through other subjects. Cookery - does she cook? Yes she cooks. What does she cook? Anything she wants. What do you mean? Exactly what I said, anything she wants: she gets out a recipe book, finds a recipe and makes it. What if you don't have the ingredients. Then she makes a list and then we go shopping. Ah. That's what I wanted to hear, so she knows how to write a list. Where are these lists? What do you mean? I need to see the lists. Why? Because I need written evidence that she can write at list. At this point I commented that she already cooks far more than her siblings who had been through school ever cooked and wasn't she far exceeding anything that she would be doing if she were at school. He replied that that was not the issue, he needed to see written evidence that she could do the things I was saying she could do. What about photos of her cooking then?

I commented that by wanting to see evidence of everything in such great detail, and not accepting my word, he was in effect calling me a liar. He said he wouldn't put it like that and so he ground on some more. P.E. We go to the park, she rides her bike, etc. He wanted to know what we do at the park, why we go to the park, why don't we go swimming. Next subject. He did seem reasonably impressed that once a week Danielle is very actively involved in helping me take an old invalid lady shopping. In fact Danielle knows exactly what the lady needs, weighs the right amount of fruit and veg, reminds her of anything she has forgotten. After explaining all of this, he then asked whether Danielle is helpful in the community and aware of other people's needs. Arts and crafts. The whole house is adorned with arty crafty stuff produced by Danielle. On the table was a wide range of made things, the fridge is covered in her artwork. He thought it was all very nice, even commented on how advanced and skilled one particular picture was for her age but none of it had dates on and where is the written record of what she has achieved?

By this point it was incredibly difficult not to bang my head on a brick wall. Despite being surrounded by Danielle's creativity he wanted to know whether she had anything else she could show him. So off she went and collected a pile of Barbie outfits designed and sewn by herself. Although sewing is my passion, I have never actually sat down and "taught" Danielle how to do it. She always makes her own dolls clothes, without help and without patterns. His comment, "she can use a needle and thread then". I also told him that she could use a computerised sewing machine - not impressed. R.E. As we are Jehovah's witnesses, this subject is obviously very much part of our life. Then he wanted to know if our faith was the reason for home edding. No it isn't - but of what relevance is that anyway? Some people home ed because of their religious views, I do it despite my religious views. Otherwise, none of my children would be at school, would they? Computer skills - Danielle is very competent at using a computer and we showed Mr Wray a range of CDs that she regularly uses, one of which is an encyclopaedia that she is reading her way through.

Socialisation was of course discussed. Danielle has friends locally, we regularly meet with our local EO group and also sometimes the Northampton group. I showed Mr Wray the picture diary that Danielle keeps of all our trips out. In this she keeps a postcard, ticket, leaflet, anything she wants

that will remind her of the place she has visited. Recently she has also started to write a short passage about any trips we have been on. He thought that this was very nice but not documented enough, etc. although this is the one item that has dates on everything! He thought it would be much nicer if there were some photos showing that Danielle had actually visited these places. (Perhaps he can't take my word for it!). He also wrote lists of which places we had visited with EO groups and which we had visited independently. I hope my local EO co-ordinator filled in the register on trips out because then Mr Wray will have some written proof that we actually go to interesting places and socialise!

I think I have now covered most of what was discussed. The meeting lasted 2 hours. Mr Wray's conclusions which he repeated throughout the visit, were that with the evidence offered, he could not state that Danielle is receiving a satisfactory education and that if he was to write a report today he would have to state that her education is unsatisfactory. The reasons: not enough evidence, this despite the fact he was nearly buried in it, no dates on work, no planning and assessment records and unfinished KS1 work. Throughout the visit Danielle was in the house but did not wish to speak to Mr Wray or read to him, further evidence as far as he was concerned that the education was unsuitable although I did offer to make a tape recording of Danielle reading which he made no comment about. He commented that he didn't actually have any proof that she could read, only my word, which was not good enough. My friend very kindly suggested that as this was a first visit and I hadn't known what to expect, perhaps it would be good idea if he came back in 3-6 months to see what progress we were making. To our surprise he agreed to this and also stated that he would not finalise his report until after his return in Feb/Mar. So as to give me time to put things in order and prove that Danielle's education is satisfactory. Upon his return he wants to see:

Planning and assessment records

A Diary

Folders with work supporting the Letts books (all filed in subject order)

Dates on everything

He wants Danielle to speak with him

All the KS1 work completed

This morning I rang Mr Wray and asked him for a letter confirming that he intends to return in 3 months and also requested that he put in writing what it is that he finds unsatisfactory about Danielle's education; just a common-sense formality I thought. Mr Wray was very hostile to this and said I was being unfair to ask this of him. I am of the impression that it is standard business practice to confirm things in writing so did not see my request as unreasonable. He said that if I wanted a letter then he would have to finalise his report now. I asked him if that meant he was going to go back on his word to hold the report for three months and he replied that no he wasn't but that I was asking for the full report now. I tried to clarify that all I want is some guidance notes on what changes he wants to see in three months and confirmation that he intends to return in three months. He told me that he will ring in February to confirm when he is coming back and a letter of confirmation would follow that phone call in February. He then hung up.

After this phone call, I rang Anne Wade who agreed it was quite a reasonable request to ask for some notes of the previous day in writing. Anne offered to ring Mr Wray. During her telephone conversation with him, he raised some issues that I feel I must clarify.

Mr Wray said that I did not have resources ready to show him and had to go and fetch things from around the house. Had this been the case, I don't see a problem anyway. But it was not the case. Everything that I intended to show Mr Wray was on the table in front of him from when he arrived. There was, I considered, enough evidence in what I was prepared to present to convince a

reasonable person that Danielle was receiving a suitable education. Items that came from other parts of the house were:- Mr Wray was not satisfied with the pile of a dozen or more books that I showed him Danielle has read recently, he asked to see every book she has read since September. As I know that Danielle has books in bed and books in the living room I called for her to bring me these books which she did. Later we discussed sewing. On the table for him to see was a piece of cross-stitch that she is working on but he wanted to see more. Danielle designs, cuts out and assembles her own Barbie clothes so I asked her to bring her Barbie clothes, which she did.

Mr Wray commented to Anne that when asked, I told him that there was other work around the house but I did not know where it was. Bearing in mind that I had already given him more evidence than a reasonable person would require, I shall put that statement into context. Mr Wray wanted to know if there was any more writing I could show him. I told him that Danielle has numerous private books that she writes in such things as letters to her pets, dolls, grandma. Her thoughts, her feelings and all sorts of things like that. These are private, I respect that and don't even ask to see them. I told Mr Wray of all this additional writing but told him he would have to ask Danielle himself if he was allowed to look at them and that I wouldn't even know where she kept them. He said that it didn't matter now but these books are to be ready for his inspection when he returns in 3 months.

Whilst here, he also repeatedly commented that he had not seen any evidence of resources, this despite the fact that he sat facing a 8ft x 7ft bookcase which I repeatedly informed him was purely full of resources. Anybody who has seen this bookcase has never failed to be impressed although that is not its purpose. This bookcase was built for the sole purpose of bringing together the bulk of the resources regularly used in educating my children; there are drawers for their day to day bits and pieces, hundreds of books on every subject imaginable, art and craft materials, a microscope, folders with every piece of artwork that Danielle has done since she was 2 years old plus a lot of loose worksheets that she has done, all filed away, and other items too numerous to list. Despite sitting facing this for two hours and being reminded about its presence every time he said "but I need to see resources and you're not showing me anything" he still maintains that I was unable to show him any resources. This bookcase is so obvious in its purpose that when some rather stuck up anti-home ed friends came to my house for the first time recently, they said "wow, it's just like school" which from them is a huge compliment and changed their opinion immediately about home ed.

So I find it impossible to see how after 2 hours he still claimed to have seen no resources when it is so obvious to everyone else, without ever a word of prompting from me. In addition to this I also showed him a huge range of CD ROMs that we regularly use with the computer and he was aware that we use the Internet which is the ultimate limitless resource. In addition to this, like every home ed family, it would be impossible to bring together every resource used by us as this would mean bringing virtually the entire contents of the house into one room.

As I stated previously, I had in front of Mr Wray far more than I felt he needed to see in order for me to have easily fulfilled my legal obligation. The fact that other things were brought from around the house is to me irrelevant. They were items that were not necessary for him to see but that Danielle brought at his request. As for her private books, as far as I am concerned he has no right to see these either now or in 3 months and it is totally irrelevant to her education that even I do not know the whereabouts of these. Everything that he saw, Danielle gave her permission for him to see. As far as I am aware, there are many children who don't give their permission for an inspector to see anything so Mr Wray should consider himself fortunate to meet a child who was so generous with what she allowed him to see.

March 2003

The LEA rang in January to come in February. I declined this visit but sent in a letter outlining why I was not happy with my daughter's inspection and I also sent my own report on my daughter's education. I am still awaiting responses to this, which I sent to various people including the principal Educational Social Worker who I have an appointment with later in March. Meanwhile the "lady" who is dealing with my SEN son's case, left a message on my phone several weeks ago stating that she needs to speak with me as a matter of urgency about my son's educational provision. She had rung earlier in the week but my husband answered the phone and she refused to talk to him. Anyway, I wrote her a letter asking her to write to me about the issues she wishes to discuss but I still have not had a reply more than a month later. My son has now been home educated for almost 5 years, he has only had one inspection at which time it was decided that his education was unsuitable. I still don't know why. His most recent statement is almost 6 years old. It was reviewed 2 - 2 ½ years ago and a draft statement issued which I responded to. January 2002 it was decided to review it again even though the previous draft was incomplete. I heard no more until January this year when said "lady" tried to contact me by phone. I still don't know what Warks LEA want or expect of me. No legal proceedings have ever been instigated against me by this LEA so I just plod on with home-ed hoping that one day I shall be left alone.

I don't want my experience to put anyone off home-ed, especially SEN. I feel that for the foreseeable future there will always be some of us who have more problems than we ought to, but when these things are resolved it is to the benefit of the whole home-ed community. At times it feels so unfair, but I've learnt a lot from it too. Unwittingly, the LEA have helped me to be more positive about what I believe in and I have reached this point much stronger than the nervous wreck I was two and a half years ago when they first said my son's education was unsuitable and were verbally threatening to take whatever action necessary to return my son to school.

Mrs June Booker, 5 Warwick Road, Ettington, Warwickshire

This is an ongoing saga, hopefully June will keep us all updated as and when things happen. *Jo Borthen*

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

In Surrey the Home Education advisors recently held a coffee afternoon in Guildford inviting home educators. It was a useful occasion, especially for home educators who had not met others before. Both the advisers were reasonably well liked by those they had visited (but I daresay those who had disliked them would not have come). One of the advisors said she had been a teacher for 25 years and had never heard it was legal to home educate before she saw the job advertised, taking it on last year. She said she was very impressed with what many parents were doing to educate their children.

Judith Wright (Surrey's local contact) and myself talked to the advisors about the unfriendly forms Surrey LEA send out to new home educators and asked if they could be changed. They sounded willing to look at this, but we await a practical outcome.

They had a table with a number of leaflets of use to home educators, such as how home educators could organise work experience. The Advisors were disappointed that more families did not show up, but apparently it clashed with a local weekly event. There was talk that they might hold it again and enthusiasm was shown for this by some of those who attended.

Priscilla Park Weir, 212 Gordon Ave, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2NT

Thanks to those who have contributed to this Special Section and to those of you who have read it. We have seen that LEAs can behave in many different ways, in fact I know of different LEAs in Hampshire, Kent and South Yorkshire and Devon who have recently been unreasonable in their demands of local home educating families. Mostly the problems have been solved by reasoning with the right person. The thing to remember is that 'The LEA' are ordinary people doing an everyday job, some know the Law relating to Home Education better than others, some are more approachable than others and some are just downright horrible. A bit like life really!

Jo Borthen, 57, Florida Drive, Exeter, Devon EX4 5EX Email: jo4eo@aol.com



EO ENQUIRIES LINE RECRUITS URGENTLY NEEDED!

As the option of home education becomes more widely known, more and more parents are turning to EO for information and support. It's great that the helpline is such a success: the new rota arrangements with 0870 numbers are working well, but we now find that we need more volunteers to answer the phone.

COULD YOU HELP to support parents who are at their wits' end with problems at school? Share your home-ed experience with those who have only just heard of it and need information? Listen patiently and non-judgementally, to empower parents to make their own decisions about taking action? Can you recognise when an issue is outside your own expertise and needs to be referred to someone else?

Then you could be really valuable in making sure that EO's knowledge and expertise is available to all who need it. (There is support available for you, too.)

And the rewards for this work? The glow you get when a caller ends by saying "I feel better now just for talking to you" or a few weeks later when they ring again to say that all's going well, thanks to you.

Contact Jo Borthen on 01392 679499 after 6pm to find out more about what's involved and how you could contribute. And do it today, please!



Cucumber Sandwiches ?

"I just wish they would treat home education as normal!" How many times have you heard that or similar over the years? Well...home education seems about to take a symbolic step which suggests an acceptance by the Establishment. A letter was received indicating that the First Minister wished EO in Scotland to be represented at the Queen's Royal Garden Party at Holyrood House this summer. It is customary for charities and others from all walks of life to receive invitations, ostensibly as symbolic recognition of their contribution to society.

So...you can either look at it graciously as home education's homecoming into mainstream society or, perhaps with a light touch, that it's simply: 'Home educated monarch at last seeks social contact with other home educators...?' ...anyone for a sandwich?

Ann Samuel Till

FUTURE of EO

It was good to see Leslie Safran (Barson)'s article in the last newsletter. The more constructive thinking (towards EO Future discussion day, 26th April - NL co-ord) the better.

If you can't make the day (and that will be most members) you can still participate by reflecting on the key issues (or discussing them in small groups) and then sending some notes on your discussions to Penny Clarke (see advert for day for details)...all contributions can inform the discussion. It will be useful if you can highlight your main ideas and preferences.

Some thinking and questions I have heard in recent months include the following:

Postal Voting for council members: 1) Voting for people you don't know does not usually bring big polls. No particular motivation for members to vote. At least with present system the council and whoever else has recommended those standing and most of those at the meeting, know who has been nominated and what work they have done and what intentions and skills they might bring (some members who may not get to meetings may feel more assured by that than deprived of a say). All members do have the right to vote at the meeting. 2) There is a general dislike for competitiveness among many home educators and the idea of self-promotion for council membership goes against the grain for a lot of folk. Many hard workers and potentially good council members would not choose to put themselves up for self-promotion and a postal vote, especially since there is already little by way of motivation or reward for them to do the job (hearing support from members for work done and decisions made would help change that). 3) EO does not need to mimic parliamentary type elections; EO decides most things by consensus, this could be argued to be superior to postal voting. 4) With a postal voting system there is a perception that those who don't vote or do not have their chosen candidate elected are not represented and there is a danger that council members could come to think they have a mandate to make all the decisions without listening to members (not unlike, some would say, present government) whereas as it stands the council (because of the consensus principle) does not act as if it has a blanket mandate (except for the responsibility to run EO legally and responsibly) but labours extensively over almost every decision taking much account of member's views as fed through to council). 5) Would the membership feel any more represented by 'strangers' voted for blind than they do for a council voted for by the meeting? 6) Would council members voted in by small polls possibly feel less endorsed in doing their job than they do now? 7) How else can we improve things without causing more work in doing so and without losing the human connection element upon which EO was built?

Postal Voting on specific issues: 1) Often issues do not come down to an 'either/or' choice making voting 'yea or nay' difficult and not useful. 2) The consensus method allows for best solutions to be found by discussion. Again consensus can be superior to deciding by vote. 3) It would be good to develop a system which allowed more people to participate in informing the discussion around bigger issues, improve the consensus system. A suggestion is to have the major issues summarised at back of newsletter with key questions and inviting people to send in their focussed views. Sort of using a consultative method of informing the meeting discussions. (This would also have the advantage of costing less than mailing out separately for votes); however, again there is the risk of small responses. 4) Postal voting costs a lot in terms of postage and human time.

Paid Office with staff: 1) good to get some of the spade work done and off the membership's shoulders. 2) Danger of professionalising EO which some may think is a bit contradictory to the self-help, autonomous nature of home education which permeates and may be the root of the success of EO. Tricky to get this balance right. 3) Employed staff are a lot of responsibility. EO would not undertake this unless done responsibly which may take another whole committee with lots of work to cover it (or a another lot of money to pay someone to do so). 4) Independence may be lost if EO accepts funding with any ties. 5) Even without ties, dependence on funding which may disappear leaves EO with the risk of a volunteer infrastructure gone and no funding or at least gaps in funding. Other major charities have gone this route with a loss of 'heart' - do we need to look around for lessons before such a decision? It is probable that EO could not raise enough funding to pay staff to do what is presently done by volunteers, it is so much. 6) EO paying staff is a hypothetical discussion on EO's present income. Significant funding would have to be found to become an employer at all. 7) Even if employing for spadework is done, should decision making stay in the hands of members? Does EO really ever want a Director who, no matter how sympathetic, could not be motivated as is a home educating parent? How far should EO go...is a development officer ok/enough? 8) If EO does

not employ or only employs small scale how do we spread the work out, encourage fresh volunteers to offer each year so that the experience carries on with continuity and burn out is minimised?

Fundraising: 1) It has been suggested in the past that new ideas should come with their own human resource and the intention and plan of generating funds required for putting them into practice if agreed under EO's banner or umbrella. This would stop more and more work falling to the same people (usually council and other regular volunteers) but would give endorsement and support to good ideas. 2) EO does need to recognise it doesn't have to do it all from the middle but it can be supportive and ideas can wait on the shelf sometimes till there are people and funds. 3) Yes, to no-ties funding. 4) Keep core activities run by membership income to ensure survival of EO if funding sources ceased.

Local Groups and Regionalisation: Lots of grassroots activity to be encouraged with clear guidelines as to organising and behaviour etc. but also encouraging and respecting maximum autonomy with good connections to the centre for information and networking, so that the centre is a rich resource for the local and regional network and vice versa.

EO has been there for families for over 25 years. Many of those families repaid their help by putting back into the running of EO in whatever way or measure they could. That is a noble CV for EO. EO is not a service organisation, a "them its ups and downs and its moments of regret and of triumph. How do you want EO to go from here, what are your ideas?

Lets hear lots of your good thinking for the Future of EO Day (all of which I am sure will be summarised afterwards).

Ann Samuei Till

Send contributions to the discussion by **Friday 18 April** to Penny Clarke on pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk Or by post to Penny Clarke, 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall, WS9 0HL (marking it: "Future of EO")

The Future of EO

1. I agree with Leslie Safran (Feb newsletter) that postal voting would make members feel more included and would encourage those interested in participating. Some have felt this could lead to people being voted on to the Council who would be difficult to work with, but instead I feel it might lead to a more businesslike relationship on the Council and less "falling out" over differences of opinion.

2. Leslie talks of paid staff for sending out info, membership and contact list. All these things are already done by paid agency workers and have greatly improved our reliability.

The next step is probably a paid enquiry office with some central administration functions, but this will require a large jump in our expenditure. We now have a volunteer approaching trusts to obtain funds; whether we can afford a central office depends on the success of this venture. If the majority of members want a central office we should perhaps consider employing a professional fundraiser whose salary is paid for out of the funds she/he raises.

3. I am not so sure about having full minutes printed in the newsletter. The minutes for the 30th August meeting ran to 12 A4 pages with appended reports. The first 4 pages of the 25 items discussed mostly just refer to the appended reports. I do think there should be some sort of 1-2 page summary in the newsletter.*

4. I agree that we must not forget our founding principle to support the right to home educate, but I also think our Help Line and Enquiries team provide a vital service in empowering people to act for themselves.

Yes, local groups should be self-determining. EO shouldn't try to impose any rules for local groups, only offer any help that they may want.

5. I too believe initiatives for regionalisation would be helpful, and there is nothing to prevent this happening now. Any enthusiast in a region can get together with others and set this going, asking for any help needed. If this evolves from the grass roots then guidelines can be constructed for others to follow.

I hope many others will contribute to this debate.

Priscilla Park Weir, 212 Gordon Ave, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2NT

*Martine has provided a summary of the January council meeting for this issue. *Anne Rix*

The Development of EO

It is not novel to say that we need to keep improving EO in order to meet new, exciting, yet challenging goals. However it seems particularly crucial now at a time of such rapid growth, with thousands of enquirers and members. Also we need to (and are in demand to) engage even more with outside agencies such as the DFES, the Scottish Executive, L/EAs, current resource providers and *prospective future ones*. Following the request to participate in the debate about the future of EO that Jill Fisher started at our 25th Anniversary celebrations; I'd like to offer my own thoughts:

Paid workers and a national office.

EO, as a membership run, grass roots charity has built up a solid reputation now that has led us to the threshold of some tremendous opportunities, and heaps of work! There has always been a lot more to do than resources have allowed, but the host of folk who help for a time - or ages! - keep trying, driven by altruism and the belief that this collective effort is enabling a growing number of children to have their interests and needs better catered for. I believe we have managed to achieve what we have with a purely voluntary network because of being run by such committed people.

However, I now feel we have come to the limit of our growth because a volunteer network cannot handle all the work generated by the recognition EO now receives. This matters because we could be developing more opportunities for members, not least in the area of resources, plus we could be engaging *even more* with the wider world and affecting policy decisions. So, I think we should try to obtain funding for an office, and carefully thought through staffing, to support the volunteers. Grants are available for development work, and there's lots of this required, but we'd also need to have appropriate administration in place to oversee accountability. Further, people like the highly skilled enquiries secretaries ought to be properly supported asap. In the meantime many existing, and possible new, jobs need more voluntary support. Members who would like to help might look in the Handbook for an understanding of current arrangements, as well as respond to job adverts in the newsletter.

Local groups and affiliation to EO.

In addition to further developing EO, I'd like to see the charity offer affiliation to other groups that might wish to associate with EO as a parent charity. At present local EO groups run independently, but use EO's charitable status to obtain money for their own resources, plus they come under the charity's Insurance provision for personal accidents and public liability etc. The question of how EO can better support these groups will be part of the debate; perhaps we can extend the same opportunities to other like-minded but not currently 'EO' groups? By affiliating to EO they would receive practical help, but still be free to organise in their unique way.

The idea of EO becoming purely an umbrella organisation for different groups has been raised but, to me, this could result in EO losing it's own voice - a voice that is being increasingly listened to after so many years of knocking at firmly closed doors. We have always stuck resolutely to our principles, and, as with Ann Samuel Till's contribution to the work in Scotland, the ethos behind the way we operate has won EO a lot of respect. To keep EO as a thriving independent organisation, which has a growing influence as the primary charity in this field, as well as improving the support we offer to local groups of people who get together to share resources, is, to me, preferable to downgrading (in my opinion) our remit to an umbrella organisation. If we did the latter I'd also be concerned about the support structure we put such effort into. If EO were to do less, who'd help the thousands of enquirers and new EOers needing support; deal with the L/EA education we do, and so on? There are relatively few, albeit significant and valuable, other national home education groups that support home edders or campaign for change. Although we share the same essential message, we all have a different approach. I believe we are more effective if we pull in the same direction, but each speak with our unique voices, and respect that about each other.

Decision making.

I'm wary of postal voting by all members, for the election of Council members. As it is, the Council is continually refreshed with new people who have shown themselves to be willing and competent *through the work they do* all around the country. Those that show an interest are encouraged by Council to stand, plus any EO member can put another member forward, and I don't recall anyone ever being turned down. Further, EO has a large council group (14-19) to keep it representative and avoid any cliquishness. I also believe we should retain our open Council meetings where decisions are taken by consensus, rather than go down the road of postal voting here too. I'm not sentimental about our traditional circle discussions; they can be a test of endurance as we try to come to mutually agreeable decisions, but I feel participants really do learn the art of listening, being respectful of another's position, and the ability to compromise when they are a party to so many people's deliberations. However there are problems with our system.

Even though any member can come (and lots do!) and participate as an equal in the business meetings, this is only truly 'democratic' if it's practical. Meetings have pitched up all over the country with the aim of encouraging new people to come along, and out of season big places have been chosen because they can accommodate the 80+ visitors (including children) who need to stay as cheaply as possible. EO is a very family orientated charity and has felt it important to have meetings embedded in gatherings so that children can play, and everyone can get to know each other.

But this often means locations are not central for those who'd prefer an easier to get to location accessible by public transport in a day; not everyone wants the gathering aspect (and this might become less important with opportunities to meet up regionally - see below). I don't feel the answer is to move to 'virtual meetings' conducted over the Internet. Perhaps in the future when more people have access to computers we could think again, but in the meantime let's aim to hold more of the business meetings as one-day affairs in central route centres. Also, to help members be better informed and so better able to participate in the discussions, they might obtain an Agenda before the meeting - as advertised, and find out more about any items of interest (I don't think it would be possible to have them ready in time to go into the N/L prior to the meeting). Then, we could put good summaries of the meetings into the only place of communication we all share - the newsletter. This should encourage more debate, again via the newsletter. Another way of keeping informed is to request Minutes from meetings. Unfortunately, even though their availability is regularly advertised, only a few members ask for copies. We could consider better ways of sharing this information, but we'd have to lose a lot of newsletter space/content to print them there in full.

Regional networks.

So that members can feel more supported, as well as providing ways in for more to offer help, I suggest we get the regional development networks going as a priority. Some members do feel isolated and detached from what's going on, and how they might involve themselves. The plan, to bridge the gap between participating in local events (where they exist) and national ones (which members may not be able to get to) is to establish a network of Regional Support & Development Coords. Someone would need to get this going, working under the authority of the Council/Meeting, by calling first get-togethers of local contacts in their (loosely defined) regions.

The LCs who wished to participate could join together to talk about how best to further the work in their regions with education authorities; resources; supporting members, and how members might share more in the running and decision making of EO, maybe by holding debates as part of regional gatherings? At this stage if appropriate, each regional group could elect it's own Regional Support & Development Coordinator. Their role would be about networking, not doing everything themselves. In addition they would establish a database of the resources and support that are available in the regions, both outside of EO as well as within e.g. with special needs, school phobia, pre-16 college entry (local knowledge would be such an enhancement here!), formal/ autonomous education, teen support by teenagers who would be near enough to get together. OR, if this seems too much to ask of volunteers, perhaps a 'Regional Development Officer' might be one of the posts to consider under the staffing plan?

Regional Resource Centres.

I see the growth of resource development and networking, within and between the regions, as absolutely key to EO's development. Further, some of the more active areas *might* build up as ideal candidates for extra funding to become national resource centres, with all other activities forming a web of opportunities around such bases. Or, EO could see if funds are available to set up a couple of national resource centres, one in the north and one in the south or midlands perhaps. In the latter scenario, we might be able to get start up funds, but we'd need to be sure we could sustain the running costs thereafter. Or, we might discover that we don't need centres as such at all, but by developing and cataloguing all resources, skills sharing and mentoring opportunities etc, we find we have a web of places and people offering different things at different times which families may dip into as they will. What do you think?

Magazine supplement to newsletter.

I'm still keen on the idea that we produce a magazine of some sort, although I see the problems around needing advertising, and getting a large enough circulation in a fairly small market if we were to go big and hit the shelves of W.H.Smiths. But to me there's the dilemma - if we don't get 'out there' more than we currently manage, most families will be denied the opportunity to learn about home education and possibly choose the approach for themselves. It feels wrong to rule out a means of sharing such information, which for some could literally be a lifesaver, because of concern over advertising computers or whatever. My intentions in this were never to lose the quiet intimacy of our own newsletter, where members can speak freely and give out contact details. What about developing a supplement to the newsletter, which could carry (non-private) articles that would inform and interest the general public, as well as some academic

content for interest to all - including policy makers. This section alone could be advertised in parent magazines and the education papers, and sold to subscribers.

FINALLY

Maybe in the future home educators won't need Education Otherwise, as it will be mainstream to receive support for whatever approach a family wishes to take in their education. But we're not there yet, so EO is needed to help make opportunities available. EO 'is' its membership and needs us all to pull together to light the way for better education provision in this country for all our young people. *Gwen Baldock*

FUTURE OF EO - LESSONS FROM HISTORY?

I fully support Leslie Safran's proposal for the future of EO (February newsletter), and a central office with paid staff is not new to EO. In the early 1980s after Dick Kitto complained to me that EO paperwork was piled high on his kitchen table covered in his daily collection of beach combings, our teenage daughter was paid the princely sum of £250 p.a. to run an office above the workshop. Our son installed the telephone line for her, Roland Meighan paid the rental of a photocopier and EO paid for an electric typewriter. Each letter and phone call was monitored and a check made at the end of each week that they had been dealt with or sent to the appropriate person. When the postman delivered mail each morning he would pick up the mail from previous day. It was weighed and stamped at the post office and a cheque was paid monthly. It was very efficient.

This office arrangement ended abruptly after conflict within the Council.

With our present helpline now so stretched I can foresee we could soon collapse. Some months we can receive nearly 600 calls, and this is likely to increase as the option of home education becomes more widely known. Desperately we need new Enquiries Secretaries but the work is arduous and can be emotionally demanding.

At times people come through to me saying that they have tried all the numbers on the answer machine and got to me, as I am the last number and in reserve should the other lines not be answered. Some of these are journalists, who do not really need an urgent response but can be very insistent. Often people who have problems with bankers orders, credit cards, and newsletter non delivery can not get direct contact to the administrator (who is part time) and come through to the Treasurer, Newsletter Co-ordinator or other people doing different jobs - this is frustrating and inefficient.

It would be so much easier if routine problems could be dealt with directly by an office worker, and much of the stress of enquiry work could be relieved by a central office receiving all incoming help line calls rather than using the present answer machine system, (EO's official telephone line) and channeling them in the right direction, be it a counsellor, support with dealing with an LEA; or an LEA or other professionals wanting help from us, the media and so on. Where necessary names and addresses would be taken and membership packs, information materials for libraries and other institutions who ask for this could be sent out from the central office.

This would relieve the enquiries secretaries, me and many others within EO of an enormous amount of work.

Iris Harrison



The Future of EO Day

Leicester, Saturday 26 April: 10 am - 4pm

Following various discussions at the 25th gathering, in the newsletter, on the EO e-lists and within council it was decided at the last open council meeting to hold a "Future of EO Day" to which all interested members are invited to come along or to send their comments and thoughts for discussion. Information packs to include discussion documents and location details will be sent out during early April to all members who have sent in bookings. Topics for discussion will

include:

Voting	Local groups	Fund raising	Central office
Paid staff	Regionalisation	Other topics as suggested for discussion	

- Please book with Liz Stevens, by email: kiss.it@lineone.net (and receive info packs by email) or by post to Liz at: 96 Ivanhoe Street, Leicester, LE3 9GW (please also send a 33p C5 or C4 sized stamped addressed envelope for Liz to send your info pack in.)
- A limited amount of overnight accommodation can be offered to those who need it by local EO members. Please contact Liz as above.
- Please contact Penny Clarke pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 0HL if you have any other issues for discussion that you would like to see on the agenda for the day.

In reply to Leslie Safran's article (Feb 03)

Discussion of Leslie's five proposed changes was invited.

I feel, very strongly, that EO should be true to its roots, as stated in point 4): I feel that employing many people will complicate matters and make it top-heavy.

Regarding the voting system, I am ignorant of the precise details of the current set-up, but would say that the simpler the system, the better.

I feel that local contacts should, ideally, do the task as a labour of love; if they act as 'signposts' to other home-educators, pointing them in the right direction regarding where to get advice, and where others meet up etc. this wouldn't take up that much time, would it? Also, the burden of arranging activities should not fall solely (if at all) on their shoulders - I've noticed that some who come to get-togethers have a 'what have you laid on for me?' attitude. 'What about self-empowerment?' I'd say to them.

Returning to the paid staff idea, I wonder about how to support the production of the excellent newsletter, which I consider to be almost indispensable. I appreciate the amount of work that goes into it. Perhaps it could become a quarterly publication? Or how about employing one or more part-timers (16 hours per week minimum) and making use of the Working Families Tax Credit provision, to cover the magazine* and other functions of EO? Surely this would be easier to handle than several paid employees and a physical office?!

To sum up, Education Otherwise should have as simple an infrastructure as is possible, and its functions should be pared back to a minimum, broadly as per Dick Kitto's ideas, and it should act as a guiding beacon and information point for home-education in general.

I strongly believe that EO should be true to its roots, and not try to become a monstrous, complicated mess. A tight, sharply-targeted organisation is the desired objective. *Ann E Cashman, 55 Station Road, Swansea*

* Co-ord's personal note: Wow! A part-time salary would be wonderful! However, the NL is only the tip of an iceberg, and actually takes a good deal less time and emotional energy than some other less obvious jobs. My job is much the same every issue (around 40 hr/month ongoing, plus one hectic and sleepless weekend every two months) and I know when everything's due to happen. There's a limit to how much work can be split to make it manageable by part-time volunteers, without loss of efficiency, especially when workers are widely spread geographically and there's no focal communication point. I was amazed when I took over as NL Co-ord to find out just how much work goes on behind the scenes just to support EO's infrastructure and to provide information, which as a 'grass roots' member I had not known about. The people who operate the national enquiries system, for example (see Iris Harrison's piece, facing page); or those who carry out EO's dealings with government and other institutions. Their workload is very heavy, unpredictable and can become overwhelming; health/relationship/nervous breakdowns can occur - that's where there is right now 'a monstrous, complicated mess'! I think we don't hear much about it because they're all so busy trying to keep their heads above water!

Anne Rix



A Postscript: on being a council member

It occurred to me after sending the piece on the Future of EO and previous contributions that in my effort to portray being a council member as realistically as possible by displacing myths of power and cliques and replacing these with the often unattractive reality (of hard work and fending off frequent attack) I may have gone too far and put off members from ever considering becoming a council member! So to redress the balance here are a few thoughts on the benefits I have experienced or seen on serving as a council member (much of it applies to doing other jobs in EO as well)

Serving on the council has the usual benefits of 'involvement', feeling that you can make a difference, being effective. Council members can use the work and life experience skills they bring to whatever extent they feel able to give of their time and effort (thereby preventing skills and certain brain cells going rusty, as if your children will let that happen!). There is continual opportunity to use and develop conflict resolution skills, problem solving skills, listening skills and working co-operatively with a largish group of diverse people (the council itself 14-19 plus other active volunteers doing key jobs). Aiming for consensus is often challenging. It's not always easy to see things from other perspectives ... all good stuff for personal growth. And of course, depending on your spiritual or psychological leanings you could see all this as a good opportunity of working through some karma! Others may see it as 'storing up grace', 'doing your bit' or even, getting your 'just desserts'! (Those who keep the council on their toes are likewise no doubt doing their bit too) ... But I won't go there!

Ann Samuel Till (currently not a council member but doing jobs)

CAMPING SEASON 2003

WHITSUN SACRED ARTS DANCE & VOICE CAMP

Friday 23rd May - Sunday 1st June

On an organic farm, Bridport, Dorset, 4 miles sea EO families Hertogs and Willow help to run this large camp (now in 14th year). Good children's area, cargo nets, marquees, crafts, games, sports outings. Young teens area and older teens circles and workers. Camping in circles round fires sharing evening meals.

Peace dancing, circle dancing, meditation, yoga.

Afternoon workshops: contact improvisation, storytelling, voice gospel and Taize, basket weaving, batik, pottery. Women's group, trips to the sea, craft market, cafe and evening dances. Basic wood fired showers, compost loos.

Cost: £100 adult, £30 Child, £40 Teen (max 3 kids pay). Young adult (20-26) £70. Concessions (on

benefits). More information and booking:

Chrystia + Keith Hertogs 020 8776 8597

75 Kent house road Sydenham SE26 5LJ.

LLYN PENINSULA CAMP

Sat 12th to Sat 19th July

A New Venue for home ed. Families on Heritage Coastline, One of Wales' best-kept secrets.

Rocky coves, sandy beaches, small harbours.

Abundant wildlife, sea birds, falcons, seals.

Sue & Pete who own the environmentally friendly site have experience running similar camps for Natural

Nurturing Network

6 toilets, 3 showers, laundry room, alter fires & wood, marquee for rainy day activities & pow wows, 4 electric hook ups for tourers £1/night, small organic shop, daily bread and milk deliveries. Transfer to/from Pwllheli for those using public transport.

Static caravan to rent overlooking camping field sleeps 4/6 all mod cons, ensuite, special EO price £ 75/week

No pre-organised activities, but plenty to do in the

area, surfing, snorkelling, scuba diving, fishing,

sailing, local hill forts, mountains of Snowdonia,

steam railway, castles, hovercraft!

We are limiting the camp to 30 families, an optimum number for facilities & space & community spirit.

Discounted site fees per night £1.50 per adult, 75p per

child, 10% of site fees will be donated to Education

Otherwise. Booking form by post with SAE & £1.50

booking fee per adult to cover admin. & firewood

payable to Sue Kennedy, Penrallt Coastal Campsite,

Tudweiliog, Pwllheli LL53 8PB Tel 01758 770654

Email Penrallt@AOL.com website www.penrallt.co.uk

GWERSYLL DEWI SANT - ST DAVIDS' CAMP

Thur 19th to Wed 30th June 2003

Pembrokeshire Coast National Park

Coastal camping & caravan site.

Places strictly limited, bookings ONLY

Send SAE for booking form and

information to:

GDS, 17 Maes Ingli, Newport,

Pembrokeshire, SA42 0TE

(Available from May 1st on

yeh@onetel.net.uk)

More info on www.stdavidscamp.co.uk.

PEAK CAMP 2003

Fri 4th - Sun 13th July

Open to all EO members

& to those interested in home-education.

Farm campsite with good facilities.

Charges (payable direct to the farm, not to EO) per person per night:

Adults: £1.50 Children: £0.80 Cars: £1.00

No need to book - long or short stay.

No pre-organised activities, offers of shared activities or workshops welcome.

Popular in past: walks, cycle rides, rock climbing,

circle dancing and shared meals. Near cycle

tracks & hire centres, riverside walks. Time to

socialise freely and share experiences of home

educating with other families.

Usual site - Barracks Farm, Beresford Dale,

Near Hartington (grid ref 123 586).

To indicate number of families and for full

details/directions please contact Gary Podmore,

52 Rupert Road, Sheffield S7 1RP.

Tel :- (0114 2585702)

<SianPodmore@eotherwise.fsnet.co.uk>

FOURTH STUDLAND BAY CAMP DORSET

Friday 18 - Saturday 26 July

Chrystia and Keith warmly welcome all home educating families and friends

Area of great natural beauty - pine forests, lowland heath, heather-filled dunes. 4 miles from sea, nature reserve, bird sanctuary (pheasants, deer, buzzards...). Dorset steam railway nearby - to beach at Swanage. Free outings to nearby Corfe Castle. Cycleways and paths through woods and to sea. Camping in large field backed by pine woods, stream, access to full facilities at adjoining Bumbake campsite.

We provide canoes, cargo nets, rope swings, craft materials, marquee, benders, fire barrels (off ground) and separate teen area and fire.

Bring cycles, drums and other instruments.

Some singing and dancing.

Camp theme: Healing (skills sharing).

There will be a quiet bender.

Cost for whole camp £100/family

(concessions available also half camp rate)

For more information and booking 'phone

Chrystia + Keith 020 8776 8597 75 Kent house

road, Sydenham, London SE26 5LJ.

Hello to a thriving local group!

The following article was requested in order to encourage home educators, perhaps some of whom might feel a little isolated, to set up their own local group. It can be done - it is being done! The benefits for all concerned will be clear from reading the piece below, not least the comments from some of the younger members of the group. Members of the West Yorks community have a history of speaking at local conferences and spreading the word about home education, but this kind of energy and commitment is not essential for starting a local group. What is necessary though is the desire occasionally to share resources, time and experience with others. It is well worth the effort.

The following is an account of the group by Judith from Leeds

History

We started meeting over six years ago in each other's homes. Soon we outgrew our homes and started searching for a meeting place. At first we met at a church in Leeds city centre, but found parking inconvenient for some, and the space required too much quiet. Then we found another church on the outskirts that offered us use of four rooms for an afternoon for £15 and we began to meet monthly. (This is the building as seen on the EO video.)

Each family was charged £1.50 to cover the rental and extra expenses for drinks and craft materials. The children held fundraising events to purchase sports items to share, as we had use of a gymnasium for basketball and indoor games. In the summer, we decided to meet in parks instead, for variety, to save the money, and with the summer months we sometimes had smaller numbers.

The children and their parents were regularly asked for ideas for future meeting topics and these were sent down a phone tree in advance so preparations could be made. One person co-ordinates the phone tree, another the treasury, another the purchases, another the events. For a while, we worked in teams to co-ordinate a monthly meeting. For a few years, a core group of members met in the morning before an afternoon meeting to plan future events.

Meetings

Currently, we meet monthly at an education building provided free of charge by the LEA. It is in a building with other groups, but we are at an end with a few offices upstairs, so feel as if we are on our own, which suits us. The West Yorkshire Home Educators group were granted a storage room with cupboards which now house our computer and drink supplies as well as craft materials. Grant money supplied our sports and science equipment, musical instruments, educational toys and equipment, a parachute, and play equipment. The older children set up a working library and dressing up bag. These are available for loan to members of the West Yorks group to be used by groups and families.

At the Leeds monthly meetings.

In the morning, families who are able arrive and share some educational activities. Those who attend this morning session are expected to bring an activity to share with others. At lunchtime, we socialise and for the afternoon, join in a topical activity. Sometimes this is an outside speaker, sometimes sports, and other times use of the educational resources from our storage room. At special times of the year, we focus on holiday topics and have shared meals together.

Learn/Share days

Also monthly, a group meets and uses the space and resources, focusing on a theme and bringing in items they have researched or have to share. This topic is suggested based on the variety of resources we have acquired. The topic is sent along the phone tree; people who wish to participate are expected to bring in items to share, and the day is filled with options.

Some monthly meeting activities we have done include archaeology, Medieval fair, bring and buy stalls, skills share (where half of group share with the other half), Egyptian day (mobile museum hands on), science or maths or language or history topic, talent show, drama presentations (rehearsed in advance or on the day), Victorian day, tracking and trailing, kite making and flying, fire safety presentations, snakes alive!, pet day, sports days, basketball coaching, willow craft, holiday themed craft, tile making, parachute games, circus workshops, Spring plantings, weaving demonstrations, talks by animal groups, social interest groups, specialists, sign language sessions, feasts, games, and craft galore.

Weekly Fun Gym

In addition, on Thursdays, we have a gymnastics session, which we arranged for our group with a gymnastics coach at the Carnegie Regional Gymnastics Centre. It is a private arrangement, which involves children of any age and is at a minimal cost.

"Between 10 and 15 children go every week and we learn gymnastics skills with our coach. We like it because it's fun to learn new skills and play games together." *Niamh (8) and Conall (7)*

Resources/other information.

We have a £5 annual membership at a scrap shop in Leeds, which also carries craft items at wholesale prices. The local Headingley library is a meeting point for use of computers and we may meet for lunch at a local cafe. All of this requires time, energy and enthusiasm but proves helpful and worthwhile and pleasantly surprising.

(Names and addresses of all contributors to this article supplied - Anne, NL Co-ord)

Contributions from some other members of the local group.

Unsure of what we would find, we entered the building. Laughter and chatter met us at the door, welcoming sounds to our ears for our first meeting of the West Yorkshire Education Otherwise, and our first ever meeting with other home educators. A couple of kids zoomed past. Children and adults addressed one another on a first name basis. The discussion part of the meeting was close to its end, but we nervously found seats in a room that had a basketball hoop at both ends and a large circle of chairs at one end of the court. With Vincent on my lap, and Eric and Theo next to me, we listened and watched for the first few minutes. When Judith saw me she asked me to introduce ourselves, and then, to save the meeting from going on too long for the sake of the younger home educated, asked that people introduce themselves to us individually after the meeting. There were so many new faces that day that I couldn't remember all the names I had learned, but they were all very welcoming and seemed happy to have us join in. I felt elated when I left, thinking that I was glad I found what I did. I already felt like part of the group.

When my husband, Eric, and I first decided to home educate our children, it was not taken lightly. Our oldest son was going to be five years old and I needed to start making some decisions about his education. It took about a year or so of talking to friends who were already home educators, listening to varied opinions, reading a lot of books and magazines on home education, and seeking information about HE laws on the internet. This was also a time when we were preparing to move from the United States to England, so the Internet was very useful. That is where I found Education Otherwise.

Although the venue has changed from that anticipated first meeting one and a half years ago, we continue to find non-stop learning, fun, and friendship. Past activities include a juggling demonstration and learning session, where children and adults could try their hand at the skill; tai chi demonstration with participation from all; making of nature trails outside on footpaths; medieval theme day with costumes and food appropriate for the era; holiday celebration in December; regional gathering; Sports Day, dinner, and celidh made possible with a grant; endless arts and crafts supplies for projects, with ideas coming from children and adults. The group has a closet full of educational equipment ranging from coloured markers to microscopes. The children and adults involved in this EO group have everything running like clockwork. With the West Yorkshire Education Otherwise group of home educators you can always count on something exciting happening.

Lisa

Being a member of EO has helped this family enormously over the few years that our children have been educated. We have been to places we would never have gone to if it weren't for our membership of EO, like the Earth Centre in South Yorkshire. But the most important aspect is the friendship and support that EO has brought to Dominick (ex-school student) and the rest of our family.

I love the way we are always welcome at meetings, even when we've been unable to attend for a while. They understand our difficult lives and even send their support down the 'phone tree' or e-mail at times of strain. We don't get yelled at for not getting there when they know we're trying. We parents have grown as people by teaching our children and still learn from others at our meetings, even if it's just how to 'let go'. I've been able to 'let go' and 'teach more' due to all our meetings and friends.

Mick & Maz

Thought I'd do something on the merits of having a free venue. As treasurer for the local EO group, I've come to really appreciate the fact that we now have access to a free venue. Hitherto, once a month we hired a suite of rooms in a church building. The rent, £30, was fairly reasonable but it meant that families had to contribute £3 each, and once we'd handed over the room rental and paid for incidentals such as tea and juice there was little left over for anything else. Moreover, for families on a tight budget the £3, when added to travel and other costs, could be a real barrier to participating.

When some intrepid EO members managed to negotiate a free space for us to use, many things changed. Firstly it allowed us to reduce contributions to just £1.50. These small sums soon add up when they are not swallowed up by rental costs and we have been able to purchase crafts materials, subsidise a Christmas party, buy a quantity of good quality second hand toys, and to pay donations to voluntary speakers and workshop leaders. We even have a fairly healthy reserve fund!

Carol-Lynn



Local EO Groups

Members who wish to extend the activities they share locally can formalise their group's structure by setting up a 'local EO group'. This is a simple procedure and enables members to get together in order to obtain independent funds to pay for resources, including perhaps, the hiring of rooms for regular meetings. The steady growth in numbers of local EO groups, as well as the increasing range of activities and opportunities they provide, is felt to be an important area of the charity's continuing development - development that is receiving special attention at the moment since the debate was started about the future of EO at our 25th Anniversary celebrations. The following is a summary of the support (and responsibilities) currently in place for members who wish to set up their own group:

- Local groups are offered up to £50 as a grant to help with start up costs. Contact EO's Treasurer, Garry Humphreys, for information (details in back of NL).
- Groups are semi-autonomous i.e. Education Otherwise does not run the groups, but it does provide some essential Insurance protection (summary available from Garry). Further, by coming under a 'parent charity', groups have the opportunity to apply for grants from outside fund holders to buy resources for themselves.
- Also available is a sample constitution. This is a simple but useful document that may help to define the group, its aims and objectives, and be useful to show to libraries and other potential resource providers.
- Organisers accepting money for the group, and wishing to write cheques, need to have a bank account. The sample constitution may be useful here as well, as banks sometimes ask for one.
- Other local groups who are handling money, but who prefer something less complex, use building societies, many of which have special treasurer's accounts.
- Organisers are asked to talk with their Local Contact about their plans in order to foster positive networking and enable LCs to refer families to the group.
- Contact details for the group and a general idea of activities, need to be advertised in the *regional diary* of the newsletter (contact Anne Rix, details in back of newsletter). It might be best to list only the very definite dates and times of meetings so no one is left 'out in the cold'.

Whilst EO does not make it a pre-requisite of the grant that all members of a group are EO members, there are some considerations of particular note:

Firstly, there is an issue here about striking a balance between EO's historic desire to act charitably and embrace all comers (whilst encouraging people to join), and being mindful that it is members' money being used in start up grants and Insurance costs, etc.

Secondly, the Insurance we have at present has a clause covering 'additional attendees' at meetings, i.e. guests, speakers, exhibitors, people considering home ed., but essentially it was designed for meetings of EOers around the country.

Thirdly, EO is conscious that many local groups do have a broader base of membership.

The question of the most appropriate ways of supporting local groups is going to form part of the discussion on the continuing development of Education Otherwise at the forthcoming open members meeting in April. Your views will be most welcome.

Garry Humphreys and Gwen Baldock

LETTERS PAGES

Suggestions and advice wanted

We have been home-educating our son now since July 2002, after withdrawing him from school. We are still trying to find our feet. We would like to do autonomous learning, but are rather afraid of how our LEA will take this. We started off with a curriculum and a timetable. These do work, but we often find ourselves going off on a tangent. We might wake up one day with a plan of doing science and look outside and it is sunny so we go for a walk. Having to keep a diary is often tiring and hard to find time. The LEA has told us we have to write aims and objectives next to everything we do. This we feel has put us off the idea of planning as it is not the way we wanted to go. We would like some help in autonomous learning and would welcome any suggestions.

We are also thinking about, possibly, getting an allotment to grow organic vegetables and fruit. Maybe I am living in a dream world of perfect peace and self-sufficiency. What a lovely dream! However we are stuck in a village house with the dream of a smallholding drifting away, so an allotment will have to do. Does anyone have any idea on how to grow food? I guess the local library will yet again come to my rescue. If you have any advice, please get in touch.

I have another favour to ask. You can tell I have been saving up my questions can't you? I am a full-time housewife, mum, teacher and childminder. A very busy lady! Reading through the EO N/L I can't help but notice most letters, events, camps etc. are down South. Are there any other home-educators in the Wakefield/West Yorkshire area? We have one friend whom we met through our LEA that home school and that is your lot. If there are any other home-educators out there near us then get in touch, we could start a Wakefield-based group. We want some more friends who can relate to us. We have a good circle of friends but whose children attend mainstream school. Would anyone like to get together for a day out? I am 28, my husband Mike is 34 and our son James is 10. We also have another son but he lives with his mum in Suffolk, he is 10 also.

Please get writing or calling!

*Phillipa Hedison, 8 Netherfield Place, Betherton,
Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF4 4LS*

(Since the above letter was written, this member has been put in touch with her Local EO Contact and offered support and information - Anne)

Building a sustainable home-education environment

As home educators we are examining how to find a way to live the life fully by creating an environment, perhaps with others, of a country property which would allow the use of workshops and animals to build a sustainable home-education environment for our family. Does anybody have any ideas or advice to offer?

I wondered if members of EO had information regarding the official attitude to home education in France and Spain. Also details of the Danish system that used to exist which allowed state subsidy of independent education with a small number of children. As someone who is returning to EO I have often thought about the state giving a capitation allowance to parents who educate their children at home as the way forward for the revolution of home education.

*Rob Emmett,
Windmill House, 5 Marlborough Road, Chiseldon,
Swindon, Wiltshire SN4 0NR Tel: 01793 740443*

Themed family camps - a joy for home educators.

Summer camps - a way to stay young, experience personal growth and make ongoing friendships - a bit of heaven on earth for children. We have 12 years of experience of camps, E.O. and otherwise, and help to run several camps, working with children and teenagers. Here are some of our favourite camps...

Home-Education Seaside Festival (HES-FES), Charmouth, Dorset. 10th-17th May.

Earliest camp and largest Home-Ed gathering in Europe (1000 plus). Commercial site and river (beware Giant Hogweed-delayed burns). Ten minutes to fossil beach with river. Nightly disco, live music, cabaret, barn dance, crafts, games and craziness. Takes courage for parents but children insist on coming every year. Good conference speakers, legal advice, discussion groups, books and materials.

Whitsun Sacred Arts Camp, Dorset. May 23rd- June 1st (See also Feb. newsletter)

Devotional peace and circle dance, voice, gospel singing, crafts, storytelling, sports. Many children and good kids area. Camping in circles round camp fires. We love this camp. More expensive, less home-educators, many teachers/facilitators. It is life changing and an open door to new friends and community for adults and children. We have managed the children's area (with their children's help!) for 10 years. Concessions and some working tickets available.

St Davids EO Camp, Pembrokeshire.

19th – 30th June

Windy cliff top site, but breathtaking views and stunning cliff walks. Good local gang of EOers into singing and fires on the beach (5 min walk). Last year we had an impromptu ceilidh including teenagers, dancing with a fiddle to the setting sun. Gets fully booked!

Peak EO Camp, 4th – 13th July

Dearly loved, friendly people come back each year. Cycle routes, river walks, trips out, games, quizzes, teenagers. Very cheap!

Studland Bay EO Camp, Dorset. 18th-26th July

Our 4th year. Mellow open spaces, large pine backed field. Camp is small, friendly, good for meeting new people, WARM. Cargo nets, cycling, canoes, some circle and peace dances. Small marquee for crafts and singing etc. Meditation space, healing theme. 5 miles to beaches & nature reserve. Laid back camp, 8 days. Mainly home-eds and friends. Lots of teenagers. Corfe Castle & steam railway nearby.

For camps listed see relevant ads or write or ring Keith and Chrystia. Also available from us is: Campscene Directory, a big leaflet on many alternative camps in England & Wales.

Chrystia and Keith Hertogs. 020 8776 8597. 75 Kent House Rd, Sydenham, London. SE26 5LJ.

(NB more camp notices elsewhere in NL – AR)

New Woodland Venue in Berkshire

During June, July, August and September a new venue in Berkshire will be running. Set in acres of woodland, the site boasts a large adventure playground, a splash pool, barbecue, large campfire, indoor and outdoor eating areas, club room with piano, table football, television, video and sensory rooms.

Different activities, and crafts will be run through the course of each day. The club will be run on a membership basis and eventually our aim will be for it to become a resource centre, and maybe even an exam centre, which will open every day. This would need to be researched more thoroughly. If any one could give us some advice I would be grateful.

More details of prices can be found on our web site www.homeeducators.co.uk

Just to gauge interest, if you think this venue could be of interest to you & your family please email me on thirdEye1@compuserve.com or call 01 628 783107.

Dawn Digwall (Address supplied)

Walkers promotion

I am at present seeking support from EO members around the UK. My aim is to get Walkers to include Home Educators in their next year's promotion for free books for schools. They cannot change this year's as it is too late. Walkers said they may consider changing their policy in the future to include us.

On the phone they said I was the only person they had heard from who had pushed it as far as I did. Your support would be very helpful in letting them know there are lots of us out there.

The feedback I have been getting so far is all positive and everyone feels our children are discriminated against in these sort of promotions. Our children deserve the same opportunities as schooled children in these free offers. If you agree please email or write to me. All the emails and letters I have received plus a few petitions I have put about, will then be sent to Walkers in the hope of a positive response for the future. Here's hoping!

Wendy Lovegrove, 36, Broomfield Avenue, Leigh on Sea, Essex. SS9 4BJ E-mail: puckyduck@blueyonder.co.uk

EO – OU

I have recently been wondering if there are many EO parents who are, like me, studying with the Open University, or perhaps tutoring for the OU. I have studied Health/Child Development/Education courses and I have found that the option to home educate is never mentioned in any of the OU course materials.

I was wondering if, collectively, we might persuade the OU to acknowledge home education as a legal choice. I'm well aware that OU progress is slow but I have a dream! Through the OU we could reach a wide audience of people who are concerned with children's care and education, with the message that home education is indeed a real option.

Is there anyone already tackling the OU? I'd love to hear from you. Good luck with your studies.

*Sue Barnicoat MA Ed (Open), Falmouth
E-mail: tredidon@hotmail.com*

Ivan Illich and related matters

I would like to say 'thank you' to Sarah Guthrie for her article on Ivan Illich. I remember his book 'Deschooling Society' as a revelation. I was working in adult education and had real reservations about the way the education system behaved and what it did to people. Suddenly Ivan Illich said

everything that I felt, but had been afraid to say. His book formed the cornerstone for much work that went on in Swindon at the time, including Dick Kitto's work at Lower Shaw Farm, along with the work of Paolo Friere. It supported some very radical work in education, which I see an echo of in Paula Rothermel's paper (Feb '02 NL).

The fundamental truth we discovered at that time is that people only learn fully and properly when.

- they take responsibility for their learning,
- they are treated with dignity and respect, and
- the learning starts from experience.

What home education does is to enable our children to develop their own very natural instinct to learn. Most education subverts this natural process into something which is not so desirable and produces very unbalanced people without the real understanding of how to be happy and fulfilled in their lives. It is a small step to a consumer-driven society from there.

I guess I saw this work as the beginning of a revolution in thinking about education. Looking back 25 years later, I see that things have got worse. I see education as centralised learning and a control mechanism; of people entering or not into the privileges of adult life via qualifications. Indeed the initiation rituals for passage into adult life in primitive societies are no different from the way we use universities. The difference perhaps is, that in primitive societies children are sexually circumcised, in the modern (Western) world we intellectually circumcise our children through degrees etc.

The modern education system seems to me to know "the price of everything, and the value of nothing"!

Rob Emmett, Windmill House, 5 Marlborough Road, Chiseldon, Swindon, Wilts SN4 0NR Tel: 01793 740443

* Oscar Wilde, *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892)

Help wanted in the Antipodes

EONL has received a request from Kim Hollis of 14 Kiripaka Road, Tikipunga Whangarei 0101, Northland, NEW ZEALAND for help with resources for her son Jordan (youngest of 5 children) who is almost five and has Downs syndrome. Kim is currently on invalid benefit and her husband is off of work in order to help with home and children. They live in an area where services are limited. Kim has a keen interest in disability and passes on information to others. In particular she is looking for the programme "jolly phonics" (just the beginning kit) as she is teaching Jordan to read and he loves books. Does anyone have a contact down under who might be able to help in any way? Anne Rix (NL co-ord)

Another family leaving the rat race!

We are a family with 2 small children (6 and 4), who are hoping to buy some land and become eco-friendly and self-sufficient. This will probably all take quite a while!! And in the meantime we really need to learn some life skills! (Organic farming etc.). Does anyone have a space we could live in a small caravan in return for working (hard!) on an organic farm/in a community etc?

We are also aiming to travel with our children, probably some camper-vanning in Europe as cheaply as possible, and hopefully some wwoofing or similar in South America and would really welcome any information (good or bad!) from families who have been there, done that!

*Lex Blakeway, lex@dialweb.fsnet.co.uk
4 Rose Cotts, Ecchinswell, Newbury, RG20 4TZ*

Resources for Teaching at Home

EO member Tricia in Brighton has sets of Ginn materials to sell at a fraction of cost price: Colour Textbooks, Photocopy Masters, Teaching Notes, etc. in English, Maths and Science for year 3 (7-8 years old) and year 5 (9-10 years old). Each subject/year originally cost over £100 but Tricia is asking only £20 per set. She also has other useful materials... For further information, please ring Tricia on 01273 418222 (address supplied) (should really be on ads page but had to squash in somewhere - Anne)

Gwerin y Coed/The Woodcraft Folk in Wales

Gwerin y Coed/The Woodcraft Folk in Wales is the Welsh branch of The Woodcraft Folk, a national voluntary co-operative organisation for children.

The Woodcraft Folk has a co-operative outlook and encourages children and young people to learn the value of co-operation through games, play, adventure activities and camping. Our values are based around internationalism, multiculturalism, understanding, community, awareness, fun, talking and listening, and our motto is **Span the World With Friendship.**

If you would just like some more information such as copies of our leaflets and latest newsletter, please get in touch.

Cea Vuilliamy Wales Officer, Gwerin y Coed/The Woodcraft Folk in Wales, 6 York Place, Barry, CF62 7ED Tel: 0845 4589560

Or for England and Scotland:

gwerin@woodcraft.org.uk www.woodcraft.org.uk
The Woodcraft Folk, 13 Ritherdon Rd, London SW 17 8QE, Tel: 020 8672 6031 info@woodcraft.org.uk
Woodcraft Folk Scotland, Robert Owen House
87 Bath Street, Glasgow, G2 2EE
Tel 0141 304 5552 woodcraft.Scotland@care4free.net
(much cut to fit available space - sorry! Anne)

Diary of a Home Educating Nobody!

I have come to the conclusion that nothing kills learning faster than having to write about it!

We were having great fun in the kitchen. That is, my youngest was. I was concentrating on the huge dollop of golden syrup on the floor and praying it wasn't going to get tramped through the whole house before I had a chance to deal with it. By now most of the runnier substances from the store cupboard were getting mixed together to see what would happen. There were lots of 'oooooh's and 'aaaaaah's and 'cool', and lots of investigation into the properties of different substances and how they reacted together. Not that she knew that. She was just concerned with making the slimiest concoction ever!

It had all started with us looking for a good experiment to do. This because she loves experiments and I get to ease my worry about being more arts orientated than sciences. So we'd delved into our backup book looking for ideas. ('The Usborne Book Of Science Experiments' - great little book for beginner scientists. Covers all the main concepts with fun experiments that actually work and which you don't need complicated equipment for.) It was while she was mixing away that I dropped the bombshell!

I'd been smugly thinking to myself how much learning was going on whilst she 'played'. And what a shame no one could see what good work was going on; 'no one' of course being someone important whom we feel obliged to prove things to like the LEA inspectorate!

That's when I spoiled it. I went and suggested she record what we've been doing on one of those flash record sheets off the computer. Big groan! Fun disappears faster than freshly baked flapjack. I ruin what was otherwise a nice morning by trying to make it all educational! Idiot! I could kick myself. Why do I do it? Well - several reasons actually. But the most pressing and overwhelming one being proof! Proof, to those in high and intimidating places, that education is taking place even though we're enjoying ourselves!

Let's face it most of us have this same fear. Fear that one day we're all going to be answerable to Big Brother, i.e. the LEA. And we've got to have proof that all this fun really is educating our children. (As if the children's wide-eyed, obvious enthusiasm for learning wasn't enough!) Proof that we've actually done something. Impressive reams of paper being nice and tangible for us to waft in front of them.

I know I should be braver than that. I should stick to my beliefs. My deep-rooted belief that having masses of stuff written down; having masses of stuff that my kids have *produced*, is absolutely *no* guarantee that learning has taken place. And just because nothing has been produced or written down it *does not* mean that nothing has been learned or absorbed. But compared to what those same inspectors see in schools, and compared to what millions of children all over the country are doing, it is hard to hold onto that fact.

From my experience in schools, and from home education, I am convinced now that the purpose of most of the activity of children in schools is simply to do with supplying proof. There is little educational value in much of it. They are merely reproducing what they already know. Spending time recording what they've already learnt. Learning, or insight into something, often only takes a split second. Learning that Henry VIII was an old so and so who got through six wives only takes a minute. Drawing a picture of him and writing down the name of all his wives takes ages, especially if you're a slow writer and would rather be doing something else anyway.

Sometimes writing something down helps, with memory and clarification. But mostly, much of what children do in schools has nothing to do with that. It is rarely to do with learning something *new*. It is about what *has been learnt* - it doesn't move the learner on in any way. It is more about providing proof that something has gone on. It's about *producing* something, *anything* - and lots of it - so that teachers, heads, schools, LEAs, and parents can feel that the children have been busy. Can justify their time. The *value* of that busyness cunningly disguised by amount.

I thought about that again as I looked at the pretty little computer sheet with all the relevant sections to fill in. And suddenly it looked pretty worthless! I realised it would do very little to enhance the learning that had just taken place in our kitchen in any way.

Recording things and writing about it obviously has a value at times. It is nice to look back. It also helps to reinforce learning. *Sometimes!* But let's keep it in perspective. Let's look honestly at the value *to the learner* of doing all that. Reams of it, daily, are unnecessary. Writing about everything does not mean children are learning. There was more learning going on, in our kitchen, by mixing the concoction and keeping the enthusiasm and enjoyment than there ever would be in writing about it. The children are much better off just having fun experimenting, discovering, investigating and exploring in their own way. Fun keeps them alive. Fun keeps them learning.

So I will keep records for my sake, and make sure I put it educational jargon for those inspectors, e.g. we weren't making a concoction but experimenting with the properties of substances! Not to mention chemical reactions! But meanwhile I'll keep on having fun with the children. There's bound to be much more learning taking place like that, than in writing about it!
(Name and address supplied)

Home Education is not Compulsory

After much soul-searching, we took our 5 year old daughter out of school in July. Now after an equal amount of soul-searching, she is starting back at school in January. My husband and I are both teachers and still have severe misgivings about the current education system, we have many other HE-ers close by, I have no doubts that academically and socially our children would do fine at home: so what led us to capitulate so rapidly?

The answer would have to be one of those 'a bit of everything' ones. The reason I write is because, having spoken to a few other Home Educators, I now realise that the maelstrom of doubts, contradictions and misgivings we have experienced whilst home educating are not unique to us. Many others are closer than they like to admit to chucking it all in. Somehow though, once you are outside the system, it's more difficult to admit you'd quite like to give it a try again, especially when the prevailing current of opinion in EO appears to be so anti-school.

My first doubts about HE arose before deregistering when I went to my first EO meeting and was 'teased' about being a teacher and told that it wouldn't work if I wanted to do 'school at home'. (I didn't.) It was all meant in good part, but then bullies often think they are just having a bit of fun. (I was bullied at school and this ridicule felt remarkably similar.) I tried to be adult and not to judge, but I was quite disconcerted by the anti-school and anti-teacher comments being banded around mostly by the parents. When I joined EO, I noticed that there was, understandably, quite a lot of this kind of feeling about. Surely we should be educating all our children that there are many ways of learning and that school works for some, but not all. This 'school is evil' mentality doesn't do anyone any good, even if that has been your child's (or your own) experience of it. Even in the latest issue of the EO Newsletter, I notice phrases such as 'I...*threatened* to send them to school..!' Perhaps Home Educators are adding another '-ism' to sexism, racism etc: 'schoolism'. Is it healthy to teach such bigotry?

So, despite these incidents, we did deregister. It felt like the right thing to do. As we had experienced none of the horror stories within school that others had, for us it *was* a choice, not enforced. I wondered if any HE-ers locally would like to join in with our learning so I organised a couple of workshops in my home and managed to get a venue for a monthly get-together and craft session. I recruited a French friend to offer some conversation mornings. My kids and I did days out at National Trust properties, twice-weekly swimming sessions in a deserted pool, lazy library afternoons where 'just two stories on the bean bags' turned into ten. The kids saw some workbooks on sale and thought they looked like fun, so we got them. We played and cooked and painted and were alternately intensely busy and learn-y and idle and glued to the box: Life in many, many HE households, I feel!

I began to notice that my expectations of what HE kids would be like (bright, enthusiastic, independent, sociable: blame that 'Witness' programme!) wasn't all that true. My teacher-self did

expect a bit more involvement from the kids in my workshop days. (The parents had a lovely time!) I almost felt I was proving my initial detractor right when my own child spent a morning researching Divali from books to complete a (voluntary) quiz whilst everyone else's parents did it for them so they could get on with having 'school is not compulsory' henna-painted up their arms. Surely if they didn't want to learn something, they wouldn't have come. Surely all children need a little encouragement to participate. I decided not to stick my education in where it clearly wasn't wanted and continued in the way that worked for us at home.

I also began to notice that my own previously bright, enthusiastic, independent etc...daughter had returned to the clingy, hide-behind-mummy child that she'd been just prior to starting school. All my HE friends told me I had to just relax and stop trying to educate them. It was because I was too teacher-y that I was struggling. They didn't see the weeks between the workshops when we were doing autonomous education very nicely, thank you! (Thing is, my kids WILL autonomously pick up a book to browse through and write poems about raindrops on spiderwebs and count how many woodchips there are on the wallpaper....I don't think anyone really believed that.)

Then, after something of a 'difference of opinion' with another HE-er I decided to take the kids off to visit grandparents. Whilst we were away, I realised some stuff that I'd tried to deny. I was fed up of being with the kids 24/7 (and that was OK!), I actually love classroom teaching, with all its irritations and unreasonable demands (and this is also OK!), My daughter adores being in school: bless 'er, with two teachers as parents, the poor mite didn't stand a chance! (This is also OK...I haven't failed!) And HE wasn't doing either of us, nor her younger sister, nor my husband any favours emotionally. After admitting all this to some other Home Educators, I found that my feelings weren't so unusual: they sometimes felt fed up too, and thought of sending the kids back! There seems to be this big stigma of not admitting that you're struggling. It's partly caused by this whole 'School - Bad, Home Ed - Good' mentality that seems to be heard above the still, small voice of reason within the HE community.

I still feel that feeding my children back into the system is going against my beliefs about how children should be educated. I think the current system with its tests and tick-sheets, restricted and compartmentalised curriculum and demoralised teachers is far from ideal. But my children will still have parents who can take them to galleries, do craft and go camping with them outside school hours. We can still go to the beach and outside to learn about the wonder that is the natural world. We can give them the material to either reinforce or challenge what they are being taught in school. We will simply have had a bit of time away from them to recharge our batteries and enable us to fully enjoy our time together.

At the risk of being shot down in flames by the 'hard-core' Home Edders out there, I'd like to suggest that not all schools and teachers are out to ruin our children, many kids come out unscathed, enriched even (and sometimes utterly untouched by our efforts as teachers!) Home Education is not the answer for all either and mounting a campaign to encourage parents to withdraw their children from school (as I have heard suggested)* could be positively detrimental for many. If you are the kind of parent who, like me, loves to play an active part in their child's education, feels confident in their ability to give their children the wherewithal to make their own choices but also needs to live their own life and retain their own identity, perhaps we should investigate the possibility of 'Flexi-Home Edding'. After all, Home Education is NOT Compulsory!

T C Peppercorn (name and address supplied)

* as far as I know no formal proposal for such a campaign has been made. However, this could be implied by the notice in December's NL suggesting that members should put up posters in libraries etc. to spread the word that school is not compulsory - Anne (NL Co-ord)

Advertisements

For small items, advertising in the newsletter is free to members, but if you are running a business or hoping to make a profit from your advert please send £25 per issue (possible reduction for first insertion), quoting your EO membership number. Non-members may submit adverts, subject to space and interest to members, at £35 per issue (for 50 words). Adverts should normally be limited to 1/8 page or 50 words and sent to the NI Co-ord, - send cheque payable to 'Education Otherwise' to the Treasurer (address inside back cover) by deadline for issue.

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www.choiceineducation.org.uk

LeCardo:

Help your children learn word-building, simple arithmetic and teamwork with LeCardo, the new card-based word game. Suitable for 2-4 players aged from 10 to adult. Price £10.99 (inc. p&p). Volume discounts available - contact us for details. Like word games? You'll LOVE LeCardo! 020 7278 1269 www.lecardo.com

Wanted by home-educating family a 2/3 bedroom property with a good sized garden for long term let in or around Totnes, Devon. Must be willing to accept two good natured cats! Contact: nick.smith@dsl.pipex.com or 01702 480982

Services and products advertised on this page have not been endorsed by Education Otherwise. EO does not make recommendations about any tutors or youth leaders, whether members of the association or not. Use of people in any such role, whether paid or unpaid, remains the responsibility of the parent.

Regional Diary

Events organisers please remember when giving full details of events that the newsletter can be read by people who are not members of EO.

New members attending their first meeting should phone to check it is happening as shown.

All regular meetings listed below are included automatically in every issue, but if you have a local NL, please reduce your details to minimum.

Thank you to contact people who are keeping an eye on their entries and letting me know if changes are needed. Please do check every issue, it really helps.

- **CHANGES BY LETTER OR EMAIL PLEASE** -
to: Anne Rix NL Co-ord (see inside back cover)

BATH

H.E.L.P. group meets regularly for outings and activities. Contact: Louise Jensen 01225 840735

BEDFORDSHIRE

For full details of events programme in Bedford and other areas of the County contact June McDonald 01234 341375 or email info@Bedford-Home-Ed.org.uk

Science theme to current (spring) term, continuing science theme planned for first half of summer term; Victorian theme for second half of summer term. Lots of craft, drawing sessions, science/Victorian talks & workshops, Victorian costume session, visits to Bedford Victorian Rooms, Victoria & Albert Museum London, etc. Also regular swimming, multi-sport, softplay and chat sessions in Bedford and other areas.

Website: www.Bedford-Home-Ed.org.uk

BERKSHIRE

E-mailing list for home educators in Berkshire and surrounding areas for events/activities

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BerkshireHomeEducators>

For Local NL/What's on Contact: Dawn 01628 783107
thirdEye1@compuserve.com Or **New Web Site** for Berkshire www.homeeducators.co.uk

Maidenhead Heros Club Holyport, Mondays 10-3 sports, dancing, pottery crafts and cooking. £29 month or £10 family/day. Dawn 01628 783107

Reading: Mondays, 10am - 12noon swimming at Central Pool, lots of teenagers Contact: Lynn 0118 972 1420

Bracknell Wednesdays ice-skating at John Nike Leisure Centre, 2-4pm, £1.50 show EO card at reception. Contact: Pat Connor 0118 9662123

Newbury group on Fridays for younger children. Contact: Gillian 01491 671328

Pangbourne area, Fridays, 11am - 3pm-ish for chat and play. Separate space for teenagers; adventure playground for younger ones, animals. Contact: Lynda 0118 961 4466 or Abigail 01628 483895

A **"NEW"** Woodland Camp venue will be running end of May through September on Thursdays & Fridays. Acres of Woodland, large adventure playground, plenty of play area, BBQ, camp fire, splash pool, indoor and outdoor eating areas, club room with TV and games, plus lots more. Activities running though the day, also possibility of Camp Evenings. Costs available soon on www.homeeducators.co.uk If you think your family would be interested please let me know so I can keep you up-to-date. 01628 783107 Dawn

Lambourn. Weekly meeting on a farm for crafts, cooking and nature walks, group based on respect for each other and our world and an unhurried childhood. Contact: Tracey or Roge 01793 610448 roge.tracey@virgin.net

BRISTOL

Thursdays meeting at St Paul's Adventure Playground 1-3pm; Spanish, Science and Pottery happening on a regular basis Contact: Carla 9354389

Email list for Bristol and surrounding areas at: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BristolHomeEducation>
Also local group website for more information about home education in Bristol: www.bristolhomeeducation.org.uk

BUCKS

Newsletter for Bucks/Northants Contact:

Georgeanne on 01908 662256.

South Bucks: fortnightly meetings for craft, activities, play, speakers, drama, trips etc.

Contact: Jackie 01753 886924 or Dorothy 01494 782864

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Cambridge regular meetings and outings.

Contact: Penny 01223 526441

penny.k@ntworld.com

Monthly at Alconbury, activities run by Christian group. All welcome

Contact: Audrey Hill 01480 219881

Peterborough: weekly meetings on Wednesdays for art, craft, science, swimming, sports, play and visits.

Contact: Sarah 01733 265043 SJLambert@aol.com

Cambridge/Norfolk border: fortnightly at Guyhirn.

Contact: Pat 01354 656582 or Ruth 01945 480232

North Cambridgeshire fortnightly meeting at Chatteris on Monday afternoons. Contact Sarah 01354 694710 or Jane 01354 677869.

CHESHIRE

Contact Gill Wilson 0161 443 8723 for **North**

Cheshire/Stockport

Meeting 1st Wednesday of the month for crafts games and activities

Contact: Sue: SueElaineDavies@aol.com

Sue 01270 883 978 (for **South Cheshire**)

CLEVELAND AND DURHAM

Contact: Pauline Butterworth 01642 899247

CORNWALL

Free events sheets every two months via Email or SAEs. Contact: Anna Wheeler, Cambrose Farm,

Redruth, TR16 4HT 01209 890378

Or Annawheeler@cambrose.fsnet.co.uk

Local information on our local home ed website: Homeedinkernow.tripod.com

CUMBRIA

Informal gatherings for socialising, support and activities.

Kendal alternate Mondays Endmoor Village Hall

1-4pm, Contact Jo Collier 015395 67005.

Penrith alternate Tuesdays Castledown Community Centre 1.30-3.30

Contact: Sarah Cook 01768 896019

DERBYSHIRE

Chesterfield group meets every Wed. morning.

Contact: Karen 01246 865532

Kaz 01246 205463 Yvonne 01246 555645

South Derby/N.W. Leics/E. Staffs :

regular meetings, socialising and days out.

Contact: Julie 01283 760800

DEVON

Devon Newsletter, full details of events throughout the County: E-mail copies free; £3.00 for 6 months by post. Contact Kate and Elsie 01392 851370 or email katefernhill@aol.com

NATIONAL TRUST (Devon) - Card held by Nick Vidal-Hall (01548 830716) gives free membership/entry to NT sites to all Devon EO members for pre-booked 'educational' visits.

East and Mid Devon:

Local Contact Becca 01404 549479

Lots of varied activities - see Devon newsletter (above) for full details.

North Devon

Local Contact: Amanda 01237 422403

Bideford area Fortnightly social meetings on

Tuesdays. Ring Louise 01237 441786

South Devon

Local Contact Bridget 01803 862158

Loads of activities for all ages - full details in Devon newsletter (see above)

DEVON EAST/DORSET WEST

Lyme Regis, Axminster, Bndport, Chard

Contact Ann 01297 561070

Or Habiba 0845 4582984 (local rate)

DORSET

Regular meetings, keep in touch. Contact Christine 01258 880355 or Rosemary 01747 853 593

Bournemouth area: Meeting every Monday for crafts, games, play etc. Friendly, welcoming group.

Contact: June 01202 827945,

bugchick@btinternet.com

ESSEX

Full details in Essex Epicycle newsletter, available from Corinne 07802 630693 epicycle@wavy.org

Braintree Cheeky Chimps indoor play area

1st Thursday of the month(ex school hols) 2pm

Chelmsford Ice skating, Riverside Fridays 3.30-5pm

Elmstead Market Teenagers Fortnightly Fri 10-2pm

Marks Tey Meetings, social and activities

Fortnightly Weds 1-5pm (close to the rail station)

Springfield Meetings social and activities

Third Thurs of the month 1-4 PM

Tiptree Meetings, social and activities

Fortnightly Tues. 2-5pm

All over Essex trips (usually Thursdays) and workshops.

Info also available from Sue 01206 520284

East London/Essex group contact Gill 020 8597 8537

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Monthly social meetings open to all. Regular workshops and outings. Website

<http://members.lycos.co.uk/GlosHomeEducators/index.html>

Email list for events and forum for discussions,

information and virtual activities. Contact Rob and Fiona 01684-290087 openhorizons@ntworld.com
Caroline 01242 890351 cambrose@ieee.org
Beverley 01242 524091 or Mhairi 01452 384104.
Gloucester meetings & swimming
Contact Dawn 01452 540019
dawnandmike@blueyonder.co.uk
Tracy 07941 612092

HAMPSHIRE

Portsmouth EO. Warm and friendly group meet Thursdays for art, craft, music, chat and outings.

Contact: Kirsten on 02392 428 952, or email kasturi@pkinteractive.co.uk

ACTIVEO meet 3 times a week within 25 miles of **Petersfield**. All welcome. Contact: 01428 712394

FAREGOS HE Group meet weekly at Holbrook,

Gosport, for swimming or skating, weekly in **Fareham** for crafts and other activities. Other

outings on an ad hoc basis. Friendly, welcoming group. Contact Gayle 01329 82-3112.

Email Gayle@v21mail.co.uk for more details.

North Hampshire: group aged 0-12 meets weekly,

Contact Carol 01264 357650 mobile 07760 355740

or e-mail eo@azakit.com

Farnham/Aldershot area. Friendly group for under 10s, weekly meetings/outings/activities

Contact: Emma 01252 350034

emmajeavons@supanet.com

HERTFORDSHIRE

TOP Health and Education Together. Numeracy, literacy and parenting health sessions. Literacy home study program 3-10 years. All at

Bentley Heath Barnet.

Contact: Priscilla 01438 840674

olsandpjs@aol.com

Casual Swimming Friday morning, term time only at North Herts Leisure Centre, **Letchworth**. Meet in

the pool 9.00am - 9.15am cost 60p per person on production of EO/HEAS card.

Contact: Priscilla Simmons (as above)

or Karen Bartlett 01462 743034

Sandridge village hall, Sandridge, St Albans 2nd

and 4th Thursdays, term time. 1-3pm Contact:

Carolyn 01727 851073 or Melissa 01462 438577

ISLE OF WIGHT

I. W. E. O. group: craft sessions, visits, swimming, theatre, picnics, bar-b-qs, mutual support, especially older EO kids but new members and visitors always welcomed.

Contact: Jude 01983 531680

Isle of Wight Learning Zone workshops, social events and newsletter.

Contact: Shara 01983 562313

Alison 01983 810862

KENT

Canterbury Regular meetings and activities

Contact: Irene 01227 709570

More →

East Kent including Dover, Canterbury and all surrounding areas. Contact Heather on 01227 370822 or email slimeheva@eurobell.co.uk for an up-to-date activities list.

Medway towns Contact: Bridget 01634 234938

Tunbridge Wells Contact: Kim 01892 863941

French for beginners through songs and games.

Yoga for children. Contact: Katherine 01892 863958

For events listings send SAE : Amanda Mackenzie, 16 Brambletree Cotts, Borstal, Rochester ME1 3TN

Bromley Contact: Claire 0181 460 7347

Claire@wadefamily99.freemove.co.uk

SE Kent Ravensbourne Community Centre, Ravensbourne Est. Brangbourne Rd, Bromley.

Every Tuesday 10-12 for support and outings.

Contact: Lorraine 0208 461 0885 (9-10am only please)

LANCASHIRE

Regular meetings Contact: Angelica 01254 603 497

Outings and get-togethers

Contact: Brenda or Diana 01254 389673

Fortnightly play sessions at Botany Bay, Chorley,

Junction 8 M61 Contact: Jacqueline 01204 361072

or Angela 01204 659634

LEICESTERSHIRE

Frequent meetings for play, craft, walks, hanging out, singing, swimming, science, skating and much more. Contact : Lise 0116 242 5802

LINCOLNSHIRE

Weekly meeting in Cleethorpes

Contact: Caroline 01472 690738

Lincoln group: For list of events contact

Gill 01205 871399, Louise 01522 533582 or

Kathleen 01522 869239

LONDON

Walthamstow Fridays 2-3.30pm

Contact: Kate 020 8520 2676

Tuesdays Clissold Park. All welcome.

Contact: Charlotte 0207 254 0419

Wednesdays Honor Oak playground.

Contact: Steve 8680 2933

Thursdays Lee 11-1 Contact: Clare 020 8480 0740

Thursdays once monthly during term time

rollerblading Kidbrooke Contact: Fiona 020 8852

9756 bettleslake@clara.net

Fridays fortnightly at Sydenham 11.30-2.30

Contact: Chrystia and Keith 8776 8597

Fridays alternate fortnight Forest Hill Nature

Reserve 11.30 Contact: Dave 8692 4080

NW London Otherwise Club

Contact: Leslie 0208 969 0893

Harrow meetings fortnightly on Fridays;

Stanmore events on Tues and Wednesdays.

Programme available from Vivienne email

timsharkey@aol.com or tel. 0208 954 1885

or Vicki on Aceva@btinternet.com

W. London HE group every Tuesday for social and

educational activities and visits. Contact: Claire

Evans 0208 943 4491 timesteps@freemove.co.uk

West London **NEW** EO group meeting from

April, 1st and 3rd Tues each month, at Chiswick Park, W4. Meet outside the cafe, from 11am. Climb trees, build camps, feed the ducks, play football, stomp rockets, bring a picnic or eat at the cafe. All ages welcome, especially 7+. First meeting 1st April 2003. Alternative venue if wet.

Contact Naomi 0208 5677 589 or

naomisandler@hotmail.com

Lewisham EO group Thursdays weekly.

Contact: Clare 8333 9455

Plumstead Common Adventure Playground SE18

alternate Fridays, meeting at 12.30 pm.

Contact: Bev 0208 312 2160, Kim 0208 317 7262

MANCHESTER

Monthly formal art lessons at Stockport Art Gallery

£1.50. Also monthly meeting at Stockport library

E-mail young writers group Ed Wilson

wilson-net@lineone.net

MADCOW newssheet, send SAEs : Gill Wilson,

20 Brook Rd, Heaton Chapel, Stockport SK4 5BZ

Computing Skills 1st and 2nd Saturdays at Moores

family home, limited places

Contact: Karen 01204 573136

NORFOLK

NEON gives details of all events £1.50 plus 4 large

SAEs. Contact: Steve Williams, North Cottage,

Croxtwick, Norwich NR12 7BD

Workshops/social meetings 1st and 3rd Thursday

Contact: Sue 01603 738494

NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Term-time, every Thursday 2.30 - 4.30

Swimming, indoor sports/play at Breckland Leisure

Centre, **Thetford**. Contact Fay 01953 681785

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

New activities/meetings in addition to others already

running. Contact: Jane Newson 01536 418885

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Weekly meetings. For full list, Contact: Wendy 0115

9114312 or Louise 01773 780634

East Midlands Christian Home Educators 1st Tues

of month 10-2, Stapleford Baptist church, Stapleford

Contact: Jo 0115 8770281 or Julia 0115 8494083

OXFORDSHIRE

Classes in creative writing. Monthly Parents meeting, monthly Drop-In, also regular museum trips and outings.

Local newsletter. Contact: Wendy 01865 514973

SCOTLAND

Fife: Friday fortnightly meetings, activities and

social get-togethers. All welcome. Contact: Nicola

01334 478530 nicola.stubbs@btinternet.com

Irvine: For details of regular and one-off activities

please contact: Rhona 01294 273644

or Shirley 01563 540063 or Vivien 01563 537428

Highlands meetings Fortnightly meetings in

Inverness, plus occasional outings. All ages

welcome. Contact: Rebecca 01667 462772 or

Alison 01463 232571 alison@sauer.demon.co.uk

Lothian, Central and Southeast Scotland:
fortnightly group for meetings and outings. Ann 0131
556 6271 or <ann.samuel@blueyonder.co.uk> or
Jane 01835 863 118.

SHROPSHIRE

Activities and outings Contact: Val 01952 502225
South Shrops. regular meetings every Tuesday,
outings and workshops.

Contact: Carolyn 01588 680503

SOMERSET

Frome and beyond (FAB) home educators support
group. Social gatherings, outings and newsletter.

Contact: Sally 01749 841554, Helen 01373 465260

Wiveliscombe - new meeting on the 1st Tuesday
of the month (term time) at Scout Hut 10.30-13.30

Contact: Maggie 01984 624 651

Wells and Glastonbury Area Regular social
meetings, weekly swimming, outings and nature
activities. Contact Lesley 01749 689241, Tanya
01458 834871 or Steph 01749 812959

SOMERSET NORTH - Regular get-togethers and
activities Contact Vicky 01275 848425 or Sarah
01275 842300 or e-mail hegns@bopenworld.com

STAFFORDSHIRE/SOUTH CHESHIRE/NORTH SALOP

Stafford every 2nd and 4th Wednesday in village
hall for games craft etc. 12-3.30

Contact: Nicola 01785 612410

Alsager: 1st Wednesday of the month at YPCP
for craft, music, games, chat. Contact: Caroline
01270 875 633 or Sue 01270 883978

Suedavies@tesco.net

STAFFORDSHIRE NORTH ***NEW*** meetings on
3rd Tuesday each month, 12.30 to 3.00. Our aims
are to support each other and collectively provide a
variety of social opportunities for our children.

Contact Julie 01782 316434 or Helen 01782659112.

SUFFOLK

Felixstowe: group meeting fortnightly in town centre
location for socialising, outings, sports etc.

Contact Karen 01394 279117

kjc88@whsmithnet.co.uk

Foxburrow Farm, Woodbridge

Once a month, activities organised by Suffolk
Wildlife Trust

Wetherden meetings every 3rd Friday 10.30-2.30
£2.50 for family, shared lunch.

Contact: Sarah 01379 783678

East Suffolk (Lowestoft/Gt. Yarmouth area)

Contact: Lin 01502 741097 or Jackie 01502 566266

SURREY

Guildford area: Theatre bookings

Contact: Tisha 01483 898575

Skating during term time Friday 1-4

Contact: Jane 01420 88188

Under 10s Contact: Nicky 01483 232080

Dorking/Reigate area.

Contact: Helen Burnett 01737 243606

Farnham/Aldershot area. Friendly group for under
10s, weekly meetings/ outings/activities. Contact:
Emma 01252 350034 emmajeavons@supanet.com

North Surrey Home Ed group meets up in **Croydon**
once a month, Age range from 2-15, small group,
looking to grow. For more details, contact

Karen: karen_wilkins@hotmail.com

or Viv: viv@madtoyman.fsnet.co.uk

SUSSEX

Monthly newsletter £8pa or £4 six months,
cheques payable to "ESEO" to Ian Lawes, 35

Waldegrave Rd, Brighton, BN1 6GR

Contact: Isobel 01403 261178 (W. Sx.)

Winnie Durdant-Hollamby 01342 826087 (E. Sx.)

Lindfield EO Friday club, contact Liz 01444 414058

Hastings Area Home Educators, regular arts, craft, gym,
outings and meetings. Contact: Ali 01424 814175

Eastbourne Home Educators Club, alternate Fridays
9.30-11.30 Shinewater Community Centre 75p per child.

Contact: Angelique 01323 509702

Worthing: Thursday morning group 10-12.30. Many
different activities and outings last Thursday of each
month. Contact: Sam Kruger 01903 233799

Forest Row Area: regular support group meetings,
drama club, outdoor games mornings and outings -

Contact Winnie 01342 826087

TYNESIDE

Monthly art sessions at the Laing Art Gallery - for
children over 6. Contact: Lilian 0191 456 7007

lavenderco@aol.com

Regular outings, visits, etc. Contact: Becky 0191

478 5322 beckyfeeny@hotmail.com

WALES

South Wales regular group activities and newsletter
£3 pa. Weekly ice-skating. Contact: Dawn 01452

540019 dawnandmike@cableinet.co.uk or Beverley

02920 797628 Bev1.French@btinternet.com

Swansea monthly meetings in Llanelli area

Contact: Sue 01269 861902

Swansea/South West Wales group meet regularly
for swimming, group activities, social events and
support. All ages, network of 30-40 families over
wide area. Contact Geraldine 01792 405894

or Juliet chestnut1@ntlworld.com

Pembrokeshire EO swim & sauna: Haverfordwest
pool, Dew St. 3pm at main reception, fortnightly. Call

to check dates. Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

Cardigan area social meetings and outings on
Mondays - Contact: Yvette 0845 458 9251

Gwynedd Mondays swimming at Bangor

Contact: Louisa 01248 361254

Friday swimming at Porth Madog Weekly meetings
at Tremadog Thursdays. Contact Jo 01766 512330

NE Wales/Borders weekly gym/trampoline in
Wrexham (Thurs) various meetings in Oswestry,
W. Cheshire/NE Wales. Also sports and ice skating
at Deeside Leisure Centre.

Contact: Genny 01978 757489 49 Westminster
rd, Moss Valley, Wrexham LL11 6DH - £2 for a
years listing. eo@7times7.freeseve.co.uk

WARWICKSHIRE

Usually 2 Thursdays a month; at Wolston nr Coventry and for an outing in Coventry/Warwicks area. Contact: Helen Hall 01926 771958

WEST MIDLANDS

Meetings, trips out, activities etc are held throughout each month at a variety of locations all over the West Midlands. The newsletter HELM lists many of them. HELM is available free by email or by post for a small charge and covers HE related articles and events throughout the West Midlands and surrounding areas. Contact: Joy Beasley 0121 585 6450 JoyBeasley@b-bunch.freemove.co.uk or Penny Clarke 01922 745465 pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk

WILTSHIRE

Salisbury Friendly innovative group meets every Tuesday pm, (except last of calendar month) Lower Street Hall, off Netherhampton Rd., 2-5pm. £3.00 per session. Regular outings + visiting guest speakers: Contact: Martina (01722) 744715 or Miranda (01722) 320167

Swindon: Informal get-togethers twice per month; badminton weekly Contact: Shena on 01793 334673 or join email list at

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/NWWilts_HE/

Last Thursday of the Month The Scout Hut, Southbroom Rd **Devizes**, 11.30-14.30, games, activities, support and socializing.

Outings most Thursdays Contact: Janet 01249 818672 email: janet.eldekivist@btopenworld.com
Jemima: 01380 727470 Helen: 01249 822958
www.geocities.com/wiltshirehomeed/index.htm

WORCESTERSHIRE

Local Contact - Rachel 01527 597809
Meetings, events, trips out etc happening all through the month throughout the county.

Meetings - Karen Raybould 01527 835384
Meetings - **North Worcs/Kidderminster** - Gail Tutchter 101562 822034 gail@tqmi.co.uk

YORKSHIRE EAST

Regular meetings and visits.
Contact: Alison 01405 769902

YORKSHIRE NORTH

New group for regular meetings and outings.
Contact: Karen 01904 792819

YORKSHIRE SOUTH

Regular meetings for arts/crafts, visits, swims, hanging out and more. Contact: Jo 01709 820866
Denise 01226 733478 Gary 0114 2585702.

Tuesdays 12-3 term time at Highfield Adventure Playground. Free entry, small contribution for craft materials. Off London rd/Abbeydale rd. Contact: Annette 0114 2583502 or Fiona 0114 22751142

YORKSHIRE WEST

Outings and activities Contact: Eva 01535 274520.
Last Thursday of the month 11-1.30 at Civic Centre **Huddersfield**. Contact: Tracey 01484 317176

2nd Fri of month 1-4 at West Park Centre, Spen Lane, Classroom 9. Contact: Susan 0113 2688304
Swimming (term time) Tuesdays **Bradford**
Contact: Eva 01535 274520

Huddersfield sports Centre
Contact: Tracey 01484 317176

Skating Fridays (except the week of the Leeds Meeting) Contact: Frances 01274 884750

LOCAL CONTACT UPDATE

New acting local contacts

Bedfordshire - June McDonald 01234 341375

Yorkshire North - Karen Sanderson

Derbyshire - Julia Loughlin

Powys - Julia Phillips

Resigning local contacts

Cheshire - Dawn Roberts

Gloucestershire - Fiona & Rob Brookes

Gloucestershire South - Sue Summerhayes

Hertfordshire - Christine Waterman

Areas needing a local contact

Cheshire

Dyfed

Glamorganshire

Gloucester South

Isle of Man

Lancashire

Manchester North

Northern Ireland

Durham

Fife

Gloucestershire

Hertfordshire

Kent

Leicester City

Manchester South

Strathclyde

Tayside

If you want to volunteer

or are interested to know more about the job of being a Local Contact
please contact Keith Charlton, 2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT
0116 259 2118 kcharlton@care4free.net
(see also EO Handbook pp 28-30 - AR)

Education Otherwise Adverts

Resources Booklet

50 page booklet giving information on different curriculum materials aimed at 5-11 year olds

Available to home educators who are interested in a more structured approach.

Send £1 coin with your address to:

H. Turnbull, Hadlow House,
2 Hadlow Rd, Sidcup, Kent
DA14 4AF

Or get a free RTF copy by e-mail
henrietta.turnbull@ntlworld.com

EO Home Education Cards

Extra cards are available from:

EO HE Cards, 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge,
Walsall, WS9 0HL

Please send a stamped, addressed envelope
**plus 1 x loose 2nd class stamp for each
card required.**

EO T-shirts:

Good quality cotton printed with logo in choice of two designs:

1. white shirt with E.O. logo
(red triangle kicked open by
running children)

2. navy shirt with white slogan:
"home education - a real option"

£5 adult (M, L, XL)

£3.50 child (3/4, 5/6, 7/8, 9/11, 12/13)

Add p&p up to 6 shirts £2, 7+ £4

Cheques payable to E.O. Trading Ltd.

Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Reading,
Berks., RG6 1ED

EO Car Stickers

Help spread the word.

Please send a reasonably large SAE to:

Ali Willer, 28 Cozens Hardy Rd,
Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF

Archie Postcards

– limited Y25 edition –

look out for them at gatherings!

EO Hoodies and Mugs

Hooded sweatshirts

with the **triangle logo** and the letters **SINC**
now available in navy blue and black
children's and adult sizes

(£15 for children's and £20 for adults'
including postage and packaging).

EO 25th anniversary mugs

available in white and red with a picture of
Archie

(£5 including postage and packaging).

If you are interested in the above please

contact Jill.Fisher@care4free.net

or ring at 0116 212 8120 for further details.

New Member Forms

Can everyone check their stock of new member joining forms (the yellow ones) and make sure that they're giving out the new ones which show the increased subscription rate of £20.

Email Addresses

We appear to have a lot of incorrect email addresses on the database. If you've changed your email address since giving it to us for the contact list, please could you let me know the new one along with your name and first line of your postal address so we can correct the information. Lynda Hitchman database@education-otherwise.org

EO Email Lists

The EO Business list discusses the organisation and policies of Education Otherwise and it is hoped that this will develop into a useful forum involving members of the organisation. If you would like to know more of what is going on in EO, then this list could be the forum for you.

The list is open only to EO members (memberships will be regularly checked to ensure that the list members are still members of EO) and only for the discussion of EO business. (General HE discussion can take

place on the EO general list, which can be accessed via the website at www.education-otherwise.org)

To join the business list: Go to: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eobusiness>
Or send a blank email to: eobusiness-subscribe@yahoogroups.co.uk
You will receive an automatic response from Yahoo asking for your full name and address. When you have responded and your membership has been checked as valid, you can be added to the list.

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Back Page Part Two

Get involved and join a small group:

Finance: Garry Humphreys, Lynda Hitchman, Celia McDonagh, Ann Samuel Till, Ken Grindlay

Enquiries: Pam Bellinger, Geraldine Adams, Iris Harrison, Jo Borthen

Publications: Jill Fisher, Gary Podmore, Penny Clarke, Lucy Charlton, Chris Harper, Ali Willer

Business Practice Group: Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Pam Bellinger, Martine Frampton

DfES Team: Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock, Ann Samuel Till

LEA/EA Group: Isobel Bogucki, Jill Fisher, Anne Wade, Rob Wade, Gary Podmore,

Communications: Jill Fisher, Priscilla Park-Weir, Richard Eaton, Penny Clarke

Scottish Group: Ann Samuel Till, Lucy McAuley, Anne Wade, Jill Fisher, Gwen Baldock

Information for other organizations: Penny Clarke, Priscilla Park-Weir, Martina Macklin

Grievances and Complaints

Celia McDonagh, 169 Habershon Street, Splott, Cardiff CF24 2LA 029 20733629 celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk
Martine Frampton 3 Redesdale Mews, Hospital Road, Moreton in Marsh, Glos. GL56 0BQ 01608 812411 martine-frampton@macunlimited.net
Anne Rix (see inside back cover)

Media: Eva O'Rourke, Fiona Brookes, Celia McDonagh, Belinda Harris-Reid

Media Contacts

Please contact one of the following people if you would like to volunteer to be interviewed or are contacted by the media and would like help/advice/support on giving an interview.

Scotland: Alison Sauer 01463 232571

North West: Marina Orme 019467 28313 marinaathelakes@aol.com

North East: Eva O'Rourke 01535 274520 evaandmary@aol.com

Midlands: Helen Donaldson 01889 882043 serf@unappreciated.co.uk

Wales: Celia McDonagh 0776 321 3851 celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk

East Anglia: Ali Willer 01603 401020 simon.whitehall@tesco.net

South West: Belinda Harris-Reid 01364 643343 bharrisreid@aol.com + blinedata@aol.com

South East: Karen Ingelbrecht 01303 254787 pencraft@ukonline.com

London(1): Linda Eileenschild 020 7787 6692 lindaflora2002@hotmail.com

London(2): VACANT) *Volunteers needed please!!*

Ireland: VACANT) *Volunteers needed please!!*

*New volunteers for any of the groups most welcome, with expertise or just an interest
For more information contact any of the council members listed (in bold)*

Who does What in EO

Council Members

Geraldine Adams (N. London) 0207 2634922
Jane Bathgate (Borders) 01835 862118
Keith Charlton (Leics) 0116 259 2118
Martine Frampton (Glocs) 01608 812411
Pam Bellinger (Leicester) 0116 282 7929
Penny Clarke (W. Midlands) 01922 745465
Yvette Hartley (Wales) 0845 458 9251
yeh@onetel.net.uk
Lynda Hitchman (Berks) 0118 961 4466
Jacqui Houlding (Cheshire) 01925 654856
Garry Humphreys (Lincs) 01205 871399
Celia McDonagh (Wales) 029 20733629
Gary Podmore (Yorks - Acting Chair until next meeting) 0114 2585702
Julie Ridley (Manchester) 0161 860 7589
Jenny Stevens (W. Sussex) 01243 783469
All Willer (East Anglia) 01603 401020

Membership

Membership and newsletter subscription enquiries, membership cards and address changes:
Administrator, Education Otherwise,
5 Goodyers, Alton, Hampshire, GU34 2SH
mailto:database@education-otherwise.org
For other queries or missing newsletters contact
Lynda Hitchman (0118 961 4466)
database@education-otherwise.org

Stationery

Leaflets, posters, membership forms, car stickers:
Ali Willer, 28 Cozens Hardy Rd., Sprowston,
Norwich NR7 8QF (donations towards postage
welcome, reuse labels £2.50 per 100, free for EO
business use)

Publications

Books, information leaflets and back issues of
newsletters. For a full list send SAE to:
Bridget Elgie, 14 Elizabeth Crescent, Bay Vista,
Whitehaven, Cumbria CA28 6JQ 0845 4582075
bidgelg@aol.com (please ring to check availability
of items before ordering)

EO Home Education Cards

Extra cards are available from: EO HE Cards, 5
Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 0HL Please
send a stamped, addressed envelope plus 1 x loose
2nd class stamp for each card required.

EO/NEC vouchers - £30 discount per course - A5
SAE to Sarah Cook, The Old Cottage, Croglin,
Carlisle, CA4 8RZ (quoting EO membership number)
or sarah@croggies.freereserve.co.uk

Useful contacts

Single Parent Family Contact: Sarah Martin, Lammas,
34 Cowslip Drive, Little Thetford, Ely, Cambs, CB6 3JD
01353 648716 (assistant) Rowenna Williams
rowenna73@hotmail.com Tel: 01678 521348
Berllan Gron, Llanycil, BALA, Gwynedd, LL23 7YG

Special Needs: Christine Waterman, 85 Elfrida Rd,
Watford, Herts WD1 8AT 01923 464773

School Phobia: Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

Teenage Support: Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

College Contact: Kathy Chilton 01969 623707
(retiring - volunteers please!!)

GCSE Contact (acting): Geraldine Adams 0207 263 4922

Autonomous Education Support: Sammy and Nick
Vidal-Hall, Home Croft, Brownston St, Modbury, Devon
PL21 0QR 01548 830716

**Contact with LEA / Other Problems / Member
Support.** If you need help in dealing with your LEA ring
your Local Contact or any Council Member. If you have
a problem not covered above please contact your nearest
Council Member (list above left)

Research Contact: Pam Vickers 25 Boxley Rd,
Walderslade, Chatham, Kent Home: 01634 671507
Work: 01227 712206 pjvickerscan@aol.com

Company Secretary: Pam Bellinger 56 Beech Drive,
Braunstone, Leicester LE3 3DA 0116 282 7929

Treasurer: Garry Humphreys Three Stacks, Wicken lane,
Old Leake, Boston, Lincs PE22 9QE 01205 871 399
garryhumphreys@lineone.net

EO Stalls: Lucy Charlton, 2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt,
Leics LE8 0FT 0116 2592118

Coordinator for Local Contacts (acting): Keith Charlton,
2 Wistow Rd, Newton Harcourt, Leicestershire, LE8 0FT
0116 259 2118 kcharlton@care4free.net
(Assistant): Liz Stevens, 96 Ivanhoe Street, Leicester,
LE3 9GW. 0116 2425802 kiss.it@lineone.net

Coordinator for Enquiries Secretaries: Iris Harrison
(Assistant) Jo Borthen 01392 679499

Website and email lists: Jacqui Houlding, 01925 654856
jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk

Newsletter Coordinator: Anne Rix, Hembury Orchard, (NB
slight change of address) Frithelstock, Torrington, Devon,
EX38 8JT 01237 451535 anne@annerix.demon.co.uk

education otherwise

Education Otherwise is a membership organisation which provides support and information for families whose children are being educated outside school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children.

Our principal aims are to:

- encourage learning outside the school system;
- reaffirm that parents have the primary responsibility for their children's education and that they have the right to exercise this responsibility by educating them out of school;
- establish the primary right of children to have full consideration given to their wishes and feelings about their education.

For further information send an A5 s.a.e. to:
P.O. BOX 7420
LONDON N9 9SG

HELPLINE 0870 7300074

<<http://www.education-otherwise.org>>

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