

# Welcome to the education otherwise April Newsletter



So much for reinstating a Letters section (as I did in March). Nobody sent anything this month. Maybe it's the sunshine, and you're all enjoying outdoor activities rather than sitting at computers. If so, I'm glad; but please remember the EO newsletter is made up of what you, EO members send in. Or at least, it should be. We do get quite a number of 'advertorial' pieces, often provided by organisations that already advertise in the EONL. They would fill the space, but I'm not sure that's what this newsletter is for.

There is a question, now, as to exactly what the EONL should be for.

Getting articles from members has always been something of a struggle (apart from a few regular stalwarts, to whom much appreciation is due!) and with the vastly increased use of websites and forums, along with internet lists and groups where communication is so much more immediate, a newsletter has started to feel almost irrelevant. It also takes a lot of time and effort to produce a monthly NL. Of course, EO as an organisation does need to communicate with all members from time to time, for notices of meetings and other official business, but mostly what members tell us they want is to hear from other home educators about their experiences, about activities for home educators and about resources that others have found useful. We (EO Trustees) can't invent those – such material has to come from readers. Preferably a wide variety of individual members rather than just a few regulars.

So, here's the question – if we move to a quarterly newsletter (starting, say, in June) would more of you write in with your own contributions? What do you think is the purpose of the EONL? How should it be produced? Should the membership fees be increased to cover the substantial cost of sending a paper newsletter to everyone? Should there be a reduction for those who are happy to have everything by email? We would really like to hear your thoughts. There's a thread about these issues on the EO forum, and it's included in Heidi's statement from Trustees in the business section, which also contains minutes of the discussions of 19<sup>th</sup> March (when we should have had the AGM but it wasn't quorate, so under current M&As we were obliged to reconvene it one week later – but we spent the day in useful discussion with members present anyway).

Oh, and please also feel free to contribute to your newsletter – I won't be able to produce one in May (I'm moving house) but we do hope to be back in June (hopefully with a new co-ordinator).

Anne [arix@educationotherwise.org](mailto:arix@educationotherwise.org) [Acting] EO NL Co-ordinator

## News & Events

\*\*\*\*\*

### 12<sup>th</sup> STUDLAND BAY CAMP DORSET

FRIDAY 15TH TO FRIDAY 22ND JULY 2011

**Chrystia and Keith still warmly welcome all Home Educating families.  
Come and meet adults and young people with years of home educating experience.**

- A wild and beautiful area of pine forest and lowland heath
- 4 miles to the sea, dunes and bird sanctuary
- Dorset steam railway nearby to the beach at Swanage
- Free outings to Corfe castle
- Cycleways and paths through the woods to the sea
- Camping in a large field backed by pine woods and nearby stream
- Access to facilities at adjoining Burnbake campsite
- We bring canoes, cargo nets, rope swings and large army tent
- You bring bikes, drums, instruments
- We sing together and play instruments around a fire on some evenings
- There is a mid week bring and share meal
- Morning - acapella / gospel / taize & children's singing; some sharing meetings

**Cost for week £120 a family (concessions and daily rate available) Teenagers welcome with families only.**

**Information & booking: Chrystia & Keith Hertogs, 75 Kent House Rd  
Sydenham, London SE26 5LJ Tel: 020 8776 8597**

\*\*\*\*\*

*And then you could pack up your tent and dash across country to:-*



The Home Educators Summer Festival

HESFES 2011 is at Rougham Airfield, Rougham, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. Sat 23 to Sat 30 July.

Lots of Workshops, Live Music, Entertainment & Activities

12 Marquees, 3 Stages, Toddler Play Area, Cinema, Teen Tent, Cafes & More....

Ticket price includes 7 nights camping and all facilities, workshops and activities.

Single Day/Overnight tickets also available. Huge venue at Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

More details: [www.hesfes.co.uk](http://www.hesfes.co.uk)

\*\*\*\*\*

**NEW FREE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE**

We've heard from the Guardian about their launch of a new resource called "Teacher Network" which is aimed at home educators as well as schools. There are tens of thousands of pages of free resources, worksheets etc. that might well be useful for new HE parents in building up confidence, or for those who want to use structured materials. It's easy to register, and there's no upfront charge. You can check it out at their website:

<http://teachers.guardian.co.uk/>

~~~~~

**Thinktank Home Educator Day @ Millennium Point in Birmingham - 7 June 2011**

Thinktank is pleased to announce its second day of interactive science activities, workshops and shows exclusively for Home Educating Families!

- The day will cost £16.26 per child, it includes a full day of activities and entry to the museum. (This is the equivalent schools rate for a full day of activities.)
- Each paying child is entitled to a free accompanying adult
- Children under 3 years old get in for free. (There are no specific activities for this age group).
- Season Ticket holders can attend the day for £11.52 per child.
- Bookings will be taken from the 11th April until the 18th May and will be on a first come first served basis.

More information is available on the Thinktank website <http://www.thinktank.ac/homeeducators>

~~~~~

*This message has been sent to Education Otherwise via the website contact form:*

**Re: Connexions Direct Young Persons Helpline and Directgov**

As part of a Government website rationalisation programme, from April 2011 Connexions Direct will become part of Directgov <http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/index.htm> to offer wider online support for young people, bringing careers, work and learning advice and information together in one place.

The Listening Company provide the Connexions Direct helpline service under contract to the Department for Education. Young people continue to have access to the Connexions Direct helpline to provide up-to-date information on a range of teen issues, particularly careers advice and guidance. From April 2011, there will be links to the online helpline channels (email, web chat) from Directgov and the helpline continues to be offered by telephone - 080 800 13 2 19 and text message - 07766 4 13 2 19.

The jobs4u database within Connexions Direct is no longer being updated. Career profiles can be found in Next Step at <https://nextstep.direct.gov.uk/planningyourcareer/jobprofiles/Pages/default.aspx>

By April 2012 the government plans to introduce a high quality, unified careers service. Both Directgov and an all-age service will provide clear signposting to other services including apprenticeships and Jobcentre Plus (JCP) services.

Further queries should be directed to the Dept. for Education - <http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus>

~~~~~





## Home Education Around the World: The Netherlands – by Corinna

My family used to live near the border to the Netherlands, and many of our friends moved across for tax reasons. Back then, I was unaware of home education, and so I found it quite intriguing to go back and have a look at my former neighbouring country under an entirely different aspect.

The overall impression is that home education is illegal, as it is not recognised as a valid way of educating children, and home schooling is not considered a basic right of parents. The Dutch government seems to hold the opinion that any child outside of the official system will not receive a sufficient education at all. Therefore, numbers are low; HSDLA (see below) reckons there are about 100 families altogether. All Dutch children start compulsory education at the age of five and finish when they are 16, with somewhat laxer laws for those aged between 16 and 18 in part-time education (a state-approved combination of studying and employment is in place). Obligatory schooling includes enrolment in a government-approved school and attendance at all times it is open (there are exceptions in certain cases, e.g. of course for illnesses). A Compulsory Education Officer regularly crosschecks the register as many kids are enrolled in schools further away from their place of residence. If a discrepancy is found, the officer sends out letters of enquiry to the families of those children not on the list, which happens quite often as parents have effectively great freedom in their choice of school.

There is, however, a clause representing a loophole in the law that families have been able to exploit to gain more freedom. It states that a child may stay home if the parents do not agree with the general direction of any school within a reasonable distance from their place of living, either on religious, on philosophical or on moral grounds. And parents – as in Britain – have by law the obligation to provide a suitable education for their kids. However, their grounds to leave the state system have to be profound (bullying or unhappiness are not accepted), and most of the time parents are denied this right even after years of applications and court cases. The decision is always down to the individual officers, and thus to the manner the parents/carers present their situations before them.

A precedent case was created in 1988, which confirmed the right of educators to go their own way, and since then families have tried to apply for legal home ed status many times. Furthermore, the option is only available for pre-schoolers. Once a child has attended a school, opting out is no longer possible.

Tourists and illegal residents are obviously not on the roll and can therefore not be called. Tourist status will however only be granted for three months at the most, after which time any child of school age does need to attend a school.

The last government attempt to restrict home education even further was made in autumn 2003, but home educators from all over the world handed in letters of protest to ministers and the embassies of their countries, and thus in a common struggle prevented a change in the law. At the time, most ministers in the Netherlands simply considered it not worth the effort as only 50 families were affected. Despite the fact that since then inspections of home educating families have been introduced, the community generally considered the result a small victory on their part.

Useful links you might want to check out:

The official home ed organisation of the Netherlands, “Nederlandse Vereniging voor Thuisonderwijs” (NVvTO, meaning the Netherlands Home Education Association), is run by home educators for home educators as a “pluralistic” organisation, in its own words. It sees its role as a supporter of all people educating children at home, as a facilitator for access to home ed and as a mediator between the state and parents who would like to teach their children (parts of the website are in English): <http://www.home-education.nl/>

In addition, the website caters for families in Northern Belgium (Flanders) as their language is also Dutch. The network comprises home educators from France and the United Kingdom.

The usual link for HSLDA (Home School Legal Defense Association) provides recent news about the Netherlands’ struggle with home ed laws: <http://www.hslda.org/hs/international/Netherlands/default.asp>

A concise abstract can be found here: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling\\_-\\_Netherlands](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homeschooling_-_Netherlands)

A helpful Yahoo-group (Christian background, only available in Dutch): <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Jozua24v15/>

## Diary of a Home Educating Nobody – by Ross Mountney

One of the things to remember when you're a home educating parent is that it's just as important to manage your own time and activities as it is to manage the children's education.

I used to forget this and sometimes end up as a screaming witch by the end of the day feeling like I'd just run fifty marathons. Actually, when you think about it, HEing is like running marathons however enjoyable!

The house would be strewn with the day's activities; books, craft materials, pens and colours and various cooking ingredients and utensils. The table would be laden with stuff, chairs laden with coats, library bags full of books dumped by the door.

In other words the house looks like the usual Home-Ed battlefield and I could only sit and look at it not having one gram of energy left to do anything about it.

The children had been busy right up to the last minute. We'd been out. We'd been fed. And right at the end of the day when we'd be at our most tired the little one says; "mummy, can you read me a story?"

And how did I respond to this need for our cuddly time at the end of the day? With a desperate shriek: "For goodness sake, can't you just give me a break for two minutes?"

Her little face dropped – she didn't understand why I was suddenly shrieking at her when I usually read her a story. And I didn't understand why I suddenly found that reading a story – a bit of the day I usually enjoy – was the last straw and my lovely children have suddenly become horrible leeches always wanting more!

In the instant I regretted it I also realised how it happened. It was so simple really; I was just tired. I was used up. I needed some space.

But that wasn't her fault. I cuddled her up, apologised, explained and dragged up enough energy to read just a little story.

What's not so simple for all us parents is not letting it get to that pitch before we do something about it.

I've said before that successful Home Schooling is as much about how we manage our own personal time as it is to do with education. How we manage time off.

Time off seems impossible. For most Home Educators, the children are always around. But it is essential that we each have our own personal times for space and relaxation. It is essential that we have our own time away from our children. It is essential that we have that time without guilt! And it's essential that we value these times. They are so important.

The home education we provide – whatever form it takes – will be dependent on the relationship between ourselves and our children being a good one. It is extremely difficult to maintain a good relationship with overkill. It is extremely difficult to maintain a good relationship when we don't have time and space to recuperate from the demands of each other. Both for children and adults! And it's really difficult to feel happy, energised, enthusiastic, and well when we never get time off. It would be in any job.

But how do we get time off?

I found the first thing I had to do is remember to take it. Because it doesn't just happen with them around all the time; I had to make it happen, and regularly.

I needed to organise the children to be somewhere else sometimes. To do a time swap with another Home Educating friend. Or to go off by myself when there's someone else around, instead of always being available.

When that's not possible I had to do it by talking to the children about respecting one another's space, about me needing some time for myself – as they do, about not disturbing me when I'm having this time.

That was difficult at first, but as they grew and I persevered they began to understand and respect it – although a refresher course was often needed.

Just as I needed a refresher course in remembering that just because I opt to Home Educate it does not mean that I have to feel guilty about not being with my children all the time, or every moment with my children being 'educational'.

That's a trap that's easy to fall into. As Home Educating parents it is easy to feel that we need to be filling our child's every day with stimulating and educational activities. We don't. It's not necessary. It's not valuable. And it's not good for anybody.

It's not necessary because stimulating and educational activities do not stimulate or educate a hundred percent of the time. That's not realistic.

It's not valuable because after these stimulating and educational activities there needs to be some time for the children to digest them, to assimilate the experiences, to put them in their own personal framework, to think and cogitate and vegetate too.

And it's not good for anybody to provide this stimulation all the time because children need to find ways of providing their own stimulation.

They also need to appreciate that there are other people in the world who are important besides them and those people sometimes do other things. Things that they are not part of and they need to respect that. Just as I respect the things they do that I am not part of and I keep out of it. Everyone needs to have their own space. Their own time. Their own activities as well as shared ones. Which others should respect. Children and adults alike.

Sometimes we all slumped, chilled, watched a video, sat in the garden, lay on the bed, at the same time but companionably apart, just to get a break.

Sometimes I went off into another room and made myself out-of-bounds. Sometimes, when the children were content with what they were doing, I'd drift off into a good book or some other engaging diversion like gardening or walking. (Great for releasing pent up frustrations!)

We need to practise. For the sake of our children and ourselves. We need to find a way to separate ourselves from each other and get a break. We need breaks.

Just so we don't turn into shrieking maniacs like I did, and we conserve some energy for the loving bits like the story at bedtime!

*Ross Mounthey.*

Author of 'Learning Without School. Home Education' <http://rossmounthey.wordpress.com/>

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

## **HESFES 2007, Mersea Island - by Andrew, Teignbridge EO local contact.**

We had not long been home educating and were very excited when we found out about the HE seaside festival. Everyone we had spoken to who had been, had an experience to share with us, so after we had decided the best way to get there (from Devon to Mersea Island) we booked our tickets and looked forward to the event.

As the day became nearer and our excitement grew, we nearly had to decide not to go! On the 29th June, the first day of the festival, there was a terrorist incident in London and as we were travelling by train, we were concerned about going through the city. Because we had been looking forward to it for so long, we decided to risk it!

We were pleased that we did decide to go. When we got there the atmosphere was absolutely great! There were people from all walks of life - expensive cars and tents, mixed in with more affordable ones. The sounds and smells were part of the magic: slow rhythm of a drum, children laughing, the smells of grass drying and food cooking.

The venue was next to a large beach and this was to be the setting for the 'Labyrinth'. This is where everyone gets together, using materials available to create the maze featured on the T-shirts and hoodies, so popular with visitors to HesFes.

There always seemed to be an activity on, ranging from archery and drama, to circus and woodworking skills. Our children particularly enjoyed the 'peace tepee', set in the centre of the events field and full of dressing up clothes, toys and circus skills equipment, such as spinning plates and stilts.

Teenagers also had plenty on offer and there was always music coming from the marquee. Evening entertainment was also provided and the children's cabaret was a big highlight, an event not to be missed!

We have never seen so many children and adults together, enjoying themselves in such a relaxed style. Everyone had a terrific time, especially the children and look forward to our next HesFes!

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

## EO Business

### MINUTES OF MEETING 19<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, BIRMINGHAM

*We don't normally print full minutes in the newsletter, but as there are so many changes going on at present, we thought that just this once we would do so. We hope that, as well as getting all the proposals out there, this will give members a flavour of how things happen at Open Council Meetings (OCMs, or sometimes OTMs = Open Trustee Meetings) which was what the whole day of 19<sup>th</sup> March turned out to be, since there weren't quite enough members present to form a quorum for the AGM scheduled for 11.30. Now that you can discuss things on the members forum and send in your votes by proxy, and as meetings have been stand-alone days rather than during a gathering, it has become more and more difficult to get 20 members personally present ...*



### **DRAFT MINUTES / EO OPEN COUNCIL MEETING 19<sup>th</sup> March 2011 11.00 am, Priory Rooms, Birmingham**

Present: (Trustees) Lei Ashe, Beverley Cameron Young (CRB contact), Shena Deuchars (Treasurer), Heidi de Wet (Membership Secretary), Celia McDonagh (Company Secretary), Anne Rix (Publications Secretary), Jennifer Skillen (Disabilities and SEN), Andries Theunissen, Edwina Theunissen (Enquiries Secretary), Sarah Willans (Webmaster)

(Others) Tracey Foyster, Alison Sauer, Janet Simpson, Janet Wilkinson

Apologies: (Trustees) Adele Haley (Chair), Kat La Fleur, Nikki Mayow, Tony Putman

(Others) Hanna Newton, Rosemary Stace.

Meeting Chair: Beverley                      Minutes: Anne

Agenda: None had been circulated; this meeting was to ratify decisions that had been taken by Trustees since the last Council Meeting, via the Trustee Forum, and deal with any other business.

(1) Minutes of previous meeting/s – not available: carried forward to next meeting

(2) AGM - It was decided that if (as anticipated) the AGM should be inquorate, then we would continue with discussion on AGM items in any case, so as to gauge the feeling of members present (and their proxies) and to answer questions.

(3) Membership - Trustee Forum proposal: To allow reinstatement of family membership to any previously expelled members at the discretion of the trustees where there is no record of ratification of the original barring at a full trustee meeting.

Rationale: approximately 160 members on the database have been marked as suspended. Some members may have had their membership wrongly suspended but as there are incomplete records of what has happened this procedure will allow the trustees discretion in looking at situations again and reinstating any members that feel they have been wrongly removed.

T-Forum votes: 11 for, 3 not voted. Proposal accepted unanimously by meeting.

(4) AGM venue - Agreed that if AGM today is inquorate, reconvene in one week at either Oxford or Swindon.

(5) Accounts - Shena explained that these would still not be ready to present to members today, and possibly not by 31<sup>st</sup> March which is the deadline for Co. House. The reason is that the accountant dealing with EO accounts had been away, and only sent a revised version on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March; this version did not show all the information. Shena had spent much time compiling trustee expenses for 2009-10, that had only just come to light, and therefore final figures are not yet known. Shena expressed surprise that Whiting & Partners had not asked questions of the previous Treasurer regarding these accounts, at an earlier stage. Shena felt that the version she had prepared would be more meaningful to members, when presented, and that she would be able to answer questions better than in Whiting & Partners version. Accounts would be put on Members Forum when full information is available, so that questions may be raised there. Shena proposed to ask the AGM to permit Trustees to appoint a new accountant to carry out independent examination of the accounts.

(6) CRB checks - Beverley had queried how to make decisions where results of a CRB check were not clear. Adele had said she might be able to find some helpful information on how to deal with this situation, but has not yet done so. Beverley clarified that no such results had been received; but we need to have procedures in place in case

this should arise in future. CRB checks for recent trustees were under way, though there seems to be some delay in them coming back at present. Jennifer had noted some online advice regarding CRB checks, and would forward link for this. It was also suggested that NCVO might have useful information, and Beverley would contact them. Anne suggested that Beverley might take over as EO's NCVO contact – Beverley would need to know what was involved.

*Meeting suspended 11.30 am – to resume following AGM*

*The AGM being inquorate by 12 noon, OCM resumed at 12.15 pm with discussion on AGM items.*

(AGM 1) Minutes of previous AGM to be carried forward to reconvened AGM in one week. – projected onto screen by Shena for those present to check in case of queries. No points were raised.

(AGM 2) Consideration of Accounts (also projected onto screen)

Janet S requested printed copy be posted to SUMs. Shena to do this when updated version ready, also put on forum for discussion and questions; Questions sent in by email will be on forum, and note of these (with replies) also to be sent to SUMs.

Accountants had been away in week before last, and only forwarded their version of accounts to Shena on Thursday (2 days ago) so she had not been able to discuss discrepancies with them. She also still does not have full access to all bank accounts so cannot yet obtain missing statements, cheque stubs etc. for 10-11 months of y/e June 2010. On the printed accounts, bold type is y/e 6/10 and light type is y/e 6/9 for comparison.

Ann ST asked whether there would simply be more detail in updated accounts, or if figures would change? Shena said totals in bank would be the same, but some figures redistributed.

Shena said that due to difficulty in obtaining bank account access and the accountants being away, it was possible that accounts would not be ready by 31<sup>st</sup> March deadline – in which case we will be fined £200. An extension has been requested, but we are allowed no leeway this time because of late submission and fine in last two years. Accountant had changed information that Shena sent – e.g. wages was lower; accountant has underestimated amounts in and out by around 10-15%, and redistributed figures. However this does not affect the total balance. Ann ST asked whether the current accountants (Whiting & Partners) were good at communication. Shena said they were not.

W&P have been preparing accounts as well as acting as independent examiners (to check paperwork) but as they do not do the day to day book-keeping they have no real knowledge of EO's financial operations. Shena would like to propose that we no longer use W&P, that the EO treasurer should prepare the accounts and that a different professional accountancy firm should be appointed to act as independent examiner in future. Ann ST noted that all the accountants do in this case is to prepare accounts on the basis of information and documentation provided to them, and asked if trustees intend to have an audit of the June 2010 accounts. Shena said that trustees had intended to do this but so much documentation is missing that there was probably no point – if the information isn't there it can't be checked. Ann ST said that if a different accountant looked at the accounts, they would simply say that they could not give a true and fair view (if so much information missing). This might be useful for members as a way to draw a line.

Alison suggested it would be cheaper to say 'We have an empty box – what do you suggest we do about auditing our accounts' – and when they said they couldn't, ask them to write a letter to say that.

Shena said she would do her best to get accounts completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March, but with so much paperwork missing from the boxes obtained from EO office, and no access to bank statements, could not guarantee this. Shena has asked another accountant, informally, about the statement in the independent examiner's report 'I see no reason to assume that the books have not been kept properly' – apparently as long as the bank statements show correct totals in and out, they can say that.

Ann ST thanked Shena for her hard work, and suggested that as well as a letter from another accountant, for the record, a statement should be added by trustees to acknowledge the lack of documentation.

Janet S asked whether the 2010-11 statements and cheque stubs were OK – Shena had not spent much time on the current year, but these do seem to be there. There will be questions about expenses.

Shena produced a box file of expenses to show how these came in – all in a muddle, and receipts not attached to the relevant forms; some receipts in sandwich bags. There were 8 forms from July 2009 for one person, at June 2010, and information does not match up re setting up office. Therefore adjustments will be made, e.g. some 'expenses' are for items such as buying computer for office. Some relate to the year 2008-9, and as these accounts have already been signed off, and nothing mentioned about earlier expenses by November 2010, she felt we could

not go back there. There will still be expenses questions for 2009-10, but from June 2011 she will ensure these are kept correctly.

W&P's charge is about £1,500-1,700 for preparing accounts and independent examination. Janet S asked if Shena had another accountant in mind. Not yet, but they should be independent. The books are OK up to June 2009, the mess is later.

Q. was asked, who was responsible for books in the troublesome period. In 2009-10 Lynda was book keeper and Pauline Treasurer, as they had been in previous years. Fiona was chair of finance committee. There was an Excel cashbook and analysis up to June 2009, but these are not available since then. There was no response from the trustees responsible when they were asked about this. Lynda resigned in April 2010 but still had some input up to August 2010. W&P had been provided with all the membership documents; they said they had returned them but were unable to tell us to what address these had been sent.

Janet W noted that we would need to change the Registered Office if we no longer used W&P, as this is currently at their address.

#### (AGM 3) Auditor's remuneration

We do still have to pay Whiting & Partners for the work they have done.

#### (AGM 4) Appointment of Auditor

We would appoint a different firm – not W&P. Shena will ask meeting to authorise trustees to choose someone else to do independent examination. Ann ST said we must make sure they are professional; also take care what we say about dropping W&P. Shena said there should be no issues with changing.

#### (AGM 5) Election of new Council Members

##### Current Trustees

Lei Ashe  
Beverley Cameron Young  
Shena Deuchars (Treasurer)  
Heidi de Wet (Membership Secretary)  
Adele Haley (Chair)  
Kat La Fleur  
Nikki Mayow  
Celia McDonagh (Secretary)  
Tony Putman  
Anne Rix (Publications Secretary)  
Jennifer Skillen (Disabilities and SEN)  
Andries Theunissen  
Edwina Theunissen (Enquiries Secretary)  
Sarah Willans (Webmaster)

##### Resigning

Adele  
Kat  
Celia  
Tony  
Jennifer  
Andries  
Sarah

##### Standing

Celia  
Tony (?)(Heidi to check)  
Andries  
Sarah  
Tracey Foyster (Kent LC)  
Hanna Newton (surrey LC)  
Rosemary Stace (Anne's daughter)  
Janet Wilkinson (former trustee)

Ann ST asked whether these people would work together if elected; Janet W said that the intention was definitely yes; others present agreed.

*The meeting broke for lunch at 1.30 pm and resumed at 2.15 pm.*

#### (AGM 6) Special Resolutions

Although a formal vote could not be taken, those present (and proxies) indicated their intention, to take the measure of the meeting, and informal votes were taken.

##### ***Special Resolution 1:***

*THAT: Article 5 shall become Article 5(a) and shall have the following words added, "No member shall be admitted who is not a fully paid up family member of Education Otherwise.";*

*AND THAT: Article 5(b) shall be added as follows, "A member may resign his membership at any time by writing to the Association. Membership shall not be transferable and shall cease on death. If a member ceases to be a family member of Education Otherwise, his membership of the Association shall cease three months after the lapse of his family membership.";*

*AND THAT: Article 1 shall include the definition of the term "family member" as "a named member of a family which has during the preceding 12 months paid a subscription to the Association in order to receive benefits such as the newsletter, contact list and online forum access".*

The meeting noted that currently there could be 2 named adult members per family, who can both be SUMs. 32 votes (including proxies) would be in favour in a formal vote; 1 proxy abstained.

***Special Resolution 2:***

*THAT: In Article 51, the words "one or more properly qualified Auditor or Auditors" shall be replaced by the words, "a properly qualified Auditor or Independent Examiner";*

*AND THAT Article 52 shall be replaced with the words, "Auditors and independent examiners shall be appointed and their duties regulated in accordance with the relevant sections of the Companies Act 2006 and the Charities Act 2006."*

33 votes would be in favour in a formal vote.

*Discussion of AGM items ended 2.30 pm; followed by ...*

(7) General open discussion about EO's future

*[N.B. This was a very informal and wide-ranging discussion, and difficult to keep track of. So my notes are rather uneven and probably not a complete record, but I hope I have recorded the main points. AR]*

The meeting was reminded that this was to be a general discussion on ways forward, and that personality issues and criticism of individuals were not appropriate to bring to the meeting.

Janet S asked how we stop repeating what happened in the past. There had been discussions on EO's future before, e.g. John's Lee Wood in July 2006, but that things had not developed as planned. People then didn't want to talk; some people were removed from voluntary posts. Janet S used to help with finance but had not been involved over the last few years, so had questions as to how we had got to where we are now. How do we grow, and change the way of working? The move to a more 'corporate' type of governance apparently hadn't worked. Improvements hadn't been got around to. People had come forward but there was lack of consultation and member discussion. Organisation was too 'top-down' so goodwill had been lost, therefore networks lost. Some personalities had driven the agenda, and people only did what interested them.

Heidi commented on the 'corporate' model – Lawyers who had been consulted regarding EO's organisation had said that under current M&As we had no legal obligation to involve 'customers'. Lawyers work on the basis of giving a service and advice according to what they are told is required. Sometimes it appeared this had been of the form 'XYZ is what we want – how can we do this?'. Membership had dropped sharply – we have fewer *total* members now than we had *new* members 4 years ago. Home education generally had changed over the same period.

Q. Why did the recent statement say that it might be necessary to close EO if more volunteers didn't come forward by June 2011? Heidi thought it would probably be possible to have an efficient office, but that if we had not closed the Sheffield office when we did, then EO would have folded due to bankruptcy by April 2011, because the outlay on the office was not sustainable by income. Trustees could not continue the current level of work indefinitely.

Revision of M&As is on 'to do' list. Jennifer said before doing this we need to step back and decide what EO is for. Shena said people have responded positively to the last email statement (the one that outlined current position and called for more volunteers by June 2011). Over the last 2-3 years people in the wider HE community had been very anti-EO, but this opinion now seems to have turned around. Some new volunteers were coming forward, and it seems that the wider HE community wants EO to exist in an appropriate form.

Ann ST asked whether there was a lower-key way to operate, given the current workload on trustees who had to spend so much energy on sorting out the situation they had inherited. Heidi said the focus was now on supporting HERS rather than proactive centralised campaigning. It would be good to be able to give stronger support to members being hassled by local authorities, as we did have for a while in the past, but at present this is not possible.

Heidi is setting up a more efficient administration system and database. Wondering if we might attract more members by offering a reduced membership fee for electronic-only family membership that would mean accessing everything via a secure area of the website, apart from membership & truancy cards sent by post. This might mean that a paper-based subscription would need to cost slightly more, to cover the cost of printing and postage of Newsletters, Contact list, Concessions list, etc.

Beverly mentioned that the Contact list in its present form is of limited use to members, as it contains so little information – many members present agreed with this. There was a suggestion of having regional as well as national contact list. Heidi said that it would be possible for the online joining form to have sections for additional

information if members wished to provide this; existing entries, however, would remain as they are unless individual members inform the database otherwise, because they have been provided on the current basis. The Contact list would be in a password-protected secure members-only area of the website. Ann ST said that if such a change were made, then members should be given advance warning of the increase in paper subscriptions.

Shena suggested we write to former members who have lapsed, asking if they are interested in rejoining now that things are changing. Ann ST mentioned Sarah G who used to provide the 'Educating Archie' cartoons.

Heidi wanted guidance from those present on the principles of membership – who should we allow to join? What criteria should be used? The meeting felt that there were some clear reasons for refusing membership – e.g. LAs and those convicted of child protection offences. It was pointed out that we already have 'organisation/corporate' membership, but that the Contact List and other confidential information is not provided to them; only paper copies of Newsletters, and that they should be charged a high subscription fee. The meeting felt that in general, full membership should be open to former HERS and individuals interested in HE, whether currently HEing or not. Associate/friend membership (NL only) at a normal or reduced rate was suggested – this might cater, e.g., for members whose families had grown up but who wished to remain in touch. Jennifer suggested that we might have a meeting in June to discuss membership criteria.

It was noted that we already have a clause in the membership form to say that membership will be terminated if the Contact list is misused. Trustees should also have additional judgement (but on what grounds?). There are trust issues here, and guidelines agreed by members would be helpful. Shena raised the question of individual members whose membership had been revoked, and the criteria for re-admitting them. There is no indication on the database of who should not be admitted, and if someone joined online this would not automatically be flagged up.

The reasons for membership revocations seemed to be very varied, and there appear to be no minutes of reasons. Q? asked if we have a list of people banned due to sex offences. Janet W said that when she was formerly Memb. Sec. she had had a verbal list, but that this had not been passed on to Lynda when she took over the database. She was unsure of the credibility of what she had been told, as some might be unsubstantiated claims. Beverley said that in 2 cases there was legal evidence. However we may not know until something untoward happens and we are made aware. Heidi said that she had a list of names of people who had been banned/removed from membership, and that 3 of these had recently re-joined. Beverley asked whether there was any legal or other information to support their being banned. Heidi said that brief reasons were given, but without supporting legal information or newspaper reports etc.

Jennifer pointed out that we used to have groups to help with information and decision-making on several fronts: Child Protection, Complaints, Strategies ... but these were no longer extant.

Q? Structure of EO? Janet S mentioned 'mission statement' on back of paper NLS. This was read to the meeting:

*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 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;*
- *promote knowledge, understanding and acceptance of education otherwise than at school in the world at large.*

The meeting felt that these should be reconsidered, especially the 4<sup>th</sup> which had been added only a few years ago, together with the original statement of aims in the current M&As:

*3. The object for which the Association is established is:-*

*To promote, maintain, improve, and advance public education, particularly by the provision of information, support and facilities to enable parents to make educational provision for their children otherwise than through full- time state or private educational institutions.*

It was suggested that we should try having a one-off gathering, around the October AGM (which will be needed to consider the accounts to y/e 30<sup>th</sup> June 2011) during which a meeting to consider the structure of EO, our aims and mission statement, would be arranged. A show of hands indicated that the majority present favoured trying such a gathering – over a long weekend, and at somewhere fairly central with good public transport and road links, to enable as many members as possible to attend. Celia volunteered to research suitable venues etc. and report to trustees.

Ann ST suggested that consultation on aims and mission statement should also be started through newsletter and forum. Hopes were expressed that we could aim to produce a more attractive newsletter.

*General discussion was brought to a close at 4 pm, to allow time for a brief but more formal session, to tie up any loose ends, before we had to vacate the room. ... resumed 4.15pm, after a much-needed cup of tea ...*

(8) Co-options. Agreed to co-opt those proposed as trustees, prior to adjourned AGM next week, so that forum access can be organised and they can start to pick up on current issues, start CRB checks, etc. That is: Tracey Foyster (Kent LC), Hanna Newton (Surrey LC) Rosemary Stace (Anne's Daughter) and Janet Wilkinson (former trustee).

(9) Re-allocation of Council posts, (to take effect following adjourned AGM and assuming those proposed as trustees are elected)

Chair: Shena (though she would continue to complete accounts to y/e 30-6-10)  
Treasurer: Beverley (from July 2010, with initial support from Shena)  
Company Secretary: Janet Wilkinson (N.B. it was not decided where the EO Registered Address should be, if we no longer use Whitings as accountants.)

(10) Other voluntary posts:

Jennifer: SEN/disability consultant  
Tracey Foyster: Advertising  
Wendy Knight: has volunteered but not yet been contacted re specific job – suggestion she act as Volunteer Co-ordinator (which needs to be someone with experience of EO)

(11) Current Actions

Trustee/s responsible

Research Youth Hostels with suitable disability provision and organise one-off long weekend gathering, fairly central UK, around October AGM. N.B. date needs to be decided.

Celia  
Trustees

Redirection of post from 125 Queen Street. P.O. have not started redirection although payment has been made for this. Currently, the virtual office at 125 are forwarding to Helidi's address; this has been agreed up to end of June 2011 as a final payment, which does not need to be by credit card.

Shena  
Heidi

Final closure of office by 31<sup>st</sup> March – Jennifer has space available in Bristol for storage of furniture, etc. Need to arrange for packing and transport of contents, hire of man-with-van (Luton/LWB transit), locking up and return of keys. Beverley has taken charge of keys. Both Beverley and Lei have connections with haulage operators and will liaise to arrange details.

Jennifer  
Beverley  
Lei

(12) Small Groups – reinstate some of these as soon as possible, to share workload.

Finance – possibly Janet S who did this previously (though there are other potential roles she could fill). EO is now financially stable, though full access still not available to all bank accounts.

(13) AGM – venue for reconvened meeting – agreed 11.30 am, Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011, in Oxford (C/o Celia McDonagh, 01865 552527, <cmcdonagh@educationotherwise.org>)

(14) Next OCM – date and venue to be arranged.

*5.0 pm Meeting closed*

\* \* \* \* \*

P.S. At the reconvened AGM on 26<sup>th</sup> March in Oxford, with 6 trustees present, the matters discussed on 19<sup>th</sup> were ratified as above. EO Council now consists of the following trustees, elected on 26<sup>th</sup> March:

|                        |                |                    |
|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Lei Ashe               | Nicky Mayow    | Rosemary Stace     |
| Beverley Cameron-Young | Celia McDonagh | Andries Theunissen |
| Heidi de Wet           | Hanna Newton   | Edwina Theunissen  |
| Shena Deuchars         | Tony Putman    | Janet Wilkinson    |
| Tracey Foyster         | Anne Rix       | Sarah Willans      |

*There remained the daunting prospect of putting it all into practice ...*

