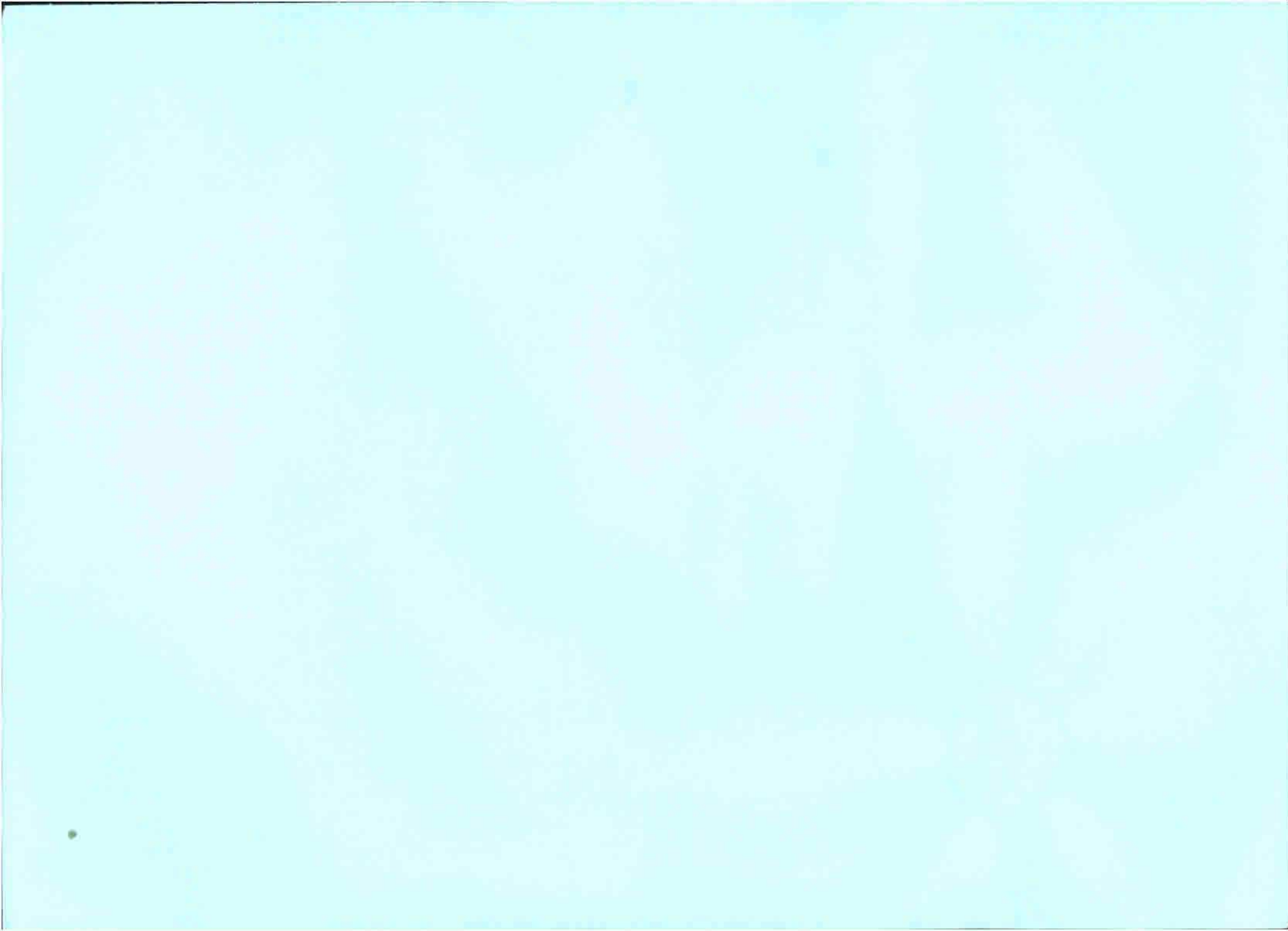


education
otherwise

Handbook

May 2003



INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the E.O. Members' Handbook.

The purpose of the Handbook is to make as much information as possible available to members and, hopefully, to make communications between those doing work for E.O., or those wanting to speak to the relevant person, easier.

The Handbook now incorporates the E.O. Concessions List – if you have any additions for this, please do send them in. There are details of how to join and take part in the E.O. Internet lists – The E.O. Business List and the E.O. List.

For those who would like to help EO recover tax paid on membership subscriptions, a Gift Aid form can be found at the back of the handbook and there is also a signed-up members form to be completed by those who want to be present and to have voting rights at General Meetings.

Several job descriptions are included and it is hoped to be able to expand on these in future issues of the Handbook, which is scheduled to be distributed with the Contact List each year.

For ease of finding information, the Handbook is organised as an alphabetical listing with an index to aid finding details on specific topics.

It is hoped that members will find the Handbook to be of use and to further that aim any comments for additions, amendments etc., would be gratefully received. Comments may be sent to:

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Please note that the contents of this Handbook are for the use of E.O. members only and that the conditions of use are the same as those applicable to the Contact List.

(see The Contact List and page 61 of this Handbook)

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GIFT AID FORM

SIGNED-UP MEMBERS (EO Membership Declaration)

General Information for Members

Welcome!

A members' introduction to home education and the support charity Education Otherwise

Education Otherwise

Is a membership organisation providing information and support for families who choose to educate their children otherwise than at school, and for those who wish to uphold the freedom of families to take proper responsibility for the education of their children. EO forms a 'grass-roots', self-help group in which everyone is welcome to play a part; all those who offer support to others or help in any way, including running the organisation, are volunteers. Through each other, members increase access to wide-ranging experiences, expertise and even resources. National and local gatherings give opportunities for developing friendships, with all members being encouraged to participate, if they wish, in social activities, workshops and business meetings. Ideas to improve this mutual support network are always welcome.

Support for Members from Education Otherwise

New members receive: this introductory document; a free copy of *School is Not Compulsory*; a contact list of EO members; bi-monthly newsletters; discounts on EO publications; free access to many places of interest; and, very importantly, the support of a voluntary Local Contact, who can help new members feel at home with home education and EO. Where there is no Local Contact for an area, members should feel free to contact a Local Contact for an adjacent area. If you have any difficulty accessing a Local Contact please get in touch with the Local Contact Co-ordinator. The Local Contact should have up-to-date news of members plus any local activities, and they may be able to advise about the attitude and 'expectation' of the Local Education Authority. Other volunteer members offer specific support or information on issues such as school anxieties, single parenting, special needs, child protection (access through the General Secretary), pre-16 College entry, GCSEs, newsletter production and contributions, publicity and research work. Detailed legal information and support is accessible through Local Contacts, some of whom assist personally.

What is home education?

A fundamental aspect of our society is that parents are responsible for ensuring children receive proper care and a "suitable" education. A suitable education may be provided by attendance at different types of school; learning at home and in the community with parents, family, friends, and/or tutors (including informal work and skill based mentors); or through a combination of the two called flexi-schooling. Families who choose to provide a home and community-based education come from all backgrounds, circumstances and beliefs, and have many reasons for deciding to do this. Some continue the home education of their child beyond the official start of compulsory education at five years; others withdraw their child from school, perhaps following concerns or difficulties. A unifying factor though is a belief that a range of alternatives is needed to cater for children's individual needs, interests and learning styles.

Home educating may seem daunting at first and cause much re-thinking of life and learning. However, families generally report increasing confidence in their abilities to develop an approach to education that is unique, individual and often child-led. Home education may be very different from the school-regulated approach, but research shows that amongst other things home educated children are noted for their well developed sociability and their

academic achievements. This powerful combination equips them well for dealing with life's opportunities and problems. Further, parents of children who have developed severe school anxieties possibly leading to school refusal, report a steady return to balance in general and with enthusiasm for learning being completely restored.

Legal Requirements

Parents must see that their children receive education, but they need not send them to school. In England and Wales, children must receive education "either by regular attendance at school or otherwise" (Education Act 1996, s.7); in Scotland, education must be provided "either by causing [the child] to attend a public school regularly or by other means" (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, s.30). Although most parents do enrol their children in schools, the two alternatives have equal status in law. There is no question of seeking special dispensation to home educate, and if the child has never been to school there are no formalities involved in starting home-based education. Furthermore, "suitable" education may take a variety of forms. In particular, home-educators, unlike state schools, are not bound by the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Where a child is being withdrawn from school in order to embark on home-based education, the situation is slightly more complicated. In England and Wales, the parents will normally need to write to the school asking for the child's name to be deleted from the admission register on the ground that the child "is receiving education otherwise than at school" (Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9(1) (c), 1995); in Scotland, they will need to get consent to the child's withdrawal from school from the education authority (Education (Scotland) Act 1980, s.35 (1)).

Local education authorities (England & Wales) and education authorities (Scotland) are mainly concerned with school education, but they do have a duty to take action if it seems to them that a "school-age" child in their area is not receiving suitable education. Authorities invariably take this to mean that they have a duty to check up on home-educating families they know about. For England and Wales, a court ruling established in 1980 that LEAs are entitled to ask informally for information about educational arrangements. Exactly how this information is provided is a matter for negotiation between the LEA and the family.

For more detailed accounts of the legal background to home education in England & Wales and in Scotland, see elsewhere in this handbook.

Common questions

Do parents need permission to home educate?

No. As parents are responsible for their child's education, parents have the right to take appropriate decisions. The same applies to children with special needs, except where they attend a Special School (see SEN section). Parents in Scotland need to consult the Education Authority, but permission should not be unreasonably withheld.

Do home educators have to inform the LEA?

No. There are no legal requirements in England & Wales for parents to inform the LEA of the intention to home educate a child. The authorities will, however, automatically be aware of those who have been removed from a State school because of the de-registration procedure.

Do parents have to be trained teachers?

No. Parents do not need any formal qualifications to home educate. Parents do need the desire to help their children learn, which may involve learning with them - learning is not synonymous with teaching! Nor does efficient learning have to revolve around lesson and

curriculum planning, or testing and recording. What is required is time, commitment and resourcefulness.

Do families need a timetable, or a special room or facilities?

No. Schools need timetables and classrooms to cope with large numbers of children, but at home greater flexibility and originality is possible. Most home educators take advantage of learning in real situations, adding to their work at home by using a range of community facilities. Children do not need to keep to school hours as learning can, and does, take place at any time and anywhere. The education must be "full-time", but in a home-based context there is no definition of what this means.

Do home educated children have to follow the National Curriculum?

No. This, and the associated formal tests and assessments, apply to children in State schools only. Some parents do choose to follow the National Curriculum; others feel reassured using it as a guide, especially at first; others follow the child's interests, perhaps with varying degrees of formal structure in areas where they *all agree* this is beneficial. Active involvement, even full autonomy by the student in decisions about their education is usually considered of great importance. Although there are no compulsory subjects, and evidence of learning in separate subject areas is not required, families often do pay particular attention to literacy and numeracy skills and the acquisition of general and special knowledge. But, here again, a great deal of variation will occur depending on the child's individual style of learning. Also, this would not outweigh the importance placed by many on the development of personal and social skills.

So can parents provide the kind of education they feel is the most appropriate?

Yes. As long as it suits the child's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs, it does not isolate the child and it prepares them for life in a modern civilised society parents are free to provide the kind of education they prefer. This can be especially important for those with different learning requirements such as dyslexics, as they may not realise their potential in certain areas such as literacy, numeracy and organisational skills, within a standard time-scale. Conversely other aspects of their learning have the potential to move forward ahead of 'standard'

How do parents know that home education is right for their child?

The decision can only be made by the family concerned and depends on their individual circumstances. EO has a range of publications on offer to enable families to make an informed choice. Even so, written information is no substitute for the kind of support available through membership of EO with its network of home educating families. If a child does seem resistant to learning it may be worth investigating a fresh approach.

Can a home educated child go to school later if circumstances change?

Yes. Parents may approach a school at any stage to see if they have a place available. Many teachers say they welcome the social maturity and enthusiasm for learning often displayed by these children. Even if they have not been covering the same material, this confidence and flexibility means home educated children generally integrate well. Children who choose to go to school are usually committed attendees - some try flexi-schooling first.

'Flexi-schooling' unusual yet viable alternative, what is it?

Flexi-schooling means a child attends part-time, but permission is granted at the head's discretion, as this is not an absolute right. The child becomes a registered pupil, therefore the school has the advantage of receiving income related to that child, and any time at home is

considered 'absent with leave'. The arrangement does not have to lead to full-time attendance, but the child will become subject to the National Curriculum unless an exemption is applied for.

How do children learn at home?

The approaches to life and learning are as varied as those reasons for undertaking home education and as diverse and individual as the people involved. People join Education Otherwise from all social, cultural and educational backgrounds, a unifying factor is the desire to facilitate their child's development. Families usually discuss ideas and decide together what they feel comfortable with, the approach often varying as the child develops and parents become more experienced and confident. Siblings often study in a different way reflecting recognition of individual styles of intelligence. Many people believe that education can be highly successful in other ways than the approach that is taken in school. This view is certainly supported by research which has investigated effective learning. Case law has established that many different approaches can fulfil the legal requirements for a "suitable education".

Some parents teach in a formal manner, using a fixed timetable that keeps to school hours and terms, and with a curriculum based on traditional school subjects. This approach may be chosen when a child is first withdrawn from school, the family appreciating the sense of stability offered by a familiar routine. If a return to school is likely in the future, many families prefer to plan their education in a similar way. Sometimes a fully, or partially, structured approach is the child's choice. Other families take advantage of the freedom from having to follow a strict timetable, and choose an autonomous approach, using a child's real life interests and natural curiosity as a starting point and allowing the child to determine what and how to study. Subject areas may be integrated by means of topic and project work. Children whose enthusiasm for learning has been seriously affected by school problems often benefit from this relaxed and child-centred approach.

Home educating allows families to choose aspects and materials from other educational philosophies such as Steiner and Montessori, or from therapists like Peto, and incorporate them into their own unique approach. There is no "correct" educational system that suits all children as they are individuals who learn in different ways, at varying speeds and have different abilities, aptitudes and interests. It is vital for parents and children to choose the kind of education that is right for them, the main thing probably being to have a positive outlook on life and education. Home education often seems to evolve of its own accord with the child being an active participant. This may not produce a uniform 'end product' but it does allow children to develop as flexible and motivated individuals who are positive about what they wish to contribute.

How can parents teach children things they do not know themselves?

Parents do not need to "know everything". A more important skill these days, with the ever increasing volume of facts which change and soon become out of date, is learning how to learn, how to think and how to find and use information. We live in an information rich society with easy and variable access to fascinating educational possibilities. We can add to our own knowledge in so many ways, through libraries, the media, clubs and societies, inter-active museums, the Internet, historic battle re-enactment's, open lectures etc. In the local community there are enthusiasts in many hobbies or professions who are usually more than willing to share their expertise with a keen youngster. Friends or neighbours may happily offer special knowledge and resources. Evening classes, private tutors, correspondence courses, educational books, materials and specialist equipment can be used as appropriate.

How much does education from home cost?

There is no financial assistance for home educators, so inevitably some expense will be incurred. However, home educators do not have to buy school uniforms, pay bus fares to and from school, or the other incidental expenses connected with school. Home education can cost as much - or as little - as parents are able or prepared to spend; many families manage on very low incomes. A lot of resources may be available in the home including equipment for measuring, weighing and simple science experiments as well as woodwork and other tools. Many families have access to computers and the internet. Many excellent educational broadcasts (including the Night Learning Zone and the Christmas Lectures etc) are available on radio and TV. Educational resource catalogues can provide many ideas for things to make together such as multiplication bingo or other such games.

Many libraries provide topic loans and special tickets for additional books. Some LEAs allow home educating families access to their teacher resource centres. Major industries have education packs (even 'propaganda' can be used educationally). Free and cheap materials can be obtained at Agricultural and others shows, exhibitions, and the like. A lot of materials are available free from businesses such as wood off-cuts. The EO membership card allows free admission to many places of interest, some local, and some of national interest such as English Heritage sites (if booked in advance).

Social and educational visits involve some expense, but many E.O.er's arrange group discounts for trips to places of interest. It is always worth asking whether, as a home educator, you can have a discount.

Clubs such as Brownies, Venture Scouts, and Woodcraft Folk, and local drama, art, sports or music clubs are all popular with home educators and school children alike. So are special interest societies such as conservation groups like 'Watch', joining in the local 6th Form outdoor pursuits expeditions with school friends, gardening co-operatives or junior archaeological events. So families may have this expense anyway. All of these activities can be a great source of friendships.

De-registration & contact with the LEA.

How do parents take their children out of school?

Parents must write to school asking the head to remove the child's name from the register because the child is receiving education otherwise than at school. The head then has a duty under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 9(1) (c) to remove the child's name from the admissions register and inform the LEA - s.13 (3). Parents in Scotland need to approach the Education Authority for consent (Education (Scotland) Act 1980 s.35) but, as stated earlier, this consent should not be unreasonably withheld. Families whose children are being withdrawn from school need to ensure they have followed the necessary de-registration process, or the LEA may instigate non-attendance proceedings. It is crucial to state in the de-registration letter that *"the child is receiving education otherwise than at school"* since any other wording may be used as an excuse not to remove the child's name from the register. Members of EO should seek information from their Local Contact in case of difficulty.

What form will contact with the LEA take?

As stated earlier LEAs are entitled to ask home educating families informally for information about their approach, but it is for both parties to negotiate how any discussions about provision are to take place. LEA representatives often prefer to visit the home. However this is only one possible arrangement and they do not have an automatic right of access to the home or child. Families might decide that this is the simplest way to proceed and agree to a visit at a mutually convenient time; especially where parents feel confident that the

representative understands that home education is quite different from school. The frequency of any future contact may be considered at this time as well. Many parents prepare a summary of aims and resources, and keep an education diary as a (private) source from which to extract information for further visits. LEAs are mainly interested in hearing about broad-based educational opportunities and the availability of social contact. Parents can ask for a copy of any reports and comment on them if necessary.

If for any reason parents do not wish to have a home visit, for instance where a child is still feeling over stressed after a difficult period at school, or because they feel that it would be intrusive, they can send in written representations instead. This may include samples of work and third party verification, but does not have to. If for any reason a family feels the LEA or its representative is taking an authoritarian stance, then they might want to discuss the situation with their EO voluntary Local Contact (who may in turn seek assistance if required). Attitudes of LEAs do vary, but EO is working to improve their understanding and treatment of home educators.

What if the LEA do not think the education being provided is good enough?

There is a formal procedure the LEA must follow if they think arrangements are not adequate. The LEA can serve a School Attendance Order (see S.I.N.C. or the EO Legal Summary "In Case of Difficulties") and parents may be threatened with prosecution if they do not comply with this. If parents decide not to comply with a School Attendance order they will have the opportunity to show that their arrangements are suitable in court. The court will accept evidence in a number of forms and will be looking for evidence that would convince a reasonable person on the balance of probabilities that a suitable education is being provided. Parents do not have to defer to the LEA's view of what constitutes a suitable education. Families in Scotland may present their case to the Children's Panel.

Where a child is being home educated following a period of stress, and the education really can be shown to be less than adequate, then there are many reasons why parents need their LEA to show special understanding. These children may have been under-achieving in school in any case and home education can, in time, prove to be a highly effective alternative. A period of recovery may be needed for confidence and interest in learning to return and it is worth trying to negotiate with the LEA to allow time for this to happen. This would apply particularly to those who have become severely school anxious as they are running out of options. The alternative, if it means forcing school attendance, potentially holds very serious implications for the child's future well-being.

Socialisation

What is socialisation?

People frequently enquire about the socialisation of home-educated children, but parents have found that the question is often based on a rather narrow interpretation of 'socialisation'; i.e. that which occurs in school. More broadly, people can think of socialisation as the ability to mix freely and comfortably with different people. Professor D. Lawton, Head of Curriculum Studies at the University of London Institute of Education, comments: "Primary socialisation takes place in all societies, mainly within the family, as a process of inducting children into the rules, beliefs, and values of society; they are taught the kind of knowledge necessary to allow them to live in society and become members of it". The process is furthered and enhanced as young people become more actively involved in their community, communicating with a broad range of individuals in work, play and every day life settings. This integrated way of life is truly traditional and develops a feeling of belonging and commitment.

Do children need school socialisation?

Socialisation in the classroom or playground is of a very specific kind. Children are usually grouped with large numbers of others in the same age range, relationships between those of different ages being less common. This also applies to contact with adult staff which tends to be more formal than social (this balance of young to older does not reflect a natural community, and may be the source of some of the feelings of alienation experienced by young people today). Also, some socialisation learned in schools is highly undesirable. For example, it can be difficult to avoid peer group pressure and so many pupils join in activities that go against their better judgement. Further, some school children find they are lonely in spite of being part of a crowd; many have experienced this paradoxical kind of isolation and cite it as a reason for joining EO.

Surely children need school to learn how to work in a group, and to prepare them for coping in later life?

Of course school is one way to learn some valuable skills useful in later life, for example working co-operatively in groups, but a child who does not attend school can utilise the many opportunities to become involved with learning and leisure groups in the community as mentioned above. Many people believe that home educated children do not have the opportunity to function in group settings, but this is not necessarily the case. Many home educated children participate in group activities with other home educators and in a variety of after school clubs and activities. It is also a myth that a child needs to suffer hardships in early life in order to cope with them in later life; it is secure, happy, confident children who, as adults, are able to cope with many diverse circumstances.

Where do children who are educated at home make their friends?

Children educated at home make their friends with other home educated children, with school children who live nearby (which in turn may give access to an even wider network of friends), and through clubs, play schemes and activity groups, etc. These are friendships of choice, and are based on mutual respect and pleasure in each other's company, often spanning a wider age range than is common at school. Children may choose to have other home educators who live far away as pen pals and make long distance friends, meeting for holidays or at EO camps and national gatherings. It is the quality rather than the quantity of friends, or the amount of time spent together that counts. Home-educated children may spend fewer hours in the company of large groups, and parents may have to make extra effort, but friendships tend to be positive and lasting.

Bullying in school

Bullying is a deliberate act designed to cause distress to victims in order to give a feeling of power to the bully. It ranges from name-calling, threats and teasing to ostracising an individual, extortion and physical assault. Bullying in school is a discipline problem that can lead a child to illness, truancy, school phobia and in some cases, even death. There are many misconceptions about the supposed 'value' of bullying. Some people suggest that bullying is a normal part of childhood and that victims probably bring it on themselves, but bullying is not natural. Bullying is learned behaviour and can be unlearned, just as co-operation and kindness can be learned instead. It is not character-forming, except in unhelpful ways, in that it may teach children to side with the bullies and ostracise the victims in order to protect themselves. It may also teach the victims that aggressive, dis-empowering behaviour is the most successful - not lessons which help children.

No child asks or deserves to be bullied. "Learning to mix more" can mean hiding real interests and abilities, compromising oneself in order to fit in, and pretending to be something one isn't.

Bullying should be sorted out at source as it is not the bullied child's problem, in fact if the 'problem' is that the child is refusing to go along with the herd, then s/he is showing real strength. Parents should tell the Head and school governors and even involve the LEA or a local councillor on the Education Committee if nothing is being done. Children have a right to be safe and aware that concerns about these issues are taken very seriously. Bullying can and must be stopped. Contact the Anti-Bullying Campaign (ABC) 0171 378 1446 and Kidscape 0171 7303300 for further help and ideas of possible whole school approaches. Parents of a bullied child may decide to consider another school or to home-educate (and many do with every success) but ideally this should be seen as a choice, a positive decision.

School "Phobia" or school anxieties.

The vast majority of children who experience severe school anxieties have understandable reasons for becoming upset such as unrecognised learning difficulties, bullying or being at odds with the social or learning environment. Children who are having problems at home with a bereavement or parental separation may also find it too difficult to manage school attendance. Again, this is completely reasonable. To apply the label "school phobia" to any of these children is misleading. It implies the child has a problem which must be rectified, effectively placing all the 'blame' on the child rather than addressing the issues.

Some school anxious children cope with support from family, friends, teachers, and officials connected to Education Welfare Departments. Others are helped by attending small classes in Pupil Referral Units (PRUs). Some schools are particularly good at giving the child time to recover, while actively dealing with the source of the problem such as bullying. Many children, however, do not benefit from this degree of sensitive understanding. In fact parents frequently report official behaviour of an oppressive nature. School anxious children often gain enormous benefit from an alternative approach such as home education and parents have a right to be informed of all options.

School anxious children and their parents may be greatly misunderstood and families can feel isolated. This is largely because school phobia is often misrepresented as a "separation anxiety". However most of these children are perfectly able to leave their families and homes in all situations except for attending school. Children may become deeply distressed, some to the point of ill health with real physical symptoms. Sadly some feel driven to trying to commit suicide.

Children who are unable to cope with the school environment are in danger of automatically being treated as if they have a mental or emotional problem and they may lose a great deal of self-confidence. Home education can provide a real opportunity for these children to regain self-esteem and interest in learning. Contact with other home educated children can also help children with school anxieties to realise that they are not alone in finding school a difficult environment.

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Can parents home educate a special needs child?

Yes. Anything other than this would constitute discriminatory practice. The Education Acts refer to the responsibility of parents to provide children with a suitable education, in school or otherwise, while taking account of any special educational needs. Parents do not need any training. Their special knowledge of the child's specific situation, coupled with information they will have received from health care professionals over the years, enables them to make informed decisions about the child's needs and how these can best be met. Specially trained teachers are not teaching the majority of children in school with special needs in any case; the same applies to the Advisors who may visit home educators.

What is a Statement of Special Educational Needs ?

Statementing is a procedure aimed at establishing and providing for the needs of a child who appears to have different learning requirements. Only a small percentage of children with special needs will eventually obtain a Statement. The LEA should initiate this assessment (or parents may request it) where the child is attending school. However many parents of children who are to be home educated say they don't feel Statementing is necessary. The procedure may take some years to get under way and some parents say they find the process difficult as opinions in these matters can vary quite considerably. In any case, where a child is going to be assessed, parents might consider obtaining the ACE Handbook (0207 354 8321) so they know what is involved.

Can a child with a Statement of SEN be educated at home?

Yes. Even where the Statement names a school. The LEA must arrange for the provision set out in the statement to be made "unless the child's parent has made suitable arrangements". Such arrangements can include home education and the de-registration procedure, if in school, is the same. The exception to this is where a child attends a special school as the permission of the LEA will be required before removing the child. This is meant to safeguard the child and is not meant to undermine the rights of the parent or limit their duties and responsibilities. Although permission is required, to deny parents of children in special schools the right to home educate without justification would amount to discriminatory practice. In all situations the annual review of the Statement will take place and visits to the Paediatrician or other professionals may be required where the process of Statementing is being implemented.

Dyslexia - a learning disability or a learning difference?

Dyslexia is an umbrella term that refers to a range of difficulties in processing language (written or verbal) and may affect short-term memory, such as remembering instructions, and sequential skills, like spelling and times-tables. Varying degrees of dyslexia are sometimes called "specific learning difficulties", but this is a less popular description to many dyslexics. It is a condition which affects 1 in 25 of our children, and something which may actually enhance certain aspects of right-brain functions such as problem solving skills. The increasingly less flexible approach to learning provided in schools means that a dyslexic child often feels at a disadvantage: a learning difference then becomes a handicap.

Our present system emphasises the need to have certain skills that may be more of a problem for dyslexics, such as the ability to remember facts taught in a certain way, and being an efficient scribe. Useful as these skills certainly are, they are likely to become less necessary as technology has a greater impact on ordinary lives. Not only can computers store information for us, they also enable people with varying degrees of literacy to convey what they wish to say. Citizens of the future will need to be flexible and adaptable and have the ability to manipulate easily available information in the most creative way.

Many children who turn to home education because they have become unhappy in school are later found to be dyslexic. With a fresh approach, unfettered by restrictions on learning certain skills to a set time scale, these children invariably flourish. When the time is right, progress in basic skills can be extremely rapid, and meanwhile the student will have the chance to enjoy learning in a variety of ways.

What about Courses and Qualifications?

Rather than limiting a child's chances of gaining qualifications, home education often enhances opportunity as the education can be tailored to meet each child's particular needs. Even those going into higher education without standard exams have various options, such as university Access courses, direct entry as a mature student, or enrolling in the Open

University at 18 years. Some people prefer to develop their position directly through employment; either self-employment, by taking a Modern Apprenticeship or by training through work-based qualifications, the NVQs.

GCSEs or A Levels may be taken over a number of years as the young person feels ready. There are a number of ways of taking the courses, such as independently, through Correspondence College, or classes at the local College of Further Education. Some families may pay a private tutor to work towards exam courses or when children hit a problem. It is well worth a visit to the local F.E. College to investigate options, both for 'academic' and 'skills-based' possibilities. The GNVQ courses on offer have proved very useful to many students, especially if dyslexic, as the material is mainly based on course work with learning support being readily available.

So, Education Otherwise, who are we? EO is you, me, our families and anyone who joins in support of a greater range of alternatives in education. We are a charity funded by members' subscriptions, there are no paid staff. We do not run on a *them and us* basis; all the members who help out are volunteers, people who are committed enough to offer some of their time to assist other families personally or the organisation more generally. Many members are not aware of the amount of work going on, such as with families who are facing (sometimes severe) difficulties. We are only able to carry on with this essential work thanks to the people who decide to join Education Otherwise and subsequently renew their annual membership. These funds are vital. On behalf of EO - thank you for joining and so supporting the organisation. If you have any ideas for developing EO's network (and more needs to be done), or feel you can contribute in any way to help extend the support we can offer, then please get in touch, either through your voluntary Local Contact, through any council member, or by writing to the newsletter or EO e-mail list with ideas.

This booklet offers a basic introduction to important issues relating to home education and may arouse your curiosity and interest in the many different aspects of education from home. Education Otherwise has a range of publications giving more detailed information, including many excellent books and a selection of special topic leaflets from the EO Information Leaflet Series. These leaflets cover in greater depth many of the topics referred to in this booklet, including for example a fuller description of the De-registration procedure; Courses & Qualifications; and a useful summary of the research which has been carried out into the effectiveness of home education. It seems researchers are no longer asking; "Is home education a viable option?" Rather the question has become; "Why is home education so successful in terms of the academic achievement and social development of children?"

De-registration letter for England and Wales (Sample)

Your address
The Date

Head teacher's Name School name and address

Dear (Head's name)

Name of child. Date of birth

I am writing to inform you that I/we have decided to withdraw our son/daughter from school in order to take personal responsibility for her education. Please delete her name from the register in accordance with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9 (1) (c) 1995, as she is now receiving education otherwise than at school.

Yours sincerely etc.

Child Benefit over age sixteen

When your home-educated child reaches the age of sixteen, they are still entitled to receive Child Benefit provided that they do more than 12 hours study per week, this being full-time study. It is important to understand this and make that clear when filling in the form that the DSS will send when the child is fifteen. The Child Benefit Office is likely to ask your LEA to confirm that you are home educating. If the LEA has been satisfied till now that the education is full-time and valid then that should also satisfy the Child Benefit Office. (The LEA would have taken steps towards a school attendance order had there been cause to doubt this was the case.) So whether or not your child is autonomously educated or studying for 'A' levels, as long as the Child Benefit Office is assured that your child's education is full-time, the entitlement to benefit should be secure, even if you have to appeal an original negative decision and claim payment of arrears. If you deregister from school after the age of sixteen it is possible that the benefit will be stopped without you being given the opportunity to make these declarations, you would still be entitled to appeal and the payment of arrears.

See SINC for relevant benefit law references and NL 149 for succinct article on this issue.

EO Business List (Internet)

This 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 List, which can be accessed via the website). To join the business list people will have to be approved and their membership will be checked before they are approved. They should go to <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/eobusiness/> to sign up for this list. Or, contact Jacqui Houlding jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk and request an invite. If they include their full name and address (as it appears on the white labels with the newsletters) then they can be added almost immediately.

EO Children's List (internet)

The EO Children's List is open to the children of members. To join the Children's List, the child should send an email to EO-Children-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and will receive an automatic reply requesting that his/her parents send an email giving their name and address so that verification of EO membership can be made, and giving permission for the child to become a member of the list. Once this has been done, the List Moderator can approve the pending membership. Any problems, contact Jacqui on jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk.

EO Website

EO has a website with lots of information and relevant links. Go to www.education-otherwise.org. There are also links to a number of general e-mail support lists.

Health

If required, all routine health checks, immunisation, dental and eye care that is normally administered by schools is available to home educated children via their GP or health visitor.

Membership Renewal

EO membership runs for a year from the time you join, and you will receive a newsletter every other month. With your 6th newsletter you should receive a renewal letter and a membership card. If you choose not to renew, we ask you to destroy the membership card. If you renew before end of the month in which you receive your renewal letter you should receive the next newsletter. If you do not renew in time, you will receive a second renewal letter instead of your next newsletter. You may renew at that time if you have not done so already.

If you have missed a copy of the newsletter due to late renewal you will still receive 6 copies of the newsletter before you need to renew again. If you want a copy of the newsletter that you did not receive you can buy a copy from Publications.

If you miss receiving a copy of the contact list and the handbook due to late renewal, then write to the Administrator including an SAE with stamps worth 69p(2nd class) or 88p (1st class).

The Newsletter

Is sent out bi-monthly to all members. If you change your address, phone number, email or other details or if your newsletter does not arrive please contact the Administrator. From the Newsletter, "Newsletter editorial policy : EO is legally responsible for the material printed in the newsletter, and sometimes it is necessary to edit letters and articles to ensure that there is no possibility of legal action against EO. We try to consult with authors when this is necessary but we reserve the right not to print anything we consider puts EO at risk."

Phone Co-op

EO runs the enquiry line through The Phone Co-op, which is the only co-operative non-profit making telecommunications provider in the UK. They were quick and efficient and gave us a very good deal. They are also the first telephone company in the UK to neutralise all of its carbon dioxide output!

EO has an Affinity Scheme where members can use The Phone Co-op on their BT line, save money on their calls AND 6% will go to EO. The Phone Co-op provides very competitive rates and ploughs profits back into the charities that 'own' it via these Affinity Schemes. And there are no chief executives or shareholders raking in cash from your calls.

To become a customer costs nothing; there are no set up charges, no monthly fees, no standing charges, no change of phone number. Once you register, you dial a four-digit code before the number. The Phone Co-op will bill you monthly only for the calls you make with the code. Their prices, especially for long distance calls, are well below BT's rates. The minimum call rate is 1p (plus VAT) rather than the 4.2p (plus VAT) with BT. None of your other BT services (such as 1471, 1571 or Call Minder) are affected.

The Phone Co-op can also provide you with an 0845 number direct to your home phone, so friends, family and other EO members can contact you for the costs of a local rate call. Plus internet deals, savings on international calls, other offers, and the chance to invest in and become a member of the co-operative.

Call Customer Services on 0845 458 9004 and ask for a registration form (check whether they need to see a copy of a recent BT bill as this used to be the case) and to discuss the current Phone Co-op prices, or look at <http://www.education-otherwise.org/eo/phone%20co> for a current comparison with BT charges.

AND REMEMBER – say that you want to join the Education Otherwise Affinity Scheme

The Phone Co-op Ltd, 5 The Mill House, Elmsfield Business Centre, Worcester Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5XL

Stationery

The items below are stocked by Ali Willer, 28 Cozens Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF or simon.whitehall@tesco.net

EO headed notepaper A4/A5
Re-use address labels
Enquiry leaflet
Publications order form
Trifold leaflet (home education - a real option)
"Welcome to EO" leaflet
Membership form
Car Sticker

Truancy Packs

- Available from: Penny Clarke pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk
5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 0HL All members receive one Home Education card, but further copies are available from EO HE Cards (at above address) upon receipt of a stamped, addressed envelope and 1 x loose 2nd class stamp for each card required.

Volunteers

Work done for EO is on a voluntary basis but some expenses can be reclaimed. Contact the Treasurer for expenses guidelines. From time to time decisions will be made to buy in some services, such as printing the newsletter.

EO is run almost entirely by volunteers and vacancies are advertised from time to time in the newsletter. Members interested in volunteering for a position should speak to the current post holder or the person designated in the advertisement to find out about the job and/or to offer their services. Their offer then goes to this next meeting where the appointment is approved (as usually happens) and minuted, and they are made 'Acting' for a period of 6 months - about 2 meetings in practice. If there is an urgent need for a replacement, the Council can proceed with the appointment and this decision would go to the next meeting. Volunteers can be ratified in post after the 6 month period.

What is Education Otherwise?

Education Otherwise (EO) 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 work is carried out by a team of members who volunteer their services free to support other members and to promote home-education.

EO is a limited company with charitable status. There is a council consisting of 14 to 19 members who are legally responsible for what the organisation does and a network of voluntary Local Contacts and administrative volunteers as well as contacts for special concerns.

Who is on the Council?

Council members are elected by signed up members at the AGM. Candidates are either recommended by the council or proposed by any signed up member following the procedure which appears in the newsletter before every AGM. Any member of EO can become a signed up member by completing the form at the back of this handbook and sending it to the General Secretary. Members can also become signed up members at the AGM.

On the whole council members are people who have taken on jobs within EO. People who are interested in becoming council members usually start by coming to business meetings joining in the work of the organisation, and showing that they are reliable and co-operative.

Anyone who is competent, responsible, willing to be active, and in sympathy with the general ethos of EO, is likely to be an asset as a council member. We rarely have more people willing to accept council membership than we need.

Council members should normally not serve more than two consecutive terms or 6 consecutive years and should normally have some direct experience of home education.

Business Meetings

EO business is dealt with at Council Meetings and at General Meetings. Council meetings, which can be quite informal, cater for the routine running of the organisation. General meetings, which have to be conducted in a much more formal way by company law, allow *signed up members* a) to appoint council members, b) to consider the accounts, and c) occasionally to vote on special resolutions and formal issues. Special resolutions have to be put in the newsletter, or posted out to all guarantors, along with statutory notice of General Meetings.

Signed up members are members who have guaranteed to pay £10 in the event of EO going bankrupt, thus 'acquiring an interest in the company' and becoming eligible to vote at general meetings. An application form for this purpose can be found at the back of this Handbook.

Gatherings

Business meetings generally take place during gatherings or camps which can last from a few days to a week, although sometimes business meetings are held at one day gatherings. Gatherings give members from different parts of the country a chance to meet and share interests and activities. Members also get a chance to meet council members and officers and to discuss issues with them and with other members outside of the formal meeting structure. Gatherings are particularly useful for contacts and others involved with EO business because they allow an opportunity to exchange local experiences and to develop a support network. All members are encouraged to attend gatherings for all or part of the time although members are also welcome just for a day or just for the business meeting. There are also camps without business meetings held all over the country which allow the same opportunities for meeting people, exchanging ideas and making friends.

What happens at a council meeting?

There are three council meetings a year with an AGM at one, and EGMs (extraordinary general meetings) are held when necessary. Council meetings are normally open (i.e. anyone can attend, and speak when recognised by the chair), and run by consensus, with no differentiation between council members and others. Anyone can ring or write to put something on the agenda, can make their views and concerns known to the meeting, and can ask the meeting to consider doing something. This means that in practice regular attendance at meetings is more important than council membership.

The council, however, remains legally responsible for what is done (with unlimited liability in certain situations), so it has to be allowed the last word if controversy should arise. When there is disagreement and an issue is urgent, it can be settled by a vote of the council members only. This might well be preceded by a vote of the whole meeting, which has no binding power but which the council members would take into account. If there is controversy a decision is usually postponed to allow for wider discussion in the newsletter. On the rare occasions when something can be boiled down to yes/no, and agreement cannot be reached, postal voting may also be used so that the whole membership can express their opinion.

Full council minutes are sent to anyone who sends apologies, as well as everyone who was there. Members can have a copy if they send stamps and a self addressed label, to the Meetings Secretary or the General Secretary but some time ago a custom was started of publishing an informal summary of the meeting in the newsletter, generally written by the Chair of the council.

In addition there is a steering group consisting of the General Secretary, the Chair, the Treasurer, and two other council members. The steering committee, in consultation with as much of the council as possible, deals with any business too urgent to wait until the next Council meeting.

Where does the membership money go?

The bulk of the membership fee goes to producing and distributing the newsletter and the contact list. If anyone is interested in the accounts (sent out automatically to signed up members each year), they can obtain a copy by sending an SAE and stamps to the treasurer. We encourage people to read the accounts carefully and to share in the responsibility for the organisation's finances.

Where do I go if I need help?

Any members needing information or help should first contact their voluntary Local Contact. If there is no voluntary Local Contact for their area, or if the voluntary Local Contact is unable to help, then any of the officers or council members are happy to be contacted. In addition there are contacts people listed in the back of the newsletter that can help with specific issues.

How can I contribute to Education Otherwise?

If you are interested in becoming more involved with EO you can attend council meetings, learn about the issues, and volunteer to help out with anything that needs doing. At a local level you can help to organise events and offer your services to support your voluntary Local Contact.

People who are well known to their voluntary Local Contact or to an existing council member often take responsibilities within the national organisation without necessarily attending business meetings. There is also a list of members who are happy to do small jobs, i.e. sticking labels on envelopes. If you are interested in being on this list contact the General Secretary or the Treasurer.

Who Does What in EO June 2003

This List is maintained and updated regularly by Priscilla Park-Weir. If you need a current copy please contact Priscilla at priscilla@pvpw.fsnet.co.uk or 212 Gordon Ave, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2NT (01276 22735 or 0845 458 3085)

Please inform her immediately of any errors or changes.

(VOLUNTARY LOCAL CONTACTS for each county are listed in the separate Contact List)

Council Members (and their areas of responsibility)

Geraldine Adams, 87B Evershot Road, London N4 3DF
Tel: 020 7263 4922 (School Phobia)

Jane Bathgate, Tudhope Cottage, Lanton Road, Jeddburgh, Roxburghshire RD8 6RY
Tel: 01835 862 118

Pam Bellinger, 56 Beech Drive, Braunstone, Leicester LE3 3DA
Tel: 0116 282 7929 (General Secretary)

Keith Charlton, 2 Winslow Road, Newton Harcourt, Leics LE8 9FT
Tel: 0116 259 2118 e-mail: kcharlton@care4free.net (Local Contacts)

Penny Clarke, 5 Ridge Way, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 0HL
Tel: 01922 745 465 e-mail: pennyclarke@blueyonder.co.uk (Info for other Orgs.)

Martine Frampton, 3 Redesdale Mews, Hospital Road, Moreton in Marsh, Glos GL56 0BQ
Tel: 01608 812 411 e-mail: martine-frampton@macunlimited.net

Yvette Hartley, 17 Maesingli, Newport, Pemb. SA42 0TE
Tel: 01239 820 968 e-mail: yeh@onetel.net.uk

Lynda Hitchman, 31 Audley Street, Reading RG30 1BP
Tel: 0118 961 4466 e-mail: lynda.h@lineone.net (Database)

Jacqui Houlding, 38 Garwood Close, Westbrook, Warrington WA5 8TF (Web Site & e-lists)
Tel: 01925 654856 e-mail: jc_houlding@onetel.net.uk

Garry Humphreys, 'Fairacre', Skidbrooke Rd, South Somercotes, Louth, Lincs. LN11 7DD
Tel: e-mail: garryhumphreys@lineone.net (Treasurer)

Celia McDonagh, 169 Habershon Street, Splott, Cardiff CF24 2LA
Tel: 029 2073 3629 e-mail: celiamcdonagh@yahoo.co.uk (Media)

Gary Podmore, 52 Rupert Rd, Sheffield S7 1RP
Tel: 0114 258 5702 e-mail: sian.podmore@eotherwise.fsnet.co.uk

Julie Ridley, 32 Cheltenham Road, Chorlton-Cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9QN
Tel: 0161 860 7589 e-mail: ridleybirks@breathemail.net

www.kingarthurslabyrinth.com

Red Kite Feeding Station
Gigrin Farm, South St
Rhayader Powys LD06 5BL

Groups of children £1 per child, carers free.

Andrew Logan Museum of Sculpture
Aquaduct Rd, Berriew
Welshpool Powys SY21 8PJ
(01686) 640689
www.andrewlogan.com

Show EO card for school rate of £1 per head.

Powysland Museum & Montgomery Canal Centre
The Canal Wharf
Welshpool Powys SY21 7AQ
(01938) 554656
<http://powysmuseums.powys.gov.uk>

Children are free, but small groups may book to use activities/art materials attached to temporary exhibitions for £1-£1.50 per head.

Ireland

Environment & Heritage Service
Commonwealth House, 35 Castle St,
Belfast, C Antrim, BT01 1GU
www.ehsni.gov.uk/education/monuments

Educational visits to historic monuments free if prebooked. Write to Ann Henderson at the above address stating Education Otherwise group, name of monument, date & time you wish to visit, number of children/adults in your group, whether you require a tour. If date, etc. is okay she will send you a permit. List of monuments on website.

Ecos Millenium Environmental Centre
Kernohan's Lane, Broughshane Rd
Ballymena, C Antrim, BT49 7QA
(0282 5664400
www.ecoscentre.com

Show EO card for admission at schools rate.
Adults £3, Children £1.75.

Botanic Gardens & Ulster Museum
Stranmillis Rd
Belfast, C Antrim, BT09 5AB
(0289) 0383000

Free lessons available to groups of home educators. Too many to list, phone them for details.

WhoWhatWhereWhenWhy Science Centre
Odyssey, 2 Queen's Quay
Belfast, C Antrim, BT03 9QQ
(0289) 0467700
www.w5online.co.uk

Show EO card for educational rate. Valid on school days only.

Carrickfergus Castle
Marine Highway
Carrickfergus, C Antrim, BT38 7BG
(0289) 3351273

Prebook a group in the name of Education
Otherwise for free admission, 1 hour tour and worksheets. Book well in advance as they have to than send you your free permit. Show EO card on arrival.

Procedures

Agenda Items and Reports

Draft reports from post holders, working groups, and small groups should be sent to the General Secretary at least 3 weeks before each council meeting. Agenda items should also be sent to the General Secretary at least 3 weeks before each council meeting.

Agendas and copies of the reports are sent to council members two weeks before the meeting, and are available to any member who sends the General Secretary an SAE or an e-mail address.

Complaints

Obviously some people just want a sympathetic ear to let off steam in confidence and the complaints group are more than happy to do this or to discuss any complaints that people feel they would like to make. Of course anyone's name connected with the passing on of information connected with complaints or potential complaints is to be treated with strictest confidence.

After this initial contact, should they wish to take the complaint further, we ask that the complaint is written down and sent by email or post to the complaints group. The complaints group will respond and write to the second party asking for their version of events.

Upon receipt of this, the complaints group will jointly decide whether mediation or further action is called for. At all times both parties will be kept informed of any development. Martine Frampton, Celia McDonagh and Anne Rix (for contact details see list of "Who Does What") are the contacts for complaints and problems.

Contact List – Use by Members

Members who choose to be included in the contact list have indicated that they would like to have contact with other members. Feel free to contact anyone in the contact list for social purposes or to talk about home education. Please remember, however, that the information contained in the contact list is confidential and for the sole and personal use of members. You must not make information from the contact list available to non-members, nor may you use it for business or research purposes. Members who use the contact list for purposes other than social contact or who divulge information in it to non-members will have their memberships terminated immediately.

Database - Undertaking by those who hold a copy

The data will remain the property of Education Otherwise Association Limited. A computer that holds the database should not be linked to the internet unless checks are made to ensure that others could not access the data.

Security and confidentiality will be maintained at all times and sufficient back up discs will be made. From time to time security back up copies of the database will be sent to the General Secretary.

Education Otherwise Trading Ltd

EO Trading was set up as a separate company from Education Otherwise Association Ltd so that our trading activities, which might be taxable, could be kept separate from our charitable activities. Another side effect was to help keep EO Assoc below the VAT threshold. It has been set up in such a way that any profit is covenanted back to EO Assoc but otherwise the running of the company is the responsibility of the Directors of that company. It is recommended that one Director of the Trading Company should also be a Council member of EO Assoc.

The main task of EO Trading is the selling of our stock of books. Suggestions on what books we sell or reprint are passed on by EO Assoc Publications small group who are also responsible for updating books and information leaflets as necessary. Selling T-shirts and running camps, gatherings and conferences also come under the auspices of EO Trading.

Currently EO Trading has four directors, one being the secretary and one being the treasurer. The only shareholder of EO Trading is EO Assoc who appoint a member for all meetings that EO Trading hold. It is recommended that EO Assoc appoint the Secretary of EO Trading as the member representing them, as this means statutory meetings, such as the AGM, are quorate when the Secretary alone is present.

When EO Trading was set up, the stock of books was transferred to EO Trading and recorded as a loan by EO Assoc (this asset replaced the books in its balance sheet). EO Trading has its own bank account for its business, where it accumulates monies

until they are paid to EO Assoc under the annual deed of covenant. If EO Trading cannot pay for additional stock then EO Assoc can lend it additional money via the loan account until the books are sold.

If it was ever decided that EO Trading should stop trading, the stock of books and the EO Trading bank balance should be sufficient to repay the EO Assoc loan.

LEAs (and other organisations) as members

We agreed that it was not appropriate for some organisations (particularly LEAs) to become EO members, and all organisations applying for membership will need to be approved by the council first. In cases where it is not suitable for an organisation to become a member then the membership secretaries will send them information about EO and home educating, and, where appropriate, put them in touch with voluntary Local Contacts. (May 27th, 2001, in the steering group report) We will send them:

- A copy of SINC
- Copies of Summary of the Law
- Copies of the Enquirers leaflet
- Copies of the trifold
- Copies of the publications leaflet
- Organisations that we are happy to have as members will continue to receive newsletters but not contact lists.

Insurance Provision

EO has insurance to cover EO events. Details of the cover are:

1. Public liability. Up to £5,000,000
2. Personal accident.
 - Ages 14 to 75. Death, loss of limb, loss of sight, permanent total disablement. Up to £20,000.
 - Ages 12 or 13 and over 75, £7,000.
 - Temporary total disablement weekly benefit up to 104 weeks. Ages 16-75, £200, ages 14 or 15 £100. Ages 12 and 13 and over 75, £70.
 - Temporary partial disablement weekly benefit up to 26 weeks, age 16-75, £100, ages 14 and 15, £40.
3. Loss of money subject to the following limits
 - Non-negotiable money, £100,000
 - In locked safe on premises, £1,000
 - In private dwelling of committee member, £350
 - In transit, or in a bank night safe, £2,500
4. Personal accident (assault)
 - Death, loss of limb, loss of sight, permanent total disablement, £15,000
 - Temporary total disablement, weekly benefit up to 104 weeks, £100
 - Temporary partial disablement, weekly benefit up to 104 weeks, £25
 - Cost of cleaning, repairing or replacing damaged clothing or personal effects, £250 per person.
5. Employers liability. Up to £10,000,000.
6. Legal expenses. Up to £25,000

7. Personal liability and personal accident for additional attendees at the insured's functions. Up to £5,000,000

Contact the Treasurer should you need more information, including the certificate number.

Media – talking to the press

- The following list may be useful if you find yourself talking to the media. Many EO members do write to their local papers or find themselves being interviewed by the media.
- Home education is a legal option for anyone. It's education that's compulsory, not school attendance.
- You don't have to be a teacher / well educated to do it, you can learn together, however around a quarter of all HE families have a parent who is also a teacher, a sad indictment of the school system.
- Single parents can do it.
- Children with special needs can do well at home.
- People of all incomes home educate.
- It doesn't have to be anything like school.
- The National Curriculum only applies to State Schools, not home-educators.
- You don't have to work to a timetable or follow any set programme of work although some families choose to do so.
- Each child can be free to follow their own interests and learn at their own speed.
- Exams can be taken over a number of years in a variety of ways to suit the child and family.
- HE enables children to learn in a 'natural' environment without artificial constraints as to gender, age or ability.
- Isolation need not be a problem.
- EO puts families in touch with each other.
- Children choose their social contact.
- The local community can play an important part in HE.
- It promotes positive family relationships.
- Parents enjoy being with / learning with their children.
- You can give your children more attention.
- You can organise your own life rather than having to work around school hours.
- You can use local facilities e.g. swimming pools, at quiet times.
- You can take advantage of the weather, special events and unexpected opportunities.
- Every family has its own particular reason for and way of doing home education.
- Education Otherwise is a national support group run by volunteers.
- For more information or to join us, send an A5 sae to Education Otherwise, 31 Audley Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1BP or phone 0870 730074 for recorded details of phone contacts.
(Calls are charged at National Rate Find our website at <http://www.education-otherwise.org/>)

A few useful answers to difficult questions if you can't think of a quick response:

- I'll have to come back to you on that when I've had more time to consider it.

- I'll have to check EO policy on that.
- I couldn't comment, as the experience is individual to every family.

Remember to use; probably, possibly, maybe, type responses if you're not sure your answer covers all home educators.

Running a Gathering/Conference/Stall - Financial Guidance

Last updated January 2003

Education Otherwise Association Ltd now has a subsidiary company called Education Otherwise Trading Ltd. All the transactions for gatherings etc. are carried out by this subsidiary company. It is important that the finances of Education Otherwise Association Ltd (EOA) and Education Otherwise Trading Ltd (EOT) are kept separate. **All** money received for an event should be paid into **EOT**, and all expenses related to the event should be claimed from EOT and not added to other claims which may normally be claimed from EOA.

It should be kept in mind that stalls and events are primarily to promote home education, to make people aware of the option. Profit margins, particularly on books, are low. Whilst the aim would be to cover any booking costs, it is unlikely EO would be able to fund stall bookings at events where that cost is likely to be higher than the profits. In order to offset the costs for those running stalls, a percentage of the profit may be reclaimed by the stallholder in certain circumstances. Please contact Helen Donaldson (Treasurer EOT), when you send your stock taking form and pay-in stubs to her after the event, outlining how much the stall cost you, and what percentage of your takings were for EO if you want to take this option.

For gatherings, in the planning stage you will need to list **all** the expenses you expect to incur and work out the income you expect to receive. If you think you might be going to make a loss, EOA may be able to underwrite the event, but you will need to clear this with the Council in advance. The first point of contact for this clearance is Garry Humphreys (Treasurer EOA). If a council meeting is to be held as part of the gathering, the hire of the hall should be charged separately to EOA.

Please send in advance to Helen Donaldson for a form to record the financial transactions of the event. If you are running a stall selling books and T-shirts, ask Helen in advance for the form to ensure good book-keeping. She can also send you an expenses claim form. Please ask for cheques to be made payable to "Education Otherwise" rather than adding "Trading" or "Association", as this keeps it simple. People like to know that their bookings have been received and accepted, so be sure to send an acknowledgement (or tickets, if appropriate). You might want to include a map with details of how to reach the venue.

Money received should be paid in by post. Helen can provide you with some Triodos Bank pay-in slips and prepaid envelopes. Should you receive cash, please convert it into a cheque through your own bank account. When paying in cheques/P.O.s, fill in the pay-in slip and tear off the stub. When you send off the cheques and pay-in slip to Triodos Bank, please send the stub to Helen **at the same time**, together with a note of what the money is for. If you are going to sell EO books/videos/t-shirts, Helen will send you a stock form. If any of the money you are paying in relates to EO books etc., please complete this form and return it with the pay-in stub.

If you receive any invoices send them to Helen, who will pay them. Also send her any expense claims on the forms she provides, and please enclose receipts. If you do not have receipts for everything, please add your signature to the claim certifying that the expenses were genuinely incurred in connection with the event.

You need to keep a note of all money coming in and going out so that you can draw up a simple income and expenditure account after the event. **Do not** include money received for books or T-shirts. As the 'event' has not paid for these, it cannot claim the income from them, so this income should be recorded separately. A copy of the account should be sent to Helen so she can check it against the money passing in and out of the bank account.

Don't forget to order books/videos, T-shirts or EO literature in **plenty** of time. Jill Fisher has some display boards if you can arrange for them to be collected.

Useful Contact Details

EO Trading Ltd – Treasurer

Helen Donaldson, Domus, Crossheads, Colwich, Staffs ST18 0UG
01889 88 20 43 serf@unappreciated.co.uk

EO Association Ltd – Treasurer (for underwriting the event)

Garry Humphreys, 'Fairacre', Skidbrooke Rd, South Somercotes, Louth, Lincs. LN11 7DD
Tel: e-mail garryhumphreys@lineone.net

EO Literature – leaflets etc

Ali Willer, 28 Cozens-Hardy Road, Sprowston, Norwich NR7 8QF
01603 401 020 simon.whitehall@tesco.net

EO Books

Hazel Hutton, 39 Millfield Gardens, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 4PD
017687 72546 HHutton422@aol.com

EO T-shirts

Pat Connor, 2 Whitegates Lane, Earley, Reading RG6 1ED
0118 966 2123 TJJ.Connor@virgin.net

EO Hoodies and Mugs

Beth Fisher, 54 Ratcliffe Rd, Leicester, LE2 3TD
0116 212 8120 jill.fisher@care4free.net

Trade Mark

This is the wording on the Registration Certificate:

Trade Marks Registry. The mark below has been registered under No. 2172166 as of the date 15 July 1988.

Education Otherwise The mark has been registered in respect of: Class 41: support and advice to parents choosing to educate their children at home; promoting knowledge of the freedom to home-educate. In the name of Education Otherwise Association Ltd. Sealed this day in my direction. P.R.S. Hartnack. Registrar. DATE 29 January 1999.

Policies

E.O. & the Map

The map of E.O. on the following page, was devised to help set a context for the discussions on the future of E.O. which were held at a one day meeting in April 2003. The top section (*1 and *2) is applicable to the structure of any organisation and the bottom section depicts what actually happens in E.O. today, i.e. "the Practice". It doesn't get into detail of the practice, just broad headings of E.O.'s various functional operations in order to give an overview or context for E.O. as a whole. It is worth noting at this point that these functions within E.O. are almost entirely carried out by members/volunteers.

*1 **AIMS.** E.O.'s aims are set down in our memorandum of association and the core aims are:

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.

And the Association shall have the following powers exercisable in furtherance of its said object but not otherwise, namely:

To present, promote, organise, provide, manage and produce such classes, lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, conferences, exhibitions and publications, whether on any premises of the Association or elsewhere, as shall further the promotion, maintenance, improvement and advancement of education.

(The rest of the memorandum concerns things like property and money)

E.O.'s aims are summarised in a few lines for everyday purposes on many of E.O.'s publications (always on the back of the newsletter)

And interestingly, in the first newsletter (produced after the third meeting of what has become E.O., in Dec 1976; and recently reprinted for the 25th anniversary), it says:

..." This suggests that the network is really needed, to give that little bit of support and advice that will help people over the hump." And, (not yet the formal statement of aims and objectives)... "We identified some of the needs that exist that might be met by establishing some sort of national network. These are listed below, but not in any order of priority, except that the first overall aim underlies all the others:"-

- *To alleviate the sense of isolation of most de-schoolers, and the consequent anxieties and undermining of confidence they suffer from.*
- *To maintain contact between de-schoolers and others by a newsletter, by helping in the formation of groups, by arranging meetings, etc.*
- *To disseminate through the newsletter and otherwise up-to-date information about: a) people's experiences; b) available resources; c) exchanges; d) schools; e) local education authorities.*
- *To support people with general advice and where needed with specific help: a) legal aspects; b) presenting their case to the authorities; c) facing up to*

intimidation; d) formation of groups; e) educating children over 16 (problems of tax, social security and student privileges.)

- *To initiate a network of exchange resources.*
- *To establish contact with other groups with whom a fruitful liaison might evolve. Suggested groups were:- National Association of Gifted children; Advisory Centre for Education; Confederation for the Advancement of Education; The A.S. Neill Trust Assoc.; Schools Without Walls; Nat. Assoc. of Governors and Managers; New Education Fellowship; P.N.E.U.; Society of Teachers Opposed to Physical Punishment.*
- *Eventually to establish resource centres*
- *In the long term to act as a political pressure group.*

(You may agree that E.O., 25 years on, has done remarkably well by that list)

*2 In any organisation, aims need to be followed by **policy** to guide or underpin how the aims might be achieved. Policy is usually about the values behind the means (procedures and practices) and is not changed very often, nor, generally, does it need to be. Some of E.O.'s policy has not been written down, and where it has, it is buried in various old minutes and decisions from way back when. It has generally been passed on in the council meeting. In recent years E.O. has been trying to capture policy on paper when it makes itself obvious! The idea is that this goes into the handbook.

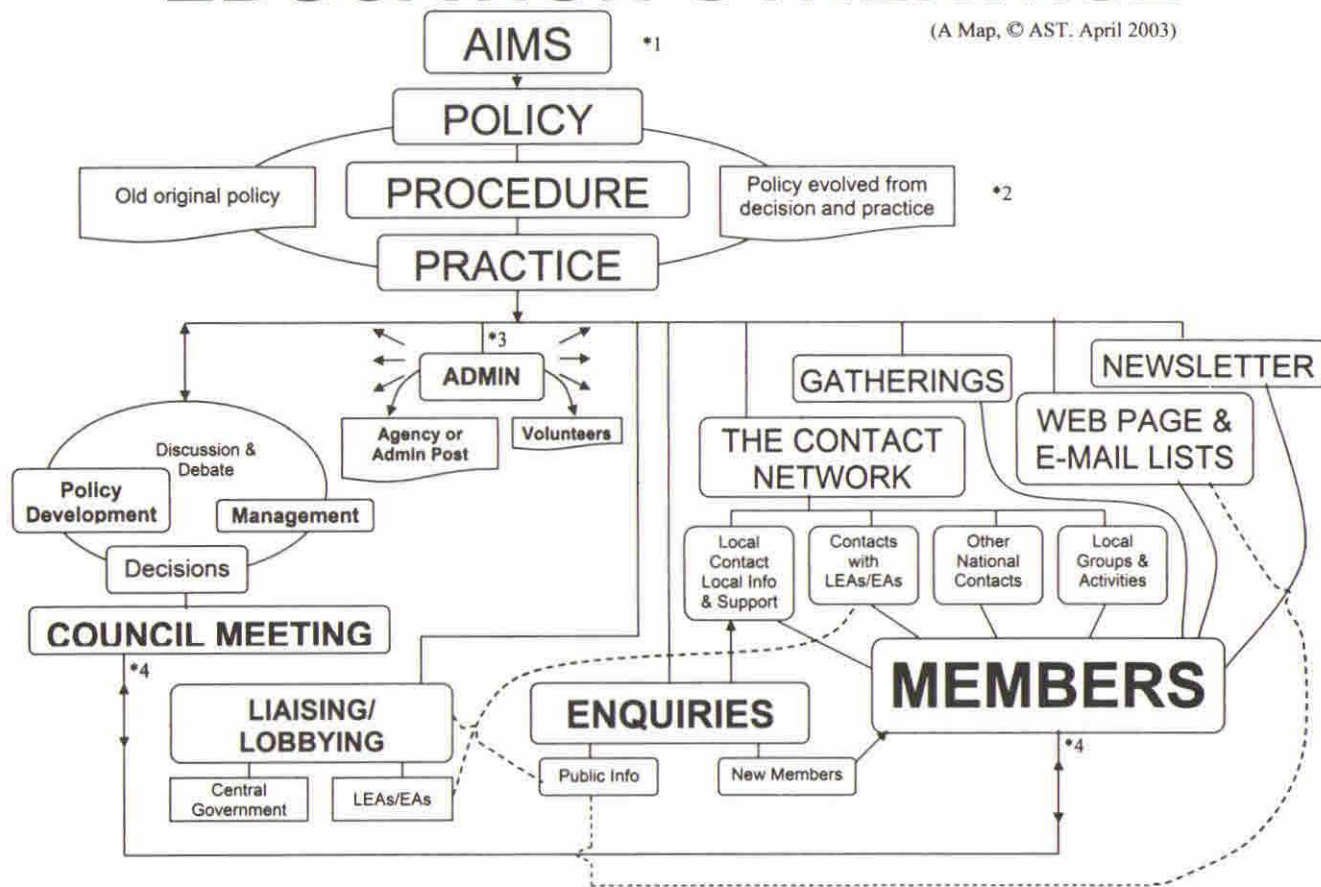
'**Procedures**' logically follow on from policy and are the agreed, preferred or recommended ways things are done, but sometimes procedures evolve from actual practice and certainly can be modified over time by practice. In theory, practice should aim to match laid down procedures. In E.O., agreed procedures have generally evolved from practice and often like policy are not written down.

'**Practice**' is what actually happens; how things are actually done on the ground (i.e. how the underlying aims are actually achieved) and that's what the Map above is depicting under broad headings. (The detail of how some of the jobs are actually done by different people in different parts of the country probably varies greatly.)

*3 **ADMINISTRATION.** Administration appears on the map like a many legged spider to indicate that it is not really a separate function but actually goes on in every job in E.O. and is usually carried out by the member doing that job. (NB. There is now an administration agency handling some specific areas of database and membership work.) Of course administration is facilitated these days by computer and internet use throughout E.O.

EDUCATION OTHERWISE

(A Map, © AST: April 2003)



Child Protection: Code of good practice (DRAFT)

'Please send feedback on the draft child protection policy to Anne Wade, rob.wade@tvu.ac.uk or 19 Perkin Close, Wembley, Middx HA0 2LY.'

Although this code of practice started off as guidelines for protection against sexual abuse, a narrow focus seemed unhelpful, and we have put it in the context of providing an environment which protects children physically and emotionally as well. We believe that the best safeguards both against paedophiles and to prevent false accusations are to support children to keep control over their bodies, without the threat of smacking, bullying or any unwanted physical intrusion, as well as the obvious sexual violation; and to promote the safe practices described here.

Events in places other than private homes

Physical environment

- Events should be held in safe venues.
- Any dangers inherent in a site, such as a cliff, river or busy road within walking distance, should be made known to parents before they attend an event, so that they have the information to decide whether the risk is acceptable.
- Any building used by groups with children should have up-to-date fire and health and safety checks, and owners or managers should be able to show certificates to that effect.

• ***Fire safety***

- Fire procedures should be clear to the organiser and assistants and should be explained to families attending.
- Families should cooperate with any fire drills and should comply with any notices relating to fire procedures.
- Families should provide any information needed to allow lists of people attending to be compiled.
- For fire safety purposes, families should keep the organiser informed of any changes to sleeping arrangements.

• ***Safe behaviour***

- Families must accept any safety restrictions imposed by the management of the premises or by the organiser of the event. (Any restrictions beyond those imposed by the management will normally be negotiated with the whole group.)
- The organiser of an event may exclude from it any family of which a member refuses to behave safely.
- When this has happened, the organiser of a subsequent event may require, both from the family and from the individual concerned, a written undertaking to abide by safety agreements.
- In consultation with the Council, the organiser of an event may refuse a booking to any family of which a member has refused to behave safely at a previous event.

First aid

- Adequate first aid kits and expertise should be available at all EO events. Disposable gloves should be worn when treating cuts and grazes, and when cleaning up body fluids. Cuts should be covered with a dressing.

Rubella and other infectious diseases

- If there is the slightest possibility that a family at an event has been in contact with rubella (German measles), or if someone develops it within three weeks following an event, it is vital to let the organisers know so that women in the early stages of pregnancy can take medical advice.
- Organisers should also be notified of any other infectious diseases.

Smoking

- There is no smoking at EO events, whether within the buildings, around the doors, or in front of children playing outside.

Illegal drugs

- If anyone brings illegal drugs to an event, the family will be asked to leave. The police may be informed.

All EO gatherings, meetings and activities

Publicity

- Notices for local meetings, whether printed or electronic, should quote a contact number rather than give full details of time and venue. This makes it less likely that anyone with harmful or inappropriate intentions will be attracted to the event.

Basic principles

- Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity.
- There should be no abuse or exploitation, no scapegoating, ridiculing or bullying.

Responsibility for children

- **Children and young people under the age of 18 remain the responsibility of their parents or guardians.**
- Another adult known to the parent may act *in loco parentis* provided a written statement to that effect is accepted by the organiser of the event.
- A more informal arrangement may be made when an adult is going off-site for a few hours, or is in a meeting, but the arrangement must be clear and acceptable to the child, to the adults involved, and to the organiser.
- In any case children should not be in the presence of a single adult who is not their parent (including, for instance, travelling in a car) unless that adult is formally acting *in loco parentis*.
- No-one should invade the privacy of anyone when they are using the toilet, showering, etc.
- If a child needs help, their parent should be called. If another adult has to help, perhaps because the parent is not nearby and the child is distressed, they should call a second adult to be present.

Activities for adolescents

- Some EO members may offer activities to older children unaccompanied by their parents. Whilst adolescents may benefit from such opportunities to develop independence, a number of precautions are necessary.
- Interested parents are entitled to a full description of any code of practice and/or safeguards that have been established in connection with an activity.

- Where an activity has taken place on previous occasions, the names of parents whose children have already taken part may be passed to other interested parents. Such interested parents should have access to the full list of parents of previous participants.
- The organiser of an activity should obtain certificates of enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau for themselves and all members of their team. EO may help with this (see below), but the responsibility for choosing to send young people on such activities remains with the parents.

Control of children

- No-one, child or adult, should behave in a way likely to make a child feel threatened or humiliated.
- Whatever the regime at home, control and discipline of children at an EO event should not include physical punishment, and this should be stated in the details of gatherings or meetings.
- An appropriate degree of physical restraint may be used only where it is immediately necessary to prevent harm to the child concerned or to other children present.
- When the need to restrain a child is more than momentary, the child's parent, or the person responsible for the child, should be called as soon as practicable.
- Non-coercion and autonomous education do not mean that everyone is allowed to do anything they like, but rather that everyone should be free to do as they wish provided it does not limit someone else's freedom and wellbeing.
- Older children developing romantic and sexual relationships should be helped to behave appropriately and non-exploitatively, and be aware of the needs of the whole group. Adults should be alert to any young person coming under sexual pressure within the group.
- If a child does not stop bullying another when asked, they should be removed from the group and kept with adults until they are ready to rejoin the group.
- Where any incident takes place which calls these principles into question, those involved should be encouraged to discuss the issues raised in a non-judgmental context.
- Nevertheless, families attending EO events who do not accept these principles (e.g. who hit children, or allow children to bully or behave dangerously) may be asked to leave.

Behaviour of adults

- Aside from the *in loco parentis* arrangements described above, **adults should ensure at all times that they are not alone with a child who is not their own.** This applies both to informal situations and to organised activities such as workshops.
- Other adults should make themselves available as necessary to see that such situations do not arise. Parents are in any case encouraged to attend workshops with their children where the child is likely to need support in order to cope with the activity.
- Guidelines are for the protection of adults as well as children. It is never enough to protest that we meant no harm, and that our actions are being misinterpreted. We each have a responsibility to act transparently and with such a margin that no error of interpretation is possible.
- Adults should abide by EO's equal opportunities policy and help children to apply it.
- Gatherings are family events with people from a wide range of backgrounds, and we should behave sensitively and with discretion.

- If we think someone is acting unsafely or in ways which might be misconstrued, we must be prepared to speak to them or to someone responsible.

General Membership of, and appointments within, Education Otherwise

- People who have been convicted of child abuse, or who have lost a job because of child abuse, will be excluded from the Association.
- EO is registered with the Criminal Records Bureau. The Council may decide which posts require the production of an enhanced certificate of disclosure. In addition, it may require any member to obtain such a certificate without giving reasons. The fact that a disclosure has been required should not in itself be taken to imply any judgement or opinion about the subject of the disclosure.

Tutors and youth leaders

- 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.

Cases of suspected abuse

- For any allegation we must consider, in this order,
 - a. the protection of the children,
 - b. the protection of an adult who may be being falsely accused,
 - c. the rights of the parents to have information to help them safeguard their children, and
 - d. the protection of the organisation.
- Before precipitating irreversible action we should help each other explore whether an anxiety is well-founded. Anyone who suspects child abuse at an EO event should discuss the matter with the organiser so as to make sure they are not misinterpreting it. Where the suspected abuse is physical rather than sexual, it may be appropriate to encourage people to discuss the issues raised in a non-judgmental context.
- **Anyone who suspects abuse should not ask the child questions about it.**
- Anyone to whom a child discloses abuse should listen supportively without actively responding, and without promising secrecy. At an EO event they should tell the organiser and the police, and not discuss it more widely.
- Anyone who has clear evidence of child abuse should report it to the police.
- Where there is no evidence of child abuse, EO members have neither the duty nor the right to intervene, or to report a family, simply because a child is being treated, within the family, in a way which they personally find unacceptable. The only effective intervention in a case which is not outside the law is to befriend the family and support them to function more lovingly.

Equal Opportunities Policy

The central paragraph is self-contained so it can be lifted and used in discussions with children in local groups, for instance, or on the children's pages.

Education Otherwise is a single-issue organisation, an umbrella group to support families of children who want to be home educated. There are many reasons for home educating, and many ways of doing it. We support each other in educating in whatever style suits a particular child: legally, parents must be able to show that for this particular child at this time, the education they are providing is suitable. We do not support the

removal of children from school against their wishes, or for reasons of racism or homophobia, or in order to segregate them from the community. We do not support keeping a child at home without offering them alternative educational experience. But we interpret education widely, as any experience which offers the child greater understanding and knowledge of, and compassion for, themselves, other human beings and the world around them, and the means to express their experience. The paramount concern of Education Otherwise is the welfare of each child. We actively resist discrimination on any grounds.

When we tried to list these grounds - race, gender, class, disability, sexual orientation, educational style... we kept finding more and more labels. Eventually we realised that the list could be as long as the number of people involved, and we came up with the following statement:

Equality

Everyone is equal, but everyone is different in some ways; and this variety is exciting and enriching. Some differences make life harder, for instance if we can't walk or we can't think very well. But as well as all having difficulties, we also each have individual gifts which other people may not have. Whatever our differences, we can all be fun and interesting and a good friend, unless we've been so badly treated that we're too miserable or angry - and then we have a responsibility to deal with this pain, so we don't take it out on each other. If someone is too unhappy to be friendly because they have been badly treated, we may help them become a friend by being friendly to them.

It is important to refuse to tolerate sexist, racist etc language, jokes and behaviour, both to avoid giving offence and to train ourselves out of the prejudices we were taught. We do not discuss religion or politics in the newsletter; or in EO Gatherings except with mutual consent. EO is not a forum for making judgments about other people's lifestyles and lawful choices. However, we do not support people who, on religious, political or idiosyncratic grounds, believe they have an inherent right to dominate children. EO does not exist to help people oppress children. We refuse to condone bullying between any members of the organisation, whether they be children or adults. It is never acceptable to put other people down, whether by intimidation and bullying, by sexual or other harassment, by sarcasm, or by any other lack of respect. AW 1999

Newsletter - Editorial Policy

GUIDANCE

The primary purpose of the Education Otherwise newsletter is to provide support and information for members. Education Otherwise supports all home educators irrespective of the particular approach they might choose to take in educating their children. The editors encourage members to make their own contribution, express their opinion and initiate debate. It is important that contributions are written in the first - or third-person ("I think this" or "She did that") rather than in the instructional or prescriptive second-person ("You should do this..." or "You are wrong to think that..."). Contributions can take many forms, for example: personal contacts, family stories, learning experiences, reflections on life as a home educator, expounding of a philosophical standpoint or resource recommendations.

The editors have a duty to produce a newsletter that is of most interest to readers, and all submissions will be subject to this principle, except Education Otherwise Council and administrative business, which must be included. Submissions may be edited for length

and available space, where this does not change the message of the contributor. Articles are more likely to be included where they are concise. Where a contributor is critical of another member or group, the latter will be consulted and offered a right of reply, to be included alongside the original item. Any contribution considered by the editors to be offensive to other members will be edited or not published.

GUIDELINES FOR ADVERTISING IN NEWSLETTER

Advertisements should normally be limited to 1/8 A4 page (approx. 50 words). It may not be possible to reproduce illustrations or logos.

Members can advertise small items free of charge. Members' wants and announcements are also free. Members' commercial enterprises (e.g. property rental, services etc.) are subject to a charge of £25 per issue. Members are asked to quote their EO membership number when sending advertisements.

Non-members may submit advertisements, subject to space and interest to members. A flat rate charge of £35 per issue (for 50 words) will be payable per 1/8 A4 (reduced to A5 on printing) page, unless the advertisement is clearly not for commercial purposes.

Flyers of up to A5 size may be included, where there are no more than two flyers per newsletter. (This does not include EO's flyers.) Inclusion of a flyer will be on a 'first come first served' basis. Should demand for this service increase, the editor will be responsible for restricting repeat insertions from the same individual or organisation, and for including those judged to be of most educational interest to members. The cost per issue will be:

PLAIN/THIN PAPER

Single sheet A5	£125
Double sheet (i.e. A4 folded)	£225

GLOSSY/THICK PAPER

2 page (i.e. single A5 sheet)	£300
4 page (i.e. A4 folded)	£550
(MAX) 8 pages	£1000

Payment for all advertisements and flyers must be made direct to the Treasurer by the deadline for each issue (1st of previous month).

In exceptional circumstances, a flyer may be included free of charge where submitted by a non-profit making educational organisation that is offering free or outstanding benefits of interest to EO members. A reciprocal arrangement may be agreed between a non-profit making home education organisation and EO on an individual basis, at the discretion of the EO council.

Newsletter – Guidelines for Editing The Childrens' Pages

- Use 8 sheets of good quality, white **A4** paper, typing on one side only, in **black**. Use a word processor, computer or typewriter with black ribbon. You can cut-and-paste things in to fit by hand if you like.
- Do not type too small, as the printer will reduce everything to fit an A5 sheet. Use a minimum of about Times New Roman 13 or Arial 12 (14 is probably better, and you can use larger for special effects if you have room), in any font (style of print) you like. This sentence is in Arial 14, this in Arial 12, and here is Times New Roman 13 to compare. This is Arial 11 – probably best not to go much smaller!

- Leave one space after comma, or semicolon; two spaces after full stop, question, exclamation, colon: . ? ! (no space before punctuation marks, except when using a hyphen as a dash, when you leave one space each side of it - thus)
- Leave a small margin (1 to 1.5 cm), top and bottom and on both sides of each sheet. (This page uses 1 cm top, 1.4 cm sides and foot) - set these from page layout (menu from "file" button). Keep everything, including drawings (which you can paste on manually if necessary), within this area to make sure it will all print.
- Number pages centre bottom (you can do this by hand if you like). If you are using "insert page number" you will need to set the footer margin at about 1.8 (page layout menu).
- **Handwriting** should be re-typed. Please do not copy things out by hand.
- **Drawings** should be gone over in **black** ink if they are in pencil or colour. You may need to enlarge or reduce them on a photocopier.
- **Check** that each contribution has a **surname, address and county**. You may need to use the Contact List or contact the Database Secretary. Make sure **ALL penpals or petpals** include this information - it **must** be printed. Please add at the top or bottom of Petpals section that the **full name and address of the contributor (not the pet) must be included**. (Full name and address of child or family must be supplied for every contribution, though for poems, drawings, etc. it need not all be printed)
- **Pen/pet-pals** page should include the following disclaimer:
While the Children's Pages editor and NL co-ordinator take care to verify that all pet/pen-pal correspondents are EO members, it is up to parents to inform themselves of what and to whom their children reply. Children are reminded that they should consider the feelings of others when writing or responding to letters.
- Front Cover should include the words: **Children's Pages, Issue** (number & date), **Edited by** (your name and address) and should carry the following statement:
Notes for Contributors. Drawings should be in Black and White only. Please note that all contributions for the Children's Pages must have the full name of child or family, and address (including county). We must print these details. We cannot print just a first name and an e-mail address. If you would like to edit the Children's Pages, contact the Newsletter Co-ordinator. The Editor of the next issue is: (name, address, Telephone number and e-mail address of next editor) Contributions must be received by 20th (month of your issue)
- **Include:** Letters, Articles, Puzzles, Poems, Penpals, Petpals and Talking Wall (Draw your wall in any way you like, using black ink) and other special sections as in current issues. Please check with NL co-ordinator before starting any new section.
- Also include (a good place is in the Talking Wall) : **CHILDLINE 0800 1111, KIDSCAPE 020 77303300 (London) or 01273 557133 (Brighton)**
- **Put this in somewhere suitable:**
 An email list now operates for the children of EO members. To join the list you must send an email to EO-Children-subscribe@yahoogroups.com and you will receive an automatic reply requesting that your parents send an email giving their name and address so that verification of EO membership can be made, and giving permission for you to join the list. Once this has been done, the List Moderator will approve the pending membership.
- Get someone else to **proof-read** your work (read it through and point out any spellings, etc. which you may need to check with the original or a dictionary). It is very hard to proof-read one's own work!!!

- Send the draft text (written words) to me (NL Co-ord) by Email by 5th of the month - this is because the publications secretary has to check everything - it gives time for changes if necessary. If you can send some of it earlier, that's even better. Because there may be queries, wait for reply before finishing off!!!
- Send the completed Children's Pages, well packed, to the Newsletter Co-ordinator at the address below by 10th of the month. Use First Class post (or Email).
- Expenses may be claimed for paper, photocopying etc.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP - I HOPE YOU ENJOY IT.

Call or Email me if you have any questions. Anne Rix, Newsletter Co-ordinator
 anne@annerix.demon.co.uk Tel. 01237 45 15 35 The
 Orchard, Hembury, Frithelstock, Torrington, EX38 8JT

Legal Summaries

De-registration letter – for England and Wales (Sample)

Your address

The Date

Head teacher's Name

School name and address

Dear (Head's name)

Name of child. Date of birth

I am writing to inform you that I/we have decided to withdraw our son/daughter from school in order to take personal responsibility for her education. Please delete her name from the register in accordance with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9 (1) (c) 1995, as she is now receiving education otherwise than at school.

Yours sincerely etc.

Summary of the Law Relating to Home Education in England and Wales (2nd Edition – September 2000)

School is not Compulsory

In England and Wales parents have the primary responsibility for ensuring that their children receive an effective education. Although this responsibility is usually delegated to schools, some parents choose to exercise it directly by providing an education based at home.

The following summarises the legal responsibilities of parents and local education authorities in relation to elective home education of children of compulsory school age.

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PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility to Ensure a Suitable Education

The responsibility of parents is clearly established in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 (previously section 36 of the Education Act 1944):

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

- (a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

Definition of Suitable Education

An interpretation of some terminology used in the Education Act 1944 (replaced by the 1996 Act) was provided by an appeal case which was brought at Worcester Crown Court in 1981 (Harrison & Harrison v Stevenson). In this case, the judge defined a 'suitable education' as one which was such as

1. to prepare the children for life in modern civilised society, and
2. to enable them to achieve their full potential.

The diversity of modern society and styles of education give parents considerable freedom of choice in enabling children to achieve their potential. In the case of R v Secretary of State for Education and Science, ex parte Talmud Torah Machzikei Hadass School Trust (1985) (Times, 12 April 1985) Mr Justice Woolf held that:

education is 'suitable' if it primarily equips a child for life within the community of which he is a member, rather than the way of life in the country as a whole, as long as it does not foreclose the child's options in later years to adopt some other form of life if he wishes to do so.

Examining the meaning of the expression *full-time* shows the hours spent on teaching in schools are not relevant to home education, which generally takes place on a one-to-one basis, or in small groups, in very different conditions.

Provided the child is not a registered pupil at a school, the parent is not required to provide any particular type of education, and is under no obligation to

- have premises equipped to any particular standard
- have any specific qualifications
- cover the same syllabus as any school

- adopt the National Curriculum
- make detailed plans in advance
- observe school hours, days or terms
- have a fixed timetable
- give formal lessons
- reproduce school type peer group socialisation
- match school, age-specific standards
- seek permission to educate 'otherwise'
- take the initiative in informing the LEA
- have regular contact with the LEA

LEA DUTIES

Enquiries about Educational Provision

Sections 437 to 443 of the Education Act 1996 place a duty upon local education authorities to take certain actions if it appears that a child is not being properly educated.

If it appears to a local education authority that a child of compulsory school age in their area is not receiving suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, they shall serve a notice in writing on the parent requiring him to satisfy them within the period specified in the notice that the child is receiving such education.

(s 437 (1))

The LEA's legal duty is concerned solely with children who appear not to be receiving suitable education. There is no implication that an LEA should be active where it appears that a child is receiving suitable education at home. *Nowhere* in the act is it stated that regular monitoring of suitable education is a legal responsibility of the LEA.

Evidence of Suitable Education

Although the legal duty of LEAs is concerned only with children who appear not to be receiving a suitable education, case law (Phillips v Brown, Divisional Court [20 June 1980, unreported]) has established that an LEA may make informal enquiries of parents who are educating their children at home to establish that a suitable education is being provided. In Phillips v Brown, Lord Donaldson said:

Of course such a request is not the same as a notice under s 37 (1) of the Education Act 1944 [now s 437 (1) of the Education Act 1996] and the parents will be under no duty to comply. However it would be sensible for them to do so. If parents give no information or adopt the course ... of merely stating that they are discharging their duty without giving any details of how they are doing so, the LEA will have to consider and decide whether it 'appears' to it that the parents are in breach of s 36 [now s 7 of the Education Act 1996].

If an LEA chooses to approach a family and informally ask for information, parents can provide evidence that a child is receiving an efficient and suitable education in a number of ways. Parents might, for example

- write a report
- provide samples of work
- invite an inspector to their home, with or without the child being present
- meet an inspector elsewhere, with or without the child
- have the educational provision endorsed by a recognized third party
- provide evidence in any other appropriate form

In their leaflet, "Educating Children at Home, England and Wales (received June 1998), the DfEE state:

3. LEAs however, have no automatic right of access to the parent's home. Parents may refuse a meeting in the home, if they can offer an alternative way of demonstrating that they are providing a suitable education, for example, through showing examples of work and agreeing to a meeting at another venue.

Occasionally, after examining the evidence, an LEA may have genuine concerns about a child's education, but the way the evidence is presented should not form the basis for these concerns. Parents need only present evidence that would, on the balance of probabilities, convince a reasonable person that a suitable education was being provided.

Disputes Between Parents and LEAs

It should be possible to resolve most disputes without recourse to formal statutory procedures. However, where children of compulsory school age are not being educated at school and the LEA has serious doubts about the parents' educational provision, the following scenario will apply.

Initially the LEA may make an informal request for information. If the parents provide such information and the LEA is satisfied that it appears that a suitable education is being provided no further steps should be taken.

If, after making informal enquiries, and then giving the family reasonable time and opportunity to explain or improve on their arrangements, it still appears to an LEA that a child is not receiving a suitable education, then it may decide to serve a school attendance order. The LEA should bear in mind, however, that should the case proceed to court the action will fail if the parents can satisfy the court that they are providing a suitable education. The court will accept evidence in a number of forms and will be looking for evidence that would convince a reasonable person on the balance of probabilities (rather than beyond all reasonable doubt) that a suitable education is being provided.

At any stage during this process the parents may present evidence that they are now providing a suitable education and apply to have the order revoked.

De-registration

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9, 1995 sets out the conditions under which a pupil's name must be removed from the admission register of a school. Under Regulation 9(1)(c), the name of a school-age pupil is to be deleted from the admission register if:

he has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.

The parent does not need to ask permission from the LEA to begin home education and, as long as the parent has notified the governing body of the school, usually through the head teacher, of the intention to home-educate, the parent is under no obligation to inform the LEA of their intention. Under Regulation 13(3), however, the proprietor of the school must report the deletion of the pupil's name from the admission register to the LEA within ten school days.

Parents seeking to home educate children registered at a special school, however, must obtain the consent of the LEA to withdraw their child from the school (Education (Pupil Registration) Regulation 9(2), 1995). This regulation ensures that LEAs can maintain continuity in their responsibility for children with special educational needs. The regulations, however, are not intended to be a hindrance to these children being educated at home and any such suggestion would be discriminatory.

Part-time School Attendance

An increasing number of parents are requesting a more flexible use of schools, and some schools have been happy to accommodate them. This part-time schooling, where children are granted leave of absence to receive part of their education out of school, is a matter for schools rather than the LEA to negotiate with parents.

Any 'school age' child who goes to school at all must attend regularly, but under s 444(3)(a) of the 1996 Education Act absence 'with leave' does not count as irregular attendance. During such absences the child is officially at school, but is effectively being educated off site. The child is therefore in the same position as any registered pupil as regards insurance coverage and also attracts full funding. Such arrangements are at the discretion of the school.

(s 444(9))

Home Educating Children with Special Educational Needs

The right to home educate a child with special educational needs (SEN) is stated in section 7 of the Education Act 1996:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

However, where a child does have a statement of special educational needs and begins home education, the LEA's statutory duty to undertake an annual review continues. This review includes assessing whether the statement is still appropriate and it may be possible to alter or even cease to maintain the statement depending on the child's current circumstances and the provision being made. Should it be necessary for the statement to remain in force, the parents continue to have responsibility for the education provided; however, the LEA has a legal duty to ensure that the child's needs are met. At times there may be disagreements between parents and the LEA about how a child's special educational needs should be met. There are some situations in which parents can appeal to the independent Special Educational Needs Tribunal. However where this is the case, then the LEA would have a legal duty to inform the parent of their

right of appeal.

Parents of children with special educational needs do not need to have any special qualifications or training to assume direct responsibility for their children's education. Furthermore, they do not need to inform the LEA of their intention to home-educate unless the child is registered at a special school when the consent of the LEA is necessary to withdraw the child from the school.

Home education and the law in Scotland - A Practical Guide For Home Educators

Parental Choice and Responsibilities

Section 14 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (asp 6) provides for guidance to be issued 'as to the circumstances in which parents may choose to educate their children at home', and requires education authorities to 'have regard to any such guidance'. However, as at September 2001 no such guidance has been issued. At present all the relevant provisions relating to the rights and duties of parents in Scotland are contained in the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.

The general principle of parental choice is set out in s 28(1) of the 1980 Act:

In the exercise and performance of their powers and duties under this Act the Secretary of State and education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

The duty of the parent

The right to educate otherwise than at school is contained in s 30(1):

It shall be the duty of the parent of every child of school age to provide efficient education for him suitable to his age, ability and aptitude either by causing him to attend a public school regularly or by other means.

This means:

- If you have a *school-age* child, you must see that (s)he is *educated*.
- You can do this either by sending the child to a state school or by other means.
- In any case, the education provided must be *efficient*.
- It must also be *suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude*.

The main thing to note is how *little* the law says about your duty. *Provided your child is not at school* you are bound by no other constraints.

Although s 1 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 affirms the right of children to be provided with school education by education authorities, this has no bearing on the right to home education. The same Act (s 60 and Schedule 2, para 3(5)) amends the 1980 Act by the addition of s 30(2). This subsection explicitly states that the right to school education is without prejudice to the choice afforded a parent by s 30(1) of the 1980 Act.

The role of the education authority

Unless you are taking your child out of a state school (see below), you don't have to tell the education authority you are educating 'by other means'; but once they know about you they are entitled to investigate. Usually this should just be a matter of checking up informally on your arrangements.

Many people educate their children at home with the full cooperation of the education authority. But sometimes conflicts develop. The authority have a duty to take action if they are 'not satisfied' that you are educating your 'school age' child properly. The formal steps they should take are laid down in s 37-41 of the 1980 Act, summarised here for reference:

1. They serve you with a notice giving you at least a week to provide whatever information they ask for about your arrangements. You can choose whether to do this in person (with or without the child) or in writing.

2. If you fail to satisfy them either that you are educating properly or that you have 'reasonable excuse' for not doing, they must make an 'attendance order'. But before they do this they must consider any views you have expressed about the school you want your child to go to.
3. They serve you with an attendance order requiring you to send your child to the school named in it.
4. Once the order is served, you have two weeks to appeal to the sheriff, who may confirm, vary or annul it.
5. You can ask the education authority to revoke the order because you have made alternative arrangements (including arrangements for home education). (Alternatively you can ask them to amend it by substituting another school which has agreed to accept your child.)
6. If they won't do this, or if they fail to decide within a month, you can appeal to the sheriff.
7. If you don't comply with the order you can be taken to court, but you won't be guilty if you can show that you have a 'reasonable excuse'. (Under s 44(1), whether it convicts you or not, if the court finds that there was irregular attendance without reasonable excuse it can refer the case to the local authority reporter. See below.)

Withdrawing your child from school

How do you go about withdrawing your child from school? Section 35(1) of the Act provides that:

Where a child of school age who has attended a public school on one or more occasions fails without reasonable excuse to attend regularly at the said school, then, unless the education authority have consented to the withdrawal of the child from the school (which consent shall not be unreasonably withheld), his parent shall be guilty of an offence against this section.

This suggests that the safest course of action is to seek the education authority's consent while your child is still going to school.

But experience to date shows that authorities are very reluctant to give their consent in this situation, and you could be kept waiting indefinitely. So can you begin to educate at home in the meantime?

A senior Scottish QC, now a judge, was asked on behalf of EO whether the intention to educate by other means could count in itself as 'reasonable excuse' for irregular attendance. He felt this was unlikely, but went on to say that

while I am of opinion that a bare declaration of intention to educate the child at home would not be reasonable excuse, the fact that the child was being afforded at home an education which was efficient and suitable to his age, ability and aptitude would, if established, in my opinion constitute reasonable excuse.

In other words a court would probably not think it was reasonable to keep your child away from school simply because you wished to home educate, but it might well conclude that you had behaved reasonably if you could show that you had been educating appropriately.

Even if you take your child out of school before obtaining the authority's consent, you would be wise to write to them to explain what you are doing. Otherwise they will be more likely to embark on the formal truancy procedure (see below). But if they do start this procedure, they may still accept evidence of suitable ongoing home education as sufficient explanation of the child's absence.

If they don't accept your explanation they can take you to court for irregular attendance. You will then need to convince the court in turn that:

1. you were providing suitable education for your child; and
2. this constitutes reasonable excuse for irregular attendance.

Irregular attendance

If the education authority think you have failed to see that your child attends regularly, they are required by s 36 of the Act to serve you with a notice giving you at least 48 hours to explain the child's absence in person (with or without the child). If you are unable to satisfy them that you have a reasonable excuse, they may either prosecute you straight away or warn you and wait for up to six weeks before deciding whether to prosecute or not. In the latter case they can make an attendance order. (Before they do this they must consider any views you have expressed about the school you want your child to go to. The rest of the procedure is set out in points 3-7 above, under 'The role of the education authority'.)

Whether they prosecute you or not, the education authority may refer your child to the local authority reporter (see below). Likewise (under s 44), if you are taken to court, and if the court finds there was irregular attendance without reasonable excuse, it may refer the case to the reporter regardless of whether it convicts you as well. Alternatively the court may itself make an attendance order.

'Reasonable excuse'

This concept appears in the Act in connection with both failure to educate and irregular attendance. 'Reasonable excuse' can be any of the following (s 42):

- No school within 'walking distance' will educate the child free of charge, and the education authority have made no arrangements for travel, boarding or tutoring.
- The child is ill. (In this case the education authority have the right to insist on medical examination.)
- There are other circumstances constituting a reasonable excuse in the opinion of the education authority or the court.

If you have applied for an attendance order to be revoked or amended, this is not in itself a reasonable excuse for failing to attend the school named in it.

Children's hearings

As a parent you can be prosecuted for two offences under the 1980 Act. One is failing to comply with an attendance order (s 41); the other is failing to secure regular attendance (s 35). But whether they prosecute you for irregular attendance or not, the education authority may refer your child to the local authority reporter. And whether or not it convicts you of either offence, if a court finds that there was irregular attendance without reasonable excuse it can also refer the case to the local authority reporter. The following brief summary is given for reference. If your child is referred to the local authority reporter you would be well advised to seek legal advice if you have not done so already.

Under s 39 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, the reporter may

1. decide that no further action is needed; or
2. refer the child and family to the local authority for advice, guidance and assistance; or
3. conclude that conditions are met whereby your child seems to need compulsory care. (One of these conditions is irregular school attendance without reasonable excuse.)

In the third of these cases the reporter must get a report from the local authority and convene a hearing before the children's panel, which you and your child must normally both attend (s 40-41).

The procedure at children's hearings is set out in s 42-44 of the Act. The chairman starts by explaining the grounds for referral. (If you or your child do not accept them, the reporter must apply to the sheriff for a decision on whether they exist. The chairman must tell you about this.) After considering the report and any other evidence, the panel can decide

1. that no further action is needed; or
2. to adjourn pending further investigation (- this could entail taking the child away for assessment); or
3. to make a supervision requirement (i.e. a residential or non-residential care order).

Under s 48-50 you have three weeks to appeal to the sheriff against the panel's decision, and where a supervision requirement has been made you can apply to the panel for the requirement to be suspended pending your appeal. After that you have a further four weeks to appeal against the sheriff's decision to the Court of Session on a point of law. Supervision requirements must be reviewed at least once a year, and may be reviewed after a shorter period if you or your child ask for it.

Special educational needs

Education authorities have a duty to identify children with 'pronounced, specific or complex special educational needs such as require continuing review'. To do this they must first carry out an assessment. If the assessment shows that the child's needs fit the above definition, they must then open a record of needs (1980 Act as amended, s 60-62).

In making an assessment the authority must obtain advice by means of:

- a medical examination (at which the parent has the right to be present);
- a psychological examination; and
- a report from one of the child's teachers.

If the authority want to assess your child, they must write and ask you to present the child for examination. When they do this they must:

- give you basic information about the assessment procedure;
- allow you at least three weeks to write back with your own views on the child's needs and how they should be met; and
- give you the name of an officer who can provide advice and further information.

(If you fail to present your child for examination without reasonable excuse, they must write again requiring you to do so. After that, you can be prosecuted if you still don't comply, but the authority's duty to carry out an assessment comes to an end.)

In deciding whether to open a record of needs, the education authority must consider not only the specialist advice obtained in the course of carrying out the assessment, but also any other relevant evidence, including your own views.

- They must then write and tell you straight away what they have decided and why.
- If they have decided to open a record, they must also send you a draft, giving you two weeks to comment on it.
- In drawing up the final document they must take your views into account.
- They must tell you what they decided to put into it.
- They must notify you of your right of appeal.

You can appeal against their decision to open a record as well as against its contents (s 63).

A record of needs must include:

- an assessment profile;
- a summary of the child's impairments;
- a statement of the special educational needs arising from those impairments;
- a statement of the measures the authority proposes to take to meet these needs; and
- where appropriate, details of the school the child is to attend.

After at least a year you can write and ask the education authority to review

- their previous decision to open (or continue with) a record of special educational needs; and
- the information in the record.

The authority can also carry out a review without being asked, if and when they think fit.

We fully intend to educate our child at home. Is the education authority entitled to open a record of needs?

There is no clear answer to this question. The education authority have to 'record' any child with 'pronounced, specific or complex special educational needs such as require continuing review'. The child's record of needs then defines the special provision the authority must make.

If you are providing for your child's needs by other means, it seems pointless to go through the procedure of opening a record. You may be able to argue that the child's needs do not require 'continuing review' in this situation. But if the authority are determined to go ahead with the procedure, they may not be easily convinced by this argument. And in particular you are obliged to present your child for examination if asked.

If my child has been 'recorded', can I still educate him or her at home?

The law is not very explicit on this point, but with respect to 'school age' children, s 62(3) of the amended Act says:

An education authority shall ensure that the provision made by them under this Act for a recorded child ... includes provision for his special educational needs.

This might be taken to imply that if the authority are not providing education for your child in the first place, they do *not* have to take the measures specified in the record of needs.

Can I withdraw my child from a special school in order to educate 'by other means'?

If you feel you can meet your child's needs more appropriately at home, there's no reason why you shouldn't consider doing so. However, to take your child out of any state school, you need the education authority's consent. (See above, under 'Withdrawing your child from school'.)

This document is based on section 2.7 of *School is not compulsory*, 5th ed., Education Otherwise, 2000, but has been revised to reflect the situation in September 2001. For further information about home-based education (including model letters), please refer to *School is not compulsory*.

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PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS and return to Education Otherwise, 31 Audley Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 1BP. Tel: Lynda 0118 961 4466 Email: lynda.h@lineone.net

Name _____ Address _____

County under which you wish to appear in the contact list _____ Large X if you do not wish to appear.

Telephone: _____ e-mail address: _____

Children's Name/s and month/year of birth (Please *star those who are home educated)

The annual subscription is £20, (concession £15), (overseas £25). Credit card and Bankers Order facilities are available below, but if you send a cheque it should be made payable to *Education Otherwise Association Ltd* £ 20.00

If you would like to make a **donation**, please state the amount here £

TOTAL PAYMENT £ *

* The new Gift Aid rules make tax efficient giving easier. If you are a tax payer you can elect that your payment to EO is treated as Gift Aid. This allows us to reclaim 28p in the £1. (See form below.)

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Please tick: Master Card, Visa, Eurocard, Delta

Amount £ _____ Name as on Card: _____

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Please Pay Education Otherwise Association Ltd, Triodos Bank, Brunel House, 11 The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NN
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(Signed up Members)

I (Print Name)wish
to become a member of Education Otherwise Association Limited. In
the event of the Association being wound up I agree to contribute up
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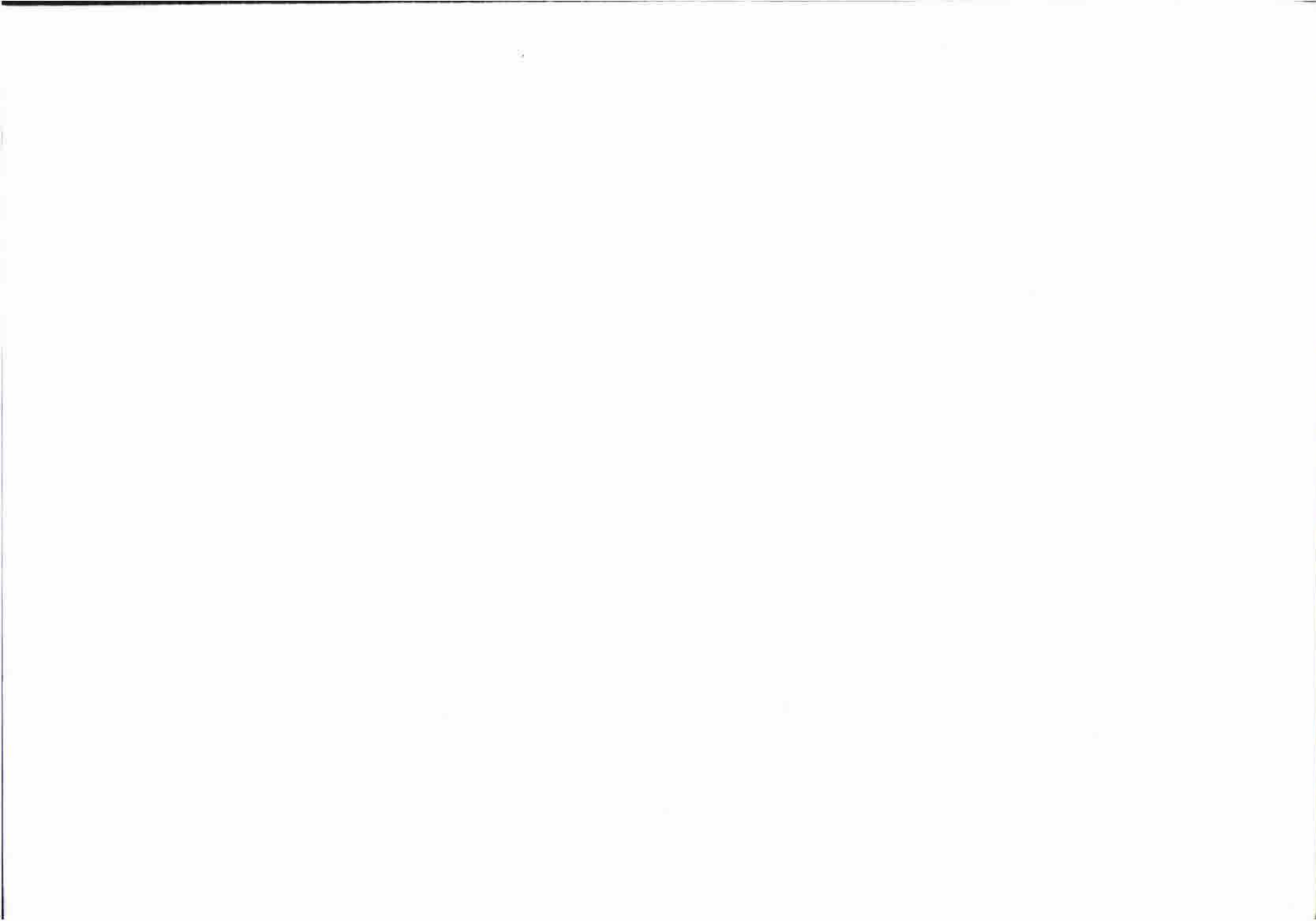
Signature of New
Member.....

Date.....

Address (print in full)
.....
.....

For details of signed-up members, see pages 18 and 19 of this
Handbook.

This form can be completed by current members who have
paid their annual subscription and should be returned to
The General Secretary, 56 Beech Drive,
Braunstone, Leicester. LE3 3DA



Who does What in EO

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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

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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 521348Berllan 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

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Chair: Vacant

N.B. See Newsletter for updates of this page

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

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

HELPLINE 0870 730 0074

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

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