

Cambridgeshire Home Educators Positive Dialogue Forum



Minutes of the Meeting

Date: Wednesday 13 November 2024

Time: 6.30pm for 7pm start; finished at 9pm

Venue: Children and Families Wing, Meadows Community Centre

Chair: Penny Stanbridge

Coordinator/Minutes: Helen Murray

Zoom support: Julie Mason

Cambridgeshire County Council representatives: Donna Symonds (Senior Business Manager) and Melanie Chandler (Children Missing in Education) on behalf of Luthfur Rahman (Education Legal Manager)

Attendees: 66 (45 on zoom, 21 in person)

Introduction

Having previously been adeptly organised and chaired by Caroline Shortmoor, this was the first meeting since she handed the baton to new volunteers Penny Stanbridge and Helen Murray to chair and coordinate the meetings. The previous meeting, badged 'Cams HE Forum' was on 30 November 2023 with 24 participants. Penny gave apologies from Luthfur, welcomed everyone and thanked Donna and Melanie for joining our meeting. She also thanked Caroline for her much-valued work up to this point. A

reminder was given that it is fine to remain anonymous when contributing and an explanation given on how timings would be kept. The Zoom chat was monitored during the meet so that those attending from home could contribute to discussions. There was not time for all comments to be addressed or shared during the meeting so those that were missed have been included in the minutes.

Home educating parent: Charlotte Andrews

The meeting began with Charlotte sharing her story as a home educating parent who has set up a self-directed learning community. Charlotte was a secondary English teacher who marvelled during covid at her 2-year old son teaching himself to draw and how he was teaching her a lot about learning. He was also overwhelmed by busyness; new people, and separation anxiety, soon this decided school wasn't going to be a place he'd thrive in at that stage. During Covid lockdowns, there were no opportunities to meet other home-ed families and he was not yet comfortable with structured groups. It was challenging, but not as challenging as school would be have been for him.

Charlotte started a WhatsApp group in Summer 2020 with just a few other people who were considering home educating. It expanded quite quickly and in addition to the older email and facebook groups, there are now also WhatsApp groups for all age ranges and groups for different activities.

When it became possible, a few families started to arrange regular meet-ups outdoors. There were still challenges with limits on numbers, and then subsequent lockdowns, but it was good to start to have connections an that community was out there. Charlotte started to think more about what her own children needed (and what she needed), and felt strongly that the best thing for their family would be to be part of a consistent and regular community. Along with another mum she connected with like minded people who felt the

same way. They started thinking about what that would look like. They wanted the group to be 'weatherproof' so that meeting up could be more reliable and they also wanted access to outdoor space. They also wanted the children to be able to explore freely and they wanted there to be activities to provide a 'way in' to social interaction for children like their own. They found a hall and decided not to have any formal structure and to provide resources that the children could use as they wished. They made a website as a way of collecting ideas of what the group would be about and then started up.

The first few meetups in March 2021 were still outside due to covid and the age limit of the group was initially age 5 and under. They moved inside at the beginning of May 2021. There were challenges. It was a slow start, and despite there being not much competition for activities (because of Covid) and having a system of being able to sign up week by week, it took about 6 months before the group had grown to capacity (then the challenge became not having enough capacity to accommodate everyone). Also, since it began as a group for younger children, some children ended up going to school, so it took until the older siblings were 5 and over to really have consistency.

Charlotte stressed that she had lots of support. The other parents all helped out with setting things up and tidying away, and some of the parents had experience of running groups themselves with their older children and were able to give support and guidance.

Charlotte wanted the group to grow and evolve with the children. The aim at the beginning was to create a space where the parents and children could get to know each other. Since that has now happened, it has been possible to ask questions about what could be done with the community, so the most recent changes have been biggest, where they have introduced a led 'challenge activity' for the older children to be able to work on group projects together (something that is hard to replicate at home unless you have lots of children!) and they have started playing group games outside inspired by the sports day they did in the summer.

Charlotte says it is undeniably hard work (in addition to being a mum and home educator of 2 very small children, which is already a full time job in itself) but there are so many benefits for their family and says;

- It's the only group that has been a consistent part of our weekly rhythm since we began, 3.5 years ago and we've never had to wonder what we're doing on a Tuesday.
- We get to experience the group! The group works for our family and it's very fulfilling to see it meeting needs in the wider community as well.
- My children see me being responsible for the group, and everything that involves, 'close up' and they often offer to help with setting things up, getting things ready to load into the car or pulling the trolley from the car to the hall.
- We all get to witness and experience the generous support of the other parents - coming early to set up, helping to tidy away, running group games, offering ideas for activities, bringing in books and resources, looking after each other's children. It really wouldn't work if the parents viewed it as an activity or a service being provided. It is a community effort.
- In the early days, it was really helpful to be able to explain to my children who would be there and go over everyone's names. It was also helpful that we were the first people there and that people came along gradually so that it was less overwhelming.
- We have a community of friends who we enjoy spending time with and learn so much from.
- It's given me lots of activities to do at home - and the children enjoy making example activities for everyone else to do.
- We probably own every kind of building toy that exists, and we have playgroup amounts of each.
- It's made me very organised with storing the resources I have, which is good for all of us.

- We go to the library to find books that relate to the theme for the week.
- The group is truly part of a weekly rhythm for us that I feel helps my children to thrive alongside time at home, activities such as Drama and Sports, and flexible time where we can do more ad hoc things as well as more time to play with friends.

Charlotte says she had learned:

- Parents in this home ed community care so much about their children and ensuring their children live in an environment in which they can thrive both at home and in the wider community.
- As children get older, structured activities aligned with their interests can really enrich their experiences. These things tend to be more relevant when children are aged 6+.
- For parents of younger children, there can be a tension between wanting home-ed to work, but feeling like community is part of that equation and not always being sure how to find it without doing more structured activities. But, if there is something that your family needs which doesn't exist: 1. It is more than likely that others need it too. 2. It is possible to create it.
- Not everything works for everyone (that's part of the beauty of it) but if you need park meets, play dates, specific locations, regular groups, noisy groups, quiet groups, groups around a particular interest that your own children have, it can be done. (Square, soft play, forest school/yurt, multi sports).

Charlotte says they've gone from Covid and knowing one or two families in 2021 to having community, friendship, groups, activities and children who are able to thrive and that it feels very vulnerable to tell this story, and she is aware it may look like she has answers, but there have also been a continue to be so many questions and a lot of learning along the way to get this point,

and as with all of home ed, you settle into one stage and the next stage is already knocking at the door, so there is discomfort in that.

Nevertheless, she concluded that it feels important that we tell our stories because in choosing to home ed, we have all chosen a path that is not the well trodden path, and when we hear others' stories, we know that there are people ahead of us and behind us and beside us and we act as waymarkers for each other.

Charlotte's input highlighted that starting small can quickly lead to building community and not be as overwhelming as it might first seem. Angela Mutty asked if she got a lot on enquiries about neurodivergent children wishing to attend. Charlotte replied that inevitably there are a lot of neurodivergent children in Cambridge in general and the home education community in particular so yes, that does happen increasingly. A participant shared that it was a great point about reaching out via whatsapp/facebook/email group to find other children who have similar needs as your own, as it can feel quite lonely, especially with children who struggle with the social aspect. Nancy-Ann (home educator who was helping operate the microphone) shared that her family attend the group and thanked Charlotte for running it.

Action points

- If you haven't already seen them, check out the slides were shared with participants showing images from the community Charlotte set up:
<https://1drv.ms/p/c/886beb3aec158e27/ETRIIs3eLrBPrUs7CKaQSxYB-nITe5Gt61bxZYKV9fc0HQ>
- All Cambridge Home Educators are welcome to use the established whatsapp groups/facebook groups/email group platforms to reach out and make connections in whichever ways they have capacity to do.

SEND parent, home educator and AuDHD herself: Angela Mutty with Melanie Chandler (Children Missing in Education, Cambridgeshire County Council)

Penny gave apologies from the Cambridgeshire County Council SEND team who has been asked to attend this meeting for a third time but had again not been able to send a representative. She checked with Donna that it was looking likely that someone from that team would be attending the next meeting. Penny explained that we could instead hear from Angela and Melanie.

Angela started by sharing that she was going to be very open re: her own experiences with child protection personnel and explained that she had previously been terrified of them but urged people not to be. She explained that as single Mum of a profoundly autistic child with multiple other challenges (refuses clothes, wears a nappy, communicates in his own way but would be considered non-verbal) she has to work extremely hard. Her son was diagnosed very young so they decided to home educate from the start and when compared to other children in school with similar profiles, he is clearly thriving because she is able to meet his needs. She explains that Melanie Chandler (Children Missing in Education, Cambridgeshire County Council) who she invited to come tonight with her, has been waiting for a home education report from her because her son is considered a child missing in education. She explains that she fully trusts the team that have been supporting her and that even though her report was late, Melanie and colleagues have been very understanding. Angela highlights that there is very limited support for high needs children. Many who are home educating who

don't actually want to be or are forced to put their children in school when they know it's not in their best interests because they have to keep working.

Angela goes on to say that many simply do not have capacity and there is a very vulnerable proportion that really need support. She asks Melanie if Cambridgeshire County Council are supporting those families in ways that allows conversation, not judgement. Melanie replies that if, for whatever reason, they have been passed to her e.g. because they haven't completed the EHE form or there is detail missing, she makes contact, speaks to parents and tries to support and signpost and answer questions. If a family haven't given enough detail, Melanie explains they will support parents to better understand what is needed from the forms. Contact would be by email in first instance requesting information – sometimes just asking the questions differently and helping them see that they are in fact they are doing an amazing job is all it takes.

Angela shares that her last report was 46 pages but since engaging more with the local home education community more and with Cambridgeshire County Council, she has learnt that may in fact be overkill and that just a couple of pages will suffice! Questions arose about how reports are read, Donna explains they are read weekly on a rota basis by the same people, that there is no benchmark to mark them against and that they have tailored them to make them very general. Participants commented that people find themselves having to home educate as schools can't meet needs and there is a shortage of school places. A participant from the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education pointed out that the whole system is highly pressured so teachers are increasingly unable to meet the needs of individual children. Another participant raised a question which has come up at previous

meetings about acknowledgement of reports. Donna reported that since it was raised previously an automatic acknowledgement has been established so parents know it's been received. More than this is not possible due to lack of resources but she said it's safe to assume if you've heard nothing other than the automated acknowledgement within 8 weeks of sending it, there are no concerns. One participant raised they had not received the automatic acknowledgement. Another asked if request comes via email or post. Donna confirmed it's by email. Angela shared that previously she was a very private person and wouldn't want to have shared as much as she has done and asked if Melanie could assure parents who they are not obliged to send lengthy reports, photos etc and that all they are looking at is the education.

A participant asked if there is any communication between the EHE team and the ECHP workers and it was clarified that this is only the case if they become a child missing in education in which case Melanie communicates with the relevant case worker. A question was raised about the numbers of known home educators. Donna reported around 1700 within the Cambridgeshire area, up from around 800 a few years back but many of these are in an out (churn). She reports that this is a trend seen across the country and they are hearing about how people saw a change in their child during Covid lockdowns and decided to keep them at home was the most suitable approach to their education, she also reported that they are seeing an increasing dissatisfaction with the school environment. Melanie added that she also hears about bullying and child's needs not being supported at school and from parents feeling there is no choice.

Angela agrees that it would appear schools are failing children, needs are not being met, teachers quit because they can't bear to watch children struggling

and that we are very lucky in Cambridgeshire to have a great community and supportive local authority. She asks what support is available to families who aren't choosing to home educate but also have to work. Melanie says they are planning to issue an update on what's available in terms of support. Donna reports that the website has been redesigned with tiles to make it easier to navigate to this sort of information but points out they are not specialists in these areas, so they signpost and welcome feedback and are happy to review, share and add to website that would be helpful.

One participant points out that 1700 home educators is a very large group, compared to local colleges which may only be 600 or so and suggests it would be great if there could be an optional Cambs Home Ed ID card (supplied by the county council) with parity to college IDs so they can be used for discounts and memberships at many places which would be a great way to support us. A participant shared in the Zoom chat that the PopArt Home Education facebook group and AWE home ed discounts can also be a good resources. There was not time to address a question from a participant regarding whether the local authority could offer more financial support to families with children with additional needs who are home educating because there is no suitable alternative. Special schools are full so no places available. This has been included in the minutes and will be shared with the relevant teams.

Action points

- LA to respond on questions above re: financial support and ID cards

Helen Murray on behalf of Naomi Harris (Early Help Coordinator, Disabled Children's Referral and Access Team, Cambridgeshire County Council): Short breaks funding

Penny explained that Naomi Harris had not been allowed to attend as the meeting was outside normal working hours but had give permission to Helen to share on her behalf. Helen shared that Naomi had been to their home to meet with the family and been warm and supportive - she was surprised to find out from Naomi that their daughter was eligible for the Short Breaks Offer from Cambridgeshire County Council. Her daughter has Autism with a PDA profile which has been managed well since infancy according to the clinical team who diagnosed her, stating that home education had provided successful early intervention and was clearly serving well and should continue. Helen reported that her daughter's profile does not show up as stereotypically autistic and she was surprised that when, on recommendation from the PDA Society, they applied for Disability Living Allowance, it was awarded. She shared that completing the forms for that was a real eye-opener as it really brought home just how much support her daughter actually does require. Helen explained that the LA's Short Breaks Offer is for disabled children for preparation for adulthood, increasing independence, accessing community activities and giving parents respite. You can self-refer or if receiving services from social care be referred via them. The Short Break offer can be used to access council owned services such as youth clubs, befriending clubs, playwork/crafts and specialist services for children with profound needs or can be received as a direct payment and used to fund staff and 1:1 support or activities for your child. Those activities cannot be deemed to be educational (which doesn't really makes sense to home educators for whom pretty much everything can be educational!) but essentially if used with

providers who offer regular activities that would be considered extra curricula for a schooled child then the funding can cover it. Helen was keen to share this information as she feels sure there must be other people in the local home education community who could also be eligible and really need this. Angela pointed out that you don't have to be in receipt of Disability Living Allowance to be eligible either. Helen shared they use it for things like forest school and after school art clubs. Another participant asked if it can be used to fund smaller groups for children for whom bigger group settings would be overwhelming. A participant asked if Naomi could clarify if a child with selective mutism diagnosed by speech and language (but discharged in same day as there is no support available) would be eligible for Short Breaks Funding. A participant also wondered if this funding could be used for a parent who is both home educating their own child and also caring for an elderly parent when away from their child. A participant shared that Mindjam (<https://mindjam.org.uk/>) is also a useful resource for SEND children (supporting emotional wellbeing).

Action points

- Naomi to advise on questions above re: small groups, speech and language, home educating parent with other caring responsibilities
- Home educators interested in finding out more about short breaks funding to visit

<https://send.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/kb5/cambridgeshire/directory/site.page?id=e1fmGm1IH3g> or email naomi.harris@cambridgeshire.gov.uk

Donna Symonds (Senior Business Manager) and Melanie Chandler (Children Missing in Education)

Luthfur Rahman (Education Legal Manager) had been due to speak and answer questions at the meeting but was unable to attend so his colleagues came to represent the LA instead. During this section of the meeting there was discussion about how useful it would be to know about possible sources of funding for parents who feel they have little choice but to home educate. The idea of a Cambridge Home Educators Card to 'prove' EHE status was again raised. Participants pointed out that some companies like Adobe and Apple offer discounts for educators, some with and some without requiring proof of educator status so additional help proving EHE status for other companies that might request it would be welcomed.

Donna reported that there has been no changes in legislation for home educators to be aware of so they are continuing as normal and always open to ideas. A participant raised that those new to home educators would welcome signposting to popular resources used by home educators to reduce the burden of research.

Action points for the LA

- As raised in earlier section, advise if a Cambridge Home Educators Card might be possible
- Advise what funding is currently available or if any could be made available to support parents left with little choice but to EHE when no other suitable provision can be found
- Advise if it's possible to signpost more resources for home educators and how best to add to the list (e.g. reports themselves may contain much useful information)
- Adjust annual report to indicate that one form can be used per family (reporting on siblings in one report) and make clearer that alternative

forms of reporting are also acceptable to reduce administrative burden on parents and encourage voluntary registration

Donna shared answers from Karen Beaton (Strategic Admissions & Attendance Manager, Cambridgeshire County Council) to the questions below (answers in Italics):

- Could you help us access bulk subscriptions/education rates for our children that might normally require a teacher email? *Unfortunately, it's my understanding that schools are able to do bulk subscriptions/education rates as they are registered as an education provider, so we haven't felt able to offer this. I have reached out to other colleagues in education (thinking early years) to see if there is a work around.*
- Can you have any dialogue with local libraries, some of which require us to prove we are home educating to get extra borrowing rights while others do not? *All libraries should be providing the extended borrowing rights under the same criteria in that the parents show the library assistant one of our EHE letters/proof of EHE status. I will follow up with the service to see what's up! Discussion followed regarding the fact that not everyone has this letter so could something be provided without the requirement to report.*
- Can you help us access early family help without a teacher to fill in the early help assessment? *Luthfur has conversed with the Head of Early Help and received the following advice re Early Help which we will incorporate into our information provision...*

If you think you and your family might benefit from some support, you should ask a professional who you know. This could be any professional working with your family to support you, for example a health professional. They can tell you more about Early Help and Targeted Support Services in Cambridgeshire.

If you don't know who to ask for help or you don't have any professionals supporting your family, you can contact the Early Help Hub: early.helpub@ or call: [01480 376 666](tel:01480376666) (office hours). The Early Help Hub will be able to advise you on what support may be available to you and your family. If it is felt that an Early Help Assessment would best support your family, then the Early Help Hub will identify a professional to complete the assessment with you, this may be a worker from our Targeted Support Service.

They will listen to any challenges that you or your family are experiencing and summarise the discussion in an Early Help Assessment. This will consider the needs of your whole family and help everyone understand your family's situation.

The Early Help Assessment will include the things you want to change and things that may be of concern to others as well. The assessment is to explore all of these things, not to place blame. It is important you share as much information as you can because this will help get you the right support. However, it is up to you how much you say.

More information on Early Help and Targeted Support and the Early Help Assessment can be found at [Accessing support for your family | Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

- How often is special delivery/tracked paperwork to the LA's PO Box collected? *Once a week* (there was a brief discussion on how some families felt their registered post wasn't being collected in a timely manner)
- Please be more aware that setting dates well in advance and avoiding exam periods is crucial for us – many parents won't be here tonight because they are very involved in supporting their children at this time. *Absolutely* (Luthfur had confirmed the date of 9 April prior to the meeting as requested)

A participant pointed out that their GP did not know to sign post Early Help team.

Time then allowed for any new topics arising; a participant asked for clarity on what early help actually is; Donna suggested we could have someone from that team at a future meeting and possibly also the transitions team for older children if helpful and clarified that early help is about early identification of needs and support with those needs e.g. sleep, behaviour etc.

Actions points

- Donna to check if early help/transitions would like to attend a future meeting
- Karen to add new Early help to information provision for home educators
- Helen to circulate date of next meeting
- Karen to confirm SEND team representative for next meeting
- Karen to elaborate on Library cards issue for those who do not wish to write an annual report
- Luthfur/Karen/Donna to confirm if it is possible to prove EHE status without the obligation to provide an annual report e.g. a card

Karen Abrams, Home educating parent: how we have shaped our lives to home educate our four children

Karen began by saying that although she has lots of days when she questions how they live their lives, she thinks really they are a pretty average

family! She explained that they decided to home educate when pregnant and that she is a nurse and her husband is a consultant paediatrician. She said they were looking forward to having kids, both went to the University of Cambridge and moved back here from London when their eldest was 1. Karen explained that when you do shift work for the NHS, the childcare options aren't great so their pattern was very much one parents comes in from a shift and the other takes over; sometime her Mum would stay and she and her husband wouldn't even see each other because they didn't overlap. Karen always worked part time because of childcare requirements and because of that they didn't need to use childcare in the early years. As the children got older and they had more (they now have 4 children), she said school just wasn't a draw for them. They felt they could offer a rich environment and felt we could offer them more than school or childcare could. They knew family and friends who home educated so it seemed a very legitimate option, they didn't make grand decisions or do loads of research, time just elapsed. The year their eldest son would have started school was during covid, which worked well for them and by the time their second child was due start school, they hadn't even noticed it was that time and hadn't applied. They wanted them to have a freer childhood, have more time and space to be children but Karen says they've since learnt from the local home education community that there are also loads of other great reasons why its amazing. She said they are not against school and had great educations themselves; they did experience issues like bullying but they got on OK at school and liked learning.

Karen says sometimes she wonders if she's missed out on the easy community school might have offered but that mainly they just wanted to give their children more time in nature and read loads of good books together. She explains that is very central to their home educating philosophy which is

Charlotte Mason inspired and calls for children to learn from the world around them and respond to it, learn from what they see, to let them explore and create great thinkers and creators. The idea is often described as spreading a feast before them and letting them choose what to feast on. Karen also shared one of the benefits of this approach is it allows them to go down rabbit holes in depth on topics that interest them. Karen described how she'll often be found at home education groups and activities with her loaded buggy (soon to be cargo bike!) and is learning to drive as buses with multiple children can be very time-consuming and expensive. Karen shared how some of her son's friends were reading at 6 but he wasn't and was resistant to her efforts to engage him with it but by the time he was 7 or 8 he just did it by himself and taught himself all his timetables. She describes how his sister is different and does want to sit and do phonics with her which highlights just how differently children learn.

Karen expressed confidence that they'll learn everything they need to thrive and if she's worried she knows she can add things in and find ways instead of making them jump through hoops they aren't interested in on an arbitrary timeline. She says she provides support as needed, they do lots of groups and love days at home too. She says they are part of a great home educating community with lots of parents who put time into setting up groups. They have many friends, meets lots of people and love going on excursions – they also enjoy lots of table time too (although with her fourth child now turned 1 that's becoming more challenging!). She says their fourth child is now 1 so table time is a bit more challenging but nevertheless she thinks they are all thriving – she says they know know lots who are schooled and home educated and we're a lot like many other families thriving in lots of different ways. She says, like every parent she does sometimes wonder if she's doing things right. She shared with happy tears in her eyes, that overall she feels

they are living life really well and they are so grateful for having this time with their children and received a warm round of applause from all present.

Discussion following Karen's input included:

- A participant shared that its lovely to see that home education is not necessarily a reaction to a problem and that it simply suits their son; important for the LA to recognise that often home educators are embracing an opportunity, not trying to solve a problem.
- Tiger cards and group tickets for buses to reduce costs when using public transport with multiple children
- Charlotte (who had given an earlier input) thanked Karen for sharing and related to the feeling of vulnerability for sharing, saying it really reaffirms and encourage others to share their stories – it's not a well trodden path – when we hear each other's stories we learn from each other.
- A participant asked if Karen would be happy to share why she's chosen not to register as it might be useful for the LA to hear why. She explained it's not really a choice – we don't have to register currently and she says she's so behind on life admin (e.g. unpacking after moving house!) simply can't see the point in adding extra unnecessary tasks. She says she would mind registering if it did become a requirement but for now she just can't bring herself to write four reports annually (further discussion here about a family report covering all four children being acceptable) – she said “why do I want to do more admin to prove I'm doing a good job to somebody else if I don't have to?”. Donna clarified when asked that home educators do not have to use the online form and can send a report in your own format – if you're doing something to document anyway, you just send that. She said the

online forms to help them with consistency and reduces admin for them but we are very welcome to send them in other formats.

- A participant asked if more people use your forms or send reports; Donna said the majority are online forms, maybe 5-10% are not.
- A participant raised that it would be good if the report could ask less school-like questions. Two participants noted that they politely point out in their answer if a question on the form is not helpful or relevant and explain why and noticed that some changes do seem to have been made to the forms in light of such feedback and another reported that they enjoy the report-writing process and keeps it as a record of what they have achieved to look back on.
- A participant shared that do feel well supported by the LA and that their reports are quite small for a 14 year old daughter whose needs are such that there's not a huge amount to report other than a maths and English tutor.
- Questions were raised about what they do with the information and what they are looking for that's deemed acceptable. Donna assured us that they are not looking for arbitrary age-related milestones and that they do understand education isn't just subjects covered. She gave examples of how some parents might report on use of resources and tutors while others might list none of that a tell a story of what home education looks like for them and that the LA are not there to judge unless there are problems around parents' refusal to engage – so long as it looks like the child is engaging in whatever way suits them, that's all they are looking for. She points out that other LAs are much more heavy handed than this, that there are no benchmarks they are checking us against and if we want them to add things to their website it would be

useful to share, they are happy to. A participant shared a reminder of the law and remit of parents to ensure a suitable education:

Section 7 Duty of parents to secure education of children of compulsory school age.

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

- A participant shared on Zoom “I think these meetings are really useful and have increased my confidence with interactions with the LA” a sentiment seconded by six other participants.
- A participant asked how we can have a better user experience as a lot of the conversation seems a bit ‘them and us’ – it would be nice to see more sharing of resources and signposting, sharing inspiring home education stories – suggestion that a subset of this group could work with the LA on that.
- Helen shared in Zoom chat that she’d been asked to raise with LA if the LA would consider funding a home educator to take on Luthfur’s role to further this positive dialogue between home educators and the LA; this was seconded by 7 other participants.

Action points

- LA to consider if they’d like to work with us on sharing inspiring stories
- Home educators interested in working with LA on sharing inspiring stories or adding resources to their website to express interest by emailing hellofromchef@gmail.com
- LA to respond if they would consider funding a home educator to take on Luthfur’s role in furthering positive dialogue

Jack Johnson, Inclusion Officer, Cambridgeshire Music - music provision for EHE children

Jack explained he had spoken to Luthfur a while back about that they could offer. He explained they have a base in Histon and that he planned to put out invites so that home educators could visit. He said he's particularly passionate about providing provision in the daytime and although he'd brought leaflets about things happening there in the evening he is minded that home educators may well want day time activities too. He explained that Helen had helped him circulate a survey to home educators about what they'd like to see in terms of music provision and that they got a great response. He said what emerged was that there is a desire for it to be useful academically but also in terms of wellbeing/socialising. He shared that they are in the early stages of trying to put something together and hoping that by April they will have a firm offer with time/space/capacity to deliver. Angela asked if they would be able to support profoundly disabled children. Jack responded yes, they have a therapy team and there would be an assessment with the parents to make sure they can cater for profoundly disabled children. He explained that the music provision will be based in Histon. Charlotte asked about instruments; Jack replied that they have 4000 and that mostly vocal and instrumental provision were asked for. Participants said a choir and ensembles would be welcomed. Jack said they are very interested in supporting social mobility and that they mainly just want to get people through the door to share the beautiful space and resources. Participant raised that they had trouble using their website; Jack acknowledged the site can be problematic so people are welcome to call for assistance, Their website is www.cambridgeshiremusic.org.uk and their number is 0345 045 1371. Jack shared that is delivering a bronze and silver Arts Awards from January and would love to involve home educated 13-17 year olds as well. This is part of

their Move and Shake project funded by Creative Arts East which so far has seen Jack deliver performances and workshops to around 2000 children. will use some from those, I want to make sure there's space for others too bronze and silver available. A participant asked if he would be delivering the whole award and he confirmed he would with the children doing much of the work and research themselves.

Action points

- Jack to circulate invites for home educators to visit their centre
- Jack to advise if a choir and ensembles are a possibility
- Home educators interested in Arts Award for their 13-17 year olds to contact Jack

Any other business arising

A participant shared that Histon Road Library is supportive of home educators. Penny thanks Donna and Melanie for their input and how much we valued having people present from the LA to engage in discussions.

Another shared "My eldest is 6 and I am forever getting excited by home ed provision only to find out it is for 10/11+ :- (Just want to put it out there that those of us with younger ones eg Reception-KS1 age are really struggling to find home ed provision)." Helen responds to this while typing up minutes "Provision sounds like something formal is offered to home educated children but in reality what's available is pretty much entirely set up and run by volunteer parents. I remember feeling like that when my daughter pre-school age because I wanted to engage with the home education community but

everything was for over 5s so I and another parent set up an outdoor toddler group which led to a lot of other things (she's now 9 and loves her home ed life). Perhaps the LA can help signpost to our website

(<https://www.cambridgehomeeducators.org.uk/>) from this page of their's <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/schools-learning/education-your-rights-and-responsibilities/elective-home-education-ehe/online-resources-knowledge-hub-home-education> to help newcomers find their feet/make contacts, access our shared calendar.

A participant shared on Zoom chat: "Across several of the national home education groups on Facebook that I've joined, Cambridgeshire has a strongly positive reputation for how the council responds to and supports the home educating community. It was something which gave us a lot of confidence when deregistering. As a family new to home education, it's reassuring to hear the thoughts of those speaking tonight supporting that positive perception. Thank you."

Action points

- LA to advise if they can signpost to Cambridge Home Educators website to help other home educators find their feet in the local home education community

Date of next meeting

All present at this one very welcome at the next and anyone reading these minutes who could not attend this time very welcome to attend come next time. We welcome both in-person and online participants to maximise attendance. We have tried to time the next meeting to try to maximise convenience for home educators and external speakers and look forward to

welcoming everyone to engage in the next Cambridge Home Educators'
Positive Dialogue meeting:

The next meeting date is 4pm for 4.30pm start, finishing no later than 6.30pm
at the Children and Families Wing at the Meadows Community Centre.