



The Out of School Learners' Support Pack

Updated April 2024

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INTRODUCTION

The Highland Council recognises that education is a key aspect of parental choice. Every child has a right to an education, and it is the duty of the parent of every school age child to provide that education, either by sending the child to school or by other means.

This pack has been prepared to assist families who are educating their children by other means, or if their child has a long-term illness which means school attendance is infrequent, or due to lifestyle choice. The information in this pack is not exhaustive. It has been collated, but the availability and quality of sites cannot be guaranteed as they can change at any time.

Highland Council representatives would welcome your thoughts on ways to improve support for out of school learners.

More information can be found on the Highland Council's website at:
https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/878/schools/946/home_education

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What Is the Legal Position?

See Scottish Government guidance at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/>

How Do I Withdraw My Child from Education?

See Scottish Government guidance at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/pages/3/>

Will The Highland Council Contact Me If I Am Home Educating?

The Highland Council will contact you, usually on an annual basis, to see how the home education of your child is progressing, to offer advice and support and to answer any questions you may have.

If there are concerns about the education being provided, contact may be made more often to help you improve the education you are providing.

You should also feel free to contact your Area Education and Learning Office at any time for information and advice.

What is the Difference Between Home Education and Home Tuition?

Home Education is a separation from the local authority with the parents being responsible for the education of their child. Home Tuition is a service offered to some pupils due to their Additional Support for Learning needs, on a short-term basis, to support their education until they can return to school.

Will the local authority provide a tutor?

Providing a tutor will be dependent on the needs of the child or young person.

Will the local authority provide work?

No. If families ask for specific advice guidance will be offered.

Will a school provide work?

No. A child who is home educated is not registered in any school.

What Support Is Available from The Highland Council?

Please see: <https://additionalupportforlearninghighland.wordpress.com/>

Are we entitled to financial support? Is there a grant?

No. Some educational charities may be able to help with a specific request. Pupils over the age of 16 in home education are entitled to an Education Maintenance Allowance. You can find out more about this at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/899/schools_-_grants_and_benefits/14/education_maintenance_allowance

Does the local authority pay exam fees, centre fees, and work experience insurance?

No.

Will my child need to access examinations and if I choose to present my child how is this arranged?

See Scottish Government guidance on this at:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/pages/7/>

If I think my child has Additional Support for Learning needs, what should I do?

You may be able to get some advice and support from Highland Council representatives.

You should contact your Area Principal Educational Psychologist. Information about the Psychological Service is at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools_-_additional_support_needs/36/psychological_service

Some support group contacts for specific needs are included in the Support Groups section on Page 7.

Does my child still have access to School Health and Dental Health?

Yes, but not through The Highland Council. The National Health Service promotes contact with home educating families.

Will The Highland Council representative try to persuade us to return our child to school?

The Highland Council respects the right of parents and carers to home educate and are aware that responsibility for education lies with parents to ensure efficient and suitable education is provided. However, the option to return to school education will always be available.

If I seek enrolment in a school, can I choose for my child to enrol at their previous school or a school of my choice?

Contact should be made with your local Area Education and Learning Office to ascertain your options.

How can I provide proof of home education if required to do so?

Your Highland Council contact can provide written verification for any such requests.

Can my child attend school part-time (flexi-schooling)?

Yes – if both the Local Authority and the Head Teacher of the school agree.

Do I have to follow a particular curriculum?

No, but many parents choose to use a framework.

You are free to choose what you use and how your child learns. However, whatever framework is chosen must reflect efficient and suitable education. A child who is at least literate and numerate will be able to take their place as a confident individual, responsible citizen, successful learner, and effective contributor to Scottish society.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Aphasia Now

Website created by and for people living with aphasia.

<http://www.aphasianow.org/>

Down's Syndrome Association

Provides information and support on all aspects of living with Down's Syndrome.

<https://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk/>

Dyscalculia Association

Support for people who have dyscalculia. Resources and advice.

<http://www.dyscalculiaassociation.uk/>

HE-Special

Home Educating children with special educational needs.

<http://www.he-special.org.uk/>

Home Education Advisory Service

Official guidelines on your right to home educate in England and Wales.

<https://www.heas.org.uk/>

INFED – the home of informal learning

A study of informal learning in home-education and its potential to generate positive attitudes to education, especially for people who have had bad experiences at school.

<https://infed.org/informal-learning-home-education-and-homeschooling-home-schooling/>

MuddlePuddle Home Education

A site aimed at providing information on home education and the various educational philosophies that exist. Its focus is on providing themed link pages, activities, and information on a few things we happen to know about, like having a child with a cleft lip and palate.

<https://www.muddlepuddle.co.uk/home-education-2/>

National Autistic Society

<https://www.autism.org.uk/>

SCOPE

Scope works in England and Wales – but there is a lot of good information on their site.

<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/homeschooling/>

Scottish ADHD Coalition

Bringing together voluntary organisations providing support to adults and children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Scotland, and their parents, carers and families.

<https://www.scottishadhdcoalition.org/>

Scottish Government

Here you can find details of the law, HE Guidelines, and documents regarding EMAs.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/home-education-guidance/>

Speech and Language UK

Support for children with communication difficulties.

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/>

The Dyslexia Association

<https://dyslexiascotland.org.uk/>

Thriving Families

Information, support, and advice to the families and carers of children and young people with additional support needs, and to professionals who work with them. Based in Inverness.

<https://www.thrivingfamilies.org.uk/>

Tourette Scotland

Provides information, advice and support for children and adults with TS and everyone involved in their lives.

<https://www.tourettescotland.org/>

HOME EDUCATION ORGANISATIONS

Education Otherwise

A charity and self-help network offering support and information to home educating families and those considering home education, in Scotland and throughout the UK.

Contact: Education Otherwise, PO Box 3761, Swindon, SN2 9GT

Tel: 0845 4786345

<https://www.educationotherwise.org/>

Home Education Advisory Service

A UK-wide organisation for home educators and those thinking about home educating.

Contact: PO Box 98, Welwyn Garden City, Herts, AL8 6AN

Tel: 01707 371854

Email: enquiries@heas.org.uk

<https://www.heas.org.uk/>

North of Scotland Home Educators

Email: norscothe@hotmail.co.uk

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

CALL Scotland

CALL (Communication, Access, Literacy and Learning) **Scotland** is a small unit within the Moray House School of Education, The University of Edinburgh. CALL is both a Service and a Research Unit. Service activity is limited by the amount of staff time available but is open to anyone in Scotland concerned with communication difficulties, particularly in a learning context.

<https://www.callscotland.org.uk/>

CALL Books for All Mini Site

Books for All is about learning materials in accessible, alternative formats, for people who have difficulty reading ordinary printed books. Information on the project, and where to find these materials as well as a link to Hodder Gibson Titles available on CD from CALL free of charge.

<https://www.booksforall.org.uk/Home/>

Children 1st

Children 1st works to keep children safe, loved and well and together with their families.

<https://www.children1st.org.uk/>

Contact a family Scotland

Extensive information service including details on local and Scottish wide parent support groups.

<https://contact.org.uk/help-for-families/information-advice-services/education-start/education-learning-scotland/support-in-education-scotland/>

Education Scotland

Education Scotland is a national public body sponsored by the Scottish Executive Education Department. Its remit is to provide advice, support and resources to enhance the quality of educational experiences in Scotland.

<https://education.gov.scot/>

Enquire

Scottish advice service for additional support for learning matters.

<https://enquire.org.uk/>

Equality and Human Rights Commission

Statutory body to promote and monitor human rights and to protect, enforce and promote equality across the nine 'protected' grounds – age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/scotland/>

Govan Law Centre and Additional Support Needs at Govan Law Centre

The Education Law Unit specialises in the field of school education, with a focus on tackling discrimination, promoting human rights and the rights of disabled pupils and pupils with additional support needs.

<https://govanlawcentre.org/education-law-unit/>

<https://additionalneeds.co.uk/>

Internet and Online Safety

This link is to The Highland Council Internet Safety Policies and information.

<https://sites.google.com/highlandschools.net/highlandonlinesafetycentre/home>

Mumsnet

A website where parents can swap advice and share information.

<https://www.mumsnet.com/h/parenting/education>

Scottish Child Law Centre

Independent legal advice.

<https://sclc.org.uk/>

Scottish Government Learning Directorate

Address: Learning Directorate, The Scottish Government, Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

Tel: 0131 556 8400 – or 08457 741741

Email: ceu@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/>

Scottish Sensory Centre

For everyone who is involved in the education of deaf children, deaf-blind children and visually impaired children and young people, the young people themselves and their families.

<https://www.ssc.education.ed.ac.uk/index.html>

Family Diaries



These are some examples of 'A Day in the Life of...' Home Educating Parents diaries.

Diary 1

Diary 2

Diary 3

Diary 4

Study Supports



My Study Bar

My Study Bar is a tool which helps overcome problems that students commonly experience with studying, reading and writing. The tool consists of a set of portable open source and freeware applications, assembled into one convenient package. Easy to install, simple to use, handy and effective, My Study Bar is completely free to download and free to use.

<https://www.callscotland.org.uk/mystudybar/>

Education Scotland

Supporting learning underpins the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence for all children and young people, and it is the responsibility of all practitioners and partners to deliver this universal entitlement within their own teaching environments.

<https://education.gov.scot/>

These are some links to sections within the Education Scotland Website:

About Curriculum for Excellence

<https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/about-curriculum-for-excellence/>

Learning at Home

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/learning-at-home/>

Additional Support

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/additional-support/>

Dyslexia Scotland

Empowering people with persistent literacy difficulties to reach their full potential. Resources for parents and carers.

<https://dyslexiascotland.org.uk/parent/>

The Grid Club

Learning Website – Grid Club is challenging and fun, aimed at 5–12-year-olds. The content covers all areas of the curriculum.

<https://gridclub.com/>

Subject Supports

Googling a learning topic will bring up a selection of resources and power points uploaded by teachers and freely available on the internet. The quality of these will have to be judged as you use them.

National Parent Forum of Scotland

<https://www.npfs.org.uk/>

Scottish Qualifications Authority

The heart of Scotland's world-renowned education system. Offering globally recognised qualifications and services to realise the potential of young people in Scotland.

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html>

COMMUNITY LEARNING AND LEISURE

Museums, heritage sites and art galleries give access to learning environments which go beyond what can be provided in the classroom or home school environment. For example, museums have artefacts and artworks which can be used as rich primary sources of evidence to support a scheme of work. They have portraits made long before the age of photography through which pupils can see images of our ancestors. Pottery, sculpture and other works can illustrate changes in fashion, styles and indeed whole cultures, and great works of art can inspire pupils to create their own original work. Some science exhibits, for example, can bring whole environments to life and may be the closest that many pupils will ever get to walking through an ecosystem such as a rainforest.

Museums can also encourage:

- **Motivation**, by stirring curiosity and developing a fascination for objects that can be satisfied by first-hand experience
- **Learning**, by engaging pupils in practical activities that improve their ability to gather and retain information.
- **Interaction**, by which pupils learn through experience and build on prior expectations and beliefs to create new understanding.

In short, museums offer a fantastic range of learning environments, exhibitions and specialist staff and resources that can be used to support a wide variety of curriculum areas and different pupils' needs. Taking pupils outside the normal classroom space can not only enrich learning but can create opportunities for pupils to learn in different ways.

Some Useful Links:

Highlife Highland

High Life Highland is a charity registered in Scotland, formed in 2011 by The Highland Council. HLH develops and promotes opportunities in culture, learning, sport, leisure, health and wellbeing across ten services throughout the whole of the Highlands, for both residents and visitors.

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/>

Museums Galleries Scotland

<https://www.museumsgalleriesscotland.org.uk/>

National Museums Scotland

<https://www.nms.ac.uk/>

The following websites are run by local interest groups and National charities. Information on these sites may be useful to supplement programmes of study. This list is not exhaustive, and sites may be updated or changed at any time.

Am Baile – Highland History and Culture

Explore the rich history of the Scottish Highlands and Islands through images, maps, documents, audio and video.

<https://www.ambaile.org.uk/>

Crann Tara – Gaelic Language History

<https://cranntara.org.uk/gaelic.htm>

Eilean Ban Trust – The Brightwater Centre, Skye

<http://eileanban.org/>

Highland Archive Service

<https://www.highlifehighland.com/archives-service/>

Highlands Astronomical Society

<https://www.spacegazer.com/>

Historic Environment Scotland

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/>

John Muir Trust

<https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/>

National Trust for Scotland

<https://www.nts.org.uk/>

RSPB Scotland

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/scotland>

Scotland's Nature Agency

<https://www.nature.scot/>

Scottish History Society

<http://www.scottishhistorysociety.org/departments/scottishhistorysociety/index.html>

Woodland Trust

<https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/>

ONLINE SCHOOLS

This is not an exhaustive list, but these are schools which have been used by Highland home-educating families.

Christina McAuliffe Academy – School of Arts and Sciences

<https://www.cmasas.org/>

King's InterHigh

The UK's leading independent online school.

<https://kingsinterhigh.co.uk/>

NATIONAL BODIES AND RESOURCES

BBC Bitesize

Support for primary and secondary-aged children and young people, with exam-style and quick-fire questions, podcasts, revision guides and more.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize>

Coffee Break Languages

<https://coffeebreaklanguages.com/>

Education Scotland

Education Scotland is the national body for supporting quality and improvement of learning and teaching in Scottish education.

<https://education.gov.scot/>

Scottish Qualifications Authority

National body in Scotland responsible for the development, accreditation, assessment and certification of qualifications other than degrees.

<https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html>

STEP

<https://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/families/resources/>

Youth Scotland

Quality youth work programmes, information, resources, training and support.

<https://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

Some Highland Council support and resources which may be useful:

Additional Support for Learning

<https://additional-support-for-learning-highland.wordpress.com/>

Armed Forces Families Highland

<https://armedforcesfamilieshighland.wordpress.com/>

English as an Additional Language

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/18272/english-as-an-additional-language-service>

Highland Deaf Education Service

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/45/highland-deaf-education-and-hearing-support-service-leaflet>

Highland Education Vision Support Service

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools-additional-support-needs/42/children-and-young-people-with-visual-impairments>

Highland Schools Online Safety Centre

<https://sites.google.com/highlandschools.net/highlandonlinesafetycentre/home>

Psychological Service

<https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/886/schools-additional-support-needs/36/psychological-service>

COLLEGES OFFERING DISTANCE LEARNING

Distance Learning Centre

<https://www.distance-learning-centre.co.uk/>

Learn Direct

<https://www.learndirect.com/>

Open Study College

<https://www.openstudycollege.com/>

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig

<https://www.smo.uhi.ac.uk/>

The Open University

<https://www.open.ac.uk/>

UHI Inverness

<https://www.inverness.uhi.ac.uk/>

UHI Moray

<https://www.moray.uhi.ac.uk/>

UHI North, West & Hebrides

<https://www.nwh.uhi.ac.uk/en/>

Some additional useful links:

BBC Bitesize | Careers

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/careers>

BBC Bitesize | College, Apprenticeships & Uni

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/groups/cm5m6rkdwyvt>

BBC Bitesize | Study Support

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/study-support>

More information can be obtained by contacting:

Linda King

Events Co-ordinator & Schools Programme Liaison Officer
Highland Council

Tel: 01349 868615

Mob: 07765 898266

Email: linda.king@highland.gov.uk

CAREERS INFORMATION

Highland Employability Team

<https://www.employabilityinscotland.com/local-employability-services/highland/>

Hi-Hope

Hi-hope is an online resource giving lots of information on what's out there for young people leaving education in the Highlands.

<https://hi-hope.org/about>

My World of Work

Scotland's career information and advice website.

<https://www.myworldofwork.co.uk/>

PlanIt Plus

PlanIT Plus is a resource for careers, learning, and school information in Scotland.

<http://www.planitplus.net/>

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland is the national skills body supporting the people and businesses of Scotland to develop and apply their skills.

SDS can provide guidance, advice, and information, including practical help with job search, CV writing etc. They can meet with young people being home educated to discuss their career plans, aspirations and assist in making career-related decisions as well as support them in making college/university/employment applications.

<https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/>

SOURCES OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Education Maintenance Allowance

Young people aged 16 to 19 years old from a low-income household may be eligible to receive financial assistance from an EMA.

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/899/schools -
grants and benefits/14/education maintenance allowance](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/899/schools-_grants_and_benefits/14/education_maintenance_allowance)

High Life Young Scot

A card that offers young people between the ages of 11 and 25 a single application card that will enable them to access local and national services such as information, retail discounts, libraries, leisure centres, transport and other entitlements.

<https://young.scot/the-young-scot-card/>

The Highland Children's Trust

A charity which was set up in 1983 to provide help with the educational needs of children in the Highlands and Islands.

<https://www.hctrust.co.uk/>

HEALTH

Brook.org

<https://www.brook.org.uk/>

Children's Health Scotland – Teenage Health Freak

<https://www.childrenshealthscotland.org/resource/teenage-health-freak/>

Deaf Action

<https://deafaction.org/>

Dental Contacts

[Click here](#)

Diabetes Scotland

https://www.diabetes.org.uk/in_your_area/scotland

Epilepsy Action

<https://www.epilepsy.org.uk/>

Health & Social Care, The Highland Council

https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1347/social_care_and_health

Know the Score

<https://www.knowthescore.info/>

National Deaf Children's Society

<https://www.ndcs.org.uk/>

NHS Highland

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/>

Speech & Language Therapy (NHS Highland)

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/your-services/all-services-a-z/speech-and-language-therapy/>

Thriving Families

<https://www.thrivingfamilies.org.uk/links>

BOOKS ABOUT HOME EDUCATION

Title	Author
School's Out	Jean Bendell
Free Range Education	Terri Dowty
School is not Compulsory	Education Otherwise
How children Learn	John Holt
Learning all the Time	John Holt
Teach Your Own	John Holt
What Shall I Do Monday	John Holt
The Underachieving School	John Holt
The Teenage Liberation Handbook	Grace Llewellyn
The Freethinkers' Pocket Dictionary to the Educational Universe	Roland Meighan
Learning from Home Based Education	Roland Meighan
Natural Learning, Natural Curriculum	Roland Meighan
The Next Learning System	Roland Meighan
Educating Children at Home	Alan Thomas
Doing it Their Way: Home Based Education and Autonomous Learning	Jan Fortune-Wood
Bound to be Free: Home Education as a Positive Alternative to paying the hidden costs of 'Free' education	Jan Fortune-Wood
With Consent	Jan Fortune-Wood
Those Unschooled Minds – Home Educated Children Grow Up	Julie Webb
One to One	Gareth Lewis
Unqualified education	Gareth Lewis
Learning without School	Ross Mountney

Linked Files

Diabetes in Children

There are several different types of diabetes however in children the most common type of diabetes is Type 1 diabetes, however Type 2 diabetes is now on the rise.

Signs and symptoms of diabetes

Symptoms occur because of a shortage of insulin in the body. Insulin is needed to move glucose from the blood and into the cells in the body that require glucose to use as energy. Some or all of glucose in the body stays in the blood and it isn't able to be used for energy. The body tries to reduce blood glucose levels by flushing the excess glucose out of the body in the urine.

The main symptoms of undiagnosed diabetes can include:

- passing urine more often than usual, especially at night
- increased thirst
- extreme tiredness
- unexplained weight loss
- genital itching or regular episodes of thrush
- slow healing of cuts and wounds
- blurred vision

If your child displays any of the above symptoms, please contact your GP to arrange an urgent appointment or contact NHS24 if out of hours.

Type 1 diabetes – what is it?

Type 1 Diabetes is an unpreventable condition that develops when the insulin producing cells in the body have been destroyed and the body is unable to produce any insulin. A person with Type 1 diabetes needs to take insulin by injections to help control the glucose levels in the blood to keep them in a normal range.

Type 2 diabetes – what is it?

Type 2 Diabetes develops when the body does not produce enough insulin to maintain a normal blood glucose level, or when the body is unable to effectively use the insulin that is being produced. The signs and symptoms of Type 2 diabetes are similar to those of Type 1 diabetes although may develop more slowly. Again, if your child has any of the above symptoms, please contact your GP. Treatment may involve medication and changes to diet and lifestyle.

There are ways of preventing Type 2 diabetes developing. Ways of adopting a healthier lifestyle include eating well as part of a balanced diet, taking plenty of exercise and maintaining a healthy weight. These are all steps that help control blood sugar levels and contribute to preventing Type 2 diabetes developing now and in the future.

For further information visit Diabetes UK – www.diabetes.org.uk

Family Diaries 1

A quick introduction to our happy home-ed family. We have 3 children, a 15 year old girl, 10 year old girl and a 3 year old boy. None of the children have ever attended pre-school or school. We live in a remote location surrounded by rolling hills and sheep.

A typical day:

We will be up and have had breakfast and be ready to start the day by around 10am, typically this is the time of day where the children will engage in something more structured. Mondays we normally do French. I'm working with the eldest with a combination of resources, we use text books and on-line programs, and she's doing really well and has a fairly good grasp of most of the commonly used verbs and is beginning to understand conjugation in different tenses. I studied French with the OU in order to teach the children. For the younger two we have a series of books from Berlitz, where the picture book is in French and then English. I read the French and they then translate, the pictures really help them to remember and now even my 3 year old is beginning to translate from memory.

Generally we will have lunch and then the children have free time. If it's not raining, they will spend some time outdoors, trampolining, cycling, walking, or just running around. Later in the afternoon they will normally find something to occupy themselves, our eldest is a keen musician and will normally practice her guitar for an hour or more. Our middle child is very enthusiastic about manga art and endlessly creates comics and artwork. The youngest child will normally play with either myself or his Dad. Monday night is Scouts night, our middle child attends scouts, so it's a quick dinner and out the door.

Generally, most days takes a similar pattern, we will take a subject and work with it each day. We now use numerous on-line resources for their maths/arithmetic practice and we have also found a fantastic geography resource which the children love. The children engage readily in these tasks and seem to thrive on them. Generally this more structured side is carried out in the morning and then in the afternoons they are left to indulge their own pleasures. We do not have television or computer games etc., in that time but they are free to do that in the evening, although screen time is still limited and regulated.

The children are also part of Noshed which is a big home ed community, we do varied and frequent activities together which I have found to be very rewarding and the children seem to find that too, they have made many, many friends through this group.

Our 10 year old is a member of the local drama club, which she has thoroughly enjoyed for many years now. Our eldest used to attend when she was younger but is now a helper there as part of her Silver Duke of Edinburgh Award which the local high school have kindly allowed her to take part in, she completed her Bronze award last year with the same school. Our eldest is also currently undertaking the Young Leaders development programme with The Ocean Youth Trust Scotland. She sailed to the Faroe Isles last summer with them and is now part of their staff and will spend this summer sailing with them as a Bosun. She is also part of the local kayaking club and kayaked the length of the river Spey last summer. Her younger sister will be joining the club this year too.

Obviously mixed into this is time they have with friends. We regularly have friends staying here or ferrying them to and from friends' houses. The children live in an isolated spot, but they are by no means isolated as we have made it a priority to make sure that they have kept up friendships that they have made.

Home education has been deeply fulfilling for us as a family. The children appear to be well adjusted, confident individuals, willing to give anything a go! Long may that continue.

Family Diaries 2

Hi: I'm Sally and together with my husband Kevin, I home educate our 2 sons Alexander (13) and Finlay (8). Kevin works full time so the majority of the home education is my responsibility. Kevin is very supportive and participates and attends home ed events whenever he can. Alex went to school for a few weeks in Reception year and for 2 terms in Year One when we lived in England. Fin has never attended school.

We don't follow a schedule despite fits and starts and occasional attempts to crack down. I think lots of home ed parents never get over the idea that we aren't doing enough 'work'. It's pretty hectic in our house and we generally put more value on the boys' social lives and friendships than on formal learning. We are quite isolated up in Sutherland and the home ed community is very spread out in North Scotland so we travel a lot. Most of the arranged activities are in the Elgin area which is 2 hours drive for us. We have close friends even further away so we often go for overnight visits.

We don't really have a "typical" week although the boys do have regular activities. There is a weekly home ed skating session in Elgin which we often attend and a monthly outdoor skills group. Alex occasionally goes to Scouts and Fin to Cubs. There's also Canoe Club weekly. At the moment we're involved with a local archaeological dig. Alex takes accordion lessons although he's on hiatus at the moment. We're trying to find a fiddle teacher for Fin.

Alex is a prolific reader and read early and easily. Fin is slower. Both love audio books and we listen to loads on our many car journeys. Right now it's the Dark Materials trilogy by Phillip Pullman.

When we're home for a few days in a row I try to do an hour of 'school' with each. I teach them English and math only. The rest is down to their personal interests. We do science experiments and collect wild foods – we dabble in languages, most recently Latin and Braille. Both boys are keen birdwatchers and are interested in survival/bush craft skills. Alex has read most of the Horrible Histories, The Knowledge and Geographies and such.

Home education is incredibly rewarding and incredibly time consuming and exhausting too. We're together virtually 24/7. I do manage an

occasional bit of part time work cooking but this requires serious scheduling with Kevin taking time off etc. I think the only prerequisite to home ed is the willingness and desire to dedicate the greater part of your time to the family – the kids will lead you from there wherever they want to go. No experience necessary and definitely teaching skills NOT required!!

There will be battles! If I let them, mine would at the moment spend most of their time on their computers, particularly on Runescape and Age of Empires. When dragged from the laptops they both also like Dungeons & Dragons and Warhammer and spend lots of time assembling and painting models and scenery. Also Airfix. And lego.

As I said there isn't a typical week in our house so the following is just what we did this past week:

Monday:

Boys up about 10:00 and breakfast and chatting around the kitchen. It's raining so Fin has extra computer time on drawing programs (Gimp). Also some Beano reading. Alex was also on the computer a while sorting his photo library. Then he designed some Dungeons & Dragons (role-play fantasy game) characters. Birthday thank you notes got written and then they each did an hours 'school' work. Fin has several maths and English workbooks on the go. He's doing joined up writing with a calligraphy pen in silver ink on black paper which makes the mundane more exciting. He's also working through the Oxford Reading Tree books (Stage 8) for reading so he read one to me. Alex did an outline for a writing project from a CGP workbook to write a fable. He would have tackled his KS3 math but the 'Conquermath' website we're currently working from wasn't loading so he wrote a letter to the Open University where he has applied to do a short course on archaeology. With various fits and starts and snack breaks, that took us to 5:00 pm after which the boys are allowed free computer time. After dinner they watched 'Springwatch', then stories and bed.

Tuesday:

Up early (for us early is 8:30!) and off to archaeology class from 10:00-12:30. This is a community project (not home ed). Mine are the only children attending because it's in school time.

12:30-5:00: We went to Milton Community Woodland to work on a coracle. We did a weekend course last year building one but didn't get it finished. Projects often run over looonng periods!

Home for dinner and then 6:30-9:00: canoe club (again this is community and not home ed). Stories and bed about 11:00.

Wednesday:

Up 10:30 and drove to Elgin (2 hours). Listened to 'Amber Spyglass' CD's en route. Afternoon and overnight with home ed friends. The boys spent time on the computer as well as planning filming for tomorrow. They're working on a production of Robin Hood.

Thursday:

Up at 7:30!! Breakfast and social time and then off to figure skating from 10:30-12:30. This is a home ed weekly activity with a group class and free skating. The boys each take a 15 minute private lesson as well. After chips in the leisure centre café it's off to the library at 1:30. Then out for sword practise for the Robin Hood film. (homemade wooden swords!) It's raining so no filming but they did test shots under leafy trees and tried to stay dry.

4:30 Drive home arriving about 6:30 dinner, computer time (Runescape) and bed.

Friday:

Sunny and lovely – mum up early and in the garden trying to get some belated planting done. Dad has the day off so he and Alex worked on building a small hen house. The boys want chickens so they found a library book with building plans and made a list of supplies (which I have to admit have been lying about for weeks waiting for the project to get underway). Fin not very involved and spent time trampolining and lying in the sun reading Beanos. Alex also abandoned project early and dad did the best part of the work! I think Alex got sent off at one point for hassling his brother and likely spent that time sprawled on his bed reading Dungeons & Dragons manuals or his current book from the Rangers Apprentice series.

Late dinner – bit of Trivial Pursuit and then bed about 10:30. I'm reading "We Didn't Mean to Go to Sea" by Arthur Ransome to Fin – we often have several night time books on the go and both listen to the others. Have been reading the Artemis Fowl series to Alex. Usually we have a bit of 'own book time' before lights out around 11:30.

Saturday:

Boys up 10:30 and after breakie I'm off to help a friend get her holiday home ready for tenants. Kevin and Alex do more work on the hen house. Fin works on repainting his precious (!) garden gnomes. Then Kevin drops them up to where I'm working and they muck about on their computers while I get on with it. (Kev off for a quick round of golf.) A seagull's nest has to be moved which is dramatic but Alex puts on a hard hat and gets on with it. Mum bird comes back eventually and all is well. Home about 7:00 and dinner. Watched an episode of "History of Scotland" on DVD and then bed.

Sunday:

Boys up 10:30 and breakie. An hour of school for each. Math workbooks and grammar and handwriting and Oxford Reading Tree for Fin. 'Conquermath' lessons and worksheets for Alex. After lunch a family bike ride and then pottering in the garden. Dinner together – the boys made cheesecake for pudding. They're meant to cook one day a week but it's one of those many things that in reality don't happen often. Rather like their jobs around the house.

Family Diaries 3

Hi, I'm Suzanne and I home educate Lawrence who will be 8 in a few weeks. We decided to home educate Lawrence for several reasons. He went to nursery which he enjoyed up to a point but did not want to go to school. Having been involved with Lawrence's nursery and giving extra tuition to children from the local primary school, I was not very happy with the 'tick box' driven approach to 'education' or impressed with the school. Up until this year I really concentrated on teaching Lawrence to read (I used Jolly phonics then Oxford reading tree books borrowed from the local school) and basically just went with the flow, pursuing natural lines of interest. We live in a village on the coast and grow most of our own vegetables, so we did lots of nature activities, art, and cookery/gardening and read lots of books that were of interest to him.

Lawrence was a reluctant writer at first but loved drawing so I encouraged that on the grounds that it would develop his fine motor skills just the same and yet hold his attention for hours without having to nag. Now he has a use for writing he is suddenly writing with no encouragement. It was just a question of waiting for the right moment. The same happened with Maths. Having shown an early interest in numbers he then went through a phase of losing that and preferring reading. Suddenly, with gentle persistence on my part and just 'doing maths' when a situation presented itself, e.g. when cooking, he has started to show an interest again. This, for me, is the real beauty of home education – you can wait until a child is ready rather than being driven by a curriculum.

This year I have started to formalise things a little and we try to do maths on a regular basis – I vaguely follow the Curriculum for Excellence, available online, making up my own worksheets, use or adapt maths round the home and supplement that with material I find on the internet e.g. Nrich/BBC Bitesize etc. We read every day – he reads to me, I read to him and we read non-fiction together for project work. He also reads a lot on his own and we listen to audio books in the car. Other topics are covered by project work, which we decide on together, inspired by something seen in a book, on TV or a visit we have made. I try to use a variety of source material – books, observation from nature or experiments, TV documentaries, internet, and visiting relevant places. We have a walk most days and he helps me round the house and in the garden. We have one other home ed family locally that we see regularly and he has plenty of local friends from nursery/toddler group days as well as golf, swimming lessons and orienteering. We also socialise with

adults on ranger guided walks, RSPB group and our charity work & friends.

We do not really have a typical week – it is so dependent on the weather, what’s happening in the garden, and what’s on roundabout.

Monday 13th Feb

Having spent the weekend with lousy colds we needed something indoors and non-taxing, so we spent all morning making puppets and a theatre to re-enact ‘The Adventures of Abney and Teal’. After lunch Lawrence read *The Matrix Mission - ORT level 11 (we have read all these before but are re-reading them as they involve time travelling and we are making a history time line round our school room and putting up the various episodes in context)*. We then watched 2 episodes of ‘Walking with Dinosaurs’ – this being the theme for our project of the moment. At 5 we tidied up the school room and I read a few chapters of ‘The Secret Seven’ to him before getting the dinner.

Tue 15th Feb

Still sniffing and a cold wind outside, so another day indoors. We continued work on the theatre and Lawrence took it upon himself to write out invitations to his play. He then tidied up and vacuumed his school room whilst I made bread – he would normally help but I didn’t fancy snot in the bread! After lunch we watched 2 more dino programmes and then Lawrence drew some dinosaurs for the project display whilst I made dinner.

Wed 15th Feb

Still feeling lousy, so we watched 2 more dinosaur programmes in the morning. After lunch Lawrence finished off his drawings and labelled them and we put them up on the wall. He also did a little timeline showing when all the different dinosaurs had lived, wrapping up the dinosaur project. *I do find that he starts off very eagerly on a project but then quickly wants to move onto something else – it’s quite difficult to keep the momentum going and spend long enough on any one topic to finish off what we set out to do – still it’s early days on the ‘written work’ front and at this stage, whilst I do want him to learn the discipline of finishing what he started, I would rather not flog it to death as it would be counter-productive. I am also learning what is a reasonable amount to expect him to do.* We spent the rest of the afternoon curled up on the couch reading – Lawrence’s reader today was about Bletchley Park so we talked a bit about WWII, military intelligence (I used to be in the Army) and evacuees. We decided that our next project would be WWII.

After that I read to him for a bit then I caved in and let him play on the iPad (this is normally reserved as a weekend treat) whilst I made dinner and did some work on my computer.

Thu 16th Feb

We really had to go and do some shopping today so we made a list together and off we went. I try to use shopping trips to do a bit of impromptu maths and we found lots of good examples today. We listened to 'George's Marvellous Medicine' by Roald Dahl in the car and were both enjoying it so much that we put it on the computer when we got home to hear the end. Lawrence got the book and read along. After lunch Lawrence drew whilst I booked a trip to Sweden to see my brother and his little boy – we then spent some time together looking at the various tourist attractions in Stockholm and deciding what we would like to do. After a snack we sat down to look at the library books we had for our WWII project. We read a few pages from one book together diverging at frequent intervals to look at the atlas/a book of aeroplanes and to generally talk about what we were reading. Lawrence then read on his own some of 'Avoid being a Second World War Evacuee' one of a 'Horrible Histories' style series we have. Whilst I got the dinner he watched telly - Deadly 60 and CBeebies (which he still likes despite his age and I'm not complaining)

Fri 17th Feb

House cleaning today as we were expecting visitors and due to illness the place was a tip. Lawrence sorted all the clean washing and put his things away whilst I started the cleaning. He then tidied the school room and did some research on the internet on WWII aircraft whilst I finished off. We're gradually teaching him to use all the different software on the computer and today Daddy showed him how to save some pictures he wanted as a PDF file and print them off. He then labelled them for his project display. We spent the afternoon socialising and then did some reading once they had gone. (ORT – Time Runners) Lawrence played on the iPad whilst I got dinner.

Sat 18th Feb

We got up late, having sat up late last night watching 'Poirot'. It was snowing outside and we're all still coughing. Lawrence spent what was left of the morning watching a documentary about aircraft with his Dad – we're an aviation mad family – and did some reading. *He is really into the ORT readers that we're using at the moment and I often find him sitting reading them of his own volition, which is the way it should be of*

course. After lunch we popped out to buy a celebratory bottle and went round to see some friends whose anniversary it was. When we got home the boys played stick cricket on the iPad and then Lawrence did some reading with me (ORT – The Thief who stole nothing) before we went out for dinner with some friends. *We've always taken Lawrence with us when we go out for dinner as we firmly believe that learning how to behave in such situations is an important part of an education for life.*

Sun 19th Feb

Another late start this morning. Lawrence played on the iPad whilst I cooked Sunday breakfast and then after that we put up all the pieces of coloured paper to make our timeline. We then went for a gentle walk with the dog – so nice to get out after a week indoors. After a late lunch we did some reading, put the dates on our timeline and played together on the iPad. We then did half an hour of Maths. When Daddy came in we all had a game of Scrabble before dinner and after dinner settled down to watch telly – Poirot again.

This was not a typical week at all due to the fact that we have both been seriously under the weather.

Family Diaries 4

We are a family of 4 who live in Aberdeenshire, I, my husband Charlie, our daughter Gudrun who is 14 and our son Gwyn who is 11. Both my husband and I are self-employed artists who work from home. We live on an off-grid small holding with my father (a writer) and my stepmother (a university lecturer in art history) and their 2 daughters 6 and 11. None of the combined 4 children have ever been to school. Gwyn has been slow to learn to read and we haven't pushed it, but we are now as he gets very frustrated at how it restricts him. My husband is dyslexic and so is my brother and think Gwyn might be too; though don't think it's important to get a diagnosis. I had a book that my brother used, for children and adults with reading difficulties "Toe by Toe" and have been working through that with him for the last two years, and we are at last seeing an improvement. We follow a very child led method of learning and the only scheduled work are the four subjects done by each of the four adults for approx. half an hour a week each. (History, Art History, Science, and Outdoor stuff, which include cycling, walking, plant identification, map reading etc.) And the guitar lessons and drama club. All the activities described are just what the children choose to do as and when they want. I have left out details of the adult's self-employed work, but we fit that in around the kids. The other activities the children have the opportunity of joining in include vegetable growing and harvesting, hay making with a scythe, animal husbandry, cob building, joinery, lots of other types of building work and cooking. All the children have their own gardens to which they all have differing levels of interest. About twice a month we go to a group activity organised by the home education group, these have included, felting, basket making, animal tracking, wild food, kayaking, canoeing, mountain climbing and potion making. Here's a typical week.

MONDAY

Breakfast

Children fed our guinea pigs, cats, and dog. Gudrun started knitting straight away, she is obsessively knitting dolls and dolls clothes just now. Gwyn did some reading practice with his dad, "sheltie and the runaway". Next History, (about half an hour a week of this) I read to them a discovery magazine - of which we have the whole set and are working through - on King John, Magna Carta and holidays. Then Gwyn did

some guitar practice while Gudrun knitted and then Charlie took Gwyn to his guitar lesson, and to visit his granny and do some shopping. While they were away I got my sewing machine out of storage where it's been since we moved here 5 years ago and showed Gudrun how to use it, she was very excited as she has been hand sewing dolls clothes to sell and feels her hand sewing doesn't look professional enough. Then she went on Facebook and flicker - where she talks to her friends and puts up pictures of her latest dolls she's made for discussion and then on eBay to look at the price of ball jointed dolls accessories (another obsession). Then she did more knitting while I went on the computer.

Lunch

Gwyn went for a walk with my little half-sister, Maddy, who lives next door (also age 11 and home educated) to look for a stick, Gudrun knitted. Gwyn got back with a stick and with a sheep's horn he had found previously he made a shepherds' crook. Gudrun fed the guinea pigs and hens and swept the hall floor - to earn some money. Both the kids then played some educational games on the BBC bitesize website.

Dinner

Gwyn did some guitar practice then some banjo practice - Gudrun knitted. Then we all did some reading music practice because Gwyn had to learn some music reading for his next guitar lesson. Then Charlie read the kids some of "King of the cloud forests" by Michael Morpurgo while Gudrun knitted and Gwyn carved his name into his shepherds crook. Then I read them some "Odysseus II, the journey through hell" by Tony Robinson and Richard Curtis. Then the kids went to bed and read for a while.

TUESDAY

Breakfast

Gwyn did morning animal feeding, then 60 press ups - he's very keen to beat his Dad at this. Gudrun knitted. Gwyn worked on a rabbit skin he is tanning. Then both Gudrun and Gwyn and my half-sisters next door played together while the adults did some building work on our sheds.

Lunch

Some friends arrived with their kids (a girl 10 and boy 12) who are good friends with our kids (and were on holiday from school) and there was much playing outside with animals while the adults chatted and made the evening meal.

Dinner

We had 3 more friends for dinner and then an adult music band practice (which Gwyn joined in with as he is also learning drums). While this was going on there was an explosion of wool projects going on in the background - a couple of the visitors taught the kids how to finger knit and darn. Then everyone left and Charlie read to the kids and then they went to bed and read for a while.

WEDNESDAY

Breakfast

The kids shared the animal feeding jobs. The kids watched a movie with my sisters next door much knitting throughout and after!

Lunch

We had a 10 min discussion about gradients. Gwyn did some banjo practice, some music reading practice and made up a knitting pattern. Gudrun did a photo shoot of her latest knitted dolls dresses, wrote the descriptions on the laptop and then put them on Etsy (a selling website like eBay - but for mainly handcrafted and vintage items). Gwyn practiced all sorts of exercises and then did some reading practice. Then my step mother (next door) did some art history (about half an hour a week) with all 4 children. Gwyn worked outside on sharpening a sword (with a metal file) he has made from an iron bar from an old gate. Gudrun knitted some more! Then the 4 kids got together and watched a movie. Then we picked up a friend of Gudrun's from the train and took her home. All the kids played together for a bit then the younger kids went and played outside and the two older girls did more knitted doll making!

Dinner

The girls hung out and chatted and knitted, Gwyn looked a recipe for

chocolate on the internet and then made some, then they went to bed and did some more knitting and some reading.

THURSDAY

Breakfast

The kids did the animal jobs together. Playing, knitting, Gwyn did some felting. I did some "Toe by Toe" with Gwyn. Then Charlie took all the kids (five, including Gudrun's friend) and dogs for a walk. (He does this once a week). They were away for over an hour and were very excited that they had seen a deer.

Lunch

Charlie did some reading with Gwyn. Gwyn did some music practice on his various instruments and I did some music reading practice with him. Then Gudrun knitted and Gwyn made some needle felted animals with Ellie my 6 year old half-sister next door. Then Gudrun made some biscuits and Gwyn and Ellie played outside.

Dinner

We took Gudrun's friend to the station and a quick trip to the Library then I read to them then bed.

FRIDAY

Breakfast

Kids did their animal jobs, Gwyn did some painting, then we tidied up our craft area as it was beginning to take over the house. Gwyn played outside on his roller boots, Gudrun knitted.

Lunch

Charlie did Gwyn's reading with him. Gudrun did some photography, then all four kids played on the track on their bikes. Then my Dad did some science with them all.

Dinner

We all watched a program about the earth's orbit. Then Charlie read to

them, then some bedroom tidying then bed.

SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

I did the animal jobs and Charlie took Gudrun and Maddy to a drama club and Gwyn to see a friend.

Then Charlie and I and our two kids went and had a camp out in the woods at another friend's house, our two and their friends (boys 13 and 16) hung out in the woods and lit a camp fire and cooked their dinner on it, and slept in tents.



High Life Highland

Tel: 01463 663800

Visit www.highlifehighland.com established in October 2011, High Life Highland is a charity developing and promoting opportunities in Adult Learning, Archives, Arts, Leisure Facilities, Libraries, Museums, Outdoor Education, Sport, and Youth Work.

Youth Work: Are you 11 to 26 and interested in taking part in activities and working within your community to make sure young people are listened to? High Life Highland places a qualified Youth Worker in each of the 29 secondary school catchment areas to help you do just that. The activities support your education and personal development and help enable you to gain a voice, influence, and place in society.

Youth Workers target many of their activities at young people who live in areas where opportunities are limited, or life circumstances are challenging, and will help you access activities and experiences that enhance your achievements and knowledge.

Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own development and are offered a range of Awards, which recognise and celebrate their achievements, e.g. Duke of Edinburgh, Youth Achievement, John Muir, Saltire Awards (previously Millennium Volunteer), Quality Young Scot Awards.

The Youth Workers are supported by a Highland-wide team responsible for programmes such as Highland Youth Voice (the Youth Parliament) and the Young Scot National Entitlement Card and associated services.

The Youth Worker staff also support the Highland Youth Convener. This is a full-time bursary post for a young person to represent the interests of all young people to the Highland Council and other key agencies.

If you are a young person, aged 11 upwards, we will help you to realise the opportunities available within Highland – remember we are here to support you. Visit your own Youth Voice Website on www.hyv.org.uk. This site is all about Highland young people and connecting you with each other, the decision makers that affect you, the information you want, and is ultimately a show-case for the rest of the world when they visit the site to find out what it is like to be young in the Highlands.

Contact: Mike Jones – Senior Youth Development Officer
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NHS HIGHLAND DENTAL SERVICES - ORAL HEALTH IMPROVEMENT CONTACTS

North Community Health Partnership Area:

Caithness:

Oral Health Promoter, Lochshell Dental Centre, Wick Business Park,
Wick. KW1 4QR.

Tel: 01955 609945

Sutherland West:

Oral Health Educator, Office No. 6, Harbour Offices, Kinlochbervie,
IV27 4RR.

Sutherland East:

Oral Health Educator, Robertson Health Centre, Alness, Ross-shire,
IV17 OXS.

Mid Highland Community Health Partnership Area:

Oral Health Improvement Co-ordinator, The Portacabin, Dingwall Health
Centre, Ferry Road, Dingwall

Tel: 01349 868779

Ross-shire:

Tain and Seaboard Villages, Alness and Invergordon, West Coast Area:

Oral Health Educator, Robertson Health Centre, Alness, Ross-shire,
IV17 OXS.

Tel: 01349 883923

Dingwall and Black Isle:

Oral Health Educator, Centre for Health Sciences, Inverness.

Tel: 01463 235468

Skye & Lochalsh:

Oral Health Educator, Dunvegan Health Centre, Isle of Skye

Tel: 01470 521774

Lochaber:

Dental Clinic, Camaghael Health Centre, Fort William.
Tel: 01397 709865

South East Community Health Partnership Area:

Oral Health Promoter, 39-41 Harbour Road, Inverness, IV1 1UF
Tel: 01463 703974

Inverness-shire East and Rural:

Oral Health Educator, Culloden Health Centre, Keppoch Road,
Culloden
Phone 01463 792554

Inverness-shire West and Town:

Oral Health Educator, Nairn Town & County Hospital, Nairn
Tel: 01667 451524

Aird Area, Kilchuimen & Drummond School:

Oral Health Educator, Dental Clinic, Abban Street, Inverness
Tel: 01463 718140

Nairn, Ardersier & Croy:

Oral Health Educator, Nairn Town & County Hospital, Nairn.
Tel: 01667 451524

Badenoch & Strathspey:

Dental Hygienist, Aviemore Health Centre
Tel: 01479 811019