



# EHE in Darlington

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# Aims

- To share information about Elective Home Education (EHE) in Darlington.
- To illustrate the talk with anonymous examples of children and families that we have in Darlington.



# EHE families don't have to ...

- Have permission to home educate, or tell us that they are if they never went to school. Recently we “found” an EHE family and 15 other children.
- Follow the school day, week or year.
- Use the national (or any other) curriculum.
- Do any assessments or qualifications.
- Agree to a visit from us.

*There were proposals to make changes via the Badman review and Children, School and Families bill, but they got “washed out” just before the election.*



# How Many EHE in Darlington?

- As at 1 June 2010 we had 117 EHE children with about 29 educated for some of the week at The Bridge. (Total numbers were bigger than High Coniscliffe primary school's roll.)
- As at 1 July 2010 this reduced 95 then went up to 98 then back to 95 ...
- Over the last 3 years EHE numbers have averaged over 100. (The highest was 120.)
- Around two-thirds of our EHE children are from the traveller community, who are Darlington's largest ethnic minority group.
- Our EHE cohort is top-heavy, with roughly 50% in KS4 and 40% in KS3.



# Reasons to be EHE at 1 Jul 10

- 52% for cultural reasons (travellers).
- 14% were unhappy at school.
- 9% for philosophical reasons.
- 7% had special needs.
- 4% (but really much more) were waiting for a school place.
- 3% had been excluded, or were at risk of exclusion.
- 11% not yet known.



# Culture

- An EHE education may be very different from school without being unsuitable.
- Our success with the traveller community, and other EHE families, has come out of understanding where they come from and where they want their children to get to.
- Other reasons for our success are ...



# Sharing Information/Raising Awareness

- Briefing stakeholders such as headteachers, governors, exams officers, EMTAS, Connexions, Children's Trust, LSCB, etc.
- Working with Admissions: children who don't get a school place, or don't apply, or who don't take up a place.
- Holding regular meetings with key agencies who deal with EHE children. Informing them when we get new EHE pupils and asking for information.
- Developing a reputation for fairness, quality relationships and good support, so that families are encouraged to identify themselves and speak to us.



# Successful Strategies (1)

- Be polite. “**You** have refused my child a school place.”
- Be flexible. Make visits when and where asked. “We are back for two days ... can you come now?”
- Assist families by making referrals to alternative provision, such as The Bridge, and helping with admissions paperwork.
- Provide whatever help, advice and resources you can. See our newsletter and Guide for Parents. “I would like my child to have a statement.”





# Successful Strategies (2)

- Avoid School Attendance Orders – I have only threatened one once and that led to improvements.
- Make the systems work for both LA and family. Give plenty of notice, write, and call the day before. “Can you come again ...”
- Meet in neutral venues and without the children, if requested - Crown Street library.
- Avoid a formal judgement at the first visit. Give the family time to get going and settle into EHE.



# Successful Strategies (3)

- Send a written report to the family as soon as possible after visits. The letter should reflect verbal comments and use the correct language.
- Have a key worker for each family.
- Collect children's school files.
- Have a high quality administrator.
- Arrange joint visits with other services. More later.
- Organise “get togethers”.
- Attend Regional Meetings with other LAs to share best practice – giving the region a “voice”.



# Improvements

- Over the past year our success rate for arranged visits has increased from 38% to 63% and our failure rate has decreased from 25% to 6%. I never did like standing on the doorstep.
- Only a tiny percentage of our families don't like engaging with us.



# Good Visits (1)

Get the right mix of visitors and take the experts to the family. We undertake visits with Connexions, CAMHS, EWOs, the Choice Adviser, School Counselling service, the 14-19 team and the Inclusion Officer.



## Good Visits (2)

Look at anything the child has made or done... carpets, scripts and storyboards, projects on fashion, Victorian dresses, plants, webpages, scones, presentations, photographs (e.g. trotting), drawings, badges, collections of vases and watches, certificates, spreadsheets in a chemical plant, etc.



## Good Visits (3)

- Speak to, or get reports from, anyone involved in the child's education: tutors, family members, friends, charities, etc.
- Ask the child/parents to keep a learning diary and ask to see this during each visit.
- Consider responsibilities the child has around the home such as preparing meals, looking after siblings, feeding animals, household chores.
- For older children, consider any kind of voluntary or paid work or work experience.
- Talk to the child about their activities, interests, learning, future plans and what they like about home education.



# Back to School?

- Families may decide that EHE is not for them, or may only intend it to be temporary.
- Knowledge of admissions procedures and wider EOTAS services is invaluable.
- Be flexible about reintegration, particularly where the child has been out of school for a long time or has difficulties. Consider part-time or flexi-schooling.
- For children who are anxious, a period with the Home and Hospital Teaching Service may be beneficial followed by reintegration.
- Consider alternative provision from Year 9 ...



# Alternative Provision, The Bridge

- We encourage those from Year 9 to consider attending alternative provision part or full-time.
- At The Bridge we have vocational qualifications, maths and English GCSEs and Functional Skills.
- Currently we have about 29 EHE children at The Bridge. Of the travellers, 70% are girls, traditionally a hard group to engage in formal education. The Bridge sparkles!
- We also have EHE children at Clervaux.





# Why The Bridge Works

- Relationships have been built with the traveller community and we understand their culture.
- Respect for their way of life. Travelling periods are expected. They can attend between half a day and five days a week.
- Offer courses they consider relevant and useful such as construction and catering.
- We dual register children as EHE, which allows flexibility.



# Summary

- We build relationships with individual children and their families. (The story of the shouting mother and grandmother.)
- We have got the systems and administration about right, but still can't be sure that we know about all children who are EHE.
- EHE is placed in the context of wider EOTAS services and has a voice at a high enough level.
- We provide what our EHE community wants.
- **Any questions?**

