

Home Education Network (HEN) Constitution

November 2020

1. MISSION STATEMENT AND ETHOS

1.1. Home Education Network (HEN) is a nationwide, voluntary, non-profit support group and representative body for families who choose to home educate or to engage in the pursuit of learning outside of the school system. We connect home educating families at a local and community level and build a nationwide network.

By engaging with state agencies, we aim to positively influence government policy and processes in relation to home education and its governance. We promote the awareness of home education as a legal and constitutionally protected option for families in Ireland.

1.2. Ethos: HEN is not affiliated to any particular religion or any cultural, ethnic or political group and welcomes all people involved in home education. HEN is committed to be an inclusive organisation, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, physical or mental ability, socioeconomic status, political views, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, or other protected status.

2. NAME

2.1. The name of the organisation is the ‘Home Education Network (HEN)’

3. AIMS

3.1. The primary aim of HEN is to support home educators in Ireland by pursuing the following objectives:

- 3.1.1. To support parental choice in deciding the most appropriate form of education for each child;
- 3.1.2. To raise awareness of the fact that home education is a viable and legal option;
- 3.1.3. To help parents share educational techniques suitable for the needs of each child;
- 3.1.4. To provide a means for the interchange of ideas and experiences among home educators through social gatherings, newsletters and other means;
- 3.1.5. To build understanding between home educators and the public;
- 3.1.6. To build connections between home educators and the authorities;
- 3.1.7. To act as negotiators and/or lobbyists with state authorities on behalf of the home educating community as a whole, as the need arises;
- 3.1.8. To strengthen the position of Home Education as a recognised part of the Irish Educational system.

3.2. The character of HEN should remain essentially voluntary but there shall be no bar on engaging salaried staff or consultants where this is necessary.

3.3. HEN is a “Not for Profit” organisation. It shall be open to HEN to raise funds through whatever legal and ethical means it decides.

4. MEMBERSHIP OF THE NETWORK

- 4.1. Membership of HEN is a family membership and is open to parents and guardians of children who are/were home educated and who subscribe to the ethos and objectives of the organisation and who have paid the appropriate annual subscription for the year in question or who are exceptionally approved by the NCB for membership without payment.
- 4.2. Members shall not disclose details of other members to persons or organisations outside of HEN without prior consent of that member.

5. LIABILITY

- 5.1. HEN shall maintain a valid insurance policy. Members have the responsibility to check the current policy cover.
- 5.2. The liability of members shall be limited to the amount of their annual subscription.

6. THE NATIONAL COORDINATING BODY (NCB)

- 6.1. The affairs and policies of HEN shall be coordinated and managed by the NCB. The NCB acts as a management board and has ultimate responsibility for the management of the organisation.
- 6.2. The officers who make up the NCB shall function within the remit of the Constitution.
- 6.3. Election of Officers to the NCB should adhere to the following guidelines:
 - 6.3.1. Officers are elected for one-year periods only, with a 'year' being the period between one AGM to the next AGM.
 - 6.3.2. For a member to be eligible to serve on the NCB, they should be a member of HEN for a minimum of 6 months prior to becoming an officer on the NCB.
 - 6.3.3. The maximum number of consecutive terms of office for any HEN member for any particular officership shall be as outlined for each individual office in section 7. THE OFFICERS OF THE NCB.
 - 6.3.4. The maximum consecutive terms on the NCB for any member shall be five.
 - 6.3.5. The NCB will endeavour to fill positions that remain vacant after elections.
- 6.4. The NCB shall hold regular meetings to facilitate the management of HEN.
 - 6.4.1. The NCB shall normally meet at least twice in each year (from one AGM to the next); however additional meetings may be called on an as needed basis.
 - 6.4.2. Each meeting must have a quorum of five officers.
 - 6.4.3. It is anticipated that NCB Officers will attend at least two NCB meetings each term of office.
 - 6.4.4. There is provision to reimburse travel costs on an as needed basis according to NCB policy.

6.5. Election of Officers:

6.5.1. The Officers of the NCB and Other Posts (excluding the Chicklit Editor) are elected at each AGM.

6.5.2. HEN members should be invited to volunteer for officership at least 28 days before the AGM, and candidate names circulated at least seven days before the AGM to the HEN members email list, along with a short statement (maximum 100 words) from any candidate if they choose.

6.5.3. If there are multiple volunteers for a position, each shall have the opportunity to address the AGM for three minutes prior to the election for that position.

6.5.4. Volunteers for any position should declare any affiliations, memberships, positions held, published materials, publicly stated or demonstrated opinions or other matters that could potentially give rise to a conflict of interest or bring HEN into disrepute.

6.5.5. An NCB Officer may be removed from the NCB by a majority vote of 75 percent of the currently serving officers.

6.6. Any HEN member can add an agenda item for discussion by the NCB by contacting the Secretary. Any HEN member may attend an NCB meeting.

6.7. Decision making: Each officer of the NCB has a single vote. The NCB shall reach decisions by consensus, unless any NCB member present, physically or virtually, calls for a vote. In this case a decision shall be reached by simple majority voting, with the HEN Chairperson having a casting (deciding) vote in the event of a tie.

7. THE OFFICERS OF THE NCB

7.1. There is a more detailed description of responsibilities for each Officer position which volunteers should review prior to committing to taking on a role. The Officer may not always be able to fulfil all the responsibilities, but should take on the position with the intention of endeavouring to do so.

7.1.1. The descriptions will be reviewed periodically by the NCB and updated as required to ensure that the roles meet the needs of the organization and accurately reflect the responsibilities of each position.

7.1.2. NCB Officers are expected to adhere to a Code of Conduct according to NCB policy.

7.2. **Chairperson**-shall preside over meetings of the NCB and all General Meetings of HEN; and shall have a casting (deciding) vote if required. Shall ensure that the Newsletter is reviewed before publication. Consecutive terms limited to three (3) years in this position.

7.3. **Secretary**-is responsible for the general administration for HEN, and for ensuring that procedures are followed according to the Constitution. This responsibility includes organising committee meetings, and ensuring that minutes of NCB meetings and the

AGM are taken and distributed. The Secretary is responsible for maintaining the records and archives of HEN. Consecutive terms limited to three (3) years in this position.

- 7.4. **Treasurer**-is responsible for maintaining financial records and presenting annual accounts, and providing financial data to other NCB Officers as required for them to carry out their responsibilities. HEN's bank account and cash receipts and payments are managed by the Treasurer. The Treasurer has authority to sign cheques on behalf of HEN up to the value of 200 euro. For any larger amounts a second authorized NCB signature shall be required. Consecutive terms limited to three (3) years in this position.
- 7.5. **Contact Officer**- keeps an updated list of the Local Contacts and directs relevant enquiries to the appropriate Contact. Provides resources and advice to local contacts on appropriate communication. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.6. **Public Relations Officer**-is responsible for ensuring that effective publicity and information is made available to the public and to news media. This includes updating and distributing the HEN leaflet, and developing and editing the web content of HEN's web page. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.7. **Membership Officer**-shall maintain the membership database and member email list, providing member data to other NCB Officers as required for them to carry out their responsibilities; and is responsible for managing membership applications and dues received. They are responsible for maintaining an email function between HEN and members and in supporting other NCB officers regarding emailing members in accordance with their roles. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.8. **Newsletter Editor** -shall produce regular newsletters distributed to members. Responsible to ensure newsletter content is in accordance with the HEN ethos and objectives. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.9. **Information Technology Officer**-shall maintain all technical aspects of the HEN website, online payment system and database. Technically supports other NCB roles with IT related requirements. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.10. **Tusla Liaison Officer**-is responsible, subject to consultation with the membership and the NCB, for communicating with Tusla and other state agencies on behalf of HEN regarding issues for home educators, or issues originating from state agencies or bodies, including Tusla. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.11. **Events Coordinator**-shall organize the annual HEN gathering with the assistance of a Gathering Committee as well as any additional HEN events agreed upon by the NCB. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.
- 7.12. **Social Media Coordinator** – responsible for creating and managing all official HEN social media accounts and posting regularly in relation to HEN events, news and

home education in general. They will support the other NCB officers in relaying information via social media and will be supported by the PRO to ensure messaging is aligned with the HEN ethos and objectives. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.

7.13. **Inclusion & Equality Representative** – Coordinate development and revision of policies and code of conduct adhering to national best practices and providing information and guidance for members relating to Inclusion and Equality. Promotion of these policies throughout the organisation. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.

7.14. **Special Educational and Additional Needs Representative** – shall support home educating families of children with additional needs. In cooperation with the Tusla Liaison Officer, the role includes communication with state authorities in regard to additional needs as well as researching options and availabilities of services which are available to school children but not to home educated children. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.

7.15. **Further Education & Career Development Co-ordinator** – responsible for liaising with 3rd level institutes and employers to ensure access to further education and work placements for home educated children/young adults; and supporting members through the provision of information. Consecutive terms limited to five (5) years in this position.

8. REPLACEMENT OF NCB MEMBERS

8.1. NCB members may nominate another HEN member to represent them if they are unable to attend a particular meeting.

8.2. If an officer steps down between AGMs, the NCB will replace them with either an Assistant Officer, or with an interim Officer.

9. OTHER HEN POSTS

9.1. **Secondments**-The NCB may, at its sole discretion, invite or second individuals to serve on the NCB where their expertise is deemed necessary for the effective conduct of business; for example a Mediator. These individuals shall have no vote and their names shall be reported by the Secretary at the AGM.

9.2. **Assistant Officers**-Each NCB Officer may be supported by an Assistant Officer(s) who may be appointed either at the AGM or by the NCB for the purpose of assisting the Officer in his or her role, while also developing expertise within the membership and ensuring continuity for the NCB. These individuals shall have no vote.

9.3. **Regional Contacts**-act as a point of contact for home educators, or people considering or transitioning to home education; and encourage local gatherings among home educators in their areas. These individuals shall have no vote.

9.4. **Chicklit Editor**-is responsible for producing the children's newsletter Chicklit, in coordination with the Newsletter Editor Officer. The position is open to be filled on a year to year basis from one AGM to the next. The Chicklit Editor will be chosen according to NCB policy. This individual shall have no vote.

10. THE AGM

10.1. The Annual General Meeting (AGM) will normally be held approximately a year after the previous meeting typically to coincide with the annual gathering.

10.2. The meeting shall only be open to all currently paid up members of HEN.

10.3. The Business of the AGM shall include the following:

10.3.1. Previous AGM minutes will be read and approved;

10.3.2. NCB Officers will present reports;

10.3.3. NCB Officers for the following year will be elected;

10.3.4. The meeting will then consider submitted agenda items provided that at least two weeks written notice has been given to the Secretary;

10.3.5. Any Other Business will be discussed as time allows and at the discretion of the Chairperson. Items not listed on the agenda previously circulated to the membership may not be voted upon at that particular AGM.

10.4. Working Parties-The AGM and the NCB may set up such working parties or committees as they deem necessary for the expedition of particular items of business. Unless otherwise specified the maximum number of members within a working party or committee shall be seven. Any decisions from such groups shall require the agreement of the NCB before implementation.

10.5. Submissions of Views to the AGM-Members who are unable to attend the AGM may submit their views on agenda items in writing to the Secretary to be discussed at the AGM.

10.6. An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM)-may be called at the discretion of the NCB or by a formal written request made by a HEN member stating the reasons for the request and being supported by 30 or more members. An EGM may be held at any time, except that four weeks' notice of the EGM and the reasons for it shall be given to all members of the Network.

- 10.7. Circulation of Minutes-Minutes of the AGM and NCB meetings shall be circulated to the membership.

11. DECISION MAKING

- 11.1. At a General Meeting decisions will be made by simple majority voting.
- 11.2. The Chairperson has a casting vote.
- 11.3. In General Meetings up to two adult members (parents or guardians) are entitled to vote per family membership.
- 11.4. Electronically transmitted or proxy votes are acceptable.

12. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

- 12.1. Any proposed changes to this Constitution must be approved by a two-thirds majority among those voting on each proposal at the AGM.
- 12.2. Votes can be by proxy or electronically submitted per NCB policy.

13. NAME AND IMAGE

- 13.1. Use of HOME EDUCATION NETWORK (HEN) name and logo.
- 13.1.1. The name and/or logo of the organisation or the names of any members in their official capacities shall not be used to endorse or promote a commercial concern or in connection with any partisan interest or for any purpose not appropriately related to the promotion of the objectives of the organisation.
- 13.1.2. The use of HEN's name and logo in fundraising must first be approved by the NCB.
- 13.2. Use and Control of name, Image and Likeness. All HEN websites, newsletters, properties, bank accounts, cash and any other assets, including name, image and likeness, shall be solely owned and controlled by the HEN organisation and not by any individuals or groups within HEN.

14. WINDING UP

14.1. In the event that HEN is wound up, then any money, books, equipment or property which are owned by HEN shall be gifted by the NCB to other organisations which have similar objectives and /or activities.