

Speaker Profiles

Paula Rothermel

Dr Paula Rothermel is a leading UK academic in the field of home education. She is an Elected Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts and an Elected Associated Fellow of the British Psychological Society. Her doctoral thesis, *Home-Education: Rationales, Practices and Outcomes*, remains the largest ever UK study using a national sample of 1099 children.

She is a Chartered Psychologist and Independent Expert Witness specializing in court cases where home education is an issue. She has appeared on television, spoken on radio and has been a regular contributor at international academic conferences. Her work has regularly been cited in the national press.

Paula also works as an artist having studied as a figurative painter at the Slade School of Fine Art under the tutelage of Patrick George, Euan Uglow and Sir Lawrence Gowing between 1984-1988.

Tony Jeffs

Tony Jeffs is an Honorary Lecturer at Durham University, UK, and Visiting Tutor at Ruskin College, Oxford, and Bedfordshire University, UK. Amongst his many publications are *Young People and the Youth Service* (1979); *Youth Work* (1988 with Mark Smith); *Henry Morris* (1999) *Informal Education* (1999 with Mark Smith) and *Essays in the History of Youth Work* (2001) and *Architects of Change. Studies in the history of community and youth work* (2004) (both edited with Ruth Gilchrist and Jean Spence). Tony is Editor of the journal *Youth and Policy*.

Alan Thomas

Alan Thomas is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society and Visiting Fellow at the University of London Institute of Education. He has taught in schools and universities in Spain, Holland, England and Australia. He has published three books on home education, based mainly on his research in England and Australia. The most recent one, written with Harriet Pattison, deals with informal or autonomous learning. They are now working on another project together on learning to read at home.

Alan was attracted to home education from his own experience of schooling and then watching his children go through school. He felt there was something fundamentally wrong with the way children were expected to learn. Eventually he discovered home education. Since then he has been on a fascinating and satisfying intellectual journey as he has learnt about how children actually learn. His latest article, written with Harriet Pattison, embodies this. They look at what philosophers say education is and then show how home educators actually put it into practice.

Eileen Atkins

Eileen has been working professionally in museum education for ten years. This has included delivering community outreach programmes for Beamish Museum, working with schools and communities in Warwickshire and working as the Learning Officer at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle. She has developed and delivered activities for a wide range of audiences including schools, families, community groups and professional development for teachers.

Eileen currently works with the North East Regional Museums Hub as a Learning Officer delivering a programme of work called Embedding Museums in the Learning Community. Through this work, she is identifying and working with a number of Learning Professionals outside of formal education to develop their partnerships with museums across the North East.

Carole Rutherford

Carole has been a home educator for 12 years. She has home educated her middle son, who was diagnosed with Aspergers Syndrome, from the age of 13, and her youngest son, who has a diagnosis of High Functioning Autism, from 5. Both boys have thrived and developed a thirst for knowledge whilst at home.

In 2000, the year that both her sons were diagnosed, she co-founded Autism -in-Mind (AIM). AIM is a national campaign and support group, and is the only voluntary group which specifically supports parents who home educate their autistic children. It has drawn the government's attention to the fact that an increasing number of children with autism are now being educated at home.

In 2009 she gave evidence to the enquiry into Graham Badman's Elective Home Education Review. She spoke on the impact it would make on home-educating families with children with disabilities and special educational needs.

Carole has recently been appointed as an advisory member of the influential All Party Parliamentary Group for Autism.

Karen Turner

After qualifying as a teacher in 1993 Karen taught in primary, secondary, Further Education and Special Education Needs sectors of education. When her own child was unhappy in part time nursery education she decided to home educate him. In 2004 she set up the Home Education Centre (HEC) in Somerset. This is a vibrant learning and support centre which provides a real sense of community and group activities like drama and sports that are difficult to provide at home.

Today Karen home educates both her children and co-manages the HEC, which has 60 children registered and a further 60 on a waiting list. The centre has gained national recognition for its learning model and its work to promote positive working relationships with Somerset EHE department. The HEC is sharing its documentation and experience to support other groups setting up all over the country.

Fiona Nicholson

Fiona lives in Sheffield and home educates her son who is 17 and has never been to school. Fiona has been Chair of Education Otherwise Government Policy Group since March 2007 and is also a member of Education Otherwise Disability Group which supports families where children have special needs and disabilities. She has spoken at committees and conferences on home education.

Fiona is conducting extensive research into local authorities and home education and meets local authority representatives on a regular basis. In Sheffield, she is part of a small group of home educators which has been having discussions with the local authority since 2006.

Fiona was educated comprehensive schools in Derbyshire and was self-taught from age 16, gaining a place at Cambridge to read English Literature and Philosophy. After graduation she worked in sales for an independent book publisher and set up her own business partnership as a freelance sales representative and marketing consultant.