

COMPOSITE MINUTES OF THE 2025 SUMMER TERM AREA MEETINGS OF THE LA AND ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

West	Wednesday 11 June 2025	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
South	Thursday 12 June 2025	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
North East	Wednesday 18 June 2025	Colchester Football Stadium
Mid	Thursday 19 June 2025	The Lion Inn, Boreham

1. WELCOME, THANK YOU AND NOTICES

- a) Clare Kershaw, Director for Education, and the Area Chairs, welcomed those present, extending a particular **welcome** to the new (or new in post) headteachers in each area, who are:

North East

Mark Sawtell	Hazelmere Juniors
Alison Clark	Tendring Primary

South

Sarah Amran	Montgomerie Primary
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West

Nicky Brogan	Henham and Ugley Primary
Sian Watson	Roseacres Primary

Mid

Chris Eynon	St Peter's CE Primary, Sible Hedingham
Nick Hancock	Templars Academy

- b) **Thank you and farewell** to those headteachers who are retiring or leaving their current post this term:

North East

Hannah McCann	Gosbecks Primary
Susan Shipp	Friars Grove Primary

South

Julie Braithwaite	Lincewood Primary
Dominic Carver	South Benfleet Primary
Alina Clay	Stock CE Primary
Sandra Dorrington	Canvey Island Infants
Katherine Parker	St Peter's Catholic Primary
Kath Samson	Wyburns Primary
Nicky Stone-Riley	Cherry Tree Primary
Sharon Walker	North Crescent Primary

West

Tara Bristow	Alderton Infants
Vicky Childs	Matching Green CE Primary
Matthew Hawley	Dedham CE Primary
Elaine McNally	St Thomas More Catholic Primary

Mid

Andy Cumpstey	St Michael's CE Primary
Joanne Deaves	Gosfield Primary
Geraldine Denham-Hales	St Mary's CE Primary
Anita Easton	Great Bradfords Infants and Nursery
Ann Kelliher	Holy Family Catholic Primary
Kelly Koller	Beaulieu Park Primary
Sarah Meares	Terling Primary
Natasha Robson	Chipping Hill Primary

At the West meeting, Clare and Nicola Woolf noted that Jacky Castle will retire at the end of the term. She has worked for the Local Authority since 2004, and is an expert on the curriculum, assessment and moderation. She will be very much missed by all of her colleagues in Essex who have relied on her knowledge and expertise.

2. a) ESSEX SEND PROGRAMME

The Local Authority has commissioned Newton to focus on improvement and sustainability in the SEND system in Essex. Newton has worked with over 100 public sector organisations to improve outcomes in complex environments; their work in SEND has seen them work with Local Areas to deliver improved outcomes and financial benefit for CYP with SEND, as well as being the delivery partner for the DfE for the Delivering Better Value Programme working with one third of the countries local areas to identify opportunities within SEND.

ECC wants to continue the momentum of SEND improvement:

- Essex has a high proportion of EHCPs supported in mainstream and the low proportion support in independent places
- Our leaders are committed to prioritising SEND with significant financial investment over the last few years
- Partnership working has improved with the SEND partnership board and a renewed focus on transformational change
- We've got the foundations for inclusion and early identification with our Inclusion Strategy driving this forward
- Place based approaches, our capital programme, commitment to continuous review and recent enhancement of our services are all strengths to the local area

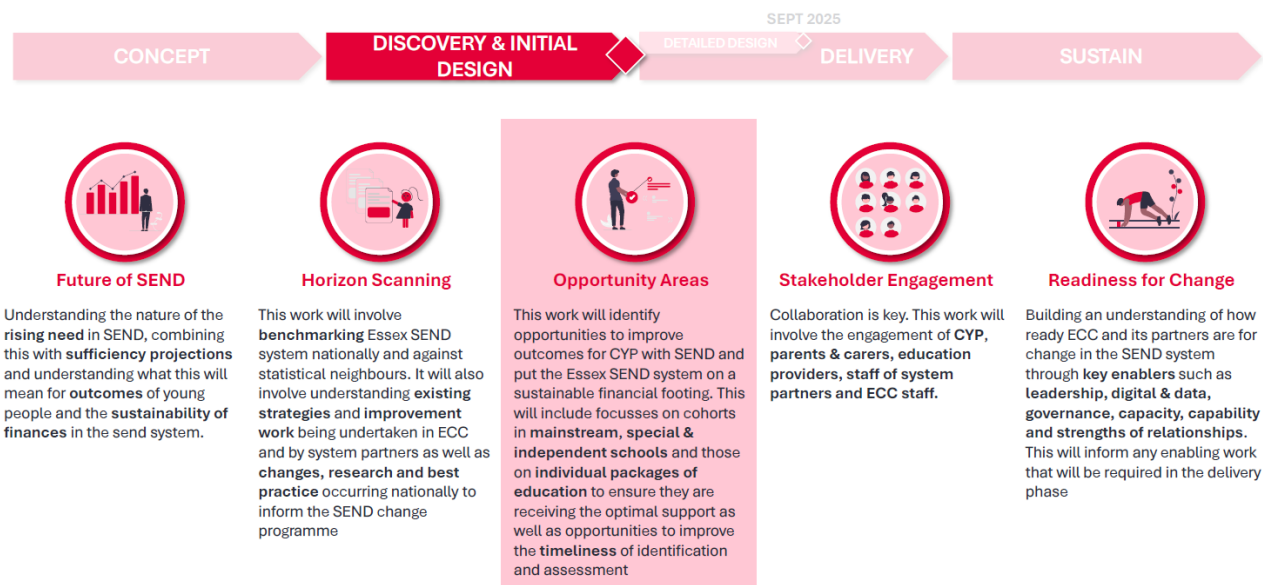
There are challenges and the Local Authority recognises that it needs to continue to improve:

- There are significant pressures on the High Needs Block nationally and Essex is no exception, forecasting a £20.3m deficit in 25/26. We want to understand what we could be doing to mitigate this as much as possible
- Consistency across the local area is a challenge, due to the size and complexity of partnership landscape which requires complex governance and our families feel the frustration of this with almost 80% of parents and carers having an okay or poor experience with the EHCP process
- Being able to meet the ever growing level of need, whether that be in processing assessments, having consistent pathways or having sufficient special school places continues to grow in its challenge

Clare noted that there are still over 300 requests to assess received each month, and around 60% of these are agreed, meaning that there are approximately 180 needs assessments added to those already in the system.

Newton will deliver recommendations by the end of the term, and a programme of work will be developed over the summer. This will take into account the capacity of the ECC workforce, as well as that of schools.

Clare noted that the Government has announced that there will a Schools White Paper published in the autumn term, which will include reference to SEND reform. The Transformation Fund announced by Government includes funding for SEND services.



b) SCHOOL ORGANISATION AND PLACE PLANNING

For the purposes of planning school places ECC organises schools by **quadrants, districts and planning groups**.

Planning groups of schools are defined by geography and admission patterns, wherein a **sufficiency of places across the group** will generally ensure every child can access a school place.

The School Organisation & Place Planning team comprises 10 officers who lead the school organisation and pupil place planning activity of the local authority.

Officers from the team liaise with schools individually and collectively to discuss current numbers on roll, future demand for places and necessary building projects.

This can include reducing the number of available spaces, as well as increasing.

Officers from the team also engage with planning authorities, local members, residents, and many other stakeholders as they **develop and deliver on the 10 Year Plan**.

school.organisation@essex.gov.uk

10 Year Plan for Mainstream School Places

This is updated annually, with the latest demographic information.

Has been in place for 8 years, and over that period of time **ECC has completed over 100 projects** to permanently increase school capacity, including 11 new schools.

Current forecasts suggest **over 5,000 additional school places are needed** over the next ten years. However, some schools, particularly those in rural areas, are experiencing falling rolls.

Demand for new school places is now **driven primarily by new housing**, particularly with the commencement of large new urban extensions and garden communities.

This will see a **new wave of schools** and school facilities on housing developments to meet the needs of the county.

7 new primary schools and **1 new secondary school** are currently anticipated over the next 10 years.

We anticipate the **need for new places will markedly increase** once local housing authorities adopt new local plans, requiring more new schools, and expansions of some existing schools.

Headteachers were encouraged to contact their quadrant place planning lead if they had local information, or needed support when explaining class sizes and organisation to their

parent community, whilst understanding that these decisions are made by the school itself.

The team includes the following officers:

Joe Chell joseph.chell@essex.gov.uk

Kevin Wilby kevin.wilby@essex.gov.uk covers north Essex (Colchester and Tendring)

Mark Pincombe mark.pincombe@essex.gov.uk covers mid Essex (Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon)

Rhona Long rhona.long@essex.gov.uk covers south Essex (Basildon, Brentwood, Castle Point, Rochford)

Monica Bird monica.bird@essex.gov.uk covers west Essex (Epping Forest, Harlow, Uttlesford)

c) **DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

Clare stressed that these are two separate concepts, which have long been a commitment of the Labour government.

Devolution is the transfer of powers and funding from UK government to a strategic authority.

Local Government Re-organisation is about how local government powers and funding are organised between councils.

A **devolution** deal would create a new single body, known as a Strategic Authority, for Greater Essex. It would initially take the form of a combined county authority. These arrangements would be agreed prior to the first Mayoral election, which would take place in May 2026.

The key functions of the strategic authority would include strategic transport functions, such as support for buses, trains and concessionary fares, skills and driving economic growth.

Greater Essex refers to the combined area represented by Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea City Council, and Thurrock Council.

Now that ECC has received confirmation that it is on the Priority Programme, the UK government is looking to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority for Greater Essex by May 2026. Mayoral elections would take place in that month.

Local Government Re-organisation

The government's long-term vision is for simpler council structures, which make it clear who is responsible for services.

At present, in the Essex County Council area, services are split between the County Council, and one of 12 city, borough or district council in a 'two-tier' arrangement.

The government believes reorganising and simplifying councils can drive economic growth while delivering better public services.

Reorganisation would see all 15 councils in Essex – including all those in the ECC area, along with Southend-on-Sea City Council and Thurrock Council which are already unitary councils - replaced with a number of new 'unitary' authorities who are responsible for all local authority services in their area.

All 15 councils in Essex would be replaced with a number of unitary councils.

The white paper has stipulated the government thinks the optimum size for new unitary councils to be at least 500,000 people. However, there may be some flexibility on this, and each case will be considered on its own merits.

Greater Essex has a population of around 1.9 million, meaning – based on the maths - the most likely number is two or three unitary councils. There is currently a discussion across the 15 councils about the proposed configuration of councils, of which the final decision is taken by central government. There are currently 700 Councillors and it is probable that this number would reduce to around 300.

As far as LGR is concerned, ECC has also committed to reorganisation. The Council submitted interim plans in March 2025 with full plans being submitted in September 25. Timelines for the remainder of the LGR process are subject to the proposals received. However, elections to shadow authorities could be expected in May 2027 following the 2026 consultation, with new unitary authorities going live in April 2028.

There will be 2 submissions to government – Southend leading on 1 (proposal of 5 LA's) and ECC leading on the other – various models being developed

NB – the Interim Plan has now been submitted and can be found here:

[Interim Plan Final ID26 ELCE2](#)

Clare noted that she and Helen Lincoln gave a presentation to district, borough and city Councillors and Ch on the 5th June, explaining the statutory functions relating to education and children's services.

She confirmed that, legally, each unitary authority will have a Director of Children's Services and, in all likelihood, a Director of Education as well, depending on the organisation of the authority.

d) ESSEX YEAR OF OPPORTUNITY

Clare reminded headteachers that Essex has run two successful "Years of" over the last three years and ECC has committed significant funding to the projects. A third Year of Opportunity has just been launched.

The Year of Reading and Numbers focused on collaboration and the removal of silos, working across the council, in schools, libraries, the virtual school, ASC, country parks, Active Essex.. It also crucially linked to external partners and businesses, including HSBC, Numberstacks, Pupil's Profit, the MOD and others. Both "years of" have lasted more than a year and have resulted in improved outcomes for children and young people and a lasting legacy of excellent practice.

The Year of Opportunity is built on three strands

- Skills; for life, for work
- Careers; inclusive and for all ages
- Employability; to get into work and to grow business.

The objective is that Essex will become the 'Inclusive Careers County' by reducing fragmentation, increasing visibility and accessibility of Information, Advice & Guidance, we will make it easier for residents and employers to have increased confidence and control over their learning and career aspirations leading to increased numbers of people in employment, training or other learning.

The Year of Opportunity programme



Developing Essential and Functional Skills



'Essex Connector' Digital Careers and employability tool



Starting Early: *My future Networks, Primary Careers Magazine and step into STEAM events.*



Health and social care Careers Programme



All-age Careers and Business Festival Programme

PLUS opportunities to align, integrate and maximise impact of existing programmes across the county through the Year of Opportunity programme

Clare noted that Harriet Phelps-Knights represents primary headteachers on the Essex Education Taskforce, and has been instrumental in ensuring that the Year of Opportunity focuses on primary age children, as well as older pupils. This includes the My Future programme.



The My Future Programme

For primary schools

The My Future programme is designed to provide primary school children with early exposure to the world of work, aiming to raise aspirations, broaden horizons and challenge stereotypes.

We will connect local key employers with pupils, schools and families. In collaboration with Skills Builder, the programme encourages building skills for future employment. This will raise awareness of local growth sectors and skills shortages too.

The free programme schedules sessions on Tuesdays (for 8 to 11 year olds) or Thursday afternoons (for 5 to 7 year olds). This helps teachers with consistency, and integrating sessions into their school day.

The My Future programme will feature:

- An interactive guest session with three employees. This is a chance for children to learn more about different roles and experiences.
- A focus on an industry theme every half term. For example, STEM, the arts, health and happiness.
- Interactive resources to enhance learning at home and in the classroom. This helps children, their parents and teachers build their skills and discover more about the showcased industries.

What are the goals of the My Future programme?

Raising aspirations by showing children what is possible. This is motivational, children will realise how important their skills and knowledge are.

Children can be **more aware of potential careers and industries**. They can build greater awareness of the opportunities in their area and region they live in. Children start to perceive the wider motivations for choosing a career including the joy of the role and job satisfaction. Children are shown links between roles and that there are many roles within the same company/field/industry e.g. the NHS and construction.

Challenging stereotypes by being inclusive and representative. Children will see "someone like me can do anything too". The programme will emphasise how place, race, gender and disability doesn't limit your potential.

How to get involved

The programme is available for all primary schools in Basildon, Tendring and Southend. Email essex.yearofopportunity@essex.gov.uk to express your interest. During the Essex Year of Opportunity, we will grow the programme in other areas too. **Watch this space for details.**

The Project Directory has been launched and can be found at <https://www.essexyearofopportunity.co.uk/project-directory>

<https://www.essexyearofopportunity.co.uk/essex-year-opportunity>

3. SEND BANDING UPDATE Ralph Holloway (North East and Mid meetings) Clare Kershaw (South and West meetings)

Banding moderation update and outcome

All schools have been notified of the outcome of the banding that they submitted; We are working to an intended introduction date for the new banding system of September 2026;

We are currently in the moderation stage which will be followed by financial modelling; After financial modelling we will set the amount of funding for each band and notify schools.

Over 200 schools passed moderation;

Ralph explained that ECC agreed with either all the bands that they allocated or the majority where the risk of a small variation was minimal;

7 schools did not submit any bands to moderate;

80 schools did not submit any or sufficient evidence to enable ECC to complete the moderation process;

We have asked them to submit the evidence needed to moderate the bands they originally allocated;

For over 150 schools the moderation panel did not agree with the banding that they allocated;

They triggered at least one of the following three criteria:

a.The overall level of accuracy;

b.The number of cases where bands submitted and moderated were different by more than two bands; and/or

c.an unusual profile of banding.

These schools have been asked to undertake a new allocation of alpha bands for a number of pupils.

Backdated and interim funding for EHCPs

Ralph Holloway reminded headteachers that the current system backdates funding to 20 weeks when a needs assessment is completed. A paper is being taken to Schools Forum in July, proposing an interim proactive payment at 20 weeks. This is likely to be based on two levels of funding, depending on the complexity of the needs assessment. It is hoped that an interim payment will help schools with their cash flow when supporting children with complex needs. Further information will be given once Schools Forum have debated and decided on the proposal; the meeting is on 9th July and headteachers were encouraged to contact Ralph or the EPHA Professional Officer if they had further views to add to the debate.

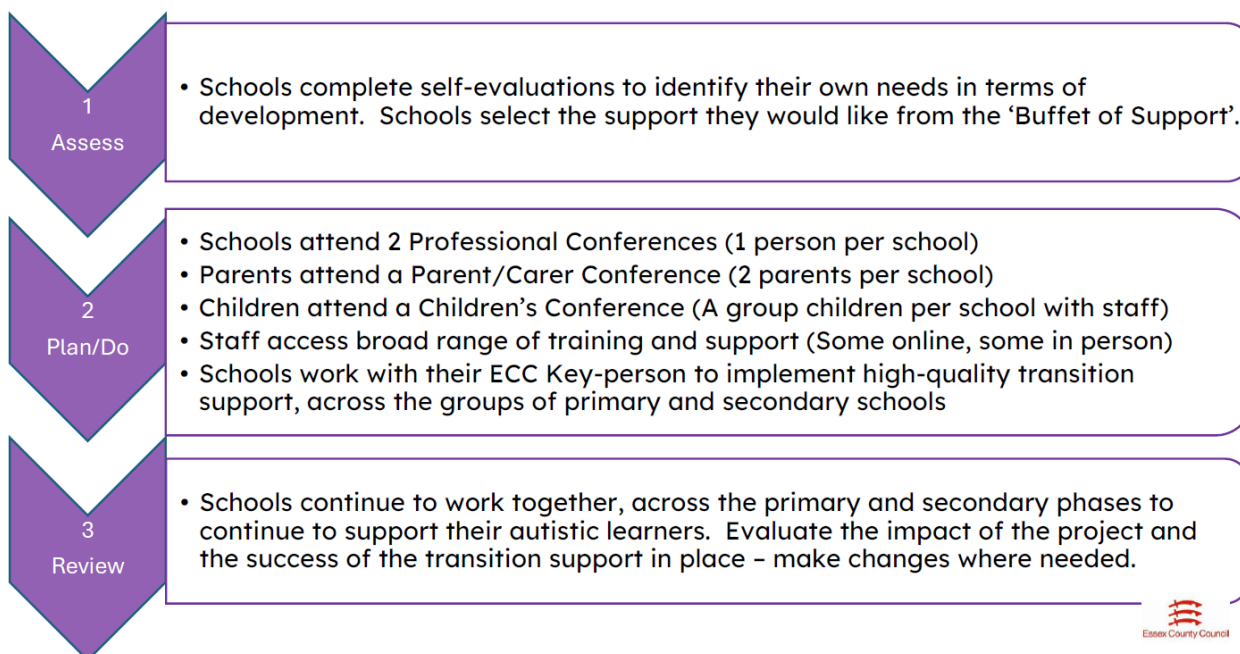
One headteacher at the Mid meeting expressed the potential HR implications around not knowing whether or not a final band would be agreed. She noted that, based on the 20-week interim funding, the school might employ a Learning Support Assistant, but without knowing whether that level of funding would be available once the EHCP was agreed. Ralph noted that if a needs assessment is accepted at 6 weeks, it is over 99% certain that an EHCP will be agreed. The two levels of funding should guarantee that the school will receive sufficient funding in time to continue employing support staff linked to the child.

4. STAY (Supporting Transitions for Autistic Young people) PROJECT UPDATE **Ondrea Bloom, SEND Strategy Lead - Autism** **Carly Clarke**

Ondrea reminded headteachers that the Stay Project focuses on successful transitions for autistic young people. 93 schools are currently involved and the feedback has been very positive. The LA is now accepting expressions of interest for the next cohort by 9th July:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSetmmSF7Z0DRSjK5fFj-JqeEYfePI8M3I3QT11TwmzIIzd7Hg/viewform>

The STAY Project complements well-established approaches like Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP), allowing schools to embed inclusive practice more deeply and use new training to refine and strengthen provision.

What is involved in the project:



STAY – Buffet of Support

- | | |
|--|---|
| • Assessment and Intervention EP day | • Neuro-affirmative language |
| • EP Casework Consultation | • Progression Framework |
| • Reasonable Adjustments | • Understanding the term Pathological Demand Avoidance |
| • Co-regulation and de-escalation training | • Autistic and OK! |
| • Autism Central coffee morning | • LEANS |
| • OT - sensory training day | • 2 x Professional Conferences |
| • OT - environmental audit and analysis | • 1 x Parent Conference |
| • SLT - recognising and supporting anxiety | • 1 x Children's Conference |
| • Masking | • Cooperative meetings – bringing Primary and Secondary School together |

Ondrea explained that the school involved work in a Cooperative of secondary schools and their feeder primaries. She stressed that she and her team will approach secondary schools if a primary school is unaware of who to contact, or if a secondary is already involved.

Ondrea showed a video made by Mike Wade, headteacher at Quilters Infants and Juniors, explaining the benefits of the project.

Next steps

Secondary and Primary schools discuss involvement in the project

Secondary school submits the Expression of Interest form – or schools do this individually if not in a group.

Deadline for expressions of interest: **Wed 9th July**

STAY Expression of Interest

Put a 'hold' in your school calendars for the conference -**Wed 22nd October @ The Fenns, Bocking**

Await confirmation of a place on the project

Contact Ondrea and her team if you have any questions: autismstrategy@essex.gov.uk

5. ESSEX AND HERTS AIR AMBULANCE – FREE CPR TRAINING – NORTH EAST, SOUTH AND WEST MEETINGS

Jenna Casey, ECC Early Years, and Adam Carr, Clinical Community Lead for the Essex and Herts Air Ambulance, were welcomed to the meeting.

Jenna gave a very personal account of an incident that happened in August 2024, when her husband suffered a heart attack at home. Thankfully Jenna had undertaken training in CPR and was able to save her husband's life and prevent possible brain damage, by keeping his heart going until the air ambulance arrived.

Adam explained some of the statistics around OOHCA – Out Of Hospital Cardiac Arrest

- Around 30,000 – 35,000 OOHCA in UK
- 1,372 OOHCA in Essex and Hertfordshire (2023)
- 33% did not receive bystander CPR
- Every minute in cardiac arrest without intervention chances of survival drops by 10%
- Women are 27% less likely to receive bystander CPR
 - Bras off Defibs on
- 452 people were not given a chance!!

He explained that in the UK the survival rate from an OOHCA is 10% - in other parts of Europe the survival rate is much higher – 18% - because of national campaigns and awareness, teaching in schools, and (in some countries) CPR is part of the driving test.

As of 2020 it is mandatory for secondary schools to provide CPR training – Kids Save Lives campaign.

Essex and Herts Air Ambulance is rolling out CPR Smart, an initiative (currently in Mid Essex) to train CPR Champions in Essex primary schools.

Contact Adam.carr@ehaat.com

6. UPDATE ON EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ESSEX Steve Whitfield, Principal EP

Steve explained the progress that has been made since he started in this role in September 2024. A key focus has been on improving recruitment, retention and workforce capacity

Trainee Educational Psychologists

We now offer placements to 4 TEPs in yr3 and 4 in Yr2.

For the first time this year we have offered 6 short term taster placements for 6 weeks for those in year 1

The intention is that those choosing Essex will live close enough for them to subsequently choose to want to apply for a main grade permanent post with us.

The DfE have now added an important caveat to a Newly Qualified EP; that they cannot work privately for 3 years post qualification i.e. they have to work for a LA. Hence, growing our own EPs via Trainees is a good place to start.

Assistant Educational Psychologists

We have just run our first recruitment campaign for Assistant Eps - over 700 applications. The posts are two years fixed term contracts with the aim to support our school-based offer – schools will see more of a psychologist. Our first cohort of 9 will be joining us ready for the autumn

The commissioned statutory work

School based working- early intervention



maintaining that every school has a **Link EP** and time for the cluster: use for consultation, implementation, review and training

Assistant EPs will be part of this

Other training and interventions (e.g. Literacy, Maths, BMBM)

Support for research

Parent helpline will continue

Critical Incident Support will continue



Steve reminded heads that the EP team offer **support for critical incidents**. This is highly valued by schools.

Autumn Term 2024 - 12 CIs across Essex

- 2 sudden secondary pupil deaths (accident and suicide)
- 2 unexpected staff deaths (accident and sudden illness)
- 4 parent deaths (accidents and suicide)
- 3 pupil or parent deaths (longer term illness)
- 1 CI pupil/staff witnesses to traumatic incident (knife attack)

Spring Term 2025 – 13 CIs across Essex

- 3 sudden secondary pupil deaths (accident and suicide)
- 2 unexpected primary pupil deaths (accidents)
- 2 pupil deaths (longer term illness)
- 5 unexpected staff deaths (accident and sudden illness)
- 1 unexpected parent death (accident)

In response to a question from a headteacher, Steve confirmed that there are currently 32 full time equivalent EPs across Essex. There are vacancies in each quadrant, as ideally there should be 50 FTE Eps.

7. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

EPHA Annual General Meeting

Thursday 2 October 2025 – The Lion Inn, Boreham

West EPHA – Manor Suite, Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth

Wednesday 5 November 2025

Wednesday 4 March 2026

Wednesday 24 June 2026

South EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 6 November 2025

Thursday 5 March 2026

Thursday 18 June 2026

North East EPHA – Colchester United Football Stadium

Wednesday 12 November 2025

Wednesday 11 March 2026

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Mid EPHA – The Lion Inn, Boreham

Thursday 13 November 2025

Thursday 12 March 2026

Thursday 25 June 2026

EPHA Conferences

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 10 October 2025 Colchester Football Stadium

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 20 March 2026 Chelmsford City Race Course

EPHA dates for the 2025/26 academic years can be found on the EPHA website at

<https://essexprimaryheads.co.uk/events/>

Pam Langmead

EPHA Professional Officer

pam@langmead.me.uk

01621 786359

07791 143277