

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADTEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 29 APRIL 2021 at 9.00 am – 11.00 am

The meeting was held virtually, as a conference call, as a result of the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic.

* indicates attendance

Distribution	*Lois Ashforth	Dengie
	*George Athanasiou	West Vice-Chair
	*Dawn Baker	Chelmsford West
	*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
	*Nicky Barrand	South Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
	*Isobel Barron	West Chair
	*Liz Bartholomew	Harwich and Dovercourt
	*Dale Bateman	Epping Forest Rural
	*Liz Benjeddi	Billericay
	*Heidi Blakeley	Wickford
	*Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
	*John Clements	Uttlesford South
	*Anna Conley	Witham
	*Dawn Dack	Mid Chair/Maldon
	*Ceri Daniels	Colchester South (Tiptree and Stanway)
	*Emma Dawson	Castle Point and Benfleet
	*Paula Derwin	Colchester East
	*Richard Green	South Vice-Chair
	Mary Jo Hall	West Treasurer/Uttlesford North
	*Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair/ Colchester West
	*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer
	*Ian MacDonald	Tendring Mid
	*Richard McIntosh	Chelmsford South
	*Kate Mills	Braintree
	*Jinnie Nichols	Halstead
	*Hayley O'Dea	Rochford
	*Matt O'Grady	Brentwood
	*Donna Parker	Tendring North
	*Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
	*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
	Amanda Reid	Chelmsford North/Mid Vice-Chair
	*Angela Russell	Basildon West
	*Gary Soars	Rayleigh
	*Karen Tucker	Canvey Island
	Jonathan Tye	Harlow
	*Joanne Willcox	Epping Forest South

Also in attendance

Paul Secker	ECC Safeguarding Lead
Jo Barclay	Schools Safeguarding Manager

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

Harriet Phelps-Knights, the EPHA Chair, welcomed everyone to the Executive meeting.

Apologies were received from:

- Mary Jo Hall North Uttlesford
- Amanda Reid Chelmsford North
- Jonathan Tye Harlow

Richard McIntosh was welcomed as the new representative for Chelmsford South. It was noted that Amanda Reid (representative for Chelmsford North) has agreed to take on the role of Mid Vice-Chair.

Harriet noted that the following headteachers were standing down from the Executive:

Kate Mills, representative for Braintree, is leaving Essex at the end of July. She has been a valued member of the Executive for many years and will be very much missed.

John Clements retires as CEO of The Learning Partnership at the end of term. He has been involved with WEPHA and EPHA for 32 years, and will be much missed for his wisdom, experience and passion for education. John said that he had valued his time as part of EPHA and acknowledged the strength and support of his colleagues, who are amazing people and many of whom he counts as trusted friends.

The resulting vacancies in Uttlesford South and Braintree will be addressed at the Area Meeting AGMs in June.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 21 January 2021 were confirmed as an accurate record. It was agreed that all matters arising were addressed on the agenda.

3. FINANCE REPORT

The EPHA Professional Officer/Treasurer shared the finance report with the Executive.

Current account income and expenditure 10.12.20 - 08.04.21

	Expenditure	Income	Notes
DSG		£0.00	
Subscriptions		£150.00	<i>Widford Lodge – part year</i>
<i>subscription</i>			
Miscellaneous	£688.60		<i>Includes subscription to The</i>
<i>Key</i>			
Transfer	£20,000.00		<i>Transfer of funds to</i>
<i>conference account</i>			
Supply	£1,161.00		
Travel & mileage	£1,368.00		<i>EPHA Chair expenses</i>
Professional Officer	£20,059.67		

Meetings	£2,000.00	<i>Paul Dix spring term</i>
<i>meetings</i>		
Colleague Supporter	£90.00	
Totals	£45,367.27	£150.00

The Professional Officer expenditure for December 2020 – March 2021 is broken down into

• professional fees	£19,120.00
• mileage	£ 50.40
• expenses paid on behalf of EPHA	£ 889.27
	£20,059.67

As we are not currently using venues, the venue hire charges are non-existent for the time being, but part of the PO expenses paid on behalf of EPHA is a monthly Zoom subscription of £100.79 which supports the online meetings, briefings, conferences and webcasts run by the Association.

We are waiting for a payment from ECC for the annual de-delegated funding - £320 per school/academy – likely to be around £149k. Also waiting for the ESSET subscription (£2,000) for 2019/20.

ESSET (special schools) pay a contribution of £2,000 a year to enable primary-phase headteachers to benefit from EPHA's support.

Bank statements for account 00795978

09.12.20	£273,358.08
08.04.21	£227,378.68

Conference account Income and Expenditure 20.12.20 – 08.04.21

	Expenditure	Income
Bank transfer		£20,000.00
Headteacher conference 2021	£8,274.00	

The conferences are currently being offered as free events as they are being held online. Therefore there has been a significant reduction in the balance of the conference account and I transferred £20,000 from the main account to subsidise the conference account. However, the current account balance is higher – this time a year ago the balance was £181,696.11. In effect the current account is currently subsidising the conference account. The Deputy Heads' conference will be face to face and the intention is to charge £100 per delegate for that event, as before.

Bank statements for account 17215168

18.12.20	£13,411.20
07.04.20	£25,137.20

4. EPHA MEETINGS AND CONFERENCES

As a result of Covid, all meetings have been online last year and the plan is to go back to face to face meetings, at least in part. The Professional Officer noted that her view is

that it does not work to amalgamate face to face with online meetings; that they need to be organised as one or the other. She acknowledged that online meetings are a very efficient use of headteachers' time, and enable people to attend at least part of the meeting even when they have other commitments. However, her view was that it would be a shame not to return to face to face meetings, to benefit from networking and seeing each other in person once again. Harriet asked what the attendance has been at online meetings; Pam noted that the attendance has been excellent (although the Executive meeting attendance has always been good). Nick Hutchings suggested that we maintain venues (that have already been booked) and make decisions at a later date. Pam noted that in time venues will become less accommodating about cancelling bookings; over the last year they have been extremely flexible and cancellations have not incurred costs.

The Executive discussed the following:

Annual General Meetings and Executive meeting – 30 September 2021

The Executive discussed the attendance at these meetings, and whether it would be a good idea to hold the AGM online. It was likely that more (non-Executive) members might attend the meeting if it was held online. However, it was agreed that it would be a good opportunity for the Executive and other headteachers to meet face to face, perhaps for the first time in over a year and a half.

Executive meetings are currently held at the Chelmsford City Football Club, which is not easy to access. It was **AGREED** that the Professional Officer will contact the Lion Inn in Boreham to find out their availability for the Executive meeting dates in 2021/22, as this is a much easier venue to reach from locations across Essex.

**Professional
Officer**

Termly headteacher meetings

The Professional Officer suggested asking the Local Authority if they would hold a fifth meeting, online, in addition to the four face-to-face termly meetings, to enable headteachers who find it difficult to get out of school to hear the information. The attendance at online meetings has been good.

The Executive members discussed the LA input and presentation at face-to-face meetings, which can be less than satisfactory. The question was asked whether it was necessary to have the Local Authority input at all four meetings; a suggestion was made that the four termly face-to-face headteacher meetings should be run as a chance for headteachers to network and to hear from presenters and a separate online meeting should be held to hear from the LA. It was argued that the LA presentation was replicated across the four areas, which was not a good use of their time. The Professional Officer suggested that the Assistant Directors (and other quadrant team members) in particular might not be comfortable with this approach as it removed their opportunity to meet directly with headteachers in their quadrant. The EPHA Chair suggested that the four meetings could be re-badged as headteacher conferences similar to the termly WEPHA conference.

Dawn Dack suggested that if there was an online quadrant meeting it could include breakout sessions with each of the Assistant Directors.

The Professional Officer suggested that she create a survey to canvas headteachers about what they wanted from future headteacher meetings, and how they should be managed. She will work with Amanda Buckland-Garnett to create an online survey to send out to headteachers.

**Professional
Officer
ABG**

Annual conferences

The Professional Officer suggested that EPHA should return to holding face to face conferences, but continue to hold webcasts with experts and presenters to hold online meetings with a large number of headteachers.

There was some concern about the size of Stock Brook and whether it is now big enough to accommodate the annual headteacher conference. It was agreed that the Professional Officer will research alternative venues.

**Professional
Officer**

5. CURRENT CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT NEEDED FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

i) Attendance

There has been a significant increase in requests for term-time holidays, and there seems to be a new “exceptional circumstances” group of parents – that of Key Workers - that expect to be granted term time holidays. The EPHA Chair noted that, if that was the case, teachers and school staff might expect to take time out of school. It was agreed that it would be helpful if the LA could provide support and guidance to schools to explain the attendance expectations to parents.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

ii) Support from Educational Psychologists and the SEND team

It was noted that a considerable number of headteachers have fed back their concerns about the support from EPs and SEND practitioners, including specialist teachers. In several cases heads have been told that EPs will no longer come in to schools and/or won't work with individual children. The approach seems to be inconsistent across the county. The DfE has recently (28th April) published a statement which confirms that Visiting therapists and other health professionals to support those with special educational needs and disability (SEND) should provide interventions as usual. The statement says: *Given the importance of therapists (e.g. speech and language, physiotherapy, occupational therapy) and other health professionals in supporting children and young people with SEND, we would like to remind settings of the published guidance for [schools](#) and [further education](#) which makes clear that specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for pupils and students with SEND should provide interventions as usual. They can move between settings but should ensure that they minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff. Such specialists will be aware of the PPE most appropriate for their role.*

The previous day one Executive member had an online strategic meeting with the Inclusion Partners and EP in her quadrant and specifically asked them to come into school to help with a pupil; they stated that they were not coming into school anymore and their role was now only strategic. However, in another school, only around 12 miles away, the headteacher reported that the EP and IP have been in on multiple occasions to work with individual children.

**Meeting
with LA**

Jinnie Nicholls argued that the Mid quadrant in particular seems to suffer from a lack of

support and provision from SEND and other teams, particularly for small rural schools such as hers.

Officers

iii) Updated operational guidance

Nick Hutchings noted the importance of updated operational guidance for schools, given the progress the country is making towards opening up society. Schools are still working to guidance that reflects national lockdown and are having to operate under stricter measures than the general public. In particular, there needs to be a relaxation of guidance around outdoor play, the deployment of staff, mixing of bubbles, staggered starts and so on.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

iv) Change to communication with school nurses

Amanda Buckland-Garnett noted that she has just received an email setting out immediate changes to the communication with the School Nurse in the Mid quadrant. The email noted: *I have been advised today from the Kate Walder, Deputy Quadrant Manager in Mid Essex, that we are asking for schools not to contact their school nurse directly by phone or email but to go via the single point of contact (SPOC) and the duty school nurse can then triage the urgency of calls and referrals. Similarly schools are asked to ring SPOC with referrals whilst a robust referral process is put in to place.*

Amanda argued that the new system for contacting school nurses is very likely to cause safeguarding issues at her school if there is not an immediate response from SPOC. The school has an excellent professional relationship with their School Nurses going back many years as they have several vulnerable families and have had to "react" very quickly in unison to safeguarding, medical and bereavement issues in their community. She argued that if they have to go through a triage system each time they contact the team, it is going to be very inefficient and unhelpful for both the school and the team. Her greatest concern is that the email concluded that this system would be in place until an alternative referral system was introduced, which may reduce contact even further.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

v) Support for schools around parental complaints

It was suggested that headteachers are having to manage an increasing number of challenging parental complaints and receive little or no support from the Local Authority, particularly since the complaints unit was disbanded many years ago. The Professional Officer argued that more guidance and help from the LA in this area would support the wellbeing of many headteachers.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

vi) Transition information being requested by secondary schools

The EPHA Chair noted that this has been a recent topic of discussion, and there are many different requests from secondary schools about assessment and transition information for Year 6 pupils.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

vii) Annual reports to parents

The DfE has not yet provided guidance about what information should or should not be included in the annual report to parents.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers**

It was agreed that these issues should be discussed at the meeting with LA officers, along with a couple more questions:

- Has the Local Authority planned training for the introduction of the Reception Baseline Assessment, and SEND Engagement Model?
- Is there a Traveller Liaison Officer available to support primary schools?

The Chair of EPHA noted the development of the Essex Education Taskforce, which will be chaired by Roy Blatchford. He was attending the meeting with LA Officers later that morning.

One headteacher noted that he had received a huge number of applications for teacher vacancies, a significant increase from a few years ago.

The EPHA Vice-Chair noted that there is confusion about the provision planned by the new Teaching School Hubs and the continuation of training and development offered by the existing Teaching School Alliances. There may well be communications from a multitude of providers as the DfE are encouraging competition. Richard Potter noted that Hubs only have a statutory responsibility as Appropriate Bodies for Early Career Framework.

6. EPHA REPRESENTATION ON GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

i) Professional Officer report

The report gave details of the meetings attended by Pam Langmead on behalf of EPHA. In addition to the attendance at meetings (and writing follow up reports), her work for EPHA has included:

- Information, emails and communications with all headteachers, including in response to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Responding to queries and actions from the Executive, ECC, other association officers, interested companies;
- Individual support for headteachers when issues arise;
- Identifying and supporting new headteachers;
- Managing the Colleague Supporter programme;
- Briefings to headteacher groups – 28 partnerships/clusters are now holding termly briefings – researching and writing briefing notes and presentations –and keeping them up to date as new directives, guidance and documents are introduced;
- Writing and delivering governor training on safeguarding;
- Writing 7 minute staff meetings, including updating all data protection staff meetings and updating all existing resources;
- Updating support materials for schools, including statutory policy lists, website checklists, and the Support Directory;
- Organisation and management of the area meetings in the spring and summer term;
- Organising and running webcasts with Clare Kershaw and Michelle Winter;
- Managing the EPHA finances: paying claims and invoices (including from Colleague Supporters), supporting area treasurers, producing reports, paying in cheques;
- Managing the bookings, organising and running the Headteacher conference, future planning for Deputy Heads' conference;

- Updating EPHA records and website;
- Other tasks as required.

ii) **EPHA Chair's report and Schools Forum report**

The EPHA Chair noted that since the last meetings she, the EPHA Vice-Chair and the Professional Officer had attended meetings with the Directors of Local Delivery for Social Care, and discussed the possibility of a funded project supporting vulnerable families (funded by the Violence and Vulnerability Fund) to run a pilot to extend the role of the TAFSO (Team Around the Family Support Officer) to upskill other agencies (alongside schools). EPHA's approach to this proposal was to support anything that increased the understanding and responsibility of other agencies to support families.

EPHA has run a number of webcasts that have been appreciated by headteachers, and the annual headteacher conference, held online in March was of excellent quality and extremely well attended. There was positive feedback from heads who attended, who generally felt that it supported their wellbeing.

The EPHA Chair noted that she, Sue Bardetti, Richard Green and the Professional Officer had attended meetings of the Schools Forum, and sub-committees focusing on Finance Review and High Needs. A recent meeting of the High Needs Review Group presented a proposal to increase the funding for capital SEND and PRU projects, but the suggestion to transfer additional money from the Schools Block to the Central Block was met with concern by the headteacher representatives. A series of additional meetings are being held to further explain the proposal and various options for funding. Without a transfer of funds it is possible that not all of the PRU projects can be completed as planned. EPHA Executive members recognised that there was a need for additional provision, particularly in PRUs, but had concerns about transferring funding from the Schools Block. One headteacher stated that he would like full transparency from the LA about how much is being spent on out-of-county provision and other SEND projects, and suggested that more headteacher representation on the High Needs Committee would be helpful.

7. **SAFEGUARDING**

Jo Barclay and Paul Secker were welcomed to the meeting.

i) Jo gave a brief update on current safeguarding issues:

- Jo has sent out a summer term briefing paper to headteachers, and these are also being circulated to Designated Safeguarding Leads.
- She is running online safeguarding forums on 29th June and 1st July. Designated Safeguarding Leads and Deputy DSLs can book onto those sessions.

ii) **EVERYONE'S INVITED – HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS**

Jo noted that the main focus was around the establishment of the Everyone's Invited website that includes testimonials from current and former students in secondary schools about sexualised behaviour and abuse.

She has circulated a checklist and asked headteachers to consider what peer on peer abuse might look like in their schools, how the RSHE curriculum is supporting this issue, how are the key messages shared with staff and pupils, communications with parents

and so on. The DfE has asked Ofsted to undertake a safeguarding review and at least one school in Essex will have a visit from Ofsted. They are not planning to report on individual cases, but any concerns could trigger a safeguarding inspection. The LA has a meeting with Ofsted next week, and the EPHA Professional Officer is part of that meeting, to look at how well partners work within the locality and engage with schools.

There will be training for secondary schools this half term, and for primary schools later in the term, following more discussion about what is helpful. Parental complaints and former student complaints are trickling in from Ofsted (including one within a primary setting). Jo asked headteachers to make sure that they are confident that staff recognise all types abuse, including this form or abuse, do they understand what is normal behaviour, what is unacceptable and sometimes dismissed as banter? Jo is also considering the Behaviour Policy as this is part of the management in schools. She feels that the LA and schools need to be vigilant, calm, proportionate and to manage the concerns of other partners and agencies. Schools can either adopt the standalone Peer on Abuse Policy or refresh the section in the Child Protection Policy, perhaps using some of the language in the Peer on Peer Abuse policy.

One headteacher asked for Jo to signpost schools to specific guidance on children using the language of rape, sometimes without any real understanding of what this means. Jo noted that there may be some materials provided by NSPCC and that she would check this out and share the information.

Jo Barclay

Nick Hutchings made the point that headteachers are being asked to absorb more and more anxiety about societal issues, and that he feels that this is yet another issue that is being pushed down for schools to manage. He is feeling concerned because he doesn't want to mismanage this concern, but needs more support. Jo noted that she has confidence in the systems in Essex and that the LA is managing the reaction of other partners. She agreed that the Brook Traffic Light tool is useful for assessing and managing sexualised behaviour in schools.

Another headteacher agreed that schools are feeling very much on their own with little or no support in her locality for many issues; it was agreed that this is inconsistent across the county, but heads are certainly feeling under huge pressure and, in some cases, really desperate for help and support. This was echoed by another headteacher, who had concerns about the thresholds for referral to social care, for example about domestic violence. Most referrals don't meet their threshold, leaving the responsibility to schools. Jo agreed to follow up these concerns with the headteachers.

iii) OPERATION ENCOMPASS

Paul Secker introduced himself as the Director for Safeguarding for Children in Essex County Council, and thanked the Executive for inviting him to the meeting. He noted that he had listened with interest to the views of headteachers and didn't want to ignore the previous discussion; he stressed that he was particularly sympathetic to the concerns raised, and acknowledged that there was perhaps a gap between what is discussed at a strategic level around multi-agency safeguarding arrangements by partner agencies, and what is actually taking place in schools. He noted that while his experience is within social care, his son is a secondary teacher, and Paul is increasingly aware that safeguarding issues are pushed onto schools. He stressed his belief that

schools have done an incredible job over the last 18 months, and he recognises that they are now having to manage some of the emerging child protection cases that have been hidden during the pandemic, including those involving domestic abuse and child abuse. He said that he would welcome more conversations with headteachers.

He explained that he was meeting with the Executive on behalf of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board, to discuss the possibility of introducing Operation Encompass in the county, and to hear the views of headteachers in respect of domestic abuse notifications and how well, or not, the current system is working. Operation Encompass was originally set up by a married couple, a headteacher and a senior police officer. The charity won the World Class Policing Award in 2019. The organisation's ambition is to ensure that all domestic abuse incidents are shared with schools, not just where a criminal offence can be identified. It is a police and education early-information sharing operation, enabling the school to offer support to the child or young person when there has been a domestic abuse incident.

There is some caution about whether Operation Encompass delivers this outcome. In practice, when there is a notification of a domestic abuse incident the police send a notification to the school the following morning; it will only give the name of the child and that there was a domestic abuse incident, but no specifics about the incident. Currently information about domestic abuse incidents classified as "high" are forwarded to health and education, but not those classified as standard or medium. If all incidents are shared, there are some concerns about case load for social care, and also about information sharing and consent. Paul asked if headteachers felt that it would be helpful to receive more information, would they know what to do with the information, would they understand the process to follow with that information.

There would need to be agreement about how schools are prepared and trained to support the process. Operation Encompass has been introduced in Thurrock, and is about to be used in Southend.

Parental consent may be an issue; if the incident is "high" it can be shared as a safeguarding concern and does not require parental consent. It is possible that if Operation Encompass is introduced there could be a statement from schools to parents informing them that the system is being used, and parents may then have the right to refuse to allow the information to be shared.

There will be a meeting of partners on 17th May to discuss the Essex approach; the EPHA Professional Officer (and Jo Barclay) will be at that meeting to represent the views of primary headteachers.

Nick Hutchings argued that any understanding and information about DA incidents, however small, would help the school support the parent. It also ensures that school staff understand what is going on and helps inform TAF meetings.

Another headteacher agreed that notification helps school safeguard children and understand any trauma they might experience. She noted that schools do hear from parents themselves about incidents, but wondered if this system might reveal information about those families who don't share these experiences.

One question the Professional Officer raised was the need to find out how schools have benefited in those authorities that have already introduced Operation Encompass and, if the decision is made not to do so, the need for further discussions about how to make the current notification systems more consistent and effective across the county.

Headteachers will need to make careful decisions about how the information is shared within the school and with which staff, on a “need to know” basis. Jo confirmed that there would be training if this was adopted in Essex.

Headteachers were asked to share any further views and comments with the Professional Officer in advance of the meeting on 17th May.

8. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2020/21 and 2021/22 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings

Thursday 30 September 2021

Thursday 20 January 2022

Thursday 19 May 2022

Area Heads Meetings

Summer term 2021 (Online)

N-EAST Wednesday 16 June

SOUTH Thursday 17 June

WEST Wednesday 23 June

MID Thursday 24 June

Autumn term 2021

N-EAST Wednesday 10 November

MID Thursday 11 November

WEST Wednesday 17 November

SOUTH Thursday 18 November

Colchester Community Stadium

Lion Inn, Boreham

Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

Holiday Inn, Basildon

Spring term 2022

N-EAST Wednesday 2 March

SOUTH Thursday 3 March

WEST Wednesday 9 March

MID Thursday 10 March

Colchester Community Stadium

Holiday Inn, Basildon

Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2022

N-EAST Wednesday 15 June

MID Thursday 16 June

WEST Wednesday 22 June

SOUTH Thursday 23 June

Colchester Community Stadium

Lion Inn, Boreham

Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley

Holiday Inn, Basildon

Conferences

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 8 October 2021

Weston Community Homes Stadium

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 18 March 2021

Stock Brook Country Club

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Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer

Harriet Phelps-Knights
Chair of EPHA