

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 18 JANUARY 2024 starting at 12.45 pm**

The meeting was held at The Lion Inn, Boreham.

In attendance	Representing	email address
Clare Kershaw	Director of Education	Clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Shamsun Noor	Head of Statutory and Regulated Customer Services	shamsun.noor@essex.gov.uk
Ralph Holloway	Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation	Ralph.Holloway@essex.gov.uk
Nicola Woolf	Assistant Director, West	Nicola.woolf@essex.gov.uk
Carolyn Terry	ECC Early Years Manager	Carolyn.terry@essex.gov.uk
Jo Barclay	Head of Education Safeguarding	Jo.barclay@essex.gov.uk
Emily Welton	ESSET Professional Officer	emily.welton@essex.org.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Isobel Barron	EPHA West Chair	head@roseacres.essex.sch.uk
Dale Bateman	EPHA Epping Forest Rural	Head@coopersaletheydongarnon.essex.sch.uk
Liz Benjeddi	EPHA Billericay	head@southgreen-jun.essex.sch.uk
Heidi Blakeley	EPHA Wickford	Head@abacus.essex.sch.uk
Julie Braithwaite	EPHA Basildon West	Julie.braithwaite@lincewood.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Buckland Garnett	EPHA South Woodham Ferrers	abg@collingwood.essex.sch.uk
Luke Bulpett	EPHA South treasurer	Head@brightside-pri.essex.sch.uk
Dida Burrell	EPHA Braintree	Head@whitcourt.essex.sch.uk
Sue Clarke	EPHA Rochford	head@barlingmagna.essex.sch.uk
Anna Conley	EPHA Witham	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Dack	EPHA Mid Chair/ Maldon	drdack@wentworth.essex.sch.uk
Paula Derwin	EPHA Colchester East	headteacher@hazelmere-jun.essex.sch.uk
Sandra Dorrington	EPHA Canvey Island	head@canvey-inf.essex.sch.uk
Richard Green	EPHA South Vice-Chair	Head@grovetwood.essex.sch.uk
Mary Jo Hall	EPHA North Uttlesford	head@stmsw.co.uk
Clare James	EPHA Dengie	cjames@maylandsea.essex.sch.uk
Chris Jarmain	EPHA West Vice-Chair	Head@st-maryscofe.essex.sch.uk
Becky Keitch	EPHA Tendring North	Head@st-georges-pri.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Kerry Malcolm	North East Partnership Lead Head	head@st-lawrence-pri.essex.sch.uk
Richard McIntosh	EPHA Chelmsford South	head@baddowhall-jun.essex.sch.uk
Jinnie Nichols	EPHA Halstead	head@sgasa.uk
Matt O'Grady	EPHA Brentwood	Matt@westthorndon.essex.sch.uk
Nicky Patrick	North East Partnership Lead Head	head@springmeadow.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair	head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Richard Potter	EPHA North East Vice-Chair	head@homefarm.essex.sch.uk
Colin Raraty	West Partnership Lead Head	mr.raraty@rodingsprimary.co.uk
Amanda Reid	EPHA Mid Vice-Chair	admin@perryfields-inf.essex.sch.uk
Gary Soars	EPHA Rayleigh	gsoars@edwardfrancis.essex.sch.uk
Nicky Stone-Riley	EPHA South Chair	headteacher@cherrytree-pri.essex.sch.uk
Ian Kendal	Substituting for EPHA Harlow	head@ourladyoffatimatrust.essex.sch.uk

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

- Lisa Fergus Assistant Director, South
- Liz Bartholomew Harwich
- Matt Curzon Uttlesford South
- Mary Evans Harlow
- Nick Hutchings EPA Vice-Chair
- Diana Mason Castlepoint and Rochford
- James Newell Tendring North
- Joanne Willcox Epping Forest South

Clare Kershaw, Director for Education, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. CYBER SECURITY

It was agreed that the cyber-security guidance is challenging, and the Executive members asked if the Local Authority had any guidance or an accompanying checklist to support schools. Clare Kershaw **AGREED** to look into this. One headteacher referred to a checklist that has been produced by The Key, and it was agreed that this might be a useful starting point.

CK

3. PARENTS REQUESTING A DEFERRAL

Shamsun Noor was asked to explain the LA's stance when a parent asks a school to defer their summer born child's entry to school for one year. Shamsun confirmed that the parent has a right to make this request and it must be considered. Whilst it is generally felt that it would not be beneficial for a child to miss the year in Reception, the LA (and school) must decide whether it is a worthwhile battle to fight, if a parent is determined that this is the right decision for their child. Shamsun confirmed that a child may then be a year older than some of their peers in chronological age, but legally this is not a problem. There are no determined ages when children/young people can take statutory assessments or tests, for example. If a school is asked to keep a Year 6 child for an additional year (because, for example, they are not developmentally ready to move up to secondary school) it is up to the school to decide.

If a child is born in the autumn or spring term they must start school in the term after they reach the age of 5. If a parent decides to keep their child out of school at this point, they must then make the decision to electively home educate their child, and risk not having an available place when/if they apply to a school.

Shamsun **AGREED** to develop a flowchart or guidance to help advise headteachers on this issue.

SN

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EPA EXECUTIVE MEETING EARLIER

a) PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS

A number of headteachers are reporting that some pension contributions that they made at a time when Essex still managed school teachers' pensions and payroll, are not all showing up on their statements. Clare **AGREED** to follow this up, to provide a phone number or helpline that can offer advice to affected teachers.

CK

b) LANDLORD CONSENT

The challenges and delays presented by the need to obtain landlord consent were discussed at the last Executive meeting in October. Clare was asked to follow this up; she apologised as this had not been actioned, and **AGREED** to discuss this with relevant colleagues in ECC.

CK

c) SCHOOL MEALS ADVISORY SERVICE

It was noted that not all schools who buy into the School Meals Advisory Service have responded to let the LA know if they plan to continue with the service at the revised costs, or opt out. So far, there are not enough schools who have opted to continue to make the service viable going forward, but a decision cannot be taken until all schools have responded. The EPHA Chair noted that we have asked Anita Kemp and Gareth Honeyford (leading on the changes) to consider a cheaper and simplified offer, enabling schools to buy online or telephone advice and support to ensure that they are compliant with food standards, health and safety and so on. CK **AGREED** to follow this up.

CK

d) SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TRADED OFFER

Clare reassured the Executive that the de-delegated funding from the maintained schools block (£440,000 agreed by Schools Forum last year) enable the LA to offer their statutory responsibilities and school improvement support to those schools; since September academies have had the option to buy in school improvement support and packages, ensuring that the offer is more transparent. Clare confirmed that the funding for 2024/25 is secure and will enable this system to continue.

5. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Jo Barclay gave the following safeguarding update.

- a)** Working Together to Safeguard Children has been updated in December 2023. The Level 2 resources have been updated accordingly.
- b)** There is a new Harmful Sexual Behaviour presentation on the Essex Schools Infolink, and the team will continue to offer online HSB training.
- c)** Around 800 licences were issued following Brook Traffic Light training. Unfortunately ECC was unable to carry forward unused licences, but schools that have been issued a licence can send staff to refresher training.
- d)** ECC will offer online awareness and training in relation to the revised Prevent Duty, supported by the DfE Prevent Adviser linked to Essex. Jo confirmed that, unfortunately, the Home Office Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) training has not been updated.

- e) Safeguarding online forums for governors will be held on Tuesday 26th March and Tuesday 25th June, at 6.00 pm. The Zoom links can be found on the infolink.
- f) Jo confirmed that schools are not required to submit the safeguarding audit this year (governors were given incorrect advice in a recent communication). The audit is available as an internal evaluation tool.
- g) The recently run LGBTQ+ training will be repeated on a half-day session on the 1st July, including reference to the new (currently draft) DfE gender questioning guidance.

The safeguarding team is in the process of producing guidance in relation to equality, and diversity, and also guidance (and training) in relation to hate incidents. It is anticipated that Hate Incident guidance will be launched in September, along with a new template for reporting concerns and incidents.

- h) Jo confirmed that the number of complaints from parents, both directly to schools and to other organisations including Ofsted and the LA, are continuing and increasing. The Team has employed an additional safeguarding adviser, and they are picking up around 60% of the complaints that come in to the LA. There were around 400 last year; around two thirds of those about secondary schools. There is general frustration that many parents bypass the school's complaints policy and go straight to the LA or Ofsted.
- i) Jo noted that there will be a briefing around Multi Agency Case Audits, and if schools feel it would be helpful to consider a historic case review she would be happy to put that forward.
- j) There was a discussion about the continuation of the DSL Supervision programme, which was run as a government funded pilot last year, and was very well received by the headteachers and DSLs who were chosen to take part. The supervision programme will continue, but at a cost to schools of £1500 a year. This will cover the cost of supervision and is not intended to run at a profit. The EPHA Professional Officer asked if consideration could be given to having a dual pricing structure, with a more affordable price for primary schools. She argued that those schools that need it the most – small schools with few DSLs – are the least likely to be able to afford this much needed supervision. Jo **AGREED** to consider this.
- k) Following feedback from headteachers, the EPHA Executive asked if Jo could offer at least one online, recorded safeguarding forum each term, either in addition to the four quadrant meetings, or in place of one each term. This would make them accessible to headteachers who were unable to get out of school for the in-person meeting, and would also allow other DSLs to access the information each term. Jo **AGREED** to consider this.

JB

JB

6. EARLY YEARS CHILDCARE REFORMS

Carolyn Terry, Early Years Manager, was welcomed to the meeting. She explained the childcare reforms that were being introduced, including the introduction of 2 year

old and under-2 years old free early years entitlement for working parents from September 2024.

From September 2024 the DfE is rolling out wraparound childcare provision for primary school age children by increasing the number of places available, to support working families. Wraparound care is before and after school childcare for primary school aged children in England during term time, such as breakfast clubs and regular afterschool provision that runs until 6 pm or later. The care should be available every school day outside of regular school hours and is aimed at helping parents access more childcare and work the hours they want to.

This is different from out-of-school activities, or school clubs, which are less frequent and can be a one-off activity. The DfE expects all parents who need it to have access to wraparound care, either from their school or from another provider in their local area, by September 2026.

The provision can be offered by schools, or private, voluntary, and independent (PVI) providers. This includes childminders and early years settings. The provision could be run on a school site or at another setting in the area. It should not require parents to pick their children up from school and drop them off at another location.

To make more available wraparound care possible, local authorities will receive a share of £289 million to help map out and accommodate the needs of parents in their area. They will also be able to use the funds to test different ways to increase their wraparound options, including working with local private providers or partnering with schools.

The DfE is also giving local authorities a share of a further £100 million to ensure childcare settings in the area – including both early years and wraparound settings – have enough physical space to roll out the programme from next year.

To support this programme the Department for Education announced £6.9 million of funding for Essex over the next 2 years to assist with the creation of new childcare places for primary school aged children from 8 am until 6 pm during term time. Between now and 31st March 2026 which is when the funding ends, it has been allocated as follows:-

- Financial Year 2023/2024 - £59,204
- Financial Year 2024/2025 - £4,711,016
- Financial Year 2025/2026 - £2,168,894

Carolyn explained that the Early Years team is undertaking a full analysis of the current childcare available in the county to understand the existing provision, mapping schools and 3rd party provision. They will then prioritise and concentrate on those areas where there is no or limited childcare.

She explained that childcare will be centred on schools, but is not limited to school sites: parents should be able to access provision within approximately a 1 mile radius of the school. Any childcare provision is required to be Ofsted registered.

The various funding options are as follows:

Capital Funding

Will be small capital pots designed to remodel or refurbish an existing space. The LA anticipates the value of which to be between £50,000 and £100,000. Examples of where the funding could be used would be on a new toilet, or the removal of an internal wall to create additional space, or maybe a new heater.

Revenue funding

This funding could be used for initial set up costs to include staff, training, and resources, while the business is establishing, and capacity is growing. The LA anticipates the value of funding to up to a maximum of £10,000 per term in the first year of funding. There would be an initial application followed by a reapplication process to continue accessing funding. We would anticipate the level of funding to decrease as the business becomes more sustainable.

Inclusion funding

On top of the funding set out above, funding has been ring-fenced to provide SEN Inclusion Funding for those school aged children that may need additional support to access Wraparound childcare. It is currently anticipated that application for this funding will be managed through the current Inclusion Funding process. More details of this will be sent out later in the year. Schools do not need to complete an expression of interest for this funding.

In order to access any funding, providers will need to have the correct OFSTED registration (the process will allow time for providers to register or alter registrations if needed). Any providers accessing funding will be required to register to accept the Tax-free childcare. ECC welcomes applications from all childcare providers and a competitive application process will be in place to ensure equal opportunity and best local solutions for families.

The wraparound offer must become sustainable during the period of funding. There will be a continual monitoring process to ensure providers are working towards being fully sustainable.

All reasonable endeavours will be made to ensure funding for the creation of any provision that might jeopardise an existing wraparound provision in the area.

The Executive members expressed their concerns about how it will be possible to offer childcare to children with complex needs.

Headteachers also discussed the problem of recruiting sufficient staff to run childcare during these hours. Carolyn noted that the local authority is running a recruitment drive for the sector and will be offering training and advice.

The Early Years team will contact those schools and settings in priority areas. Carolyn will attend the termly headteacher meetings in February/March to give an update.

7. YEAR OF NUMBERS

It was noted that new Project Directory updates will be published in February.

8. SEND UPDATE

Ralph Holloway discussed the ESSET outreach proposal, confirming the funding for the project. He is working with Emily Welton to develop the outreach offer.

Ralph referred to the SEND Sufficiency Plan and survey that has been published. There will be engagement sessions to discuss the plan and the proposed vehicles to deliver effective SEND support in the mainstream and special school system.

The Executive members discussed reviewing and using the expertise of Enhanced Provisions. Ralph noted that Dan Gee is reviewing the EnPros and will launch a plan, including actively exploring areas (such as Uttlesford) that are under-served. One headteacher noted that some local authorities offer a part time/flexi offer of provision that can be very beneficial.

The Executive asked about the work that had been done to map provision across the county. Ralph noted that he had undertaken an exercise to identify where SEN children went to school.

The strategies in Essex, including the Inclusion Framework and Inclusion Reviews are being rolled out and, along with outreach, should make the offer more equitable.

The group discussed how to lobby government, as SEND is a national issue; could the Executive help support the Local Authority in this respect. Clare noted that Councillor Ball is well briefed and concerned about SEND. It was argued that, following the next general election, it would be helpful to have a collective voice from Essex to influence future decisions.

One issue raised during the Executive meeting in the morning was around the amount of paperwork that schools are asked to provide when applying for needs assessments. There was also discussion of the number of SEND tribunals, and complaints to the LGO (Local Government Ombudsman); it was argued that parental advocates are often encouraging parents to make huge demands on the system.

The EPHA Executive expressed concerns about the structure and communication from the SEND Ops team; they often fail to return calls to schools. Clare noted that a communications and monitoring group has just been set up, which should improve routine communications.

Another continuing issue raised is that some paediatricians continue to make promises to parents stating "I hand you back into the care of your school". This raises expectations, and often offers support that the school is unable (or it may be inappropriate) to provide. Ralph asked headteachers to forward examples so that this can be raised with the ICBs.

9. SPRING TERM PRIMARY HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

It was **AGREED** that the professional Officer will liaise with Clare Kershaw and Nicola Woolf to plan the spring term primary headteacher meetings. Agenda items will include:

- Early Years update including wraparound childcare.
- Speech and language support and provision
- SEND sufficiency and outreach proposal
- Admissions: deferral and delay
- Holiday club information

10. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2023/24 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 9 May 2024

Area Heads Meetings

Spring term 2024

WEST	Wednesday 28 February	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 29 February	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 6 March	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 7 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2024

WEST	Wednesday 12 June	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 13 June	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 19 June	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 20 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer