

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2022 starting at 11.00 am**

The meeting was held at The Lion Inn, Boreham. It followed on from the EPHA Executive meeting held during the morning.

In attendance	Representing	email address
Clare Kershaw	Director of Education	Clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Ralph Holloway	SEND Transformation Manager	Ralph.holloway@essex.gov.uk
Lisa Fergus	Assistant Director, South	Lisa.fergus@essex.gov.uk
Jo Barclay	Head of Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing	Jo.barclay@essex.gov.uk
Alison Fiala AF	Education and EY Lead Mid	Alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk
George Athanasiou	EPHA West Vice-Chair	head@greatsampford.essex.sch.uk
Dawn Baker	EPHA Chelmsford West	ceo@heraacademy.co.uk
Sue Bardetti	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandhaven.essex.sch.uk
Isobel Barron	EPHA West Chair	head@roseacres.essex.sch.uk
Liz Bartholomew	EPHA Harwich and Dovercourt	head@mayflowerprimary.com
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
Anna Conley	EPHA Witham	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Matt Curzon	EPHA Uttlesford South	ht@st-marys-stansted.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
Mary Jo Hall	EPHA Uttlesford North	head@stmsw.co.uk
Clare James	EPHA Dengie	cjames@maylandsea.essex.sch.uk
Becky Keitch	EPHA Tendring North	Head@st-georges-pri.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer	pam@langmead.me.uk
Ian Macdonald	EPHA Tendring Mid	headteacher@elmstead.essex.sch.uk
Diana Mason	EPHA Castlepoint and Benfleet	head@montgomerieprimary.essex.sch.uk
Richard McIntosh	EPHA Chelmsford South	head@baddowhall-jun.essex.sch.uk
James Newell	EPHA Tendring North	headofschool@wix.essex.sch.uk
Jinnie Nicholls	EPHA Halstead	head@sgasa.uk
Hayley O'Dea	EPHA Rochford	ceo@brickfields.org
Matt O'Grady	EPHA Brentwood	Matt@westhorndon.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Amanda Reid	EPHA Mid Vice-Chair/Chelmsford North	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
Karen Tucker	EPHA Canvey Island	head@canvey-jun.essex.sch.uk
Joanne Willcox	EPHA Epping Forest South	headteacher@hillhouse.essex.sch.uk

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Amanda Buckland Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
Dida Burrell	Braintree
Luke Bulpett	South Treasurer
Ceri Daniels	Tiptree and Stanway
Richard Green	South Vice-Chair
Nick Hutchings	Vice-Chair/NE Chair
Richard Potter	North East Vice-Chair
Angela Russell	Basildon West
Jonathan Tye	Harlow

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

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING EARLIER

a) Change of date for Executive meeting in the summer term

It was confirmed that the date of the summer term EPHA Executive meeting will be changed to Wednesday 24th May 2023 as the venue cannot accommodate the original date.

b) SEND workforce and operational issues

The EPHA Chair noted that a number of Inclusion Partners had taken leave during September, which is a key time for schools who need to access their support. This was noted by CK.

Item 4 refers

c) DSL supervision project

This has been well received by those who were selected for the pilot.

d) Home-school transport

Matt O'Grady raised once again his concerns about home to school transport, particularly for those children with additional needs. He accepted that the responsibility for this does not lie with the education team, but asked who schools should contact if they have concerns. He also asked if guidance could be produced for families so that they understand the service better, including recognising that it is not managed or run by schools. CK noted that if schools have concerns they should contact the Passenger Transport inbox.

e) EPHA annual general meeting

Harriet Phelps-Knights noted that she has been elected to continue as Chair of EPHA for another year, and that Nick Hutchings will continue as Vice-Chair, following the annual general meeting earlier in the day.

3. UPDATE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Clare Kershaw noted that she had deliberately kept her communication at the

beginning of term as optimistic as possible, given the challenging times that schools are facing. She expressed her hope that with Covid receding as a problem, the term might be less disrupted, but acknowledged the many stressors on schools and headteachers, including the impact of the pandemic on mental health and wellbeing and pupil outcomes – and the challenges faced by schools, particular in respect of funding.

a) Financial pressures in schools

CK noted that the energy price rises are all-consuming and are causing a great deal of worry for school leaders. There is no additional funding available from the Local Authority, but CK is hoping that the Government will recognise the seriousness of the situation for schools, noting that it is likely that all schools will be financially unviable in a year or two if sustainable funding solutions are not offered. CK has been meeting with ECC procurement and finance and has asked schools to provide information about their existing and/or new contracts, as it is helpful to understand the picture across the county.

CK recognised that schools set their budgets when the impact of staff pay awards energy price rises weren't known. She noted that schools are likely to be required to use their reserves to cover rising costs, but accepted that this will create issues later on, when schools are unable to pay for intended developments and improvements. There are reserves in schools across the county, but they are spread unequally. CK argued that maintained schools will run out of funding sooner rather than later which will be a matter for the LA, but that the ESFA will also have to oversee the financial shortfall in academies. Obviously the energy price cap will help for the next 6 months.

One headteacher noted that schools are unable to set deficit budgets, and asked CK to give some reassurance to governors, particularly as schools will soon enter the budget setting period. CK suggested waiting for the three month review promised by Government, but stressed that the Local Authority is lobbying the DfE around school funding.

b) Essex Education Taskforce

The Taskforce has focused on the Essex Year of Reading, as well as supporting the emotional wellbeing of headteachers. Steve Whitfield is focusing on guidance around physical activity and wellbeing and encouraging self-help strategies to improve wellbeing.

c) Partnership Strategy

The Partnership Strategy lead headteachers and LA officers met on 20th September and held a useful meeting to determine what support the system can continue to offer schools.

4. SEND STRATEGY

CK reminded the Executive that a letter had gone out earlier in the term outlining the SEND strategies that are being rolled out to support schools. SENDIASS has been expanded and there is ongoing whole system reform in relation to therapies.

The system is challenged by the high vacancy rate of Educational Psychologists, which

is a country-wide problem. CK explained two possible mitigations including an active recruitment campaign, and revising the use of the existing workforce, including redirecting the EP focus and using those with less experience but with relevant expertise.

There was a discussion about the time it takes to undertake a needs assessment for EHCPs; one headteacher has been asked by a parent for compensation as the process has exceeded 20 weeks. CK noted that in these situations parents should contact the LA, and agreed that communication to parents about the challenges in the system is important.

She noted that the Inclusion Framework should help support the system, by offering practical support solutions and some associated funding to schools, before the need to engage the statutory process. She accepted that schools that haven't yet been involved in the Inclusion Framework may not yet understand the benefits, and there will be continued feedback from schools that are using the system, at the termly headteacher meetings.

The SEND Sufficiency Plan, forecasting the prevalence of children and young people with SEND, is helpful but worrying. CK acknowledged that there are not enough places in Special Schools, and the special schools development in Essex has been hindered by the delay to the construction of free schools that are being funded by the DfE; ECC has delivered on its part of the capital programme, but the DfE funded projects are unlikely to be completed until September 2024 at the earliest.

It was **AGREED** that it would be helpful for CK to offer a webcast to explain the SEND structures and organisation to school leaders. (*The Professional Officer will contact Denise Hobbs to set this up.*) Schools should receive information about their SEND workforce links shortly.

**Professional
Officer**

CK noted that there is some surplus in the Essex High Needs Block (unlike that of some authorities) but that this needs to be spent carefully in order to enhance the system for the longer term. ECC is investing in increased capacity and workforce development; she accepted that there needs to be a focus on maintaining a functioning system while the improvement work starts to impact.

One headteacher noted that schools would welcome interim financial support whilst waiting for assessment decisions. IPRA funding is a finite amount of funding which can be particularly useful to the school.

The group discussed intelligence and work with pre-schools. AF noted that the Early Years Education Partners have regular contact with pre-schools, thought there is a variable quality of staff in the range of pre-school settings, and some are unwilling to have difficult conversations with parents. One headteacher noted that the Early Years cohort of children coming into her school has definitely been impacted by Covid and are presenting with exceptionally immature behaviour and development, particularly in relation to speech and expected life skills, including being toilet trained. She felt that an amount of (IPRA) funding could help support schools in this regard. CK stated she would consider how Reception staff could be supported.

There was a suggestion that Health is putting up barriers to schools, such as not taking on ASDs. In addition, some health workers are suggesting that schools will offer counselling, rather this being offered by health.

4. SUSTAINABLE SCHOOLS DASHBOARD

Alison Fiala explained that a revised version of the Sustainable Schools Dashboard has been developed and will be made available to schools, supported by their School Effectiveness Partners. Various data has been added to the dashboard, including deprivation, PPG and updated census information. The LA is keen to be proactive with maintained schools to help support them, and the dashboard is available to academies who wish to use it.

5. SAFEGUARDING UPDATE

Jo Barclay, Head of Education Safeguarding and Wellbeing, gave the following updates:

- a) **Updated materials, model policies and presentations are available on the safeguarding page of the Essex Schools Infolink.**
<https://schools.essex.gov.uk/pupils/Safeguarding/Pages/Safeguarding.aspx>
Presentations include updates on the Ofsted inspection safeguarding expectations, and governor training.
- b) **Schools Safeguarding Audit**
An updated version should be available by half term, and will be required to be submitted by the end of the spring term.
- c) **Early Years and Pre-school safeguarding**
There has been a focus on early years safeguarding and JB reported that they are starting to see strengthened practice, specifically around child protection file transfer. She asked headteachers to contact her if they have any issues in this regard.
- d) **Year 6 – 7 transition**
JB asked headteachers to consider their particularly vulnerable children in Year 6 and to work with parents during the school year to ensure that they apply for a secondary school place for their child.
- e) **Harmful Sexual Behaviour model policies**
In response to requests from primary schools, we have provided a separate model policy on harmful sexual behaviour. This new policy plus an updated version for secondary settings is available on [ESI](#)
Schools will have the opportunity to undertake the NSPCC training on harmful sexual behaviour, with a funded licence for a member of staff in each school.
- f) **Training opportunity: 'Information Sharing – understanding the statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding'**
To support schools and settings to understand the statutory requirements around Information Sharing and Data Protection in relation to safeguarding, we are pleased to offer a training session in conjunction with the ECC Information Governance Team.

The session aim is to increase the knowledge, understanding and confidence of schools and settings when sharing information in relation to safeguarding work. The session is open to Headteachers, Designated Safeguarding Leads, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads and Data Protection Officers within ECC schools and settings. There are 2 dates available, but you only need to attend one session. The dates are:

- Monday 28th November – 2 pm – 4.30 pm
- Tuesday 7th February – 9.30 am – 12 pm

The sessions will take place online via TEAMS and can be booked by searching for the course title on the [Essex Online Booking System](#). If you need support with the booking system, please contact workforcedevelopment@essex.gov.uk.

g) Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex

Working Together requires the Essex Statutory Partners (Essex County Council, Police and Integrated Care Boards) to publish a threshold document. In Essex, this is the Effective Support guidance.

The Statutory Partners have nominated a multi-agency working group to review the current guidance and consider how children and families can be supported across all levels of need, to ensure they receive the right help at the right time.

To ensure those using the guidance have an opportunity to shape the updated document, the ESCB is asking practitioners to [complete a survey](#) – the closing date is the 26th September. Please be honest in your feedback, as it's important this is an effective working document.

h) SET Domestic Abuse Board

TONIC (www.tonic.org.uk) have been asked by the SET Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) to help gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of people who have been affected by domestic abuse, and to use these findings to help shape the design of a whole system response to domestic abuse. The project has a discovery (fieldwork) and a design (co-production) phase. We would really value your help in promoting opportunities for people to engage in both phases of the project and have their voices heard.

The short online anonymous survey can be completed using the link or QR code: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/SETDAB>

i) Learning from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPRs)

We routinely bring the learning from CSPRs into the materials and resources that we produce and also share it at the safeguarding forums.

In order for the learning to be shared across the wider partnership, the Essex Safeguarding Children Board have decided to produce a range of themed resources under the banner of Working Together Better.

The first topic identified from recent reviews in Essex is the [voice of the child](#) and the resources related to this are available on the ESCB website. You may use these resources to support your level 2 training for all staff, and it is important for each setting

to think about how the learning is reflected in practice within their own setting.

j) The Affinity Programme – children at risk of exclusion due to emotional dysregulation

The Affinity Programme supports children and young people who are at risk of exclusion from education due to emotional dysregulation. The Affinity Programme’s team of practitioners and emotion coaches work with both schools and families to bring together a Trauma Informed Affinity Partnership. The information leaflet and referral form can be found below.



Affinity Programme
Flyer.pdf



Affinity Programme
Referral Form.docx

k) Child Exploitation Training and CE Champions

The ESCB offers training on both [Child Exploitation](#) and [Criminal Exploitation Training](#). Once the online Child Exploitation e-learning has been completed, the ESCB recommends that the DSL trains to become the setting’s [Child Exploitation Champion](#). As a Child Exploitation Champion, the DSL will act as a key contact for staff to go to for support and advice in relation to child exploitation and as a conduit between their organisation and the ESCB. Further information can be found on the [ESCB website](#).

l) Safeguarding contact details

It is important that ECC maintains accurate contact details for safeguarding leads in all settings. Please help to do this by completing this [online link](#) to update your setting’s safeguarding staff details if there is a change in Headteacher, DSL or deputy DSL. ECC also uses this information to distribute the Safeguarding Briefing to staff, so please do ensure your details are up-to-date.

m) Essex Child and Family Wellbeing service survey

As part of their continued efforts to improve services for Children, Young People & Families within Essex, the [Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service](#) are seeking the views of colleagues from across the children’s system. Specifically they are hoping to gain feedback from stakeholders about their experience of the different services & partnership working. Click [here](#) to complete a very brief survey.

n) Safeguarding forums

The forums will follow the EPHA meetings in the morning. Please ensure you book a place if you wish to attend, as places may be limited at some venues. To do so, please use the [Essex Online Booking System](#)

West	09.11.22 1.30 – 4.30 pm	Manor Suite, Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0JU
Mid	10.11.22 1.30 – 4.30 pm	Lion Inn, Main Road, Boreham, CM3 3JA
NE	16.11.22 1.30 – 4.30 pm	Colchester Football Stadium, CO4 5UP
South	17.11.22 1.30 – 4.30 pm	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock Rd, Stock, Ingatestone CM4 9BE

o) Joint Essex Police and Fire Education Programme – free sessions for settings

The Essex Police and Fire Services have a joint education programme offering free sessions to schools on topics such as Gang Awareness, Knife Crime and Cyber Safety. They deliver both classroom based sessions and assemblies across Primary and Secondary Schools. The details of the courses available and how to book, including their email and website address, can be found on this leaflet:



Education
Programme Catalogue

p) SET CAMHS

The Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child and Adolescents Mental Health Service (SET CAMHS) provides advice and support to children, young people and families who are in need of support with their emotional wellbeing or mental health difficulties. NELFT works in partnership with HCRG Care Group to deliver this service and information about their current offer is available [here](#).

There is also a Professionals Advice Line for practitioners working with children and young people. The number is 0300 300 1996 and the line will operate every Monday – Thursday between 10:00 and 12:00, excluding bank holidays. The new number is not an alternative to making a referral or to be used in urgent situations. It does not replace the existing main line for contacting SET CAMHS, which is 0800 953 0222.

(Please note, this number is to be used as a professional consultation line only, so please do not share it with the general public or on any websites/digital platforms).

q) Essex Relationships and Sex Education Survey

Thank you to all schools and colleges who have promoted the Essex Relationships and Sex Education survey helping us to understand how we support young people in Essex to have healthy relationships. To date we have received over 1000 responses. The closing date has been extended and the survey will now close on Sunday 9th October.

Please do continue to share the short survey with young people aged 11 – 25 years (school year 7 upwards). The survey link for sharing is;

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/youth-service/rse-survey/>

r) Brook Traffic Light tool

Training will take place in the spring and summer terms. Primary schools will be entitled to one place on the training; booking will be through the Education Workforce Development training booking system.

6. AUTUMN TERM PRIMARY HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

It was agreed that the following information should be included in the Local Authority updates to primary headteachers at the EPHA meetings in November:

- Rollout of SEND initiatives, including the Inclusion Framework, the Ordinarily Available and the new SEND top-up funding system
- The current financial pressures on schools

7. CLOSE

CK closed the meeting by acknowledging, once again, the stresses and pressures that are on schools are the moment, and stressed the importance of working collaboratively to support the system.

8. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE 2022/23 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (The Lion Inn, Boreham)

Thursday 19 January 2023

Wednesday 24 May 2023

Area Heads Meetings

Autumn term 2022

WEST	Wednesday 9 November	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
MID	Thursday 10 November	The Lion Inn, Boreham
N-EAST	Wednesday 16 November	Colchester Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 17 November	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock

Spring term 2023

WEST	Wednesday 1 March	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 2 March	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 8 March	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 9 March	The Lion Inn, Boreham

Summer term 2023

WEST	Wednesday 14 June	Manor of Groves, Sawbridgeworth
SOUTH	Thursday 15 June	Greenwoods Hotel, Stock
N-EAST	Wednesday 21 June	Colchester Community Stadium
MID	Thursday 22 June	The Lion Inn, Boreham

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm
Pam Langmead, EPHA Professional Officer