

**MINUTES OF THE LA AND EPHA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
THURSDAY 31 MAY 2012 starting at 11.00 am**

In attendance	Representing	email address
Tim Coulson	Director for Education and Learning	tim.coulson@essex.gov.uk
Alison Fiala	Assistant Lead Commissioner: Primary	alison.fiala@essex.gov.uk
Helen Lincoln	Director for Children's Social Care SCF	helen.lincoln@essex.gov.uk
Elaine White	Principal Educational Psychologist SENCAN	elaine.white@essex.gov.uk
Tracy Goodway	Head of Education Consultancy	tracy.goodway@essex.gov.uk
Clare Kershaw	Lead Strategic Commissioner for Pupil & School Intelligence	clare.kershaw@essex.gov.uk
Chris Kiernan	Interim Lead Strategic Commissioner	chris.kiernan @essex.gov.uk
Cheryl Allard	EPHA Chelmsford South	head@oaklands-inf.essex.sch.uk
Mike Blant	EPHA Liaison Officer	mikeblant@gmail.com
Elsbeth Bonds	EPHA West Treasurer/Epping Forest Rural	admin@theydonbois.essex.sch.uk
Rachel Callaghan	EPHA Uttlesford North	rceecallaghan@hotmail.com
John Clements	EPHA Uttlesford South	jhclem@hotmail.com
Anna Conley	EPHA Witham	head@howbridge-inf.essex.sch.uk
Doretta Cowie	EPHA Central Chair	admin@perryfields-jun.essex.sch.uk
Brenda Dalley	EPHA South Chair	brenda@hadleigh-inf.essex.sch.uk
Geraldine Denham-Hale	EPHA Maldon	gdenhamhale@yahoo.co.uk
Helen Dudley-Smith	EPHA Colchester East	headteacher@friarsgrove.essex.sch.uk
Ronnie Farrelly	EPHA Tendring South	admin@hollandpark.essex.sch.uk
Sue Foster	EPHA Chelmsford North	head@tyrrells.essex.sch.uk
Sue Grocock	EPHA South Woodham Ferrers	headteacher@st-marys-woodham.essex.sch.uk
Shelagh Harvey	EPHA Brentwood	admin@ingatestone.essex.sch.uk
Nick Hutchings	EPHA North East Vice-Chair	head@st-johns-colchester.essex.sch.uk
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Vice-Chair	Head@janetduke.essex.sch.uk
Karen Springett	EPHA Chair	headteacher@milldene.essex.sch.uk
Marion Still	EPHA Rochford	admin@barlingmagna.essex.sch.uk
Heather Tetchner	EPHA North East Treasurer	Head@dedham.essex.sch.uk
Pam Langmead	EPHA Manager	langmead@tesco.net
L Johnson	Standing in for Debbie Rogan	

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Isobel Barron, Simon Billings, Alison Blant, Gill Chapman, Claire Claydon, Vaughan Collier, Chris Eshmade, Joe Figg, Lorna Handscomb, Helen Hutchings, David Iles, Shaon Ishaque, Pauline MacMillan, Neil Matthews, Jenny McCutcheon, Val Metcalf, David Milligan, Donna Parker, Nigel Roberts, Penny Smith and Jan Tunney.

2. WELCOME

Alison Fiala welcomed headteachers to the meeting and introduced colleagues from the Local Authority attending the meeting, including:

Chris Kiernan, who is on a six week contract as Interim Lead Strategic Commissioner for

Action

Standards and Excellence. His role will be to review and revise engagement with schools, the commissioning service's budget and roles, consider the job requirement of the Lead Strategic Commissioner and to have an input into the drive for a world class education standard in Essex.

Clare Kershaw, who has been appointed as Lead Strategic Commissioner for Pupil and School Intelligence. Her role will consider how the LA should use intelligence and data to drive priorities in education in Essex. She will be working closely with the Quadrant Commissioners and reports to Tim Coulson. In addition, her team will be providing data externally, focusing particularly on predictive data as well as historical information.

Tracy Goodway has been appointed as the Head of Education Consultancy, leading a team of education advisers and consultants.

3. SOCIAL CARE STRATEGY

Helen Lincoln, Director for Children's Social Care, gave an update on social care issues nationally and in the Local Authority.

- a) The **key posts in Social Care** have now been covered permanently and Helen was pleased to report that each team has been completed and a structure chart produced for each Area. Social Care is now 85% staffed with permanent appointments, a significant increase from 59% two years ago. The team is hoping to appoint more Social Worker graduates this summer.
- b) At the current time there are around:
 - 7,000 open cases;
 - 752 children subject to child protection plans;
 - 1,454 children subject to being in care. This last figure is a significant reduction due to the authority working more effectively with families, which prevents some young people from ever being placed in care. For example, Divisional Based Intervention Teams support teenagers at risk and they have around 100 open cases;
 - The average case load for a social worker is now 22.
- c) The **Adoption Service** was recently inspected by Ofsted and was judged to be good with outstanding features. 92 children were adopted last year. Helen confirmed that there is a Post-Adoption Service delivered by an independent provider that supports adopted children and their families. They offer counselling, Theraplay and other support. Access to the service can only be by self-referral by the adoptive parent(s), but Helen stressed that families are informed about the service by Social Care and are encouraged to access this support.
- d) ECC is closing its last two remaining **mainstream children's homes**, which house just 2 children. The number of children in residential care has reduced, and they are in independent sector purchased placements. There are currently **700 children in fostering placements** in Essex. Foster parents are encouraged to attend an 18 week re-training programme, Fostering Changes. There is a financial incentive for foster carers who complete the programme and this has resulted in a good take up of the course.
- e) The review and re-write of **Working Together** is underway but a final version has not yet been published. Helen explained that there has been a radical revision of the guidance, but fundamental principles will remain the same, including the child protection structure, the categories of abuse and so on. It is expected that the final version will be around 20 pages, and so there will need to be additional guidance developed by Essex LA to ensure the understanding of procedures and policy. Once Working Together has been published, the ESCB (Essex Safeguarding Children Board) will revise the SET Procedures.

f) Munro review developments

The new **Ofsted regime for social care** has been published and all inspections from May will be unannounced. The inspection of child protection, and Looked After Children (and children leaving care) will now be conducted separately. The child protection inspection will include case studies of vulnerable children and will take the views of children and young people into account. The framework relating to Children in Care and children leaving care has not yet been published. Southend and Thurrock LAs have both been notified that they will have a child protection inspection in June.

The Munro report recommended a statutory requirement to offer **early help and intervention**. It has been decided that Section 11 of the Children's Act 2004 covers this duty so there will be no new legislation.

Professor Eileen Munro is in the process of reviewing progress one year on from her review and will be writing a Review Report in the summer.

g) Restraint training

It was noted that there continue to be issues with the capacity and standard of training for the use of reasonable force and restraint. Headteachers argued that they and their staff are being put into a very vulnerable situation. The EPHA Executive asked for:

- A clear directive from the LA concerning the use of reasonable force and restraint;
- The development of adequate, effective and affordable training.

Helen **AGREED** to take this forward and to liaise with Ralph Holloway.

Helen Lincoln

It was noted that Thriftwood Special School has delivered excellent training to some local schools.

Helen noted that Social Care is delivering training to Social Workers to help them deal with violent adults and young people as this is an increasing issue. It was noted that this training would be useful for staff in schools and, in particular, Family Support Workers, who are employed by schools or Local Delivery Groups in increasing numbers.

4. EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST (EP) SERVICE

Elaine White, Principal Educational Psychologist for SENCAN, was welcomed to the meeting. She thanked headteachers for their input and feedback into the revision of the EP service. There has been an increased buy in of EP time, including an increase in the number of days that are block-purchased by groups of schools. She noted that there are still some issues around the delivery of the service and asked heads to email their views eps@essex.gov.uk or directly to her, Elaine.White@essex.gov.uk

Four publications have been recently produced considering the role of the EP and the vulnerability of the "unsponsored child" i.e. the child who falls between the gap of the core service and the school's work. This ties in with the recommendation from the Lamb report that parents should have direct access to EPs. Elaine noted that the EP service still runs a Parent Helpline but that parent drop-in services have largely been stopped due to funding cuts. Headteachers questioned what the LA is doing to support these children. It was noted that their needs are being considered as part of the review of both SEN and CAMHS provision.

One headteacher noted that GPs and CAMHS continue to refer parents to EP support even when there is no capacity within a school's budget to pay for that support. Elaine noted that there is no additional provision for the LA to deliver this support, even when a parent has been

referred by a practitioner.

Another headteacher argued that the EPs need to recognise they are now working within a traded service and must change their approach accordingly. She gave an example of an EP who was only prepared to see one child during a purchased day, with the remaining time being allocated to paper work. Elaine confirmed that the EP working day is now a full 7 hours and that a review of reports is taking place. On the whole, headteachers are saying that they want a report that sets out a bullet point list of issues, a statement about what the EP has done during the visit and then a list of recommendations, rather than an extensive report setting out everything the school already knows about the child.

One headteacher questioned the length of time Statutory Assessments are taking in Essex, despite a stated time limit of six weeks. Elaine explained that the LA has only allocated funding for 900 Statutory Assessments this year and 700 had already been submitted by March. The EPs are working an additional 15 hours a week on average to try to clear the back log of cases, but the SAMs (Statutory Assessment Meetings) are having to prioritise assessments, focusing first on children who are moving into Reception or Year 7, those whose foster placement is at risk of breaking down and Looked After Children. Elaine noted that around 60% of SAs are completed within 6 weeks, but some are taking as long as 18 weeks to complete.

5. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT CONSULTANCY PROGRAMME

Tracy Goodway reminded the EPHA Executive that National Strategies and School Improvement Partner funding stopped in the last 2 years and since then the LA has developed a traded school improvement service. From April, a team of 27 education consultants and advisers (all previously School Improvement Advisers/Partners/consultants) are working in partnership with schools. Tracy noted that pen portraits detailing each adviser's areas of expertise have been published on the Schools Learning and Development website.

The Education Consultancy programme offers guidance and support in relation to a range of school improvement themes, including learning and teaching, assessment for learning, leadership, early years, curriculum, English and Mathematics, Ethnic Minority Achievement, support staff, support for governance and bespoke consultancy built around a school's needs. Annual subscriptions for specific areas of development are available.

The Primary programme for 2012/13 has been sent to schools and is available on the EPHA website.

6. QUADRANT COMMISSIONING SUPPORT

Alison Fiala reported that the new team of 12 Quadrant Commissioners, 8 of whom are working with primary-phase schools, is now in place. Part of their role will be to analyse and diagnose best practice across the county and Alison stressed that the team will be working with the full range of schools in Essex, not only those causing concern. The team will analyse data and identify schools which are either not making fast enough progress, are below floor standards or in an Ofsted category or that have had special issues, such as no substantive headteacher.

There are currently 23 primary phase schools in Essex that are in an Ofsted category. Overall, there are about 91 schools that are at Essex stages of intervention, ranging from:

- 22 schools at Stage 1 – a school that is giving cause for concern;
- 25 schools at Stage 2 – that have either been judged as satisfactory for more than one consecutive inspection or that is below floor target;
- 21 schools at Stage 3 – at risk of an Ofsted category; and
- 23 schools at Stage 4 – in an Ofsted category.

The Local Authority has a service level agreement with each of these schools to establish a framework for school improvement, in addition each school on Stages 2 to 4 will have an intervention plan aligned to the school's single plan.

The LA has £750,000 allocated for education advisers and consultants commissioned for intervention work across all phases of schools, including core and statutory work including assessment. There is also a small budget to enable the LA to commission other providers and resources. The LA is aware of a number of additional providers which can add capacity and expertise to enable schools to improve, including 37 Advanced Skills Teachers and also 30 LLEs (Local Leaders of Education).

The Executive discussed the relationship between the Local Authority and independent consultants and providers. Alison noted that some consultants have an established relationship with the LA and work in partnership to access local knowledge and information about a school.

A headteacher asked if individual Quadrant Commissioners would be available to offer traded work to schools. Alison noted that there is some opportunity at the moment, but that eventually it will be a decision for the Director for Education and Learning. It was argued that whilst many of these individuals offer valuable expertise working directly with a school it is vital that they do not get diverted from their original brief as commissioners for the county.

7. SCHOOLS AND EDUCATION SERVICE UPDATE – INCLUDING ISSUES ARISING FROM THE EPHA EXECUTIVE MEETING

Dr Tim Coulson was welcomed to his first meeting with the EPHA Executive. He explained that he has now been in Essex for 6 weeks and is slowly coming to grips with the main challenge, the sheer size of the Local Authority. He feels that it is vital for him to get to know people and schools as fast as possible in order to make the right strategic decisions for education in Essex.

He noted that ECC is working hard to re-adjust in light of funding and political changes. The main priorities to consider are:

- Implications of Academy status and the changing landscape of school provision;
- The current Ofsted framework and particularly the raising of the bar;
- The role and purpose of the Local Authority;
- How Essex can develop a world class education strategy.

Tim noted that there are now different and powerful players in the education arena, including increasingly influential Academy sponsors.

As part of the drive for the world class education strategy, there is need for the LA to

- Ensure that the Traded Services are on a stronger commercial footing;
- Clarify and strengthen commissioned services;
- Revise and strengthen the provision for special needs, considering funding and the use of special schools, enhanced units and mainstream provision.

Tim suggested that schools have a sense of where they individually want to be, but there isn't a strong sense of where Essex schools want to be collectively. He noted that at age 11 and 16 Essex is roughly half way in the national league tables, at age 7 performance is considerably better, but at age 5 Essex is rated 135th, one of the lowest 17 authorities. He suggested that we would expect Essex to be doing better in general. He asked the question of what would raise standards for all schools, noting that the contribution of headteachers is essential and so they need support to be their very best.

John Clements argued that Essex schools need a credible and informed leader of the Schools

and Education Service, who has a shared vision for education and respects what partners are doing.

The group discussed the rate of conversion to academies in Essex. Currently around 8% of primary schools in Essex have converted to academy status, as opposed to just 3% nationally. This is considerable less than the secondary conversion rate of about 50%. The impression that headteachers have got is that the LA is forcing schools into becoming academies, and Tim was asked what the LA stance was if a school goes into Special Measures. Tim noted that the ECC policy is to support schools who wish to convert to academy status or those that the DfE has directed to convert. He posed the question that, if all schools do eventually become academies, would we look back and wish that the pathway had been more organised and supported? He also confirmed that the LA has no expectation generally that schools be forced or persuaded into conversion.

Tim confirmed that if a school is judged to be in Special Measures, part of the recovery process will be to determine whether the existing leadership team, including the headteacher, has the capacity to improve the school. He stressed that there is no policy to suspend a headteacher automatically if a school goes into Special Measures.

In some cases, the DfE will decide that a school must convert to academy status with an appropriate sponsor, which may be an Academy sponsor or another Essex school. The decision (which is a DfE decision) would be taken on a case by case basis, based on the plan for the most effective recovery of the failing school.

It was agreed that the following issues were the main challenges for Essex schools and should form the basis of a strategic discussion at the Area Heads' meetings in June:

- Academy conversion;
- The Ofsted framework - challenges and implications for schools;
- The Local Authority and other support for schools;
- Special Educational Needs funding and provision;
- Small schools.

**Summer term
Area Heads'
meetings
2012**

8. AGENDA FOR TERMLY AREA HEADTEACHER MEETINGS

The agenda for the Summer term Area Headteacher meetings will be developed by Alison Fiala, and will include:

- World Class Education Strategy in Essex – Tim Coulson
- Pupil and School Intelligence – Clare Kershaw
- Commissioned and Traded Services – Alison Fiala and Tracy Goodway
- Social Care updates for each Quadrant –Director for Local Delivery (Social Care)

Briefing papers

- Education Welfare Service

9. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS 2011/12 AND 2012/13

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)

Tuesday 23 October 2012 (including AGM)

Thursday 31 January 2013

Thursday 22 May 2013

Area Heads Meetings

Summer term 2012

SOUTH Wednesday 13 June 2012

The Belvedere, Crays Hill

N-EAST	Thursday 14 June 2012	Weston Homes Community Stadium
CENTRAL	Tuesday 19 June 2012	Chelmsford City Football Club
WEST	Wednesday 20 June 2012	Churchgate Hotel

Autumn term 2012

SOUTH	Wednesday 7 November 2012	The Belvedere, Crays Hill
N-EAST	Thursday 8 November 2012	Weston Homes Community Stadium
WEST	Wednesday 14 November 2012	Churchgate Hotel
CENTRAL	Thursday 15 November 2012	Chelmsford City Football Club

Spring term 2013

SOUTH	Wednesday 27 February 2013	The Belvedere, Crays Hill
N-EAST	Thursday 28 February 2013	Weston Homes Community Stadium
CENTRAL	Tuesday 5 March 2013	Chelmsford City Football Club
WEST	Wednesday 6 March 2013	Churchgate Hotel

Summer term 2013

N-EAST	Wednesday 12 June 2013	Weston Homes Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 13 June 2013	The Belvedere, Crays Hill
CENTRAL	Tuesday 18 June 2013	Chelmsford City Football Club
WEST	Wednesday 19 June 2013	Churchgate Hotel

Conferences

Deputy/Assistant Headteachers' Conference

Friday 12 October 2012	Weston Homes Community Stadium
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Headteachers' Conference

Friday 15 March 2013	Stock Brook Country Club, Nr. Billericay
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The meeting ended at 2.30 pm

Pam Langmead
EPHA Manager