

ESSEX PRIMARY HEADS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 28
JANUARY 2016 at 9.00 am – 11.30 am at Chelmsford City Football Club

Distribution	Lehla Abbott	North East Vice-Chair
	*Cheryl Allard	Mid Chair/Chelmsford South
	*Lois Ashforth	Dengie
	*Dawn Baker	Mid Treasurer
	*Sue Bardetti	Tendring South
	*Nicky Barrand	South Vice-Chair/Basildon East & Pitsea
	*Isobel Barron	West Vice-Chair
	Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
	Rachel Callaghan	Uttlesford North
	*Claire Claydon	Tendring Mid
	*John Clements	Uttlesford South
	*Anna Conley	Witham
	Lyn Corderoy	South Treasurer/Wickford
	*Brenda Dalley	South Chair/ Castle Point & Benfleet
	*Sue Dodd	Maldon
	*Sarah Donnelly	Halstead
	*Fiona Dorey	Braintree
	*Helen Dudley-Smith	Colchester East
	*Melissa Eades	Billericay
	*Andy Gillett	Chelmsford West
	Mary Jo Hall	West Treasurer
	Bridget Harris	North East Treasurer
	*Shelagh Harvey	Brentwood
	*Nigel Hookway	Executive Director
	Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair
	*Ceri Jones	Mid Vice-Chair
	*Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer/County Treasurer
	*Lesley Lewis	Epping Forest Rural
	Julie Lorkins	West Chair
	*Jacque Martin	Colchester South
	*Kate Mills	Chelmsford North
	*Hayley O'Dea	Rochford
	Donna Parker	Tendring North
	*Daren Partridge	Canvey Island
	*Lorna Pigram	Rayleigh
	*Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair
	Clive Reynolds	Colchester West
	*Angela Russell	Basildon West
	Janice Tunney	Epping Forest South
	Jonathan Tye	Harlow
	*Kay Wills	Harwich and Dovercourt

* indicates attendance

Also in attendance

Councillor Ray Gooding

ECC Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action

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

Apologies were received from:

Lehla Abbott	North East Vice-Chair
Amanda Buckland-Garnett	South Woodham Ferrers
Lyn Corderoy	South Treasurer/Wickford
Nick Hutchings	EPHA Vice-Chair/North East Chair
Julie Lorkins	West Chair
Donna Parker	Tendring North
Clive Reynolds	Colchester West

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Executive meeting held on 13 October 2015 were confirmed as an accurate record. The following matters arising from the minutes was discussed:

i) Information about pupil placements (minute 3i refers)

It was noted that Alison Stannard, who had attended the May meeting, had been asked to attend the Executive meeting, and the Professional officer has since tried to make contact, without success.

ii) Insurance for LLEs and NLEs (Minute 8e refers)

It was confirmed that the LA has not yet given an answer to the question of who insures Local and National Leaders of Education and it was **AGREED** that it would be raised once again at the meeting with LA Officer later in the morning.

iii) Use of Jobscene to advertise vacancies in other Local Authorities (Minute 8f refers)

It was **AGREED** that this issue would be raised once again at the meeting with LA Officer later in the morning.

iv) Union representatives invited to Executive meetings (Minute 7 refers)

It was confirmed that Russell Hobby, General Secretary of the NAHT, will attend the North East termly headteachers' meeting on 25 February to discuss local and national issues. Christine Blower may be invited to a future Executive or headteacher meeting.

v) Annual Section 11 safeguarding audit (Minute 9a refers)

The Professional Officer noted that, at a recent Essex Safeguarding Children's Board meeting, she had learnt that the statutory requirement for all sectors to complete a Section 11 audit is once every two years; currently schools are asked to complete the audit every year and, while this can offer a useful checklist of practice, the task is time consuming and can become simply a tick box exercise. Pam explained that she has discussed the issue with Jo Barclay, Schools' Safeguarding Adviser, who will explore whether schools should be brought in line with other practitioners and be asked to complete the audit every two years. This was **AGREED** by the majority of the Executive, but also agreed that an up to date checklist of safeguarding requirements should be provided and kept up to date by the Local Authority, to support schools. The Professional Officer will discuss this further with Jo Barclay.

Meeting
with LA
Officers
28/01/16

Meeting
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Officers
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Professional
Officer

vi) Free School Meals entitlement (Minute 9b refers)

It was agreed that the problem of lack of information about FSM entitlement when a children moves from an infant to a junior school should be raised once again with LA Officers. In addition, the Chair noted that she has discussed the current form published on the ECC website, which actively discourages parents from applying for FSM eligibility if their children are infants. It was **AGREED** that this issue would be raised once again at the meeting with LA Officer later in the morning.

vii) Charges for ECC phone lines (Minute 9d refers)

It was noted that, following strong concerns raised at the last EPHA Executive meeting in October, Clare Kershaw moved swiftly to remove the charges being levied on a range of ECC support service phone lines. This was much appreciated by all headteachers.

3. LEADERSHIP TEAM UPDATE

a) The Chair introduced Nigel Hookway, who has been appointed as the new Executive Director for EPHA. Nigel is currently heading a school in Colchester, his second headship appointment, but retires from that post at the end of the year. He is started to represent headteachers and has attended a number of meetings, but is looking forward to representing EPHA at a national level as well as at a local level.

b) The Chair of EPHA reported that she and the Executive Director had attended the Eastern Region Headteachers' Association meeting earlier in the term. This is attended by secondary and primary headteacher association representatives from all of the Eastern region counties, who also meet with Tim Coulson, the Eastern Regional Schools Commissioner. Harriet reported that headteachers from other authorities have much the same issues as those in Essex, in particular the recruitment and retention of staff, the management of changes to assessment and the curriculum, budget pressures and so on.

The Norfolk Headteacher Association representatives had met with their local MPs to discuss concerns, and the Essex associations have agreed to do the same; the Professional Officer is in discussion with John Whittingdale (MP for Maldon) and will organise a meeting at Westminster with as many Essex MPs as possible, probably in the summer term.

c) The EPHA Leadership Team, (consisting of the Chair and Vice-Chair of EPHA, the Area Chairs, the Executive Director and the Professional Officer) met with Clare Kershaw (Director of Commissioning for Education and Life-long Learning) and the Area Commissioners on 21 January. A number of topical issues were discussed at the meeting including:

The Schools Forum has been discussing a debt that has arisen within the EYFS budget, due to misinformation on numbers being given to the DfE several years ago. This resulted in under-funding, which was not picked up at the time as there was then plenty of funding in the system. This has now come to light and there is a shortfall of £5.9 million which the Local Authority is trying to reconcile. At the Schools Forum meeting on 20 January, five options to mitigate the overspend were considered including:

- 1) do nothing
- 2) contain the overspend within the Early Years Block
- 3) contain equally within the EY Block and the Schools Block
- 4) contain within the EY Block and the Schools Block with the overspend apportioned

based on the funding within each block

5) Maintain school funding at the amount delegated in 2015/16 and use the additional £2.7m delegation to part mitigate the 2015.16 early years' pressure.

It was noted that option 5 was the preferred LA solution, but that this would still leave a carry forward pressure of £5m into 2017/18 because of the in-year pressure on Early Years. All of the options were rejected by the Schools Forum and so £2.7m has been put back into the 2016/17 budget, resulting in the following revised AWPU figures:

	2015/16	2016/17	Change
Primary	2,695.60	2,684.32	(11.28)
KS3	3,898.00	3,850.00	(48.00)
KS4	4,747.50	4,688.04	(59.46)

Harriet mentioned the current state of the Local Authority and its changing roles and responsibilities as a result of Government legislative changes and reduced funding. She noted that Clare Kershaw had stressed that the school improvement team want to continue to offer a buffer between schools and the Regional Schools Commissioner; for example, if the LA is aware that a school is fundamentally well led and managed they will support that school (e.g. against forced academy conversion), even if there is an occasional dip in results. However, the Education and Adoption Bill clearly sets out a massive shift in power to the Regional Schools Commissioners and the upcoming consultation suggests there will be a significant reduction in the statutory responsibilities of Local Authorities.

Harriet explained that at a number of meetings, including Schools Forum and the Leadership Team meetings, there have been ongoing discussions about the quality of the Schools Broadband provision, and the Schools Forum has asked for an independent review of the service's value for money and an exploration of alternative providers. Many primary schools have been dissatisfied with the broadband width that is provided (primary schools are limited to 10 MG whilst secondaries have 100MG, regardless of pupil numbers) and also the service from DUCL, the service providers. It is possible to increase the broadband width, but at a cost to the school.

However, Harriet noted that the schools broadband provision is coupled with the ECC corporate provision and the corporate side are happy with the current contract and have no intention of changing.

Many secondary schools have opted out of the Schools Broadband service and have sourced their own provision. However, if individual primaries opt out this will prove problematic for the provision as a whole; the most significant cost of the service is the "last mile" and all schools are subsidising a number of remote and rural schools, whose Broadband provision would otherwise be prohibitive.

Executive members questioned why primary schools pay £18.40 per pupil, while secondary schools pay just £12.70 per pupil. It was explained that this is due to the far greater number of primary schools, many of which are in rural locations; the increased cost is due to the number of connections that have to be made to provide Broadband.

Harriet suggested that EPHA should canvas primary schools in order to understand the true experience and whether they are happy, or not, with the existing provision. This will be carried out at the termly headteacher meetings.

An additional problem was raised, that primary schools are limited to a maximum of 80 IP addresses. This proves insufficient for many schools and it was argued that, to reach the technical demands of the modern school curriculum, this limit should be increased. It

**Professional
Officer**

was **AGREED** that a question about IP requirements should be added to the Broadband questionnaire.

The SEN transformation, based on a “spend to save” loan, is gathering pace and Ralph Holloway has been appointed to lead the transformation. The EPHA Chair, Executive Director and Professional Officer met with the Chairs/POs of ESSET (Essex Special Schools Education Trust) and ASHE (Association of Secondary Headteachers in Essex) to discuss this and other issues; one possible saving might be made if any of the proposed new special schools are built as free schools and therefore funded by the DfE rather than Local Authority funding.

d) Proposal to amend the EPHA constitution

The Professional Officer reminded the Executive that the current EPHA constitution limits the term of office of the Chair and Vice-Chair to a maximum of three years. Pam proposed that the EPHA constitution should be changed to remove the maximum of three years, whilst retaining the need to re-elect these officers each year. This was **AGREED** in principle and will be proposed at that the Annual General Meeting in October. This will allow the current Chair to re-stand if she wishes to.

**EPHA
AGM
October
2016**

4. RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Nigel Hookway reported that he, the Chair of EPHA and a number of other primary headteachers selected by Graham Lancaster (who is leading on the LA strategy), attended a recruitment and retention workshop on 23 November. The attendees were grouped into primary and secondary tables; the Special Schools were not represented. John King gave a presentation and there was general discussion about the challenges faced by schools; the EPHA survey was referred to but not circulated at that meeting.

As a result of that meeting a task and finish group was established, including representatives from the Local Authority, the headteacher associations and the National College; Nigel attended the first meeting on behalf of EPHA. He noted that the LA had already commissioned a PR firm to produce a recruitment poster, but was dismayed to find that they did not mention primary schools or even teaching! The posters have since been changed and there is now one for primary and one for secondary, and the focus on teaching has been included. The strategy campaign was launched last week, and particularly focused on neighbouring authorities, although the LA has now accepted that this might be counter-productive and has extended it to those LAs that have a surplus of qualified teachers.

Nigel noted that the group is discussing what incentives might be used to encourage teachers to come to Essex, including the possibility of offering subsidised housing, or salary advances to help teachers pay housing deposits.

One headteacher on the Executive noted that the current national limits on ITT (initial teacher training) programmes is really unhelpful as the Government limits the number of recruits when it reaches a specified level.

There has been much discussion about the poor quality of supply agency staff, with a concern that inadequate staff are being recycled in the system. Concerns have also been expressed about the accuracy of references, with some suspicion that generous references are written in order to get rid of staff. However, one headteacher noted that

when she wrote an honest reference about a poor member of staff she was threatened with a law suit. It was argued that HR needs to support schools much better with the production of references.

Another matter was raised, that of the vital importance of actually retaining the teachers already in our schools. One head said that the main crisis point comes when teachers are into their second or third year; they lose the support and time that they are given as NQTs and some come to the conclusion that the job is too demanding and they leave the profession altogether. Helen Dudley-Smith gave an example of retention programme that her local consortium has introduced, called the 2-4 Group; this offers professional support and time to a group of recently qualified teachers in their consortium and is proving effective in valuing and retaining these teachers. She and Nigel Hookway **AGREED** to write a report on this initiative, and other Executive members were asked to share other strategies that their schools and clusters are using, in order to share the good practice in the County.

**HDS/NH
Executive
members**

Isobel Barron noted that another Government initiative, Schools Direct trainees, has reduced the subsidies available and that the scheme is now less attractive for schools.

5. REPRESENTATION ON WORKING GROUPS AND COMMITTEES

a) Professional Officer's report of attendance at meetings

The Professional Officer circulated a report with the agenda for the meeting, detailing the meetings that she has attended and the implications for primary heads. Pam is currently representing EPHA on the following groups/attending the following meetings:

- Schools Forum (as an observer and substitute when necessary)
- Schools Forum SEN Sub-group
- Schools Forum Finance Sub-group
- Schools Forum SEND Capital Project Management Board
- Chairs and Professional Officer meetings
- EPHA Leadership Group
- Schools Led Improvement System Project Board and funding group
- CAMHS Stakeholder Partnership
- Essex Safeguarding Children's Board, and governance sub-group
- Strategic Partnership Task and Finish Group – resources impact
- Pupil Wellbeing and vulnerable groups
- Pupil Voice
- SEND IASS (Information Advisory Support Service)
- Identification of provision for vulnerable groups
- SEND funding group
- Schools Local Offer group
- Family Innovation Fund Steering Group
- Strategic Hate Crime Partnership

The Executive noted that they like the format of the termly Professional Officer report.

b) Schools Forum

It was noted that primary headteachers are now well represented at the Schools Forum, with five primary headteacher representatives (Harriet Phelps-Knights, Dawn Baker, Debbie Rogan, Richard Green and Stephen Hales) who all attend the meetings regularly.

The EPHA Professional Officer also attends Schools Forum meetings, and represents primary heads on sub-groups; in addition, if a primary headteacher representative is unable to attend a Forum meeting, then the EPHA Professional Officer can substitute for them and vote in their place. Regular pre- Forum meetings are now scheduled, enabling the representatives to discuss agenda items in advance of meetings. (Minute 3c also refers)

Key agenda items at the Schools Forum meeting on 14 October included the proposed funding of Schools Effectiveness Plus, which was discussed at the EPHA AGM earlier in the day. The primary representatives on the Schools Forum voted not to fund the SE+ for all schools, in line with the views of primary headteachers.

c) SEN Funding Project Board

Kate Mills and Pam Langmead attend this group on behalf of EPHA. They have both expressed the concerns that headteachers have about managing the allocation of SEN top up funding and, as a result, the LA has decided to run a pilot to focus on the effective provision of SEN in groups of schools.

d) EnPro

Ceri Jones noted that he represents EPHA on EnPro – the group looking at the increase of enhanced provision across the county. He **AGREED** to present a report on the work of the group at the summer term EPHA Executive meeting.

**Ceri Jones
EPHA
Executive
Meeting
5 May 2016**

6. FINANCE REPORT

Current account

01.08.15 Opening balance £54,507.56

Expenditure

Supply	£ 4,686.00	
Travel claims	£ 509.80	
Professional Officer: fees (July- January)	£15,325.00	
Professional Officer: mileage	£ 1,020.15	
Professional Officer: expenses for EPHA	£ 1,217.58	
Meeting/venue costs	£ 5,028.28	
Miscellaneous (IT support/photocopying)	£ 843.97	
Total expenditure		£28,630.78

04.01.16 Closing balance £25,876.78

Income due from area subscriptions 2015/16 – approx. £25,200

Conference account

06.08.15 Opening balance £36,352.53

Deputy Headteacher conference	Expenditure	Income
Resources (photocopying)	£ 141.00	
Venue costs	£ 9,881.94	
Speakers	£10,533.82	
Miscellaneous (reimbursements)	£ 200.00	
Total expenditure	£20,756.76	

Empiribox	£ 67.50
Conference bookings (from 06.08.15)	£13,800.00
Subscriptions	£ 240.00
Total income	£14,107.50

17.12.15 **Closing balance** **£29,703.27**

<i>Total income for Deputy Conference (with bookings June/July)</i>	£21,900.00	
<i>Less expenditure</i>	-£20,756.76	
Balance		£1,144

The Treasurer reminded the Executive that these balances did not include the funds that is currently held in the four Area bank accounts, which will be transferred to County EPHA in the summer term.

7. COUNCILLOR RAY GOODING

Councillor Ray Gooding, the Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning, was welcomed to the meeting. The Chair asked him to introduce himself and explain his current priorities for Essex schools.

Cllr Gooding explained that he has an engineering background and has been on the Council for 13 years; he was excited to take on the Education portfolio, but has found it really challenging.

He thanked headteachers for their work and commitment to Essex school children, noting the big improvement in results across the county; in September, 23,000 children in Essex were attending good and outstanding schools.

He did, however, recognise the continuous difficulty that headteachers face keeping up standards and improvements, describing their job as “a race with no tape”.

In respect of the Local Authority, he noted their shrinking role, but noted that historically there has been a lot of “fat” in Local Authorities, not always with demonstrably effective outcomes. School improvement will become an increasing challenge, with tighter budgets for both schools and LAs, and he expressed his opinion that the development of school to school support, drawing on the experience and expertise in schools, is the way forward, in line with the LA’s current School Led Improvement Project.

He asserted that the current climate supports the possibility of this succeeding; 25 years ago, when he became a School Governor, he noted that there was real competition for pupils (and the associated funding) and so schools were protective of sharing business and school improvement practice. Nowadays there is a surplus of pupils (particularly in the primary sector) and so schools can afford to be much more collaborative and they are now not competing for “customers”.

He accepted that, despite the Government’s assertion to the contrary, the biggest challenge faces by Essex, is the recruitment and retention of good staff, but suggested that this could be helped by school to school collaboration, enabling the movement of staff across school groups. He argued that the initial establishment of school led

partnership is relatively easy; the difficulty comes in the second stage when some established partnerships continue to work well and others are less effective. There needs to be consistency, but some schools are unwilling to engage with others, while some school leaders are threatened by the personalities within a group.

Cllr Gooding's opinion on the current re-structure and organisations of Local Authorities was pragmatic: "what goes around, comes around". He felt that, although there is a current perception that LAs won't have a future role, he believes that it is likely that the support, experience and expertise of LAs will continue to exist in some shape or other.

When asked, Cllr Gooding stated that, in his opinion as Lead Member, not all primary schools would become academies, despite the current Government rhetoric. He accepted that, whilst some academies have been very successful, academisation is not a panacea for every school. He noted that, on occasion, LA intervention in a maintained school has been more effective than simply allowing schools to flounder. He noted that the worst case scenario nationally and in the county would be to see Academy Trusts and chains in competition with each other.

Cllr Gooding touched on the current recruitment and retention strategy, noting that there has been great feedback from staff who have come to live in Essex. The Chair of EPHA stressed the Executive's opinion that the strategy needs to focus more on primary schools, which have different recruitment challenges to those in the secondary sector.

The Executive Director noted that attracting Newly Qualified Teachers to the profession was not the key problem; the challenge is to retain teachers beyond 2 to 4 years. Cllr Gooding argued that the way young people are trained doesn't always equip them for the realities of working life. One Executive member noted that schools need to help make the job of teacher as enjoyable as possible, rather than simply equipping them to do a "rubbish" job! The Executive Director noted the need to introduce strategies such as offering support for housing, to attract teachers to Essex.

Cllr Gooding was asked whether he, as Lead Member of the ECC Cabinet, was able to influence national policy. He said that his voice was not always as loud as he would like, and that LAs are not always listened to by Central Government. He noted that part of his portfolio is lifelong learning, which includes a responsibility for FE colleges; they are particularly suffering from a lack of funding at the current time.

One Headteacher stated that it was essential that the teaching profession is elevated at community, county and national level, in order to attract more people to the profession. She asserted that the work-life balance of headteachers has gone beyond manageable, and needs to be looked at more widely and with urgency, developing an attitude to support people to do their jobs. It was agreed that there is a need to promote positive attitudes to headship; part of this includes changing the current culture of job insecurity for headteachers who may lose their jobs as a direct result of a poor Ofsted inspection outcome.

Cllr Gooding mentioned the Essex Teaching Awards, which promote the profession in a very positive way, but it was noted that it was a shame that the media largely ignored this kind of "good news" story.

Cllr Gooding accepted that the job of headteacher can be isolated and lonely; he said that

he is always surprised at the amount of hours that a headteacher works, often getting to school as early as 7.00 am and not leaving until the evening.

He accepted that the Local Authority needs to offer more consistent support, not “too little, too late.” However, this is a challenge, given the reducing capacity of the LA.

The Executive Director stressed the increasingly challenging nature of the job: the hours, the pressure from Government, the challenge of social media and the changing nature of society itself.

One headteacher noted that some LAs have taken a different approach to academisation and have insisted that all schools convert. Cllr Gooding said that, in his opinion, some LAs are simply taking the line of least resistance (to Government policy) and that he prefers to give schools the choice and the opportunity to make their own decision. His view is that the LA role is to ensure that the very best education is available to children and young people, whatever the status of the school.

Another headteacher argued that one of the biggest barriers to becoming an academy is the complexity and extend of the bureaucracy surrounding the conversion process – with resulting meetings, impact on staff and governors, back office functions, consultations and funding. Cllr Gooding noted the need for more professional governing bodies to lead the process. However, the Professional Officer noted the lack of clear guidance and structural framework and legislation around academies, and argued that this did not help governors to do a good job. In addition, “professional” governance can sometimes simply be interpreted by individuals as “domineering” governance, the last thing that a headteacher and schools need.

A headteacher noted that her small school simply cannot afford to become an academy, but she is not happy to become part of a MAT led by a local secondary school as she will lead much of the autonomy her (outstanding) school enjoys.

Cllr Gooding was thanked for attending the meeting and for listening to the views of the Executive.

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AT MEETING WITH LA OFFICERS AND SPRING TERM AREA MEETINGS

In addition to the items raised earlier in the meeting, the following issue was discussed, to take forward to the meeting with LA Officers later in the morning:

Submission of assessment data

The Executive members expressed their concern that the DfE is asking for assessment data at the end of May, one month earlier than in previous years, to enable it to determine standards and direct moderation of schools. Headteachers were particularly concerned that the LA should not ask for assessment data in advance of this date, as has been the case in previous years.

**Meeting
with LA
Officers
28/01/16**

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Dedicated Headship Time

The Chair referred to an article written by Nicki Harris, Schools HR, about dedicated

headship time. This was welcomed by the Executive and it was agreed that this should be circulated to Chairs of Governors and schools, by HR.

10. DATES AND TIMES OF MEETINGS FOR THE REMAINDER OF THE 2015/16 SCHOOL YEAR

Executive meetings (Chelmsford City Football Club)
Thursday 5 May 2016

Area Heads Meetings

Spring term 2016

SOUTH	Wednesday 24 February	Holiday Inn, Basildon
N-EAST	Thursday 25 February	Weston Homes Community Stadium
WEST	Wednesday 2 March	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 3 March	Chelmsford City Football Club

Summer term 2016

N-EAST	Wednesday 8 June	Weston Homes Community Stadium
SOUTH	Thursday 9 June	Holiday Inn, Basildon
WEST	Wednesday 15 June	Weston Homes Business Centre, Takeley
MID	Thursday 16 June	Chelmsford City Football Club

Conferences

Headteachers' Conference

Friday 18 March 2016 Stock Brook Country Club, Nr. Billericay

Deputy Headteachers' Conference

Friday 14 October 2016 Weston Community Homes Stadium

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Harriet Phelps-Knights
Chair of EPHA

Pam Langmead
EPHA Professional Officer