

ESSEX HEADTEACHER INCLUSION ROUND TABLE**TUESDAY 8 FEBRUARY 2022****9.00 am – 10.00 am Online****1. IN ATTENDANCE****ECC**

Clare Kershaw (CK)	Director of Education
Ralph Holloway (RH)	Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation
Philippa Holliday	Assistant Director, North East
Catherine Hutley	Assistant Director, Mid
Vanessa Hockley	SEND Innovation Delivery Partner
Helen Wall (HW)	SEND Strategy Lead: Participation and Inclusion

Primary

Andrew Smith (AS)	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall - Chair
Deborah Bailey	Headteacher, John Bunyan Primary (Mid)
Claire Jackman	Headteacher, Great Easton Primary (West)
Ceri Jones	Headteacher, Chipping Hill Primary (Mid)
Rebecca More	Headteacher, St Nicholas CE Primary School, Tillingham
Matt O'Grady	Headteacher, West Horndon Primary (South)
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
David Rogers	Headteacher, Bentfield Primary (West)
Marie Staley	Headteacher, Moulsham Juniors (Mid)
Mike Williams	Headteacher, Trinity St Mary's Primary (Mid)
Pam Langmead	EPHA Professional Officer

Secondary

Mark Farmer	CEO Bridge Academy Trust
Chris Fluskey	Harlow Education Consortium
Andy Hodgkinson (AH)	CEO Zenith Multi Academy Trust
Vic Goddard	Headteacher, Passmores Academy
Rob James	Executive Headteacher, Ramsay Academy
Jo Santinelli	Headteacher, St Benedict's Catholic School
Simon Thompson	ASHE Executive Director

Nursery

Debs Watson	Headteacher, Tanglewood Nursery School
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Special

Emily Welton (EW)	ESSET Professional Officer
Jen Grotier	Shorefields School
Ruth Sturdy	CEO SEAX Trust
Dan Woodman	ESSET Chair/Edith Borthwick School

AP

Philomena Cozens (PC)	Chief Executive Officer, Keys Co-operative Trust
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Governors

Ruth Bird	ESGA
Rod Lane	ESGA
John Hunter	ESGA

Andrew Smith (Chair) welcomed colleagues to the meeting. He reminded the group that the last meeting focused on priorities for the Roundtable going forward, and the structure, membership and terms of reference.

He referred the group to the agenda and purpose of the meeting, to consider the following issues:

- Update on progress against the written statement of action including the launching of new EHC process and early adopters for ordinarily available (circulated to the group: SEN Partnership Board Highlight report);
- SEN strategy (circulated: draft SEN Strategy and presentation);
- Update on the Inclusion Framework.

2. UPDATE ON THE SEND JOINT WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ACTION (JWSOA)

RH reminded the group that the JSWOA is focused on the three areas of significant weakness determined by the Local Area inspection in 2019. Key priorities include the development of a sustainable model of EHCPs, and development of the Ordinarily Available framework.

Over identification of MLD/ Accurate Identification of Need

Workstream led by Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy & Innovation (ECC)

High level actions include:

- Understand the scale and reason for over-identification of MLD
- Deliver training, support, guidance and resources to improve identification of need across the system
- Develop and deliver guidance around recording of CYP needs on the census
- Implement process to highlight and respond if data deviates from expected

Quality of EHC Plans

Workstream led by Clare Kershaw, Director of Education (ECC)

High level actions include:

- End to end process review and re-engineering to deliver improved EHCP processes (including annual review)
- Develop options for new processes
- Review funding options
- Implement practices to drive improvement in quality of plans (including training, multi agency moderation, quality assurance)

Joint Commissioning

Workstream led by Richard Watson, Deputy Chief Executive / Director Strategy and Transformation (NECCG)

and Chris Martin, Director Of Commissioning & Policy (ECC)

High level actions include:

- Develop SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy
- Develop SEND joint data set
- Undertake mapping and gap analysis of services across the local area
- Jointly commission services agreed in JWSOA.

Ralph Holloway and Alex Abercrombie share the lead for the oversight of all necessary preparations for a potential re-inspection. Including data, communications, risks, focus group member briefings etc

RH shared the presentation that was recently delivered to the SEND Partnership Board, which gave programme level, risks and key data.

The issues around the over-identification of MLD were predominantly around data. There was a clear correlation between the under-identification of speech and language needs. Following training and more accurate assessment, the Essex data is now more in line with national (census data). Case studies are now being developed to understand the changed experience of parents, exploring whether identification is now more accurate and appropriate support is in place.

There is an increasing focus on the anticipated SEND re-inspection. RH noted that some setting may be involved in the revisit, which will focus solely on the three areas of weaknesses.

The programme level risks are largely as a result of health engagement. Their participation on the needs assessment panels is inconsistent across the county. The Joint Commissioning workstream is work in progress; the provision of therapists continues to be inconsistent and lacking in capacity.

Quality of Education Health and Care Plans – workstream update

The launch of EHCNA (Needs Assessment) improvements has seen a renewed commitment from schools and increased engagement with the panels. The feedback from mainstream schools has been largely positive and SENDOps has appreciated the input from headteachers and SENCOs, which gives them a different perspective on the experience of children and schools.

EW noted that some special school representatives had expressed concern about the time taken to consider each child's application – generally around 5-10 minutes per child. The system depends on the paperwork being available and scrutinised in advance of the panel meeting. It was agreed that Special Schools had probably been unaware of the volume of requests made by to the EHCNA panel.

RH noted that the local authority had researched the practice in other LAs and they followed a similar pattern. He accepted that time is an issue, but argued that decision are not make lightly. The information provided by the school is critical to the decision. He noted that Inclusion Partners should be working closely with a school to ensure that any application is successful. He noted that the Ordinarily Available framework should help with this.

EW noted that the SEND Ops team need complete information in advance in order for them to come to an effective decision. It was suggested that a checklist (and training?) could be helpful to set out what is needed in the Information Pack. In addition the communication of the decision of the panel is critical, and information to parents from both the local authority and schools must be accurate and consistent.

Every EHCP assessed is given a rating based on the four Ofsted scores: outstanding, good, requires improvement, inadequate. The quality of plans is moderated in quadrants, and then by a county-wide panel. This should ensure consistency and brings in different approaches and perspectives on the content of the plan. Different children's services, such as social care, may have a different perspective, and there is huge inconsistency in the approach of health professionals. It was agreed that there needs to be agreement on what goes into a plan, and that should be conveyed as a matter of urgency to all contributors.

The information may also be compromised or difficult to access if a child is in hospital out of county; the LA doesn't have the contacts in all cases to ensure that it can receive quality information.

The moderation process should offer assurance that no plan which is judged to be RI or inadequate will be published; this might, however, delay the process.

Ordinarily Available framework

Helen Wall gave an update on the development and rollout of the Ordinarily Available framework.

50 schools attended training in the week commencing 24 January, and last week the LA asked for early adopters to express an interest. 25 schools so far have responded, and 20 of those have agreed to become early adopters.

HW explained that the Ordinarily Available framework is set out as 3 layers:

1st layer: Universal – that is what is usually available in the school setting

2nd layer: Additional to

3rd layer: Different from

The OA framework is being developed simultaneously with Health and Social Care colleagues.

When using the framework, schools are asked to choose their starting point, which may be one of two focuses: the whole school ethos, or the inclusive teaching framework.

The framework is being introduced between now and Easter; resources for young people (including training) and activities for parents are being developed for the summer term.

In June there will be an evaluation of the early adopters to agree the standards and content, and the aim is to make the framework available to all schools, early years settings and colleges in September.

HW noted that a number of SENCOs who attended the training said that they are enthusiastic to use the OA framework, but that they need (and don't always have) the backing of their headteacher. She asked what conversations would be needed with headteachers to reach universal engagement with the ordinarily available offer.

Vic Goddard shared an ongoing concern, noting that a problem that his school is constantly running into, is the application of how different schools interpret and apply "reasonable

adjustment". He asked if there was any way that the term "reasonable adjustment" can be explained to schools and admission appeals panels. He noted that he is constantly sitting in appeals where the school that a young person is coming from is unwilling to make what he would consider a reasonable adjustment. Panels are then admitting students with the expectation (and knowledge) that his own schools will accommodate the young person. This is an issue that is creating uncertainty for families and increased workload for his school. He stated that he was not sure how enforceable this was by the Local Authority, but argued that more clarity around what is, and isn't a reasonable adjustment, would put some pressure on schools that are failing to accommodate pupils with special educational needs.

RH noted that the OA framework will offer an Essex view of what should be offered by all mainstream schools, and can be expected by parents.

Andy Hodgkinson reminded the group that, as well as the Inclusion Statement and the document about the benefits of inclusion, produced by the Roundtable in the last couple of years, they had worked on a statement about the expectations of inclusive practice. He acknowledged that this might be controversial, but perhaps the time had come to raise the expectations across all schools. MS noted that it can be difficult for individual headteachers to challenge their colleagues, and she argued that there is a place for the LA to offer challenge to schools who are not being inclusive.

RH noted that an exercise is underway, mapping the SEN population linking their address and which schools they attend, so that there is an accurate understanding of the dispersal of pupils with SEN, and whether all schools are accommodating a fair share of those with additional needs.

CK noted that the Local Authority has held off from putting pressure on schools because of Covid, but suggested that it may be time to increase expectations. She suggested running another inclusion conference in order to share the new resources and to ratchet up the expectations on all schools.

Philippa Holliday noted that Margaret Mulholland, who was to have been the speaker at the previous event, is very keen to work with Essex schools, and would be happy to present at a future conference.

The Roundtable discussed the need to attract all schools, not just those who are demonstrably inclusive in their practice. It was suggested that the conference could be recorded to ensure that the messages reach all schools.

PH suggested including the Disadvantaged Champions, to ensure that other vulnerable groups of pupils are taken into account. This will be considered.

Joint Commissioning

RH gave an update on the progress on joint commissioning, which encompasses a number of strands. There has been work in the diagnostic pathways for autism and ASD, and the Essex Family Forum has published a document, Supporting Your Neurodiverse Child.

<https://essexfamilyforum.org/parent-surveys-and-feedback/resources-for-families/>

It was agreed that it would be helpful to reissue this document.

The work on the therapies workstream is in progress; there is continued inconsistency across the county.

SENDIASS is currently centrally run. Funding is being given to support other external advocates who could add value to the system.

The Local Offer is being re-developed. A tender is out to build a new platform, and the expectation is that a new Local Offer will be in place in September.

Finally, RH noted that the re-inspection is now overdue (it was expected in October), and Essex is likely to be the next in the Eastern Region to be inspected. He warned that the LA won't be given an entirely clean bill of health:

- there has been good progress on the over-identification of MLD;
- lots of work has been done to improve EHCPs but the LA will need to be able to demonstrate that this has had a positive impact for families;
- the joint commissioning workstream is challenging to demonstrate impact.

The SEND landscape in Essex is very different from 2019, and is more joined up and organised. The foundation is in place to offer a more sustainable and long term model for parents and their children.

3. SEND STRATEGY

HW noted that she has presented to the Scrutiny Committee in December, explain the expanded SEND Strategy. She noted that three schools/MATs had worked with ECC on the development: Janet Duke Primary, Berlesduna MAT and Passmores. A document setting out the rationale for a new SEND Strategy, the challenges, the strengths in the authority, what the strategy must achieve, the potential barriers to implementation, the vision, the delivery, the strands and commitments, and Ofsted evidence, was circulated to the group in advance of the meeting.

She explained that since they last presented to scrutiny the team has:

- Engaged further with education, health and care colleagues including schools and settings through virtual workshops
- Engaged further with the Essex Family Forum
- Used all the above intelligence to create a full five-year SEND strategy which incorporates the feedback from scrutiny:
 - Alignment with Ofsted/CQC inspection outcomes
 - More detail on the rationale for a new SEND strategy
 - Actively promoting partnership working

The aim is that the Essex SEND strategy will drive forward and embed the changes made to date across the Local Area and help to focus all services in education, health and social care on driving forward the required changes so that children, young people and their parents experience the difference.

The delivery plan that accompanies the strategy will set out the specific projects and contributions of all partners and the measures that we will use to evaluate the impact across the Local Area and hold ourselves to account.

Alignment with the Essex SEND Sufficiency Strategy is key. The sufficiency strategy sets out the provision, resources and skills required to meet the demand in Essex.

The vision for the SEND system is based on the fundamental rights of all children and young people as defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

All children have the same rights.

The rights for children set out in the United Nations Convention have been agreed by almost every country in the world.

Our vision is that every child and young person:

-  is safe
-  has the best possible health and wellbeing
-  develops their personality, talents and abilities to the full
-  is connected to, and plays an active part in their local community
-  is able to live a full and meaningful life with independence and dignity

Our vision applies to all children:

-  whatever their age
-  whatever their circumstances
-  whatever their unique characteristics
-  and without discrimination

The Strategy addresses the inspection findings in the following ways:

The inspection found variation in services across the local area, which we will address through the **Equity** thread.

“Procedures vary across the local area, which delays the identification of children’s needs.”

“Children and young people have not benefited from equitable access to services to meet their needs”.

“some children and young people get access to assessments and support and others do not.”

The inspection found that the pace and impact of change had not been sufficient, which we will address through the **Ambition** thread.

“The ambition to systematically promote good practice is high, but at an early stage across most services. “

“Weak use of measurable and clearly understood outcomes hampers the development of services ... across the local area.”

The inspection found that not enough was being done to secure high quality outcomes for children and young people, which we will address through the **Inclusion** thread.

“reasonable adjustments are not made to help [children] to attend each day and to do well.”

HW asked the Roundtable members for comments and views on the SEN Strategy document by the end of February.

RoundTable
members

4. INCLUSION FRAMEWORK

Catherine Hutley gave an update on the progress of the Inclusion Framework and pilot projects. She noted that they are seeing successes and challenges, as a result of the pilots.

An external company is evaluating the Framework through:

A research and literature review – this is almost concluded.

The review is being finalised, the outcomes have been fed back verbally. The review supports a shift to earlier and timely intervention.

An online survey to all schools is planned, building a picture of what school leaders feel that early intervention looks like across the system.

The Inclusion Framework pilots are also being evaluated and will feed into a final report available in a month. This will be shared with the Inclusion Headteacher Roundtable group, and next steps decided.

5. FORWARD PLANNING

Two members have asked for issues to be considered at the next meeting:

- Andrew Smith will liaise with Philomena Cozens;
- Ralph Holloway will follow up with Kierran Pierce re multi-schools engagement.

AS
RH

6. MEETING DATES FOR 2021/2022

The following dates have been set – meetings to start at 9.00 am :

Tuesday 29th March

Tuesday 17th May

Tuesday 5th July