

ESSEX HEADTEACHER INCLUSION ROUND TABLE**WEDNESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2020****2.00 pm – 3.30 pm****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
Helen Wall	SEND Strategy Lead: Participation and Inclusion
Vanessa Hockley	SEND Innovation

Primary

Andrew Smith	CEO/Headteacher Lyons Hall
Matt O'Grady (MO'G)	Headteacher, West Horndon Primary
Deborah Bailey	Headteacher, John Bunyan Primary
Alison Cole	Headteacher, St Peter's CE Primary, Coggeshall
Harriet Phelps-Knights	EPHA Chair/Headteacher Janet Duke Primary (South)
David Rogers	Headteacher, Bentfield Primary and Enhanced Provision (West)
Marie Staley	Headteacher, Moulsham Juniors
Sean Tobin	CEO Berlesduna MAT
Mike Wood	Headteacher, Elm Hall Primary
Pam Langmead (PL)	EPHA Professional Officer

Secondary

Mark Farmer (MF)	Bridge Academy Trust	
Vic Goddard	Passmores Academy	
Rob James	Ramsey Academy	
Jo Santinelli	St Benedict's Catholic College Simon Thompson	ASHE
Executive Director		

Special

Liz Cornish	Glenwood School
Jennifer Grotier	Headteacher, Shorefields School
Ruth Sturdy	CEO SEAX
Dan Woodham	Headteacher, Edith Borthwick School

Governors

Ruth Bird	ESGA
John Hunter	ESGA
Rod Lane	ESGA

Additional members

Andy Hodgkinson
Helen Dudley-Smith

1. INTRODUCTION

Andrew Smith (Chair) welcomed colleagues to the meeting and noted that the last meeting had been held in February 2020, before the coronavirus pandemic impacted on schools and the wider community. He reminded the group that the key issues discussed at that meeting had included:

- The developing paper: “Why be inclusive?”
- Feedback from the SEND review of the Local Authority (Autumn 2019) and the development of a new SEND strategy;
- Draft of a “SEND dos and don’ts” paper.

These issues were discussed during the meeting.

2. INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS/WHY BE INCLUSIVE

Andrew noted that this document had been sent out to schools during the summer term and he had received positive feedback. It was agreed that the paper should be resent, but as part of the launch of the wider SEND strategy. The School Effectiveness Partners are attending training on 14th December and the various SEND documents will be emphasised to ensure that they are understood and shared with schools.

3. SEND ASSESSMENT TOOL

Helen Wall noted that the self-assessment tool was started by Ruth Sturdy at the beginning of 2019. This focused on 5 areas of practice, and schools are asked to work through the sections. A number of school groups have already piloted the tool; HPK’s teamed up with two other schools and it was agreed that it would be helpful for the group to see the resulting report, as well as reviewing the tool. It was agreed that, given the current focus on managing the Covid pandemic, the tool should not be relaunched at this point.

4. INCLUSION ACTIVITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEND STRATEGY

Helen Wall, SEND Strategy Lead, gave an update and presentation on the activity since the LA SEND review in October 2019. CK reminded the group that, in addition to the discussion and work of the Inclusion Headteacher round table, numerous other projects are underway, including an inclusion framework, the redesign of the SEND teams, capturing the impact of the new way of working with schools. There is a need to communicate the sum of the whole, underpinning to commitment to reforming the culture around SEND following the review in Essex.

The starting point has been the development of a GANNT chart –to capture all projects, initiatives and developments and be able to plan together in a coherent way. This prompted discussion and the need to develop ways of working internally

ECC activity:

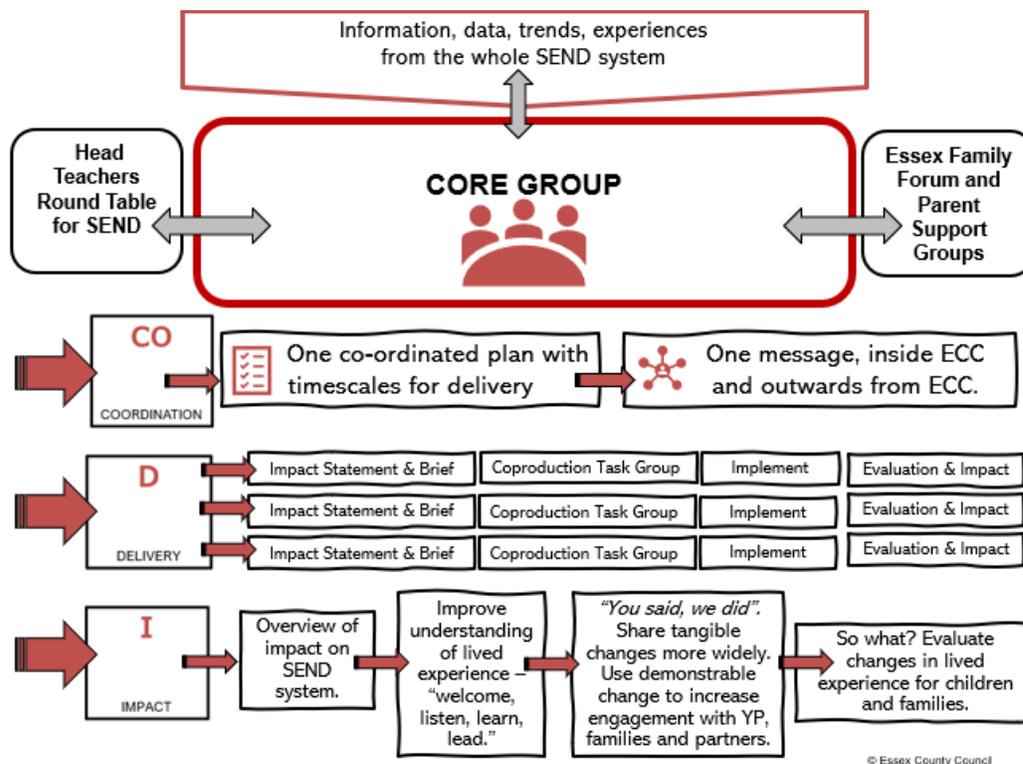
ECC SEND Core Group –Coordination, Delivery, Impact *

Aim -Coproduction at decision making stages with Heads, Leaders, parents and young people

Progress to date:

- SEND Core Group –January launch
- GANNT chart in progress

- Gathering from wider workforce completed 15.12
- TEAMS platform for sharing, comments and suggestions



A consultation on the draft Inclusion Strategy took place at the end of 2019. There was little disagreement with the overarching vision, but the main barrier was the use of language, particularly what was understood by a School-led SEND system.

The key themes of the strategy include:

Inclusive schools and communities

- All communities offer the same: a sense of belonging and a positive experience of learning.
- Every community is able to meet the needs of their local children and young people, so that everyone can be supported close to their home, family and friends.

Children and young people get the right support at the right time, which makes a difference and helps them make progress to where they want to be.

Actively involved and included

- Children, young people and their families are actively involved and included. Their views, wishes and feelings are acted upon and children and young people are included in decisions about their lives.
- We welcome, listen and learn from lived experience of everyone in the and co-production is a key principle in the way we work.

A range of stakeholders were consulted. One parent comment was important to note:

“I feel that these statements will not really make sense to many people. They seem more like soundbites than solid, concrete changes. What does this really MEAN for children and young people and their families?

What we NEED is to be believed, respected, listened to, understood, empathised with and supported. We need honest, caring people to treat the children and young people as they would like their own children to be treated. We would like to be taken seriously. We would like to not have to wait until our children reach crisis and/or our child is in danger before somebody acts. I accept that this is not an easy task, but for pity's sake, please stop using glib phrases and give us some HOPE that things will change for the better! This might be a job for you, but this is our lives!”

WAYS OF WORKING

How do we begin conversations with you about priorities and projects?

How do we involve Head teachers and school leaders from across Essex in coproduction task groups?

SEND (Inclusion) STRATEGY

How do we engage with you in a way that works for you?

How do we engage with your young people?

The group agreed that engagement with headteachers and school staff was important but that the timing was critical – it was argued that engagement this term will be lost as school leaders are focused on managing the impact and implications of the pandemic.

One headteacher did argue that some heads might welcome the consideration of an issue that was not Covid-related.

RH stressed that the LA currently has a vision in relation to SEND but not a written strategy, and this is essential, not least as a framework for any follow up inspection. He stressed that the strategy must be a meaningful co-production. CK suggested using the spring term to engage and consult with headteachers, using existing meeting opportunities (including ASHE and EPHA meetings) as well as bespoke workshops. It was suggested that the School Partnerships could be asked to consider the strategy and activity, to feed back to the LA and the Roundtable.

MF suggested holding a workshop, or developing a paper, to share good practice during the pandemic: how has Covid shaped inclusion? This has been a challenge for many schools, and it would be helpful to share how schools have supported children with special educational needs. CK agreed, noting that this would build on the “best endeavours” work already undertaken.

HPK asked what information needs to be gathered from pupils and how this might be done. RH noted that the LA consults with the Multi-Schools Council and through workshops with other young people, but it was agreed that it would be helpful to engage with primary and secondary school pupils, for example through surveys. The headteachers on the group were very willing to engage with this.

6. UPDATE ON THE RESPONSE TO THE ESSEX SEND REVIEW

Ralph Holloway shared a presentation reminding the group of the outcomes of the SEND review and the activity since.

Three main areas of significant weakness:

- Over-identification of MLD;
- Joint commissioning;
- Quality of EHCPs.

Over-identification of MLD

- *The reasons for, and accuracy of, the high proportions of children and young people identified with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) are yet to be resolved.*
- *Potential over-identification could mask underlying difficulties in communication and language, and social, emotional and mental health development.*

Progress and next steps

- Data gathered down to school level showing identification of need at SEN support and EHCP and compared to national average; particular focus on over identification of MLD and under identification of SLCN or SEMH
- Training delivered on identification of need to all Inclusion Partners and Educational Psychologists;
- Quadrant discussions and data analysis which subsequently are informing this term's strategic planning meetings (SPM) with schools;
- Outcomes of the SPMs will be shared and discussed and quadrant and county level to inform training needs etc.
- Training will be delivered to schools and settings to improve accurate assessment of need

Challenges

- Delayed impact – we won't see data until the outputs from the 2021 SEN2 return (late Spring 2021);
- A simple data fix may just shift the issue and not address fundamental issues around accurate identification of need;
- A greater awareness and identification of speech and language will have a commissioning implication;
- Parental recognition of impact will be difficult – they may not see identification of MLD as a problem and some may not be aware of the 'label' at all.

Joint commissioning

- *The joint commissioning arrangements between the local authority and the CCGs do not work well enough to provide children and young people with the services that they need.*
- *Too much variation between the CCGs leads to inequality, inconsistency and unacceptably long waiting times for services.*
- *Joint commissioning is not sufficiently informed by what is already known about the gaps in services for health and education across the 0–25 age range, across the whole local area.*

Progress and next steps

- Over-arching joint commissioning group led by NE CCG established;
- All parties and parents well represented;
- Additional capacity from health;
- Individual workstreams:
- SENDIASS and parent carer forum (parental advice, support, participation and voice);
- Equipment;
- Therapies (OT, PT and SALT);
- Assessment pathways (autism and ADHD).
- Local Offer

Challenges

- Timescales are tight and mobilisation is significant across a number of workstreams;
- Impact for children, young people and parents vs the commissioners will be difficult;
- Differences between CCGs are still apparent – therapies in particular;
- CCGs still dependent on ‘clunky’ governance and decision making – not agile enough;
- At some point we will hit the big issues around finance.

Quality of EHCPs

- *The EHC plans do not consistently secure the right professional advice to meet children’s and young people’s needs, and do not have specific details of the provision that will be put in place.*
- *Strategic oversight is not effective in making sure that EHC plans are fit for purpose.*
- *Too many EHC plans do not include the information needed to secure high-quality outcomes for children and young people.*

Progress and next steps

- Isos commissioned to lead comprehensive review of Essex’s arrangements for SEN assessment and planning;
- Multi-agency core group across Education, C+F and health;
- Focus on decision making for assessment and issuing of plans; Health and social care services’ role in decisions around assessments, plans, reviews; Moderation and quality-assurance of plans, planning, outcomes; annual reviews and ceasing plans.
- Wider group bringing in schools and settings and parents for testing progress;
- Parallel co-production group with Essex Family Forum focussed on thresholds for assessment, quality of offer for SEN support and communication with parents

Challenges

- Implementation of the recommendations;
- Ensuring consistency across four quadrants;
- Ownership of the solutions rather than depending upon Isos;
- Time to demonstrate impact and shift culture – internally (our teams) and externally (parents and schools).

Other issues to address

- Contribution of Social Care leaders and professionals to delivery and evaluation of the improvements;
- Role of education settings and schools in the improvement journey;
- Need to demonstrate effective leadership across the local area;
- Ensuring that we capture parental and pupil voice effectively – working beyond the Essex Family Forum;
- Governance arrangements;
- The Local Offer – how do we ensure that parents are informed effectively? Role of SEND Navigation.

Ofsted interim area SEND visits

- Understand impact of pandemic on SEND system and for children, young people and families;
- What has worked well and what have been the challenges;
- Identify opportunities for improvement;
- Highlight positive case studies and impact.
- For Essex: a chance to see what progress we have made against the WSOA.

RH explained that the usual timeline from the Written Statement of Action to a follow up review is 18 months. This has slipped due to the pandemic, so the follow up inspection is likely to take place in 2+ years. An interim visit could be helpful to see what progress is being made.

MO'G discussed the need for successful identification and integration to ensure that children/young people have the right intervention/placement. He noted that some enhanced provisions are not full, but in some cases the pupils in the provisions have not been correctly placed. ENPro continues to discuss outreach and this must be part of a successful inclusion strategy.

He also argued that much of the successful work with children – for example where children in specialist provision have improved and are able to return to mainstream schools – is not recognised and celebrated.

RH noted that an advantage of a follow up inspection is that it solely focuses on the three areas of serious weakness, and positive examples, anecdotes and feedback will be essential. The LA is carrying out a review of the enhanced provisions in the spring term.

7. **DISADVANTAGED STRATEGY**

The strategy, led by Philippa Holliday and Carole Farrer, aims

- To improve confidence in schools to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils.
- To deliver high quality support and challenge for schools and settings in removing barriers to achievement at a strategic level.
- To accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils (including pupils eligible for PPG), improve readiness to learn, develop personal and cultural capital and develop self-efficacy.

Philippa noted that a book is being published and launched in January, including a focus on inclusion, mental health etc.

8. COVID AND SEND

It was agreed that there have been many challenges during the pandemic, but also some positive outcomes, even for the most vulnerable. Essex attendance figures for children/young people with EHCPs has been higher than national, and it is important to understand why that is and to capture the good practice in schools. Reference was made to a report – Life on hold, Children’s wellbeing and Covid. <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/blog/life-on-hold-childrens-wellbeing-in-lockdown/>

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

tba