

EssexWorks.

For a better quality of life

Quality Matters *in Essex*

welcome to your Learning Communities



Essex County Council



What is a Learning Community?

A Learning Community is a group of Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) practitioners from local pre-schools, day nurseries, schools' reception and nursery classes, and childminders, who meet regularly to share ideas and good practice.

What is the rationale for Learning Communities?

Learning Communities will be organised to help bring together the many partners, programmes, resources and initiatives that currently exist locally and nationally. They are a key tool in supporting continuous quality improvement in early years and childcare provision across Essex.

This process is supported by the Essex Quality Matters toolkit which provides a range of information to support quality monitoring and continual improvement.

Learning Communities will ensure that there is a streamlining of resources and alignment of messages targeted to local need and ensure that there is effective working among all those with responsibility for the care, learning and development of children within the EYFS.



What is the purpose of a Learning Community?

It is:

- To ensure children in Essex access high quality early years provision and have rich early learning experiences.
- To enable practitioners working across the EYFS to work together to support the children and families in their locality.



- To provide Local Authority support and professional development opportunities for EYFS practitioners.
- To incorporate research and other materials into this working model to raise the quality of care, learning and teaching for children in the EYFS and as they transfer into Key Stage 1. For

example, the Communication, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme, Every Child a Talker (ECaT), and Speaking and Listening.

- To provide opportunities for making sustained improvements in children's outcomes by raising the number of five year olds achieving a good level of development and narrowing the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest.

How will they be organised?

A number of Learning Communities will be established in each locality across Essex. They will be based around the original EYFS clusters but will also be merged with the CLLD hubs and clusters to offer a particular focus on promoting early language skills.

The focus on early language development (CLLD) links directly with the Local Authority drive towards improved oracy for young children so that more children are able to achieve at least six points in CLLD and Personal, Social and Emotional (PSE) development and across the EYFS curriculum (National Indicator 72).

Essex is currently organised into four quadrants: North East, South, Mid and West. Within each of these quadrants there are between 200 -250 settings and schools supporting the delivery of the EYFS.

There will be approximately 12 Learning Communities per quadrant. Each of these Learning Communities will be led by an Early Years Foundation Stage Adviser (EYFSA) and wherever possible assisted by an Early Years Pedagogue.





One meeting per term will be led by the EYFSA with an emphasis on embedding good communication, language and literacy for our youngest children within rich EYFS provision. We would strongly encourage that at least one member of your setting/school attends this meeting.

The schools and settings in your Learning Community may then choose to arrange another meeting during this term for which the group can identify an appropriate focus and either lead this meeting themselves or be assisted by their Early Years Pedagogue (where one is in place).

How can I get involved?

If you are working as a practitioner or teacher in the EYFS then you are eligible to join. Membership is free and will be based on existing Early Years Cluster Groups.

You will be informed of your Learning Community by your EYFSA. If you feel that you have been allocated to the wrong Learning Community, please do not hesitate to contact your EYFSA.

Early Years Pedagogues will be recruited to support the Learning Communities in their working structure.

These will be practitioners with Qualified Teacher Status who will assist the EYFSA's in their work to facilitate

meetings and to promote reflective thinking and sharing of best practice and ideas.

If you are interested in becoming an **Early Years Pedagogue** please contact us on **01245 438500**.

What's in it for me?

The benefits of joining and getting involved in a Learning Community:



- They are free.
 - More than one person from a setting can attend.
 - Meetings are informal and supportive.
 - It is a great way to celebrate and share good practice.
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- You have access to your Early Years Foundation Stage Adviser (EYFSA).
 - Meetings offer access to regular professional development. This is free and would include exploring ECaT and CLLD resources to support young children's learning and development.

- They are a valuable opportunity for high quality networking with other EYFS practitioners/teachers to up skill confidence, knowledge and share worries or concerns.
- You have time to reflect on local and national initiatives and the impact they may have on provision for young children.
- They raise awareness of local issues and identify opportunities to remove barriers to young children's learning.
- Most importantly they are full of high quality professional dialogue and fun!

There may also be opportunities, where funding allows, for Learning Communities to group together to buy in speakers to reflect and respond to local need.



How will I know what is happening and when?

Quality and effectiveness of communication will be key to the success of the Learning Communities. Your EYFSA will assist the group in the identification of venues, dates and times of the meetings. Initially you will receive information about meeting times and dates via post or email.

Increasingly it will be made available on the Essex Grid for Learning (www.e-gfl.org), Early Years Forum, Essex Primary Heads Association (EPHA) and other relevant information streams.

Who shall I contact if I need further information?

If you have the contact details of your local EYFSA please feel free to get in touch with them directly. If not please telephone **Early Years and Childcare** on **01245 438500** for the relevant information.

Details of Early Years and Childcare staff and partners are also published each term on the back two pages of the Early Years and Childcare newsletter.



This booklet is issued by

Essex County Council Early Years and Childcare.

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