

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6 OCTOBER 2026

REPORT OF DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

A.1 Reference to Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Meeting of Councillor Doyle's Motion to Council calling on Essex County Council and relevant academies to undertake Oliver McGowan mandatory training on learning disability and autism by all schools

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

At its meeting on 1 September 2026, a motion submitted by Councillor Doyle to Full Council concerning learning disability and autism training for teaching staff in Tendring schools was presented. Full Council agreed to refer the matter to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration. The Committee is asked to consider the information set out in this report and the suggested recommendations, in order for a final position to be submitted back to the meeting of Full Council on 24 November 2026 for it then to determine the motion having received the recommendation from this Committee.

SCOPE - THE AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

To provide the Committee with relevant background information to inform its consideration of the referred motion and to enable the Committee to consider recommendations it may wish to make to a future meeting of Full Council in respect of the referred motion.

INVITEES

The following ECC officers will attend the committee meeting:

Stephen Chynoweth, Head of Early Years (North)

Ondrea.Bloom, SEND Strategy Lead – Autism

BACKGROUND

The following motion was considered by Full Council at the meeting on 1 September 2026 in respect of Learning Disability and Autism training in schools.

"That Tendring District Council:–

- (1) Believes that too many children with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) are still misunderstood or unsupported at school, and too many families must fight to get the right help;*
- (2) Reiterates that this is not a criticism of school staff but about making sure they have the training and confidence to support every child properly;*
- (3) Notes that Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training is the Government's preferred and recommended training for learning disability and autism in health and social care, as set out in the most recent Code of Practice published in September 2025 and which is*

nationally recognised and co-produced with people with lived experience;

- (4) Believes in inclusive education, and that understanding should not be optional or dependent on which school a child attends and that every child deserves to be understood, to feel safe at school, and to have the chance to achieve their full potential;*
- (5) Feels strongly that mandatory training for school staff would bring consistency, earlier understanding, better communication with families, and better outcomes for children across Tendring and that better informed staff can reduce anxiety, improve attendance and create a stronger learning environment for everyone;*
- (6) Therefore, calls on Essex County Council and relevant Academies to direct that the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism for all staff across schools in the district of Tendring be implemented urgently as a simple matter of fairness, inclusion and responsibility."*

Following the motion being moved and seconded at Full Council, there was an alteration requested by Councillor Doyle to include the following additional text:

"That my Motion as set out below in full, calling on Essex County Council to direct that the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism for all staff across schools in the District of Tendring, be referred to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further information on the type of training mentioned and the implications of 'inclusive education' being researched, with evidence in support, and then submitted back to Full Council prior to making its informed decision on the subject matter."

Following a vote, the altered motion was carried and the matter was referred to the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee for further consideration, including the implications of the proposed course of action, before the matter and any recommendations are reported back to Full Council on 24 November 2026.

In order to support identification of the issues raised in relation to Oliver McGowan training, Officers have referred to Government guidance and the Essex County Council education team for further information and guidance in completing this report.

The Committee is reminded that Council Procedure Rules 12.8 and 12.10 of the Council's Constitution sets out the arrangements for referred motions and the rights of the mover of the motion. Those Rules states:

12.8

*[The Committee] "...shall be required solely to consider such motion and to advise the Council (by no later than the second Ordinary Meeting of the Council held following the date of Council's referral) of their opinion as to **whether such motion should be supported or not supported**. That body will not be required to propose an alternative motion or an amended motion.*

and

"Once the Cabinet/Committee has considered the Motion it will be sent back to Council with that body's response.

12.10

"...the Mover of the Motion (or another Member nominated by them) will be, as a matter of courtesy, made aware by the Democratic Services Manager of the date of the Cabinet/Committee meeting at which their Motion will be considered so that they can

attend if they so wish.

As the purpose of the motion will have already been explained at the full Council meeting the Mover of the Motion (or another Member nominated by them) will not have any automatic right to speak at that meeting though they will be permitted to answer questions and/or provide clarification, if requested to do so by the Chairman of the meeting. The Member will also have a right of reply (of no more than three minutes duration) to respond to the debate at the meeting on their motion."

Councillor Doyle, as the mover of the Motion has been advised on the date and arrangements for this meeting. All other Members of the Council have likewise been advised on the arrangements and that, should they wish to speak in the debate, the Committee's Chairman permission must be sought and given prior to their contribution to the meeting being permitted.

RELEVANT CORPORATE PLAN THEME/ANNUAL CABINET PRIORITY

Working with Partners to improve quality of life

Improved understanding of SEND among Tendring teaching staff could support earlier recognition of individual needs and help children and young people to participate more fully in school and community life. By working alongside education, health, voluntary and community partners, the Council can help promote a more inclusive district in which residents with additional needs and their families are better able to access opportunities, facilities and support

Raising aspirations and creating opportunities

Greater SEND awareness within schools can help children and young people to have their strengths recognised, build confidence and access opportunities appropriate to their needs and ambitions. In the longer term, this can contribute to improved life chances and support the Council's wider ambitions around skills, employment, participation in leisure and culture, and ensuring that opportunities within the district are accessible to all.

Pride in our area and services to residents

Promoting greater understanding and inclusion of people with SEND can contribute to a district where residents feel valued, welcomed and able to participate in their communities. It also complements the Council's commitment to providing inclusive and accessible services, helping to foster pride in an area that recognises and responds positively to the differing needs of its residents.

DESIRED OUTCOME OF THE CONSIDERATION OF THIS ITEM

For the committee to agree recommendations and refer back to Full Council for a final decision.

This is therefore in accordance with Article 13 in Part 2 of the Constitution which refers to the principles of decision making and 13.02 (b) requires consideration of all the relevant factors and options and (e) refers to clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

DETAILED INFORMATION

Background

Tendring has 6 secondary, 39 primary and 6 special/other schools across the district with a school population of 19,400 (school census 2024/25).

Tendring Education Strategic Board

Established in 2020, the Tendring Education Strategic Board aims to work in partnership to raise the aspirations, attainment and skills levels of children and young people (CYP) across the district. The Board supports work as a system to ensure that “children get the best start in life,” as well as contributing positively to tackling the wider determinants of health.

The purpose of the TESB is to:

- Raise educational outcomes for the children and young people of Tendring
- Positively impact on the wider society of Tendring through improvement of education
- Influence other programmes to specifically support CYP and their families
- Connect with other organisations to target funding and initiatives towards Tendring e.g. lottery funding, commissioned contracts
- Identifying and delivering collective solutions which increase the consistency of best practice and offer for CYP in Tendring

In 2026, the structure of the TESB was reviewed and whilst the aims of the Board remain the same, two new groups were established in line with feedback from Tendring schools; the Tendring Education Leaders Group (TELG) and the Tendring Strategic Partners Group (TSPG). For the past academic year 2025/26, and this coming year 2026/27 the Board agreed its one priority would be pupil attendance.

The aims of the Board and its current priority support Tendring District Council's corporate priorities and contribute to its role of Community Leader.

The work of the two Tendring Education groups supports a number of strategic priorities at district and County level which include:-

- TDC's Corporate Plan 2024 – 2028
- TDC's Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2025 – 2028
- ECC Children and Young People Plan, 2020
- ECC's Joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2022 – 2026
- ECC Inclusion Strategy, 2023
- ECC Local Area SEND Strategy, 2022 - 2027

In this context Tendring District Council continues to support work with Tendring schools, Essex County Council and related partners to improve the quality of life, aspirations and opportunities for Tendring children and young people.

Essex County Council (ECC) fully shares the ambition that every child and young person, regardless of need, should feel understood, valued, safe and supported to achieve their potential in school. ECC recognises that for some children with SEND, and particularly for some children with learning disabilities and autism, this ambition is not always consistently realised. ECC also acknowledges the experiences of families who have felt that they have needed to work hard to secure the support their child requires.

Indeed, the ECC's Inclusion vision and strategy states:

“We aim to build a fully inclusive education system that champions ambition, equity

and inclusion for all learners, embeds the principle of 'Lives Without Labels', promotes early intervention and proactive support to reduce barriers to learning, and values the voice and lived experience of children, young people and their families."

This commitment sits at the heart of ECC's approach to inclusion in Essex. It reflects the belief that all children should experience a sense of belonging, participate fully in school life, and receive the support they need to thrive and succeed.

In considering this motion, it is important to recognise that the vast majority of teachers, leaders and support staff across Tendring schools are deeply committed to supporting children with SEND and work tirelessly on their behalf. The challenges that schools face in meeting increasingly complex needs should not be interpreted as a lack of care or commitment, but rather as evidence of the need to continue strengthening capability, capacity and inclusion across the education system.

What is the Oliver McGowan Training?

The Oliver McGowan training was developed following the death of Oliver McGowan in a health care setting which highlighted that health and social care staff needed better skills, knowledge and understanding of the needs for autistic people and those with a learning disability.

[The Oliver McGowan code of practice on statutory learning disability and autism training - GOV.UK](#) identifies that the health disparities and premature mortality experienced by people with a learning disability and autistic people can be reduced when staff are equipped with the right skills and knowledge to care for them.

The Code highlights that the requirement for training aims to ensure that staff working at all levels across the diverse settings that make up health and social care receive high quality and appropriate training on learning disability and autism.

Although concepts identified in the training, for example learning from those with lived experience, will expand professionals knowledge it is very much focussed on the health and social care setting and may not be fully relevant to education.

Essex County Council Education Workforce Training

ECC Education Directorate have a comprehensive offer of workforce training to schools designed from evidence based practise and specific to education settings.

It recognises the contribution that high-quality professional development can make in improving staff confidence, understanding and practice.

It is important to note that the responsibility for workforce training sits primarily with individual schools, governing bodies and multi academy trusts. Whilst Essex County Council can promote, encourage and facilitate access to high-quality training opportunities, it does not have the authority to direct academy trusts to adopt a particular programme of professional development.

Essex County Council cannot unilaterally mandate SEND training for academies. The legal position is that academies are independent state-funded schools governed by their academy trust and funded directly by the Secretary of State under the Academies Act 2010. Local authorities retain important statutory duties around SEND, but they do not have powers to require academies to undertake specific training programmes.

For this reason, whilst ECC support the principle that all school staff should have access to effective training that strengthens understanding of autism, learning disabilities and SEND, decisions regarding the adoption of specific training programmes are made locally by schools and academy trusts, informed by the needs of their pupils and within the broader framework of ECC's Inclusion Strategy.

General and specialised training provisions exist across the education sector via national programs, professional qualifications and schools based frameworks.

Types of training at a national level include Universal SEND Services providing training and resources for schools and college workforces, the Neuroinclusive Education Network (NEN) (formerly the Autism Education Trust) offering autism training for good practice and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) qualifications including mandatory qualifications for SENCO's.

For all education settings, ECC provides a comprehensive directory of autism support, assessment pathways, training, resources and specialist services for schools, families and young people.

Evidence-based training provided includes:

- o Autism outreach support for schools: Information on how mainstream schools can access specialist autism outreach support.
- o Autism Support Centre: Guidance for parents and carers on applying for enhanced autism provision for children and young people.
- o Advice and guidance: General information about autism, including local and national guidance.
- o Assessment, diagnosis and planning: Support and information relating to autism assessments, diagnoses, EHCPs, IPRA's and One Planning.
- o Resources: A collection of useful autism resources and practical guides.
- o Terminology: Explanations of commonly used autism-related terms and jargon.
- o Training and courses: Autism training opportunities for education professionals, parents, carers and young people.
- o Contacts and support services: Details of services providing advice, referrals and support for autistic children and young people.
- o Support for parents and carers: Signposting to advice, guidance, online resources and organisations.
- o Sensory spaces: Information about the location of best-practice sensory spaces across Essex.

For further information; ECC's Schools Infolink:

[Autism | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

[Autism outreach support for schools | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

[Book autism courses and training: Essex training | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

In terms of the Motion, and in line with their approach identified above, ECC have indicated that they are in agreement with those points set out in the recommendations to this report in respect of a) the prevalence in terms of SEND, autism and learning disability, b) the importance of training and c) supporting the uptake of training and in addition d) supporting local working to improve experiences and opportunities for all children across the district.

Inclusive Education

Effective, and sustainable, inclusive education is fundamentally about culture, relationships, leadership and practice across the whole school, rather than being delivered by any single training programme alone.

Essex County Council have a comprehensive Inclusion Strategy [The Inclusion Strategy | Essex Schools Infolink](#) which has been in existence for four years. Agreed priorities for Tendring are supported by the work of the Tendring Strategic Partners Group and the Education Leaders Group.

The Strategy recognises that overall progress and attainment is too low and also identifies the concerns around attendance. In addition social, emotional and mental health needs are rising and pupils needs are increasing and also becoming increasingly complex.

The Strategy highlights the significant rises in requests for SEND support and whilst the challenges of the current context are recognised within the Strategy it also notes how the education system must work better together and in a different way to ensure inclusivity.

Inclusion is a crucial priority for Essex County Council as a key element of their Transformation 2030 work and they are committed to working collaboratively through evidence informed inclusive practices to support the success of pupils.

The Strategy has a vision which includes developing relationships to support inclusion supporting wellbeing and high levels of attendance empowering pupils to participate and achieve to support pupils to move on to the next appropriate step.

"Positive, mutually respectful relationships underpin and support the inclusion of all pupils and their families, and promote equality and diversity."

As part of this ECC are committed to supporting schools to plan, implement and review inclusion strategies that are evidence informed and tailored to cohorts and contexts.

Delivery of the Strategy is via inclusion reviews offered to all schools and academies, an inclusion framework to help profile cohorts and individuals, early intervention and opportunities to seek financial support to develop systematic inclusive practices.

In addition there is support for schools and academies providing training, resources and support and also delivery plans that specifically focus resources on the ECC commitments.

Legal

The Health and Care Act 2022 requires all Care Quality Commission (CQC) registered providers to ensure staff receive training on learning disability and autism appropriate to their role. The requirement applies to all health and care settings.

The Education and Skills Act 2008 requires all schools and academies to be registered with OfSTED. The requirement applies to all educational settings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- a) recognises the significant prevalence of young people with SEND including Learning Disability and Autism in Tendring;
- b) notes the importance of professionals in the education setting to have

- appropriate training for their role in respect of SEND;
- c) supports those responsible for encouraging the uptake of SEND training to help ensure a high level of training amongst staff;
 - d) supports the ongoing commitment to collaborative working across schools, ECC and partners, in relation to the Tendring Education Leaders and Strategic Partners groups in working together to improve the experiences and opportunities for all children and young people across the district;
 - e) authorises this report to be submitted to Full Council at its meeting on 24 November 2026 alongside the Motion from Councillor Doyle and this Committee's response to the Motion (having determined its response in terms of recommendation (f) below); and
 - f) In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 12.8, the Committee determines whether to advise Council that it should support or not support the motion from Councillor Doyle calling on Essex County Council to direct that the Oliver McGowan Mandatory Training on Learning Disability and Autism for all staff across schools in the District of Tendring.

[Note: The full text of Councillor Doyle's motion, referenced in f) immediately above is set out at the beginning of the 'Background' section earlier in this report. While the Committee is not required to propose an alternative motion or an amended motion to that submitted by Councillor Doyle, it is within its powers to so submit such an alternative/amended motion. This is a secondary matter once the decision in f) above has been determined.]

PREVIOUS RELEVANT DECISIONS

None

BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PUBLISHED REFERENCE MATERIAL

[The Oliver McGowan code of practice on statutory learning disability and autism training - GOV.UK](#)

[Autism | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

[Autism outreach support for schools | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

[Book autism courses and training: Essex training | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

[The Inclusion Strategy | Essex Schools Infolink](#)

Academies Act - [Academies Act 2010](#)

APPENDICES

None

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