

East Surrey Shadow Authority - Record of decision taken under delegation by a Member

Decision Title:	Recruitment of expert posts to deliver Expert at Hands offer in Surrey – Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
Wards in East Surrey Impacted:	All wards
Decision taken under delegation by virtue of:	Decision by the Leader of the Council dated 21 August 2026.
Key Decision:	Is decision key: Yes Reasons: Financial impact over £1m

Purpose of Decision

The Department for Education (DfE) requires all local authorities and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Local Area Partnerships to draft and implement SEND Reform Plans. As part of this requirement, the DfE is issuing all local authorities with a grant to implement the 'Experts at Hand' offer, as outlined and required within the SEND Reform Plan.

East Surrey Shadow Executive is asked to urgently agree to the allocation of a portion of this grant to recruit to a range of 'expert' and specialist posts, stipulated to be in line with DfE requirements. Without agreeing to the recruitment of these roles before the beginning of September 2026, on a permanent basis, Surrey County Council (SCC), and latterly, East Surrey Council will be unable to fulfil the requirements of the Experts at Hand (EaH) offer.

This would result in SCC not receiving separate DfE funding to resolve up to 90% of the accumulated Dedicated Schools Grant deficit at 31 March 2026 (as previously communicated by DfE when it closed the Safety Valve programme) (this funding would be received under a separate grant from DfE), meaning that a larger deficit would be inherited by East Surrey Council, and in addition, both East Surrey Shadow Authority being at risk of not receiving the 2027/28 allocation of EaH funding.

Decision taken by:	Councillor Steve Wotton, Leader of East Surrey Shadow Authority, in consultation with the Interim Section 151 Officer
Decision taken on:	21 August 2026
To be implemented on/effective from:	2 September 2026

Decision made

It was AGREED that:

1. Consent is given under Section 24 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to Surrey County Council for the recruitment of the range of expert and support roles aligned to the budget, on a permanent basis, to enable Surrey County Council, and latterly both East and West Surrey Councils to implement the Experts at Hand model across the county.

Reasons for Decision:

1. Recruitment of the roles outlined is necessary in order to fulfil the requirements of the DfE's Experts at Hand guidance, which is mandatory for all Local Authorities and Local Area SEND Partnerships to design and implement. The DfE grant was provided to local authorities on 30 June 2026 and all areas are required to have recruited to roles and have their EaH offer operational from September 2026 for the start of the next academic year.
2. The expert roles required are all grouped in areas that are recognised as being hard to recruit to nationally, due to a shortage of qualified professionals with the required skill sets. This, and the fact that all local areas across the country will be recruiting for these roles at the same time will make the market increasingly competitive. The EaH grant is being provided over a minimum three year period which enables Surrey County Council to recruit to these roles on a permanent basis (any employment over two years entitles these employed on a fixed term contract to employment rights akin to a permanent employee). Permanent recruitment will be more attractive than short fixed-term contracts and will increase success of filling the required posts.
3. This approach will have clear benefits for the residents of East Surrey in that a comprehensive and established EaH offer will be operational on

Vesting Day, and will be available to all East Surrey children and young people with additional needs, and who require specialist support in order to remain in their mainstream education setting and have their needs met there.

Consultation

Adam Chalmers, Interim Head of Paid Service
 Nicola O'Connor, Interim Section 151 Officer
 Daniel Bainbridge, Interim Monitoring Officer
 East Surrey Shadow Authority Executive

Declarations of conflicts of interest

None

Documents considered

Exempt:

Officer report

No

Please note that this decision sheet will be published on the public website. If your decision includes Part 2 (restricted) information, please contact the Interim Monitoring Officer.

Please send completed form to: daniel.bainbridge@eastsurrey.gov.uk