

#### The Client

Essex County Council

#### The Project

Delivery of Educational Personal Budgets to children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

#### The Result

Significant savings, better control and flexibility for families

## THE REQUIREMENT

Like many Local Authorities, Essex County Council provides educational personal budgets to Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in their area. Previously, the process was managed manually via spreadsheets, which was cumbersome - transferring funds to the parents' bank account and then chasing families for receipts for items purchased.

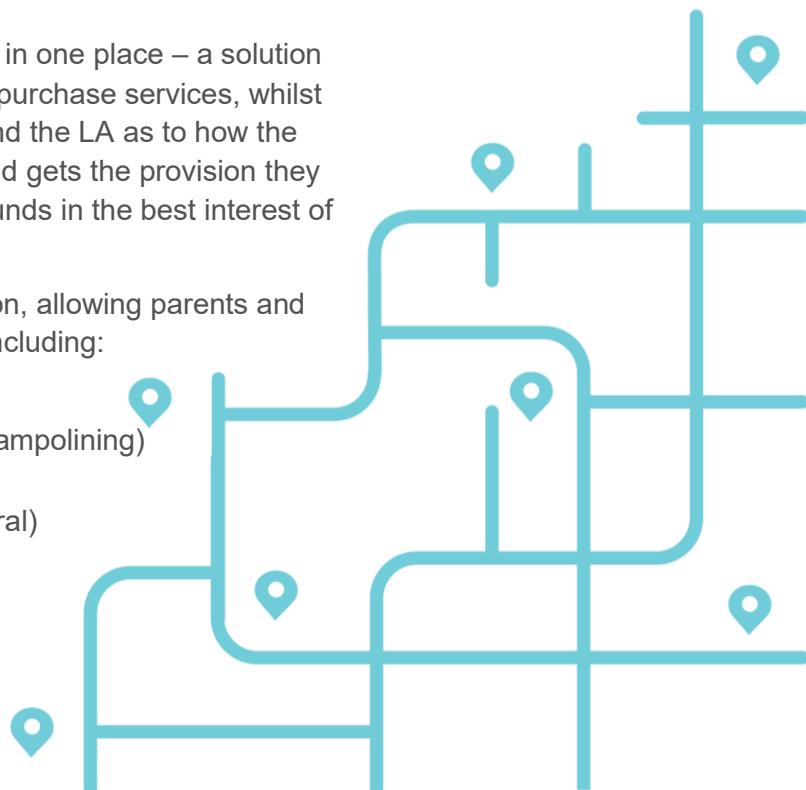
Not only did the team at Essex County Council not have sight of what support was being provided, getting receipts from the parents was hard work and difficult to manage. They were also not always aware if a parent had unspent funds left at the end of the term, so managing clawbacks was problematic.

## THE SOLUTION

Essex CC wanted a solution where everything was in one place – a solution that helped parents quickly and easily choose and purchase services, whilst also providing complete transparency to families and the LA as to how the money was being spent. This would ensure the child gets the provision they need, whilst giving flexibility to parents to use the funds in the best interest of the child.

Essex CC implemented PPL's Virtual Wallet solution, allowing parents and families to choose from a wide range of services, including:

- Tutors (academic, music, art)
- Leisure activities (pony riding, swimming, trampolining)
- Out of term support
- Specialist support (psychologists, behavioural)
- Online training & tuition
- Equipment



## HOW VIRTUAL WALLET WORKS



PPL receives one payment from the LA and allocates each individual's direct payment to their Virtual Wallet. Client contributions and top-ups can be paid directly into the Virtual Wallet or via the Local Authority and they are clearly identified in the system.



Individuals or professionals choose and book services or products through the online eMarketplace, which includes a weekly calendar showing when services and activities are scheduled.



Once the product or service has been delivered, the Virtual Wallet processes payments to the provider automatically. There is no need to retain paper copies of purchase orders and invoices, because everything is recorded in the Virtual Wallet system.

## THE RESULT

Essex County Council saved over £20k during the Autumn term alone, offsetting against funding for the following Summer Term. ECC continues to see ongoing savings by running the scheme using Virtual Wallet, which are ploughed back into subsequent funding for families.

The implementation of Virtual Wallet has been seen as a way of better joining Education with Social Care colleagues, and provides improved co-ordination, control, and transparency for Education teams within Essex.

Most importantly, the solution is welcomed by families using an Education personal budget. Virtual Wallet has provided them with more clarity on their personal budget, less paperwork and considerable flexibility to meet their children's needs.

For more information, contact: [info@publicpartnerships.co.uk](mailto:info@publicpartnerships.co.uk)

**"For me, working with the VW team is almost like having an additional team member, which has been amazing."**

*Kate Martin, Essex County Council*

