

## Equality Impact Assessment

Reference: EQIA358386982

Submitted: 25 August 2021 17:47 PM

### Executive summary

**Title of policy or decision:** Essex Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-2027

**Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):** Strategy Vision-

- There are sufficient quality inclusive early years and childcare places for all children in Essex
- All schools in Essex are inclusive and provide quality education for children no matter what their needs are
- All children in Essex are supported through all their transitions in Early Years
- All families are supported to be the best they can be
- Families understand the services available to them and how they can access these
- All children in Essex can express themselves in their individual way and are confident in how they communicate with others
- Essex County Council provides access to the support and expertise needed to fulfil this vision

Strategy Aims-

To implement our Vision, we have agreed the following six Aims:

- 1) Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an effective and connected early years system that has a clear vision, purpose, and direction
- 2) All children have a positive journey through their early years and are well supported to transition to Reception and start Year 1
- 3) Children who may be at risk of poor outcomes are prioritised for high quality targeted support
- 4) Children's early learning and development is expertly supported by a strong, skilled, and knowledgeable early years and childcare system workforce
- 5) Parents can access sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and childcare needs
- 6) Families are enabled to be the best they can be

**What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?:** Help people get the best start and age well, Transform the council to achieve more with less

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Help people get the best start and age well:** Help keep vulnerable children safer and enable them to fulfil their potential

**Which strategic priorities does this support? - Transform the council to achieve more with less:** Develop the capability, performance and engagement of our people

**Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?:** a new policy (or decision)

**Please provide a link to the document / website / resource to which this EqIA relates:** Link to follow

**Please upload any documents which relate to this EqIA, for example decision documents:** Link to follow

### Assessing the equality impact

Use this section to record how you have assessed any potential impact on the communities likely to be

**affected by the policy (or decision):** This Strategy has been developed through engagement with a variety of people who work with children and young people in Essex. We also spoke to families through a survey, to which 1262 parents responded. We have used this engagement to develop our thinking and have shared back what we have been planning to do to ensure it makes sense to everyone and reflects what they think are the things we should be focusing on. As we implement this Strategy, we will continue to engage with parents, professionals, volunteers and with children and young people to ensure we continue to do the right things to address need and to check if what we are doing is having an impact.

There are currently approximately 83,000 babies and young children under 5 in Essex (ONS data)

The estimated number of 0–4-year-olds in Essex increased by 2.3% between 2012 and 2019.

ONS have projected that between 2020 and 2025 the number of 0–4-year-olds in Essex will fall by 1.9%.

However, from 2020-2040 the number of 0–4-year-olds is projected to increase by 5.1%.

66% of 2 year olds

91% of 3 year olds and

95% of 4 year olds attend a childcare setting

Almost all settings attended are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted (97% for 2 year olds and 95% for 3&4 year olds)

#### Early Years Providers

The number of early years and childcare providers in Essex varies throughout the year as settings open and close, however in June 2021 there were a total of 2,438 providers as follows:

Primary school nurseries (including academies) 105

Independent schools 32

Day nurseries 326

Preschools 401

Childminders 1297

Breakfast clubs 15

After school clubs 80

Holiday clubs 180

Wrap around care (before and after school) 2

24% of 2-year-olds in Essex are entitled to FEEE2, this is 15 hours per week in term time Free Early Education Entitlement for children whose families are in receipt of certain benefits, where children have SEND or are looked after by the Local Authority. This has increased from 16% in Summer 2019. Take up of FEEE2 was 80.5% in 2020.

All 3 and 4-year-olds are entitled to 15 hours of FEEE a week in term time and working parents who meet certain criteria are entitled to 30 hours. The take up in 2020 was 93%.

Not all settings offer FEEE but 1447 offer FEEE2 and 1350 offer the extended 30 hours (out of 1866).

Most children in settings are from White ethnic backgrounds.

Families who are deprived lack the income and other things needed to enable them to have a decent standard of living. 42% of Lower Super Output Areas in Essex fall within the lower 5 deciles of the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) (1 is most deprived, shown in red, 10 is least deprived, shown in green). There are significant areas of deprivation in both the South and North of the County and significant diversity between different areas in Essex, with some areas in Tendring being amongst the most deprived in the Country and some in Uttlesford being amongst the least.

#### Working Families

Most families in Essex live in the middle of the scale of deprivation and are likely to fall into the category of 'Working Families'. Working Families who are 'just about managing' are defined with reference to the Minimum

Income Standard (MIS) using 'people who earn 25% below the MIS after childcare/housing costs'. Working families who are 'just about managing' are a significant proportion of the population in Essex and are not typically eligible for targeted support. Before the pandemic an estimated 180,000 of the county's population of nearly 1.5m were in this cohort.

## **Does or will the policy or decision affect:**

**Service users:** Yes

**Employees:** Yes

**The wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities:** Yes

**Which geographical areas of Essex does or will the policy or decision affect?:** All Essex

**Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?:** Yes

**Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?:** No

**Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies?:** Yes

**Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?:** No

## **Description of impact**

**Description of Impact. If there is an impact on a specific protected group tick box, otherwise leave blank. You will be given the opportunity to rate identified impacts as positive, negative or neutral on the next page:** Age, Disability - learning disability, Disability - mental health issues, Disability - physical impairment, Disability - sensory impairment, Pregnancy / maternity

**I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics:** I confirm that I have considered the potential impact on all of the protected characteristics

**Describe any actions that have already been taken to mitigate negative impacts on any of the protected characteristics:** No negative impacts were identified for any of the protected characteristics.

## **Age**

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:**

The purpose of this strategy is to make a positive impact on the lives of young children. The strategy understands the importance of the early years because it is during this time that there is the greatest potential to impact on a child's developing brain and it is a time when there are significant opportunities to provide support to children and families which will have a positive impact on children's futures.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The Early Years and Childcare Strategy sets out a vision for the changes we want to make to improve the experiences and outcomes of all young children living in Essex. Through this Strategy we want to enable more children to have positive experiences in their early years and parents to feel better supported.

## Disability - learning disability

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** The Early Years and Childcare Strategy is fully inclusive with the aim to improve the lives of all children in Essex, including those with learning disabilities. It is likely to be in a child's first 5 years that a learning disability is identified and research tells us that children's outcomes can be improved from early intervention and support.

The strategy seeks to ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible

The strategy vision is that there will be no barriers to children achieving the best they can be and realising their full potential.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:**

The development and support of children with a learning disability will be one of the aims of the Strategy. The Strategy aims for the system to effectively focus on those who are in most need and enable them to receive effective early help, including a specific focus on improving the experiences of children with SEND.

In addition, a more joined up and supportive system may benefit parents and families with a learning disability.

## Disability - mental health issues

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** The strategy recognises that having positive early years and childcare experiences leads to:

- Children having better relationships and attachments with the people around them
- Children being healthier mentally and physically
- Children being more resilient to negative things that may happen in their lives
- Children doing better in their education and being more likely to gain fulfilling jobs that enable them to be financial stable and resilient
- Children being kept safe from harm, including being less likely to engage in harmful and offending behaviour

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The more joined up and effective support that is the aim of the Strategy will have a positive benefit for young children's mental health in their early years and in the future.

In addition, a joined up and more supportive system may also have a positive benefit on the mental health of parents and families.

## Disability - physical impairment

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:**

The Early Years and Childcare Strategy is fully inclusive with the aim to improve the lives of all children in Essex, including those with physical disabilities.

The strategy seeks to ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible

The strategy vision is that there will be no barriers to children achieving the best they can be and realising their full potential.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** A more joined up system and more effective support will have a positive impact on children with physical disabilities.

The development and support of children with a physical impairment will be one of the aims of the Strategy. The Strategy aims for the system to effectively focus on those who are in most need and enable them to receive effective early help, including a specific focus on improving the experiences of children with SEND. In addition, a more joined up and supportive system may benefit parents and families with a physical impairment.

## Disability - sensory impairment

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:**

The Early Years and Childcare Strategy is fully inclusive with the aim to improve the lives of all children in Essex, including those with sensory impairments.

It is likely to be in a child's first 5 years that a sensory impairment is identified and research tells us that children's outcomes can be improved from early intervention and support.

The strategy seeks to ensure that families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible

The strategy vision is that there will be no barriers to children achieving the best they can be and realising their full potential.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The development and support of children with a sensory impairment will be one of the aims of the Strategy. The Strategy aims for the system to effectively focus on those who are in most need and enable them to receive effective early help, including a specific focus on improving the experiences of children with SEND.

In addition, a more joined up and supportive system may benefit parents and families with a sensory impairment.

## Pregnancy / maternity

**Nature of impact:** Positive

**Please provide more details about the nature of impact:** The Strategy recognises that the time a child is conceived to when they are five is a vitally important one and is therefore a time when there are significant opportunities to provide support to children and families. New parents need support in a number of different ways. This support will be provided by a more joined up system of people and services who will work together effectively, in partnership with parents, to enable all children to get the Best Start for Life.

New parents may also need to access childcare and an aim of the Strategy is to ensure that there are sufficient quality inclusive early years and childcare places for all children.

**Extent of impact:** High

**Please provide more details about the extent of impact:** The Strategy recognises the strains on working families and seeks to provide the right support at the right time and to help parents manage their childcare needs

## Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

**Does your EqIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?:** No

## Details of person completing the form

**I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance:** I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

**Date EqIA completed:** 25/08/2021

**Name of person completing the EqIA:** Andree Race

**Email address of person completing the EqIA:** Andree.Race@essex.gov.uk

**Your function:** Children, Families and Education

**Your service area:** Strategy, Planning and Performance

**Your team:** Early Years and Childcare

**Are you submitting this EqIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?:** No

**Email address of Head of Service:** carolyn.terry@essex.gov.uk