

Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022 - 2027

Content of session

- A summary of: -
 - the content of the Strategy, Vision and Aims
 - The Year 1 Delivery Plan priorities, timetable and significant milestones
- Approach to closing the Word Gap and setting the Essex Context
- Summary of the analysis of feedback from Surveys and Consultations undertaken
- Summary of numbers of children accessing Free Early Education Entitlement funding places



The Strategy, Vision and Aims

The Strategy: -

- covers the range of early years services and support, but with a particular focus on prioritising support for those children and their families that most need it
- will plan to continue with this focus for the next 5 years between 2022 and 2027, reflecting each year on the progress made and identifying the next year's priorities building on the successes and work already underway
- the Year One delivery plan sets out the priorities, timetable and significant milestones for 2022, all of which will contribute to the Levelling Up work
- Oversight Board will be in place to undertake quarterly monitoring of progress



The new Early Years and Childcare Strategy at a glance

Early Years & Childcare Vision

In Essex there will be no barriers to children achieving the best they can be and realising their full potential. To achieve this vision, we will ensure:

- There are sufficient affordable, quality and 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

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 AFFORDABLE, sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and Working Parents
6. Families are enabled to be the best they can be

Strategy Outcomes

Each Strategy Aim has an agreed set out outcomes that the strategy intends to deliver over the next 5 years

These will be underpinned by performance and progress measures

The key priorities for Year One of the new Strategy

The Year One Delivery Plan will focus on the following elements:

- The impact of Covid-19 on young children's learning
- Continue to build on the good outcomes we have achieved so far in the last strategy, with an ambition to further increase the % of children achieving GLD
- Focus on identifying those children as early as possible that will need more support, ie improved assessment at the 2 year check, focusing on the cohorts we know generally do not achieve a GLD ie summer born / SEN
- Increase the take up for eligible 2 year olds to access a funded learning place
- Focus on economically disadvantaged children to help narrow their word gap
- Contributing to the Levelling Up Agenda with a focus on the Strong Foundations in Early Years goal
- Join up with the Life Long Learning Strategy and the Education Taskforce Year of Reading planned for 2022
- Focus on the Working Families Programme aims for early years
- Making sure our Parents are as informed as they can be in order to make the right choices



Increase the Free Entitlement funding take-up for disadvantaged 2 year olds

Maintain and increase the Good Level of Development outcome for 5 year olds

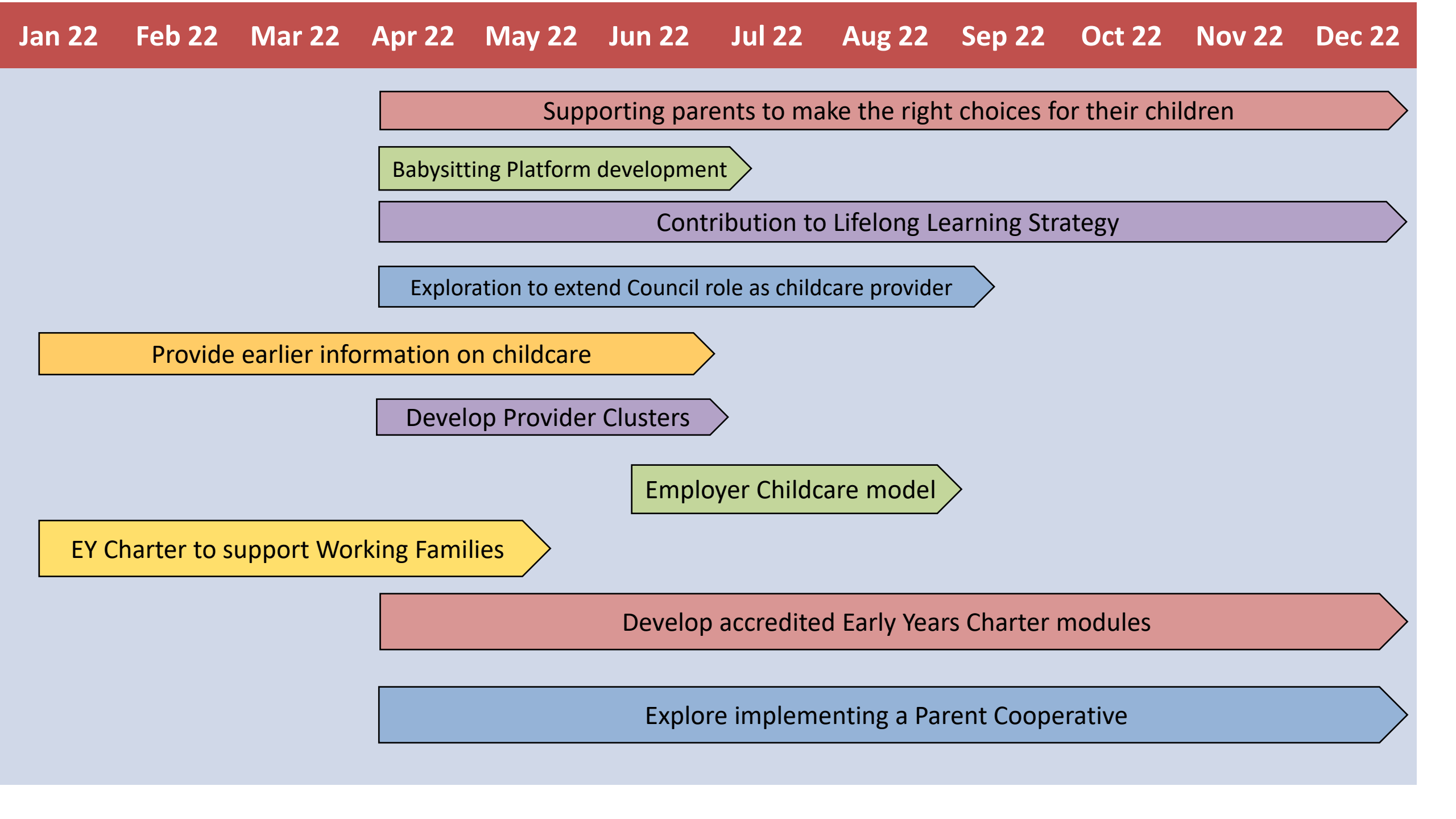
Earlier identification of disadvantaged children

Focus on economically disadvantaged children to help narrow their word gap

Contributing to the Levelling Up agenda

Understand the impact of Covid on young children’s learning

Working Families Stakeholder Forum



Jan 22 Feb 22 Mar 22 Apr 22 May 22 Jun 22 Jul 22 Aug 22 Sep 22 Oct 22 Nov 22 Dec 22

Supporting parents to make the right choices for their children

Babysitting Platform development

Contribution to Lifelong Learning Strategy

Exploration to extend Council role as childcare provider

Provide earlier information on childcare

Develop Provider Clusters

Employer Childcare model

EY Charter to support Working Families

Develop accredited Early Years Charter modules

Explore implementing a Parent Cooperative

Year One Delivery Plan

Increase take-up of funded 2-year-old places for economically disadvantaged 2 year olds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set baseline of current take-up of funded 2-year-old places • Action plans to address identified barriers in take up • Increase take-up of places of 1% in year 1 • Mapping of children identified that need additional support • Improve data collection to allow children's progress to be more effectively mapped • Production of Essex data set showing Word Gap
Maintain and Increase Good Level of Development (GLD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produce new GLD baseline at a county and district level • Produce training plan to support childcare settings and Family Hubs • Build on the Talk, Listen and Cuddle campaign • Plan for transition experience for children into the school environment, being consistently positive with school ready for continuing the learning journey for every child
Earlier identification of children that need more support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and focus on key cohorts that generally do not achieve a GLD (such as summer born children) • Develop improved assessment / identification of need i.e., 2-year check • Develop shared systems on early language identification measure results, identifying children at high risk • Upskill workforce in identifying children that need more support earlier • Implementation of targeted support
Focus on economically disadvantaged children to help narrow their word gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit childcare providers to undertake relevant evidence-based training programmes • Recruit and train Communication Friendly settings and Family Hub Communication Champions • Build on the Talk, Listen and Cuddle campaign • Develop an accessible Early Years Speech and Language Communication (SLC) pathway
Ongoing review of the impact of Covid on young children's learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse the negative impact of Covid on young children • Development of Essex data of children's outcomes • Plan interventions and support to implement • Collaboration with early years sector on needs, ensuring high quality provision and practice

Year One Delivery Plan

Contributing to the Levelling Up Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop targeted programmes of support for localities and local need, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Harlow Futures project• Winter Reading Challenge• Year of Reading• Economy and financial wellbeing of families
Contributing to the Lifelong Learning Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop shared objectives/ vision/agendas with other internal functions• Review regional collaboration on deprived communities to help with school readiness.• Build on the Talk, Listen and Cuddle campaign
Supporting parents to make the right choices for their children	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure information, advice and guidance offers are aligned and mutually supportive and meets Section 12 of the Childcare Act duty• Build on the Talk, Listen and Cuddle campaign
Look to partner with an existing Babysitting Platform	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research into current babysitting platform models• Seek to contract with commercial babysitting platform• Design content for Essex offer• Action plan and resources in place• Understand needs of parents and explore current offers available
Review the viability of extending existing Council childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore expanding existing provision and creating new provision• Research role of Councils in delivering childcare provision• Produce analysis and recommendations on concept• Action plan and resources in place to progress
Provide earlier information on childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan a programme of parent engagement• Analysis of engagement outcomes• Design and Implementation of programme• Launch improved information service

Year One Delivery Plan

Launch an Early Years Charter to support the needs of working families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalise and launch Charter• Promote signing of Charter with early years sector, schools and Family Hubs• Research and design accredited modules to further develop the Charter• Develop Charter further addressing identified barriers• Support parents to access relevant benefits and financial assistance
Explore the need for an Employer provider of childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore current employers with childcare provision on site• Approach local large-scale employers in areas of childcare need• Consult with employees around requirement for onsite provision• Explore other Local Authorities that support onsite employment provision
Further develop the growth of Multi Childcare Provider clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with parents on childcare needs• Research and analyse providers whom provide shared care• Gather information on providers (offer overnight and weekend childcare)• Gain insight into how providers promote offer• Explore provider barriers in extended hours or shared care
Explore funding the development of Parent Co-operative childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and engagement with parents on appetite for model• Analysis of research and engagement• If viable option, create concept proposals / business case to proceed• Action plan to implement required solutions (potential financial costs)
Stakeholder Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create mission statement of how partners will support working parents in Essex• Gather insight on key issues to allow for further work to identify solutions

Year One Delivery Plan

Launch an Early Years Charter to support the needs of working families	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Finalise and launch Charter• Promote signing of Charter with early years sector, schools and Family Hubs• Research and design accredited modules to further develop the Charter• Develop Charter further addressing identified barriers• Support parents to access relevant benefits and financial assistance
Explore the need for an Employer provider of childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore current employers with childcare provision on site• Approach local large-scale employers in areas of childcare need• Consult with employees around requirement for onsite provision• Explore other Local Authorities that support onsite employment provision
Further develop the growth of Multi Childcare Provider clusters	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage with parents on childcare needs• Research and analyse providers whom provide shared care• Gather information on providers (offer overnight and weekend childcare)• Gain insight into how providers promote offer• Explore provider barriers in extended hours or shared care
Explore funding the development of Parent Co-operative childcare provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research and engagement with parents on appetite for model• Analysis of research and engagement• If viable option, create concept proposals / business case to proceed• Action plan to implement required solutions (potential financial costs)
Stakeholder Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create mission statement of how partners will support working parents in Essex• Gather insight on key issues to allow for further work to identify solutions

Further information and analysis of the Word Gap, with more Essex context

A priority for the coming year is to ensure that we have effective systems in place to help us identify, as early as possible, those children that need most help and track their progress – the main focus will be the disadvantaged 2 year old children that have been identified as eligible to access a funded childcare place

These children will also give us the cohort to focus on supporting their early language and communication development to close the word gap outcome

The DWP provides lists of the eligible families twice a term enabling us to more easily identify the cohort and we are currently reviewing the ECC Capita system to allow us to gather more data to improve our ability to track progress for these children



Approach to closing the Word Gap and setting the Essex Context

As part of the year one priorities, work will be undertaken to reset the baseline data:

- **for 5-year-olds** this is informed by the Early Years and Foundation Stage Communication and Language data - due to Covid, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data has not been available since 2019 but there will be data available at the end of the Summer 2022 term. This will be used to create a new baseline of Communication and Language data at both a county and district level
- **for 2-year-olds** this is informed by the Public Health Communication and Language data - this is gathered from the 2-year-old assessments undertaken by the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service and identifies children needing more targeted support to enable them to meet their full potential. The assessment is a simple word list and child observation – known as the Early Language Identification Measure (ELIM) – that is undertaken during routine home visits when children are aged between two and two-and-a-half years. Research shows the ELIM can identify 94% of toddlers with early language needs
- An evaluation is also planned on the accuracy of the 2-year-old checks assessment compared with the outcomes for these children aged 5 by selecting a sample range of data across the county
- All of the above will provide us with the current Essex position and enable us to monitor the Word Gap going forward

Approach to closing the Word Gap and setting the Essex Context Cont.

- **Focus on increasing the number of funded disadvantaged 2-year-olds in high-quality provision –**
 - the take-up of the two-year-old FEEE during the Autumn term 2021 was 3,556, which was 83.8% of the 4,244 eligible two-year-olds in the county. This is significantly higher than the national take up level for the Autumn 2021 term of 61.8%
- Build skills and capacity to help disadvantaged parents support their child's language development from birth onwards
- Work together across the Early Years system to develop a workforce skilled in early language, and consistent systems for identifying early and providing for those children needing extra help.

Summary of the analysis of feedback from Surveys and Consultations Undertaken



Key findings 1

Background:

- There were more than **1,200 responses** to the survey.
- Majority of respondents were working parents living as couples, not receiving any income or other support packages

Types of childcare used:

- For pre-school children, most respondents used formal childcare – to provide stimulation, enable parent to work and to help child get ‘ready for school’. Location and the setting being the best for the child were the main reasons for selecting them.
- For school-aged children, more than half didn’t use any childcare. Formal childcare was used to enable parents to work.
- Under a third of parents used informal childcare – overwhelmingly provided by grandparents. This is driven by the combination of no cost and child enjoying being with family.
- Not using any childcare appears to be driven more by personal choice than actual cost.

SEND:

- Relatively small sample (n=230).
- Parents of pre-school children tend to suspect SEND, whereas parents of school-aged children tend to have a formal diagnosis.
- Most frequent conditions are Autism and ADHD.
- Provision of one-to-one/additional support is the most important to enable these children to attend formal childcare. This is more likely to be provided to pre-schoolers than school-aged children.

Getting ready for school:

- Majority of parents of recent ‘school starters’ have felt confident about their child’s transition to school. This applies for two-thirds of those starting Sept 2021 too
- Majority had an excellent or good experience of transition – good communication received from the school before starting school was key to an overall positive experience.

Key findings 2

Term of birth:

- Only 38% (n=51) of parents of recent Summer-born school starters had concerns, usually based on the child being younger and potentially not being emotionally and developmentally ready to start school yet.

ECC resources:

- Awareness and thus usage of ECC's existing resources (Talk, Listen and Cuddle, Essex Family Information Service, Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service) was low. Those who have used it generally rated it as 'helpful' and 'clear'.

Knowing other parents:

- Majority of parents place great importance on knowing other parents of children of a similar age, which provides much needed support networks and opportunities for social interaction (although also comparisons between children and potential competitiveness).
- Parent / Toddler groups and the school/childcare setting are the key places to get to know each other, but ECC could support this further by providing more classes / courses / groups and more open access spaces.

Supporting children's learning while at home:

- Most parents feel confident at supporting their children's learning while at home, drawing on a wide range of sources of information, albeit not 'official' as such, with general Google search, family, school and friends being the key sources.

Key findings 3

Childcare needs during and after coronavirus lockdown:

- Less than 20% (n=79) of key worker children continued to attend a formal childcare setting during the first coronavirus lockdown (March – May 2020), with their needs being met. The rest either decided to keep their children at home, or their usual childcare setting was closed.
- Responses indicate no particular destabilisation of the formal childcare market as a result of the coronavirus lockdown. Majority of 'keyworker' children returned to their formal childcare setting after 1 June 2020, without a change to their childcare needs.
- For those whose childcare needs changed, this was generally related to changes in work patterns or not being able to use family for childcare.

Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) funding and Tax-free childcare:

- Awareness of FEEE (2, 3 and 4) and the Extended entitlement (30 hours) is high (91%). Main benefits are around getting children 'ready for school' and improving family finances.
- Two thirds of respondents are aware of Tax-free childcare, but less than a third use it.

Further comments:

- The top 5 themes mentioned were:
 1. Supporting working parents through the provision of suitable and affordable childcare
 2. General support for parents, especially new parents (importance of baby/parent/toddler groups)
 3. Need for more wrap around care and holiday clubs
 4. FEEE eligibility from the age of 2, supporting working parents
 5. The high cost of childcare negatively impacting family finances

Summary of numbers of
children accessing Free Early
Education Entitlement funded
childcare places



FEEE take up: Essex countywide level vs national (where applicable)

Autumn 2021	2 year olds			3 year olds			4 year olds			Extended Free Entitlement	
	Eligible	Takeup	%	Population	Takeup	%	Population	Takeup	%	Takeup	£
Essex	4,244	3,556	83.8%	17,647	16,833	95.4%	17,981	17,086	95.0%	6,562	£1,194,961
England	201,562	124,543	61.8%	664,515	574,845	86.5%	686,773	637,146	92.8%	-	-

This table shows the take up of FEEE at the countywide level for the Autumn 2021 term for 2 year olds, universal 3 and 4 year olds, and extended entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds against eligibility / population (dependent on age) and compares Essex against the national figures, where available.

GP registration data, used for the population figures, are static since Autumn 2020; also, they only provide the year of birth, not the qualifying term, so the % of those accessing education may be greater than 100%.

The take up in Essex exceeds the national levels in each of the distinct 2, 3 and 4 year olds groups.

There are no national data available for EFE.

FEEE take up: Essex district level

Autumn 2021	2 year olds			3 year olds			4 year olds			Extended Free Entitlement	
	Eligible	Takeup	%	Population	Takeup	%	Population	Takeup	%	Takeup	£
Basildon	759	593	78.1%	2,576	2,283	88.6%	2,575	2,553	99.1%	825	£160,297
Braintree	410	340	82.9%	1,723	1,681	97.6%	1,757	1,720	97.9%	707	£127,742
Brentwood	145	131	90.3%	943	912	96.7%	942	869	92.3%	298	£51,912
Castle Point	242	177	73.1%	957	907	94.8%	965	891	92.3%	317	£57,935
Chelmsford	400	333	83.3%	2,103	2,148	102.1%	2,147	2,087	97.2%	845	£153,025
Colchester	546	443	81.1%	2,347	2,131	90.8%	2,438	2,166	88.8%	845	£148,498
Epping Forest	331	247	74.6%	1,619	1,435	88.6%	1,501	1,382	92.1%	421	£79,862
Harlow	440	359	81.6%	1,331	1,208	90.8%	1,379	1,251	90.7%	439	£86,724
Maldon	133	141	106.0%	596	652	109.4%	645	633	98.1%	283	£50,252
Rochford	168	165	98.2%	882	951	107.8%	947	833	88.0%	347	£61,443
Tendring	513	479	93.4%	1,486	1,413	95.1%	1,568	1,405	89.6%	511	£89,093
Uttlesford	157	130	82.8%	1,084	1,060	97.8%	1,117	1,081	96.8%	439	£78,377
No match	0	18		0	52		0	215		285	£49,802

This table shows the take up of FEEE at the district level for the Autumn 2021 term for 2 year olds, universal 3 and 4 year olds, and extended entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds against eligibility / population (dependent on age).

GP registration data, used for the population figures, are static since Autumn 2020; also, they only provide the year of birth, not the qualifying term, so the % of those accessing education may be greater than 100%.

The **highest** and **lowest** districts by % and £ are colour-coded.

Thank you

Any questions?

