



Essex County Council

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

09:30	Thursday, 09 September 2021	Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH
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For information about the meeting please ask for:

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Telephone: 033301 34574

Email: democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

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Pages

**	Private Pre-Meeting for PAF Members Only Please note that there will be a private pre-meeting for committee members on Wednesday 8 September 2021 at 3.30pm via Teams.	
1	Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest	5 - 5
2	Minutes: 15 July 2021 To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021.	6 - 10

- 3 Questions from the Public**
A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting.
Please note that members of the public wishing to ask a question must email democratic.services@essex.gov.uk by noon on the day before the meeting and that questions must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.
- 4 Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation - Further opportunities for People and Families to support the strategy** **11 - 23**
(PAF/08/21)
- 5 Impact of the pandemic on Children and Families Services and Education Services** **24 - 42**
(PAF/09/21)
- 6 Work Programme** **43 - 45**
(PAF/10/21)
- 7 Date of Next Meeting**
To note that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 14 October 2021, in County Hall.
- 8 Urgent Business**
To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Exempt Items

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.

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Urgent Exempt Business

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

Agenda item 1

Committee: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

Recommendations:

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

Membership (Quorum: 4)

Councillor R Gooding	Chairman
Councillor L Bowers-Flint	
Councillor S Crow	
Councillor M Durham	
Councillor J Fleming	
Councillor M Goldman	
Councillor C Guglielmi	Vice-Chairman
Councillor J Lumley	
Councillor P May	Vice-Chairman
Councillor A McGurran	
Councillor R Playle	
Councillor L Shaw	
Councillor W Stamp	
Councillor A Wiles	

Non-elected Members

Christine Martin (St John Payne Roman Catholic School - Catholic diocese representative)

Co-opted educational representative members may advise and vote on all matters relating to children's services in schools. Two places are available for church Diocesan representatives. Two further places are available for parent governors at maintained schools in Essex (one primary and one secondary school). To date one representative is in place as above. A review of representation is underway.

Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 11.00am on Thursday, 15 July 2021 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford.

Present:

County Councillors:

R Gooding (Chairman)

L Bowers-Flint

S Crow

M Durham

J Fleming

M Goldman

A McGurran

R Playle

W Stamp

A Wiles

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer and Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer, were also present.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted.

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Carlo Guglielmi, Peter May, Laureen Shaw, Christine Martin from St John Payne Roman Catholic School (Roman Catholic Diocese education representative) and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex.

Councillor Mark Durham declared an interest in that he was a Governor for the Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust.

2

Appointment of Vice-Chairman

At the invite of the Chairman, nominations for the two Vice-Chairman posts were received with Councillors Carlo Guglielmi and Peter May both being nominated by Councillor Mark Durham and seconded by Councillor Lynette Bowers-Flint.

There being no further nominations and by general consent, it was agreed that Councillors Carlo Guglielmi and Peter May were each elected as a Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Questions from the public

There were no questions from the public.

5. Adult Social Care Update (including Residential and Domiciliary Care Trends)

The Committee considered report PAF/06/2021 comprising an update on Adult Social Care (including Residential and Domiciliary Care Trends).

The following people from Essex County Council joined the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member – Health and Adult Social Care.
Nick Presmeg, Executive Director, Adult Social Care.
Moira McGrath, Director, Commissioning (Adult Social Care).

During the discussion the following was acknowledged, highlighted and/or noted:

- (i) The Cabinet Member paid tribute to the response of the local care system during the pandemic. The relationship with the care market providers had further improved and was much more interpersonal now than it had been pre-pandemic which was a positive. The busiest period during the second wave had been between January and March 2021 when there had been the highest levels of community infection, which had caused the biggest impact on the work in Adult Social Care. More recently activity levels had dropped.
- (ii) A challenge during the pandemic had been to continue dialogue with such a large number of local providers when everyone was under intense pressure.
- (iii) The largest cohort of people Adult Social Care supported were predominantly people aged 85 and over. However, the highest per head spend was around supporting people with disabilities, particularly the approximate 4,000 people with learning disabilities.
- (iv) In March 2020, in particular, there had been a high volume of enquiries from people who were nervous about care workers coming into their homes.
- (v) July and August were usually quiet periods, however there had been unprecedented levels of activity, some of which were delayed activity within the system and some of it was the function of the current levels of community infection.

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- (vi) There had been an increase in safeguarding enquiries since Autumn.
 - (vii) Demand for reablement services had increased due to an increased number of people coming out of hospital.
 - (viii) The number of care assessments and reviews had significantly increased. People were moved in the early stages of the pandemic in order to clear hospitals, it then had to be reviewed to ensure their long-term care were appropriate for their needs.
 - (ix) Reablement can be for up to six weeks, with around 80% of the demand being for people discharged from hospital.
 - (x) Discharge pathways had changed at the start of the pandemic with the emphasis on a discharge to assess process where people would have an initial assessment and be moved home with short-term care put in place whilst a more comprehensive community-based assessment was undertaken, this meant that the review activity had to be re-prioritised and so some of the routine reviews were taking longer than they would otherwise have done. There had been an increase in demand for occupational therapy reviews largely around things such as equipment. Prior to Covid there was a plan to launch a program called Connect which looked in detail at the discharge processes and decision making and how people were being engaged and to support an ethos of home first if possible - it was suggested that the Committee may want to look at this in the future.
 - (xi) The Committee's Domiciliary Care Task and Finish Group had identified that there was a lack of clear information and signposting about local care services for families when a relative was discharged from hospital, and had recommended producing a leaflet with this information to take away. It was confirmed that this recommendation from the Task and Finish Group had been accepted and was being worked on.
 - (xii) Some members suggested a section on Trade Union feedback within the care worker survey.
 - (xiii) Concerns were raised by members on the capacity in the Domiciliary Care Market and the infrequency of audits taken on the Domiciliary Care providers and whether there was a need to re-review the inspection review process.
 - (xiv) It was confirmed that residential care usage had declined, and whilst there may be a slight increase as people were going back to work, it was expected that there would be surplus capacity and that Adult Social Care (ASC) would work with residential

providers to plan an orderly reduction in capacity and ensure that an adequate high quality capacity remained.

- (xv) The Care Quality Commission had a schedule of inspections and ASC also had their routine work undertaken by the internal quality team which had continued to run during the pandemic. The inspections followed a risk-based approach. If there were any areas of concern identified ASC would use that information to proactively visit and/or work with the provider to help improvement actions.
- (xvi) There were challenges recruiting staff, especially among the more specialist higher paid roles. A series of remote Zoom based all-staff conversations took place to keep people engaged. Latest statistics showed that staff turnover had fallen over the last 2-3 years. There was a concern that higher wage rates were offered in other sectors. A major concern was recruitment and retention in the sector both in terms of professional and non-professional workforce.
- (xvii) Work was being undertaken with the Essex Care Association (who represent care providers in Essex) and direct with providers on a recruitment and retention campaign, extensive training program as well as some work around staff emotional wellbeing and shifting more towards prevention and early intervention. Several hundreds of pounds had been put aside to enable specialist providers with the psychological support and physiological support required.
- (xviii) The age that an individual transitions into adult services was currently 18, however there was an expectation that there should be more of a transitional approach up to the age of 25. Nationally there was an expectation that there was not a definitive transition point and ASC were doing some work on this as part of a broader all age approach. The Essex Partnership University Trust ran a process called Family Group Conferencing which was highlighted as an area of good practice and expertise.

Conclusion:

It was **agreed** that a further update be scheduled early 2022 on the overall trends and capacity and that this should particularly include the work with market providers to manage an orderly reduction in capacity in the residential market. It was also agreed that the Committee may also schedule other sessions on adult social care matters as a result of its further discussions on work programming in the coming weeks.

The witnesses were thanked for their attendance by the Chairman and then left the meeting.

6. Work Programme

The Committee received report PAF/07/21 comprising the work programme of the Committee.

Members agreed to defer further formal consideration of the work programme of the Committee pending further discussions which would be reported back on at the next meeting.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 9 September 2021.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.30pm.

Chairman

Reference Number: PAF/08/21

Report title: Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation – further opportunities for People and Families to support the strategy.	
Report to: People and Families Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Cllr Louise McKinlay – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance	
Date: 9 September 2021	For: Discussion and identifying any additional input
Enquiries to: Juliet Pirez, Head of Libraries (email: Juliet.Pirez@essex.gov.uk)	
County Divisions affected: All	

1. Introduction

In a post covid world there is a need to review and update the Future Library Strategy and set out a new and ambitious vision for the service. Essex County Council (ECC) propose to use a set of guiding principles that shape the new direction for the service.

ECC intend to engage with residents on changes in a two-pronged approach. Firstly, to set the scene and gain feedback on the principle and direction of the service, and secondly to introduce the draft strategy and launch the consultation process.

2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider and provide input to how the library service both now and in the future can support People and Families and the wider Council strategy.

3. Background

ECC were one of the first in the country to re-open library services and staff have gone above and beyond to deliver services through very challenging times. During lockdown the service developed over one hundred virtual sessions which included which has attracted over 100,000 views. This included:

- Rhymetime/Rapid Rhymetimes (for families in a hurry!),
- children's author events
- children's creative writing workshop
- various online craft sessions

ECC have adapted the face-to-face school class visit pack to online and engaged live with primary aged children via Zoom. As well as attended virtual Summer Read assemblies via Zoom with a number of primary schools. With face-to-face sessions now re-opening ECC still have a commitment to providing online, virtual sessions to complement our existing offer.

Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation Strategy

Our library staff and volunteers continued with the Home Library Service during lockdown and carried out befriending calls to those who were potentially socially isolated.

ECC promoted our e-resources through various social media platforms with guides on how to access these services plus a podcast on how to keep on reading. Find My Past and Ancestry were made available from home and proved to be very popular.

Since re opening ECC have restarted our popular activities including book-clubs, rhyme-times and the Summer Reading Challenge of which 16,000 children have signed up. ECC have introduced a really different offer, which includes things like mindfulness sessions aimed at new parents and children, free theatre events that promote books and reading and have taken part in outreach attending the Holidays Activity Food programme to run events.

Reading Friends has helped those who may feel isolated and this has been particularly successful with the partnership we have Colchester Refugee Action. For our Essex Book Festival we ran 12 events (11 in person, 1 online) with 332 attendees (numbers were limited due to socially distancing).

ECC have developed a calendar of new and existing events including;

- Winter Reading Challenge for children to continue reading over the winter,
- Love Your Library days,
- Family Learning Fayres in partnership with ACL and Talk, Listen, Cuddle. We have more author events across the county as well as Essex Authors day that will involve workshops for writers.
- We are planning to be part Silver Sunday which is national day for older people which helps tackle loneliness and social isolation.
- We will be celebrating Black History Month.
- From September we are launching Reading Well where all libraries will be promoting and displaying books on mental health and well-being for children and adults

ECC have joined TLC (The Libraries Consortium) which means that Essex residents have access to an additional 6 million items of stock.

The ambition for the Library service is to focus on three key areas:

The aim for the library service is to build on the Councils agenda of Renewal, Equality, Ambition and Climate Change by focusing on three key areas:

- **Service Delivery:**
Strong offer of core activities that we know communities' value. A strong focus on recovery, growing footfall into the service, both online and a new and exciting digital offer.

Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation Strategy

- **Improvements to Library Infrastructure:**

Buildings and equipment that support our ambition and provide great spaces for communities to use.

Buildings that are welcoming and accessible places at the heart of communities. Technology enabled to support communities access services and stay connected.

- **Supporting communities and families:**

ECC aim is to deliver on the broader Council agenda and the strategic priorities.

To support equality of opportunity and the Levelling Up agenda ECC will promote and market the comprehensive library service offer to all residents to make them aware of the wide range opportunities. This offer ranges from preparing children to start school through initiatives such as Bookstart, Baby and Toddler Rhymetime sessions, free access to Wi-Fi and public network computers in all libraries to the extensive online offer which includes access to reading and learning materials.

Libraries support the climate change ambition of ECC with the aim of **‘a high-quality environment’** by encouraging residents to consider the environment through events and activities, using libraries as recycling drop points, distribution of cloth nappies through the Registration Service points, working with partners such as ‘Active Essex’ to encourage children and families to explore nature and the outdoors. The mobile library service will look to review its current operation in terms of routes and vehicles ensuring we are reaching all communities and those most at risk of isolation. We aim for libraries to be the building block to re-connecting with residents and support revitalising communities.

Libraries represent all segments of our communities. We will use data and insight to encourage residents from low use demographic segments to use their library through targeted services and events.

Libraries support **‘health, wellbeing and independence for all ages’** through our ‘ShelfHelp’ pre-selected resources for adults covering areas such as Mindfulness, CBT, coping with anxiety etc. Libraries support those in the community most at risk of loneliness and social isolation through projects such as ‘Reading Friends’ and through our long standing ‘home library service’ which brings the service to those that can’t visit a physical building.

Libraries will support ‘a strong, inclusive and sustainable economy’ through job clubs and back to work support, enabling residents to work and study in our spaces, providing good technology that enables free access to a wide range of online and physical resources to support learning and development.

We are collaborating with ECC functions to ensure that Essex is a **‘good place for children and families to grow’** We aim to support this further through the transition of various life stages including starting school, moving from primary to secondary school and leaving full time education to enter the world of employment

Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation Strategy

We have made significant progress modernising and improving technology, we have piloted and introduced tablets, we are supporting residents to self-serve and helping residents become digitally connected.

4. How We Will Deliver

Our strategy will set out how we will work and makes a clear commitment to working in a joined up, collaborative, open-minded and evidence-based way. This is essential if we are to continue to deliver our priorities and work hard to deliver against the Council's broader strategic aims. We are supporting our front-line staff and equipping them with the right skills so that they are best placed to support residents and deliver on the aims and ambitions of the strategy.

ECC will seek out opportunities to put libraries at the heart of our communities and identify how they can be used more and provide a modern offer including to those who are currently not using them.

To reach new customers (non-library users) and make them aware of the library offer (both physical and online resources) outreach events and activities will be undertaken. These will include working with partners/stakeholders and attending events such as school fetes, community events and having a presence at places of high footfall e.g. Colchester Zoo and shopping centre.

5. Update and Next Steps

The first step will be to consult on our key principles which is planned for September and following this we will consult on the draft strategy in October 2021. To identify what would attract non-users and encourage them to access library services it is planned to undertake a questionnaire, via social media, in order to gain insight to potential new library users.

We want the People and Families Scrutiny committee to give your valuable input at this pre-draft stage so that we can work together to meet the Council's strategic aims.

In supporting the County Council's strategic aims, the Committee is invited to contribute to the development of policy and strategy on the proposed ambitions and objectives of the library service in relation to supporting communities and families.

Delivery of the core library service and the library infrastructure are not directly within the remit of this Committee and are overseen by the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It is acknowledged that there could be some overlap with the other key strategic areas during discussion but it has been agreed in advance with the PAF Chairman that this should be limited to where it is considered relevant to the remit of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee.



Library Success and Ambitions



Introduction

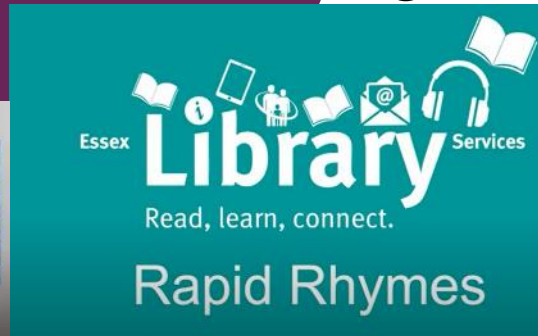
Engaging with residents on changes

- Set the scene and gain feedback
- Introduce draft strategy and launch consultation process



Background

- First in the country to re-open services
- The service has developed over 100 virtual sessions
- We have had over 100,000 views and this number is still growing!

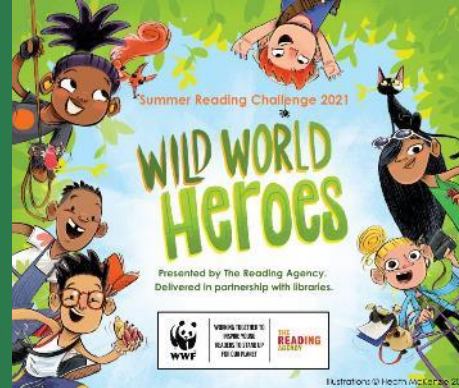


Hi Team. Brian has delivered my books today. He left them on the doorstep. We were in. If he rang the doorbell we didn't hear it. Would you please pass on my grateful thanks. I can now spend the rest of lockdown binge reading William Shaw! I really do appreciate his kindness in delivering the books. Thank you all so much for keeping us going through these difficult times. Kind regards [Redacted]





Summer Reading Challenge



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Rochford Library



Highlights of our upcoming calendar



- Winter Reading Challenge
- Love Your Library days,
- Family Learning Fayres in partnership with ACL and Talk, Listen, Cuddle
- Silver Sunday
- Black History Month.
- Reading Well



Service ambitions

Service
delivery

Improvements to
library infrastructure

Supporting communities
and families



How we will deliver



Our strategy will set out how we will work and makes a clear commitment to working in a joined up, collaborative open-minded and evidence-based way.



Update and next steps

- Consult on our key principles
- Consult on the draft strategy in October 2021.
- People and Families Scrutiny committee to give valuable input so that we can work together to meet the Councils strategic aims.



Thank you

Reference Number: PAF/09/21

Report title: Impact of the pandemic on Children and Families Services and Education Services	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 9 September 2021	For: Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is an update on the impact of the pandemic on Children's and Families Services and Education Services and actions taken to mitigate the impact.

2. Action Required

To consider the update and identify any follow-up scrutiny actions

3. Background

- 3.1 This item was requested during recent discussions as part of the Committee's induction process after the County Council elections in May 2021. The Chairman and Vice Chairman have had subsequent discussions with portfolio holders and senior officers to help plan the update.
- 3.2 Prior to the County Council Elections in May 2021 the Committee did discuss some of the impacts of the pandemic with the most recent discussion being in March 2021 and a link to the meeting documents for that meeting is here - [PAF 18 March 2021 meeting papers](#)

4. Update and Next Steps

- 4.1 Councillors Tony Ball (Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life Long Learning and Employability), Beverley Egan (Cabinet Member – Children's Services and Early Years) and Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance, together with supporting senior officers, will be in attendance for this item.
- 4.2 See Appendices A and B for the update.
- 4.3 Next Steps are as in Action Required above

Cont...

5. List of Appendices

- (i) Appendix A – Children and Families Services –
Children and Young People – Impacts of the pandemic
- (ii) Appendix B - Impact of Covid on the Education System

Due to its length, the following further background document has been published separately - Education settings - Covid-19 CYP Response Plan - Summer 2020.

Children and Families**Children and Young people – Impacts of the pandemic**

There has been on going assessment of how the pandemic has affected children and young people from the perspectives of CYP themselves and the organisations and workforce supporting them and their families.

What follows now is a summary of the issues and impacts felt specifically across both Education and Children and Families Services, as well as the wider system, and includes an overview of the position in respect of children and young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health including suicide and domestic abuse.

- **Children and families - Commissioned services and Social Care**

The number of requests for support coming to the Children and Families Hub did not increase in volume in the initial stages of the pandemic, nor did referrals to Family Solutions. The increases in requests, not surprisingly, coincided with the country coming out of national lockdowns and children and young people returning to school. There was however a marked increase in volume in calls to the Hub Family Consultation line which created tremendous pressure of the staff for a period of time but for now has returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The pandemic has increased complexity in casework. Unaddressed parental and child mental health and wellbeing issues, and hidden domestic abuse, took longer to come to light and problems have been more entrenched. So, the number of children subject of a child protection plan has increased significantly, and it is taking social workers longer to affect positive change. The economic impact of the pandemic and EU withdrawal means we expect to see more children living in poverty, and given the strong association between poverty and entry into care, we expect the number of children in care to increase, placing a significant financial pressure on the service.

We have an excellent edge of care offer, and the specialist, D-Bit service prevents over 70% of the children it works with entering care. Furthermore, for cases in the pre-proceedings process 40% have a positive outcome, and our approach to this work is regarded as best practice, nationally.

The pandemic has created a backlog in the Court process. Cases in care proceedings are expected to be concluded within 26 weeks but have taken 52 weeks or longer. This has created additional work pressure in the system, with more visits to the family, updated or repeated assessments. While the number of delayed cases is reducing this will be an issue for some months to come.

We have 1,091 children in care at present. At 34 per 10,000, this is one of the lowest rates for children in care in England and reflects the outstanding work of social workers and partner agencies. However, the pre-pandemic average for the preceding two years was around 1060, and this number is currently increasing. As Corporate Parents, we are expected to make sure that the care those children

receive, would be of a standard we would expect for our own children. We need the right children to be in care.

Of the children in care, around 100 are unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC). Given the traumatic experiences prior to leaving their country of origin, care is taken to support their mental wellbeing and connect them to their community and culture. For those from Afghanistan, this is a particularly traumatic period.

Across the country there is an over-representation of some children of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in children's social care systems, and Essex is no different. We are working to understand these differences, and make sure that our service offer meets the needs of all Essex children.

- **Working together across the children and Families and Education**

At the start of the pandemic our objective was to ensure that those most vulnerable were supported from both a practical and welfare perspective. CYP with SEND and their families were identified as some of the most vulnerable families particularly those classified as Clinical Extremely Vulnerable.

Safeguarding, Communications, supporting those with specific health needs, personal welfare, educational provision, and practical help were key considerations for those working together across Education, Social Care, Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, Commissioners and other partners. The development of a robust Children and Young People's Response Plan set out expectations around safeguarding for all settings, with advice on how to escalate any concerns and also set a framework for working with other partners. Weekly meetings ensured that these families were receiving the support they needed.

Whilst the pandemic has undoubtedly had social, emotional and physical impacts on these children and people and has resulted in increased pressure on their families, the plans were effective in mitigating the impacts that might come about by loss of communication with schools, health and social care; lack of access to school and education; preventing safeguarding issues.

- **Emotional wellbeing and mental health**

Whilst our Essex insight tells us the vast majority of children and young people have coped extraordinarily well throughout the pandemic, for some this has not been the case, and not surprisingly the biggest impact has been on those already experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health challenges.

The pandemic has put a huge strain on many young people who were already struggling with their mental health, because of traumatic experiences, social isolation, a loss of routine and a breakdown in formal and informal support.

Low mood and anxiety caused by issues such as social isolation, lack of physical activity, disruption to routines, exams, and family life has manifest in several ways including for example risky behaviour or self-harm. There are some young people

who have had to deal with multiple pressures, especially those who have been bereaved or experienced other trauma during this time.

The second lockdown has proven to be more problematic for some who in a national survey identified that the rapid return to academic pressure, after six months away, was having a negative impact and at a local level we are preparing for that.

Where young people have significant mental health issues requiring hospital admission a national shortage of Tier 4 beds is resulting in young people being supported in the community and as a result timely and specialist treatment is significantly delayed. Children's social care are struggling to manage these high-risk young people whilst beds become available.

Support has been given to schools since children and young people returned to full education in September 2020. This support included guidance documents for all Essex schools/settings supporting staff, children and young people and families. This was called 'Recovery and Return' which was aligned to the DfE Wellbeing for Education Return agenda.

The Recovery and Return and Trauma Perceptive Practice have been the core approaches to supporting emotional wellbeing and mental health. The values and mindset; compassion and kindness, hope, connection and belonging, help adults to understand the impact of isolation and how the intent to support connection and engagement are vital as society continues to come out of the restrictions put in place.

The programme included:

Recovery and Returning to Educational Settings Part 1:

Training Webinars focusing on:

- staff wellbeing: now viewed 2268 times
- children and young people wellbeing: now viewed 1546 times
- Further useful supporting documents were also published

Recovery and Returning to Educational Settings Part 2:

6 webinars related to the following mental health and wellbeing themes

Theme	No. of Views
Bereavement & other loss	685
Anxiety & low mood	581
Neuroscience of the stress response	361
Psychologically informed first aid	488
5 Rs & One Planning	299
Long term whole school approach	216

Recovery and Returning to Educational Settings Part 3:

2 webinars for families recorded. Looking after yourself and Looking after your family: in total 800 views since March 2021. Information posters for specific areas of need presenting through lockdown have been prepared on the themes of disorderly eating, self-injury, and loneliness and isolation (examples of the posters are below)

Let's Talk: Loneliness & Isolation

Covid-19 has had an impact on the lives of children, young people and families in Essex. Loneliness and isolation have been identified as an increasing concern for all ages.

If you are worried about a child or young person feeling lonely or isolated, there are things you can do to help.

If you are noticing any changes from a child/young person's presentation, be curious with the family to find out more. Remember to discuss confidentiality agreement and boundaries with the pupil before having conversations with them.

Look

- Are they spending increasing time on their own?
- Are there changes in their engagement in social situations?
- Are there changes in their relationships with friends and family?

Listen

- Others saying that they are not engaging as before (clubs etc)
- Crying, sadness, low mood, anger, expressing their loneliness
- Changes in connection-seeking behaviours

Say

- "I've noticed... and I'm wondering what's happening?"
- "Let's think about this together."
- "Help is available for you."

Do

- Offer emotional support, let them know you care with regular check-ins
- Involve them and their peers in acts of kindness and belonging
- Think with the child/young person about distraction and coping techniques e.g. music, breathing exercises, writing their thoughts down
- Gentle encouragement and scaffolding where needed

Signpost

- Essex Youth Service <https://youth.essex.gov.uk/>
- Kooth.com <https://www.kooth.com/> & Togetherall <https://togetherall.com/en-gb/>
- Essex Wellbeing Service essex.gov.uk/wellbeing (for education staff and families)
- EWMS EP helpline: <https://bit.ly/3bvdn2m>
- Shout text service: 85258

Essex promotes the values of Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) in all that we do:

Compassion & Kindness Hope Connection & Belonging

Other topics available in this series of posters: **Disordered Eating, Self-Injury and Social, Emotional and Mental Health Pillars.**

If you found this poster useful and would like to propose more themes to add to the range, please get in touch: semstrategy@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council

Let's Talk: Social, Emotional & Mental Health Pillars

All children, young people and families will need a holistic period after this latest lockdown. This should be a whole school/setting approach.

Some may need a focused recovery intervention programme, personalised to their needs. This needs to be viewed in terms of short, medium and long term.

Pillars of Recovery

Pillar 1: Relationships providing the compassion and kindness

We cannot underestimate the impact of the loss of that social interaction. It is key to their holistic development. For most children and young people, their daily goal in going to school is not just to learn, but to see their friends. This provides them with a sense of self-worth and belonging that only a peer group can offer.

Pillar 2: Openness and understanding providing the hope

Hope enables individuals to look forward in life instead of being stuck in the past. Opportunities for growth is the hope. It enables people to bounce back from stressful life experiences with increased resilience.

Pillar 3: Time and space to be, freedom and fun providing the connection and belonging

Connecting with others makes us feel safe and provides a sense of belonging that we all need. Improving someone's relationships within their positive social network increases their resilience. Being kind and connected is the best thing we can do for each other. Everyone must have quality relationships with at least one adult and one friend.

Essex promotes the values of Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) in all that we do:

Compassion & Kindness Hope Connection & Belonging

Other topics available in this series of posters: **Disordered Eating, Self-Injury & Loneliness & Isolation**

If you found this poster useful and would like to propose more themes to add to the range, please get in touch: semstrategy@essex.gov.uk

Essex County Council

The Essex Youth Service have been targeting vulnerable young people in the year groups 9- 12 to support resilience and emotional wellbeing.

The council's commissioned services have and continue to play a significant role in mitigating the negative impacts on children and young people the pandemic is having on them. All organisations, without exception, were willing to redeploy capacity around the system to ensure children and young people were able to access support early if needed. From the Essex children and Family Wellbeing Service redeploying staff to the Essex Welfare Service, to providers of SEND Short breaks clubs providers making welfare calls and providing practical and emotional wellbeing support for families, the pandemic has demonstrated how agile and flexible local organisations and their workforce is. The speed with which the Voluntary and Community Sector responded to calls to provide additional emotional wellbeing and welfare support for children and families was remarkable and they continue to provide a firm foundation for those families need some extra help.

The anticipated increase in rates of suicide and domestic abuse have not materialised in Essex but the increasing complexity of those cases coming through for support from services has and should be a cautionary indication that the current synopsis of the mental health and emotional health wellbeing of children and young people is not a one-off position and we should be mindful that some of the worst emotional wellbeing and mental health impacts are more likely to be felt in the months and years to come.

Impact of Covid on the Education System:

1. Introduction.

The impact of Covid on the education system has been immense, not just the impact on children and young people with regards to levels of lost learning and impact on emotional wellbeing and mental health, but on the entire workforce and system as a whole. In Essex, we are incredibly proud of the response from the whole education system 0-25 to Covid and the prioritisation of children and young people's education, safety and wellbeing.

Appendix 1 provides a timeline of the key milestones over the past 18 months as they affected every early years' setting, school and college across Essex.

2. National Research into the impact of the lockdowns on lost learning.

The Education Policy Institute have published some high-level research into the impact of the lockdowns on lost learning during the first lockdown. Their research compared the outcomes of pupils in autumn 2020 to those of earlier cohorts and found:

- All year groups experienced lost learning in Reading. In primary schools this was typically between 1.7 and 2.0 months, in secondary (years eight and nine) 1.6 and 2.0 months respectively.
- Learning losses in mathematics were greater, on average 3.0 months
- Disadvantaged pupils experienced higher levels of learning losses compared to their non-disadvantaged peers.

3. The impact on education services in Essex and our response – key areas:

3.1 The Children and Young People's Response Plan and Multi Agency working.

There are circa 217,000 pupils attending school aged between 5 and 16, circa 33,000 3- and 4-year-olds attending early years settings and circa 32,000 16–18-year-olds in school, college or apprenticeship providers.

During the first week of the national lockdown in March 2020, 2000 children attended schools. These were children of critical workers and vulnerable children (those with a social worker or EHCP). A much smaller number attended early years settings. This meant over 222,000 children and young people were at home, which posed a potential significant safeguarding risk.

Working with social care colleagues, we very quickly developed and put in place the Children and Young People's Response Plan. The Plan can be found here: -

[Education Settings, Covid Response Plan](#)

This plan set out expectations around safeguarding for all settings, with advice on how to escalate any concerns and also set a framework for working with other partners. The plan included a system of welfare checks where every setting was expected to contact every child at least weekly and more frequently if they were deemed to be vulnerable. Advice and support was given to schools about any concerns they may have had following the conversations with children and families and how they could escalate those concerns. This process was key to the education system's ability to have oversight of the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people.

During the second national lockdown, as the DfE set clear expectations about the quantity and quality of remote education, this became easier for schools, but did not replace the need for having a discussion with pupils and their families.

Multi Agency working strengthened significantly during the pandemic and is a strength that we will retain as we move into the renewal phase.

3.2 Engagement with schools.

The majority of the Education Directorate's work during the pandemic was supporting settings, schools and colleges. This was done through a number of mechanisms including:

- Daily (or more often if needed) emails with full guidance and information to schools, settings and colleges.
- Digesting and summarising the plethora of DfE guidance, which often was released during the night or at weekends. During the COVID19 outbreak, the School Communications Team has produced **300+** pieces of guidance to support schools, settings and colleges and interpreted the **600+ different** instances of guidance issued by the DfE. Frequent FAQ documents have also been produced.
- Meeting three times a week with the professional associations and the teaching unions to discuss concerns, challenges and to problem solve.
- Holding webinars with Dr Mike Gogarty to discuss public health concerns and the epidemiology data and to support schools to manage their protective measures, outbreaks and wider concerns they had.
- Working with all schools, settings and colleges to manage outbreaks.
- Phone calls to leaders offering support and guidance in and outside of working hours
- Writing numerous letters to parents outlining periods of closure and then wider and full opening.

This is just a snapshot of the engagement and full details can be found in the supporting document - Education Covid19 Programme.

3.3 Engagement with district and boroughs.

The Director of Education attended the Covid Outbreak Management Board, chaired by the Leader, Cllr Finch. Updates included levels of attendance, details on outbreaks, details on changes to protective measures and preparing for the wider and full opening of educational establishments and discussing any local issues. Children travelling to and from school was a key local issue in September 2020, when schools fully opened. The Director of Education and Assistant Director for NE Essex are members of the Essex Health Protection Board.

3.4 Supporting children and young people with SEND during the pandemic.

The local area supported children and young people with SEND and their families in five key areas during the pandemic:

Safeguarding

Safeguarding all children and young people but particularly those who are vulnerable (including those with SEND) was the local area's main priority:

- Implementation of the Children and Young People's Response Plan (see section 3.1).
- Weekly meetings were held with Education, Social Care, the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service and other partners to joint plan and discuss challenges and barriers.
- Regular briefings and updates were sent to all settings and partners.
- New resources and materials to support safeguarding were made available.
- All efforts were made to enable settings to accommodate vulnerable children and young people on site rather than via remote education.

Communications

- Weekly meetings across health (five CCGs), Education, Social Care and parents (the Essex Family Forum) to share key message and discuss challenges and barriers.
- Regular meetings with Essex special schools with multi-agency input to find solutions and provide support.
- Weekly drop-ins from Feb '21, open to representatives from any support group for parents of children or young people with SEND to respond to the increase in the number of contacts being made by parents to their group/service, as families worked through the complications of remote learning, changes in routines and less opportunities for breaks outside the home.

Supporting specific health needs

- Multi-agency approach to providing advice and guidance for schools and settings where children and young people require Aerosol Generating Procedures (AGP).
- Specific and targeted as well as general support for schools and settings on the mental health needs of staff as well as children and young people.
- Provision and delivery of PPE to keep schools and settings open.

- Support for those who were shielding.

Welfare

- Support for schools to facilitate home learning.
- Delivery of regular welfare calls to the families of vulnerable children and young people.
- Additional support during school holidays.
- Development of materials and resources to support well-being.

Provision

- Supporting transport operators to continue to get children to school despite challenges of social distancing.
- Multi-agency approach to individual children and young people.
- Developing school and setting based training to ensure that 'reasonable endeavours' were made to continue to make provision beyond education for children and young people with SEND.
- Development of multi-agency risk assessments to inform decision making and engagement with families.
- Additional resources to support delivery of education either on-site or virtually.

3.5 Early Years Sector

The early years and childcare sector started to re-open from June 2020. The majority of the providers have been open since the start of the Autumn 2020 term and remained open since and throughout the last lockdown period. Overall, the attendance levels of pre-school aged children remained relatively low during the Autumn term, with a cautious increase of numbers since the beginning of 2021 returning to more expected levels by the end of the Summer 2021 term.

To date, very few early years and childcare providers have closed as a result of the pandemic, but the early years sector is reporting significantly increased financial pressures. These pressures have been further heightened where providers have needed to close or partially close due to positive Covid cases within the staff or children and their families

The early years sector are also reporting an impact on some of the children returning to their childcare setting, with speech and language delays and social skills being mostly affected

3.6 Levels of attendance from March 2021

Average attendance levels across primary, secondary and special schools stood between 92% and 94% since full opening in March 2021, which is a strong level of attendance. It did dip towards the end of term due to year 11 and year 13 pupils no longer in attendance and the number of pupils required to self-isolate as case rates significantly increased during June and July.

3.7 Elective Home Education

During September 2020, we saw a significant increase in parents seeking to electively home educate their children.

We made contact with all families who elected to home educate during the last academic year, to ensure that parents were fully aware of the financial and school place implications that their decision would bring; and it was clear from these discussions (particularly during the Autumn Term 2020) that such decisions were, in the main, made due to anxieties linked to Covid or their desire to maintain a small bubble. This was mainly in relation to any health concerns within the household and shielding requirements for those deemed clinically extremely vulnerable.

The table below shows the comparative figures by quadrant.

All Pupils	Primary		Secondary		Total	
	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20
Mid	222	158	227	124	449	282
North	239	148	209	153	448	301
South	253	159	258	193	511	352
West	184	96	201	141	385	237

3.8 Supporting children eligible for free school meals

School meals have been provided to all pupils eligible for free school meals throughout the pandemic. Schools have provided this during the lockdowns through either the national portal or by providing food parcels. Since September 2020, the funding has been passed to local authorities. We have procured a system from a provider called Wonde who schools use to issue free school meal vouchers directly to parents.

4. The Essex Education Taskforce

During February 2021, following discussions with the Executive Director of Children, Families and Education and the Lead Member for Education regarding concerns about the impact on children's learning of a second national lockdown, a proposal was put together to form a strategic group that would work on behalf of the education system in Essex to oversee the education recovery of children and young people. This proposal was supported politically and announced in the Leader's budget speech at the full council meeting in February 2021. A commitment of £1.5m was allocated from council reserves with an additional £0.5m to support the extension of the holiday activity fund. Of the £1.5m, £0.5m is earmarked to support children's mental health

The Taskforce was formed in May 2021 and is chaired by Roy Blatchford CBE, founder of the National Education Trust, former Ofsted Inspector and Chair of the Association of Secondary School and College Leaders review into the Forgotten Third. There have been two meetings to date and the current priorities of the Taskforce are:

- Investment in Pre-school language professional development.
- Investment in supporting vulnerable students at 16+, moving into FE Colleges.
- Investment in the voluntary sector to provide summer and future holiday outdoor learning/residential for most vulnerable students and those with SEND.
- Investment in creating transition coaches for vulnerable children and those with SEND in Year 6, moving from primary to secondary school.
- Investment in leaders and their coaching and wellbeing.
- Investment in teenage wellbeing.
- Investment in reading, with a focus on the primary /secondary transition years: Years 5-8.

It is proposed that the calendar year 2022 will be the 'Essex Year of Reading'.

Further details can be found in the Press Release issued in June 21 at Appendix 2. Both Roy Blatchford and Robert Halfon MP featured in a BBC Essex Interview in June.

5. Other areas of innovation / collaboration

Schools within School Partnerships have supported the response to the COVID-19 crisis in the way in which they have liaised with each other; so many school partnerships have become stronger as a result. The partnerships have used a variety of ways of keeping in touch and facilitated collaboration throughout the crisis. They have used Zoom, WhatsApp groups, partnership meetings and e-mail contact to work together on a variety of common issues such as:

- Re-opening and re-integration arrangements
- Transition
- Staffing issues
- Advice on DfE guidance
- Sharing policies and examples of practice e.g., sharing 'return to school action plans'
- Provision for key worker children

Other areas School partnerships have collaborated on are:

- Virtual training opportunities
- Bereavement counselling
- Sharing premises
- Organising shared cover arrangements over holiday periods when schools had to remain open

As a Local Authority we have met with School Partnership Leads to support them in working with their groups of schools throughout this time and provided advice and guidance as to the types of work on which they may wish to collaborate for their mutual benefit.

We have also supported the wellbeing of school leaders throughout the pandemic, through the development of the School Leader Wellbeing programme and worked with governors to ensure that they are prioritising the wellbeing of their leaders.

6. Conclusion

The pandemic has been challenging for everyone and education is no exception in that regards, however it has been a vital part of this country's response to Covid19 which has not been as widely understood as the health and social care response.

Even during the lockdowns, schools, settings and colleges have remained open and operated a remote education offer, something new for everyone. Education leaders have spent more time on implementing infection control measures than overseeing the quality of teaching and learning. Risk Assessments have become part of everyday life, as has dealing with children, young people and staff who have tested positive and undertaking contact tracing and bubble management. The pandemic has tested the resilience of every education leader including the education directorate workforce but as a result of that, the relationship and level of trust between the local authority and education leaders is stronger than ever.

The priority now is to ensure that no child or young person's education is adversely affected by the pandemic in the long term and to support the significant increase in emotional wellbeing and mental health issues that are starting to present. The challenges will continue to be immense.

7. Testimonials:

We have received so many testimonials over the last 18 months, which have continued to shape the work of the programme. Three recent examples are below:

Primary School Headteacher July 21

I hope you don't mind this direct email but I just wanted to say a huge thank you for the incredible way you have helped manage and guide us all through these past eighteen months.

Your reassuringly strong leadership has gone an immeasurable way in helping me feel able to meet some of the challenges and difficulties - and often has just helped in the keeping on keeping on of the relentlessness of it all. It really has felt like you have had our backs which has made the job feel so much more 'do-able'.

I have appreciated your very regular updates, the webinars, the meetings - and the encouraging words that have sat alongside all of them.

It has often felt overwhelming but you have conveyed a sense of purposeful calm which has felt steady and enabling.

So thank you, very genuinely, thank you.

Special School Headteacher, August 21:

Having had a good period of reflection on these troubled times we have all lived through with COVID I wish to go on record as saying that I cannot speak highly enough of the unerring support offered by the LA in general and you and Ralph Holloway in particular. There were many occasions when schools were feeling lost, isolated and vulnerable. You found us, shared with us and comforted us.

The LA under your leadership showed real empathy, kindness and understanding.

I have been privileged to experience this.

Secondary School Headteacher, Christmas 2020:

Just a quick message from me, thank you so much for what you are doing and how you are supporting us. Being a head is hard enough, I can't imagine the challenges you are facing each day.

Everyone is always willing to moan but it is more important to say thank you. Keep going, i hope you get some quality time with your family over Christmas.

You and your team have been excellent, it is much appreciated.

Appendix 1 – Timeline of events.

February – March 2020	Schools and Early Years settings struggled to stay open due to staff and pupils requiring to self-isolate.
Friday 18 th March 2020	Announcement by Gavin Williams that schools and settings would close for the majority of pupils.
Monday 23 rd March 2020	Schools and settings closed to all but children of critical workers and vulnerable pupils.
Tuesday 24 th March 2020	England goes into a national lockdown.
Tuesday 24 th March 2020	2000 children are attending Essex schools. 215,000 children are at home.
March 2020	Announcement that KS2 SAT's / GCSE's and A-Level examinations would be cancelled - no indication given of the process to replace them
March 2020 – May 2020	Schools operate a remote education offer to all pupils not on site Schools remain open during school holidays for critical worker children
June - September 2020	Early Years settings welcome back pupils. Primary Schools welcome back pupils in years R, 1 and 6. Secondary Schools welcomed back students in Yr. 11 and 13
August 2020	A-Level results published following a process of Centre Assessed Grade and a national algorithm. National outcry that the algorithm disadvantaged many pupils – algorithm scrapped for GCSE results the following week. Students were awarded the higher of their teacher assessed grade or grade produced by the algorithm.
September 2020	Full return to schools for all pupils. Protective measures in place including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staggered start and finish times• Pupils put together in bubbles• Extra cleaning and hygiene measures• Ventilation

	If a pupil tests positive after showing symptoms, the whole bubble is required to self-isolate and move to remote education
December 2020	Essex placed into Tier 4. Infections rates in secondary schools increase significantly. Greenwich LA advise their schools to switch to a full remote education offer to try to control the spread of the infection. The DfE force Greenwich to overturn this decision
30 th December 2020	Gavin Williamson announces that the DfE Contingency Framework will apply to some parts of the country and that secondary schools start in January will be delayed by 2 weeks.
31 st December 2020	Details of the contingency plan are published. All schools in Essex to remain closed expect primary schools in Colchester, Tendring and Uttlesford.
1 st January– 3 rd January 2021	Discussions take place to keep all Essex Schools closed
3 rd January 2021	Cllr Finch requests that the Secretary of State enacts the contingency framework in Colchester, Tendring and Uttlesford to keep all schools closed
4 th January 2021	Second National Lockdown is announced, all schools to remain closed expect for children of critical workers and vulnerable children. The list of eligible critical workers is significantly expanded. Early Years Settings and Special Schools are required to stay open for all pupils. A directive is published by the DfE setting out the minimum expectations on the remote education offer. Examinations are cancelled for the summer 2021
8 th March 2021	Schools fully open again for all pupils All secondary students encouraged to test twice weekly. They are tested on the school's site 3 times before full attendance begins. Face coverings are required to be worn on home to school transport and when moving around the school for those eligible.

	Bubbles are required to self-isolate
July 2021	Infection rates soar in schools. During the week of the 19 th July 2021 over 750 positive cases are reported into the School Communications Team.
August 2021	<p>A-Level and GCSE results are announced, based purely on Teacher Assessed Grades</p> <p>All Covid restrictions are lifted including the need to self isolate if identified as a contact.</p>
September 2021	<p>Preparing for the new academic year, this includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On site testing for all secondary pupils - 2 tests prior to attending • The removal of the need for bubbles to self-isolate • Removal of all social distancing requirements • Schools to update their risk assessment and produce an outbreak management plan.

Appendix 2 – Essex Education Task Force Press Release

Essex Education Task Force unveils plan for education renewal

The task force will invest £1million to ensure that every child in Essex leaves school able to read at their age level or better.

The newly formed Essex Education Task Force has announced it will invest £1million in reading over the next 18 months, to support children and young people affected by the loss of learning and missed opportunities during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Marked by the launch of a new campaign, *Essex Year of Reading 2022*, the group's aim is to ensure that every Essex child leaves school able to read at their age level or better.

The investment is part of ambitious plans to address the short- and long-term impact of Covid-19 on children and young people's education.

In addition, the task force plans to invest £500,000 into mental health and emotional wellbeing support. This includes pledging commitments and resources in the following areas:

- Providing transition coaches for vulnerable children moving from primary to secondary school
- Helping vulnerable students over 16 years of age move into further education
- Providing £100,000 of funding to the voluntary sector for the provision of summer and half-term holiday outdoor learning for vulnerable students and those with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- Investment in the wellbeing of leaders
- Investment in early years' language development.

Roy Blatchford CBE, Independent Chair of the Essex Education Task Force, said: "We know that being able to read confidently is the key to being a successful learner in all other areas of life. We strongly believe this investment will help those who have fallen behind with their reading over the past year and help them to thrive in other aspects of their education. Together, with the additional commitments we have outlined, we will help children and young people prosper after a very disruptive time.

"During the roll out of the Year of Reading, we will be working with many local partners across Essex such as libraries, Adult Community Learning, and local businesses, in addition to schools and colleges. We also recognise the enormous impact that Covid-19 has had on education colleagues. Our plans include additional support and resources to help both their pupils and their own wellbeing."

Cllr Tony Ball, Essex County Council's (ECC) Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training, said: "Investing £1million to improve and promote reading from early years through to schools and into further education, demonstrates the level of our commitment to children and young people across Essex. It has been an incredibly difficult year for them and this additional support will help them to thrive and support education colleagues to enable them to do so.

“We want the county to be at the forefront of shaping education policy and achieving bright futures for all pupils, and are confident that our plans will help to make this a reality.”

The investment plan for the Education Task Force mirrors the three guiding principles of Renewal, Equality and Ambition set out by ECC’s Leader, Cllr Kevin Bentley, in May.

ECC is committed to championing equity, inclusion and excellence for all to ensure that no child in Essex is left behind or disadvantaged from the pandemic.

Following the launch of the Essex Education Task Force, a new website has been created to keep interested parties informed on the Task Force’s priorities and activities, and will be updated in due course.

ENDS

Work Programme

Reference Number: PAF/10/21

Report title: Work Programme	
Report to: People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Report author: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
Date: 9 September 2021	For: Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
Enquiries to: Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The work programme is a standard agenda item. The work programme for the Committee is being developed and the current position is outlined below.

2. Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider this report and issues under consideration in the Appendix and any further development or amendments.

3. Background

3.1 Developing a work programme

The new membership of the Committee was confirmed at Full Council on 25 May 2021. Since then the Committee has held two induction sessions which have included discussions with relevant portfolio holders about their priorities in the coming months. The issues and priorities covered during those discussions have since been further developed into an initial proposed work programme by the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

4. Update and Next Steps

See Appendix.

5. Appendix –

- Initial proposed work programme by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen.

APPENDIX

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date/timing	Issue/Topic	Focus, approach and other comments
9 September 2021	Broader community role for libraries including contributing to levelling up agenda	<p>Policy development input before libraries strategy goes out to formal consultation. This PAF item is cross portfolio and incorporates other possible functions for libraries including levelling up and wider community role and helping with school readiness, literacy, interviews and employability etc.</p> <p>The buildings themselves, the core library service itself and its future model are matters for the Place Scrutiny Committee.</p>
9 September 2021	Covid impact on Children & Families and education services and demand.	High level introduction and overview to key challenges faced and response and actions. In some cases it may then lead to further scrutiny follow-up beyond September.
14 October 2021	Domestic Abuse	Detailed discussion on new responsibilities, trends, challenges and response. There may be brief high-level reference at 9 September meeting as part of Covid impact update (see above).
14 October 2021	Early Years' Strategy	Consider draft of new strategy.
14 October 2021	Home Education/Children missing education	High level overview of remit and work of the Home Education Review Group set up by the County Council. The Review Group will look at elective home education first so the PAF's first update will probably focus on that.
11 November 2021	SEND strategy	Draft strategy ahead of wider consultation
11 November/ 9 December	Safeguarding	<p>Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards present their annual reports to the Board each Autumn. In the past the Children's and Adults Boards' updates have been at separate meetings.</p> <p>In addition to the report of the activities and focus of the Boards, there is usually an in depth review of one or two operational issues - to be identified so that appropriate supporting officers can be identified to attend.</p>

Further issues under consideration

Date/timing	Issue/Topic	Focus/other comments
Further planning and timing TBC	Working Families Programme	Strategy to go to Full Council in October - opportunity for review during September. In discussions it is proposed that this may be undertaken by email correspondence with either the full committee or a small group. TBC
Further planning and timing TBC	Academisation and local system working	Academisation impact and role of Regional Schools Commissioner and the role ECC has in supporting general standards.
Further planning and timing TBC	Drug Gangs, knife crime and County Lines	Further follow-up on recommendations from the PAF Task and Finish Group. Some subject matter may lend itself to being combined with other scheduled agenda items (e.g. Home Education/Children missing education, Safeguarding)
Further planning and timing TBC	Adult social care	As a result of the introductory discussion PAF meeting in July on domiciliary care and residential care trends and pandemic pressures – further follow up issues to be agreed.

Task and Finish Group reviews (to produce a final report for consideration by the Full Committee)

Date/timing	Issue/Topic	Focus/other comments
TBC	Impact of the pandemic on Essex County Council	Format TBC - after initial PAF session on 9 September. Discussion at Scrutiny Board on any cross-committee approach.
TBC	Broader community, children and families' role for libraries	Possible follow-up to initial discussion on 9 September (above) if deemed appropriate.
TBC	Suicide	There may be a brief high-level reference at 9 September meeting as part of emotional wellbeing and mental health update as part of pandemic impact update.
TBC	100 Day Plan	Potentially cross-cutting. Possible approach is to establish a cross-committee joint scrutiny review. Scrutiny Board to determine approach.