

<b>Report title:</b> Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022 -2027	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 3 February 2022	<b>For:</b> Consideration and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

### 1. Introduction

In October 2021 the Committee was consulted on the development of an Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-27 (see Background below). This is the requested follow-up and update on the further development of the Strategy.

### 2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider:

- (i) The attached update; and
- (ii) Identify any follow-up scrutiny actions

### 3. Background

- 3.1 On 14 October 2021 the Committee discussed a draft of the Early Years Strategy 2022-27. A link to the meeting papers for that meeting and the minutes are here –

<https://cmis.essex.gov.uk/essexcmis5/CalendarofMeetings/tabid/73/ctl/ViewMeetingPublic/mid/410/Meeting/4684/Committee/130/Default.aspx>

An extract of the minutes for the discussion are reproduced in Appendix A. It was agreed that a delivery plan/timetable and significant milestones would be brought to the Committee in early 2022, to include a brief executive summary-type overview of a 5-year plan and key objectives.

### 4. Update and Next Steps

The update is attached in the Appendix B. Next steps are as proposed under Action Required.

## **Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022**

Expected attendees to support the discussion:

County Councillor Tony Ball, Cabinet Member – Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability.

Carolyn Terry - EYCC Sufficiency and Sustainability Manager

### **5 List of Appendices**

- A. Extract of the minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 14 October 2021.
- B. Power Point Briefing Paper: Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-27.

### **Extract of the Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.00am on Thursday, 14 October 2021 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford**

#### **4. Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022**

The Committee considered report PAF/11/2021 and the following people from Essex County Council attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

Councillor Beverley Egan – Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Early Years,  
Carolyn Terry – EYCC Sufficiency and Sustainability Manager.

The Committee received a presentation on the background of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy including the consultation and engagements taken place, the positive impact of the previous Strategy and the vision for Early Years and Childcare incorporating the new strategic aims and key priorities.

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted/raised:

- (i) Early identification of the children who needed support was critical. Work was undertaken with the Essex Child Family Wellbeing Service and childcare providers to help identify those children as early as possible.
- (ii) Summer born children could be at a disadvantage and did not always achieve a good level of development and that was mainly due to being a year younger than some of their peers.
- (iii) A non-academic way of assessing a child or young person was being launched across schools in Essex including early years settings.
- (iv) The Free Early Education Entitlement Funding was allocated to Essex based on demographics such as population numbers, indices of deprivation and rurality. There continued to be a national debate around the levels of funding for early years settings and school run settings. Essex was funded on a participation level, with the more children that accessed the funding the more funding Essex received.
- (v) The feedback from the consultation survey formed a big part of the design of the strategy. The survey had been available online but had also been sent to all early years settings and schools, and distributed through the Essex Child Family Wellbeing Service, the Working Families Facebook page and ECC Twitter account.
- (vi) The majority of under-5s attending an early years’ provider would be in a setting rated ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’. Early years settings that did not receive ‘good’ or ‘outstanding’ from Ofsted received intensive support with teams deployed to work with them to help improve their outcomes. If they were unable to improve then any Free Education Entitlement funding could be withdrawn.

## Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022

- (vii) There had not been Good Level of Development data collated at a national level since 2019 due to Covid, with the next collated GLD data to be available in summer 2022. However, in the meantime, preschools would still have been assessing their own children and their levels of development. In the summer holidays some summer holiday activity groups took place to help children's physical and social interaction.
- (viii) Pre-schools and schools ran early years provision only in term time. However, the Essex Wellbeing Service and the Family Hub had comprehensive family support programmes throughout the summer holidays for children that needed more help.
- (ix) All district and borough councils were invited to the engagement sessions and workshops and ECC were keen to engage with them further.
- (x) The engagement sessions had been attended by some childcare providers. As part of the school's forum there was an Early Years Subgroup with representation from each type of childcare setting.
- (xi) A childcare efficiency audit was undertaken every year, to consider future housing developments and the forecast need for each type of childcare setting.
- (xii) There was a childcare brokerage service for parents who were unable to access childcare, the team supported them to look into how they can find childcare and what options there were.

### Conclusion

The Chairman stressed that the strategy was aspirational and that more detail was needed on implementation. It was **agreed** that the following further information be provided:

- (i) A delivery plan/timetable and significant milestones would be brought to the Committee in early 2022, to include a brief executive summary-type overview of a 5-year plan and key objectives;
- (ii) Some further information and analysis of the Word Gap with more Essex context;
- (iii) Further analysis and breakdown of feedback from the various surveys and consultations;
- (iv) More information on numbers accessing funded places and breakdown including disadvantaged children;
- (v) Information on the childcare brokerage service

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting