



Essex County Council

# People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>10:00</b>	<b>Thursday, 14 October 2021</b>	<b>Council Chamber County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH</b>
--------------	--------------------------------------	---

**For information about the meeting please ask for:**

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Telephone:** 033301 34574

**Email:** democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

## Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

### ECC Guest Wifi

For members of the public, you can now access free wifi in County Hall.

- Please log in to 'ECC Guest'
- Follow the instructions on your web browser

### Attendance at meetings

Most meetings are held at County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1LX. [A map and directions to County Hall can be found on our website.](#)

### Access to the meeting and reasonable adjustments

County Hall is accessible via ramped access to the building for people with physical disabilities. The Council Chamber is accessible by lift located on the first and second floors of County Hall. However, access and space for the public is extremely limited due to COVID secure requirements.

Induction loop facilities are available in most Meeting Rooms. Specialist headsets are available from Reception.

## Accessing Documents

If you have a need for documents in, large print, Braille, electronically or in alternative languages and easy read please contact the Democratic Services Officer before the meeting takes place. For further information about how you can access this meeting, contact the Democratic Services Officer.

The agenda is also available on the Essex County Council website, [www.essex.gov.uk](http://www.essex.gov.uk) From the Home Page, click on 'Running the council', then on 'How decisions are made', then 'council meetings calendar'. Finally, select the relevant committee from the calendar of meetings.

## Audio recording of meetings

Please note that in the interests of improving access to the Council's meetings, a sound recording is made of the public parts of many of the Council's Committees. The Chairman will make an announcement at the start of the meeting if it is being recorded.

We are experimentally streaming some meetings on the [ECC Democracy YouTube Channel](#). You may wish to see if this meeting is being streamed but please remember that this is an experimental service. There is also an [audio broadcast accessible via our website](#).

If you are unable to attend and wish to see if the recording is available, you can visit the ECC Democracy YouTube Channel or, for the audio recording check the [Calendar of Meetings](#) any time after the meeting starts. Any audio available can be accessed via the box in the centre of the page, or the links immediately below it.

Should you wish to record the meeting, please contact the officer shown on the agenda front page.

## Pages

\*\*

### **Private Pre-Meeting for PAF Members Only**

Please note that there will be a private pre-meeting for committee members. The pre-meet will be arranged as a virtual meeting the day before and further details will be sent to committee members.

- |          |   |               |
|----------|---|---------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest</b>  | <b>5 - 5</b>  |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Minutes: 9 September 2021</b><br>To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2021. | <b>6 - 11</b> |

- 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](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk) by noon on the day before the meeting (Wednesday 13 October 2021) and that questions must relate to an item on the agenda for the meeting.
- 4 Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022** **12 - 44**
- 5 Home Education and Children Missing Education** **45 - 48**
- 6 Domestic Abuse Update** **49 - 58**
- 7 Work Programme** **59 - 61**
- 8 Date of Next Meeting**  
 To note that the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 10 November 2021, in County Hall.
- 9 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.**

**10**

**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.

**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 9.30am on Thursday, 9 September 2021 in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Chelmsford.**

**Present:**

*County Councillors:*

R Gooding (Chairman)

L Bowers-Flint

M Durham

J Fleming

M Goldman

C Guglielmi

P May

A McGurran

R Playle

A Wiles

Councillor Alan Goggin, in his capacity as Chairman of the Place Services and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee (at the specific invite of the Chairman), 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 June Lumley, Wendy Stamp, Laureen Shaw, Christine Martin from St John Payne Roman Catholic School (Roman Catholic Diocese education representative) and Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex.

**2. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2021 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Questions from the public**

There were no questions from the public.

**4. Essex Libraries Pre-Draft Consultation – further opportunities for People and Families to support the strategy**

The Committee considered report PAF/08/2021 and the following people from Essex County Council attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

Councillor Louise McKinlay – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance [via Zoom link],  
Juliet Pirez – Head of Libraries,  
Elisabeth Sippings, Citizen Services Manager.

The Committee received a presentation from Cllr Louise McKinlay. The presentation provided information on library successes and ambitions such as the Winter Reading Challenge, Silver Sunday and Black History Month and how these would be delivered. Two public engagement sessions were taking place on 20 September 2021 to share and discuss key principles ahead of a public consultation on the draft strategy in October 2021. It was confirmed that the People and Families Scrutiny Committee would have the opportunity to give valuable input to ensure the Council's strategic aims would be met.

Following the presentation, the following was highlighted/raised:

- (i) Members requested that the feedback and findings of the public consultation and public engagement sessions be shared with the Committee prior to the strategy being finalised.
- (ii) Members requested that they be provided with a copy of the previous libraries' consultation from two years ago, so they had some background to the current strategy. Members were informed that not everything had changed since then, and some important groundwork was undertaken to help with the current draft strategy.
- (iii) Throughout the strategy it was important for the needs of local areas to be reflected. Public feedback would be welcomed on what services were needed and it was expected that there would be some local variations to meet differing local needs.
- (iv) Internal data such as data on what books had been taken out and what library spaces were being used would be monitored. Local requirement opportunities would be considered, for example a possible change of opening time hours.
- (v) Volunteers were important but library staff numbers should be protected. Libraries would continue to be run by paid ECC staff.
- (vi) It would be important to hear from non-library users as there was a need to understand why they were not using the library services and to encourage them to do so. Questionnaires would be undertaken via social media and hard copies would be available in some community settings to also seek the views of non-library users.
- (vii) There was a need further promote and market what services were on offer and improve the Outreach offer. Each initiative

would have its own marketing campaign, for example, prior to Black History Month there was going to be a display set up in the libraries.

- (viii) It was confirmed that the consultation process also involved library staff.

#### Conclusion:

It was **agreed** that in recognition of potential overlap with the remit of the Place and Economic Growth Policy and Scrutiny Committee, that the Scrutiny Board would discuss setting up a joint scrutiny review of the ongoing development of the library service, possibly in the form of a Joint Task and Finish Group.

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

#### **5. Impact of the pandemic on Children and Families Services and Education Services**

The Committee considered report PAF/09/21 comprising an update on the impact of the pandemic on Children's and Families Services and Education Services and actions taken to mitigate the impact.

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

Councillor Tony Ball - Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Life-Long Learning and Employability,  
Councillor Beverley Egan - Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years,  
Clare Burrell - Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy,  
Clare Kershaw – Director, Education.

During the discussion, contributors and members all acknowledged the challenges faced during the pandemic and paid tribute to practitioners and staff for their dedication and resourcefulness during this time.

#### **Children services**

CLr Beverley Egan provided an update on Children's Services, and during the discussion the following was acknowledged, highlighted and/or noted:

- (i) The Early Years' Strategy would be considered at a later date by the Committee.
- (ii) In terms of staff wellbeing, a number of staff wellbeing events had been organised.

- (iii) Some Members raised concerns for young children who were unable to socialise and the impact this could have on them in the future when they attend nursery and school.
- (iv) Members requested an update in future on the backlog in the Courts and Justice system and the impact on the Youth Offending Team, fostering and adoption.
- (v) Whilst the Multi-Disciplinary Team pilot in Tendring was originally an 18-month project, it had been delayed due to the pandemic, but it was back up and running and progress would be monitored.
- (vi) An update on County Lines post pandemic was suggested to look at the differences prior to the pandemic, during and now.
- (vii) Use of webinars were part of the recovery process and were accessible to schools when they needed them.
- (viii) During the first lockdown the Children and Young People's response plan was produced to provide guidance and advice around welfare checks and for schools to help support their vulnerable children.
- (ix) It was important that teachers were also receiving wellbeing support. There was also a County Headteacher Wellbeing Programme which included support for governors and teachers.
- (x) Further information on the trend of children being placed outside the county was requested. Members also referenced the Good Law Project legal challenge.
- (xi) The County Council worked collaboratively with other councils in the region in supporting asylum seekers.

### **Education Services**

Cllr Tony Ball and Clare Kershaw provided an update to Members on Education Services, during the discussion the following was acknowledged, highlighted and/or noted:

- (i) All schools were open and operating with a more normalised setting. The County Council was offering support to encourage high levels of attendance and regular testing of children as part of getting back into routines and schools being a stabilising factor for children.
- (ii) A big challenge of remote education was the issue on digital divide. The Council worked with schools to ensure every young

- person had access to a laptop and connectivity. Further information on where laptops were distributed was requested.
- (iii) There had been higher levels of absence in the education system due to self-isolating, and the numbers being home educated had also increased as some families wanted to shield themselves.
  - (iv) Schools had contact with all children during the closures and more regular contact with vulnerable children. However, it was acknowledged that during the pandemic any family could have become vulnerable. A contact number was provided through the Education Workforce where schools could go for further support, the Children and Families Wellbeing Service was used as a support service in terms of families that were struggling with lockdown.
  - (v) Some Members raised concerns about the difference in attainment between private and public sector schools and suggested that the gap was widening. Reference was made to the OFQual report expected later in the year. There would be a need to rebase the system at the end of the academic year and focus on the inequalities within the state sector. It was stressed that it was important that employers did not see it as a downgrading of the assessment process over the last two years.
  - (vi) Concerns were raised regarding the lack of regulations around home-schooled children.
  - (vii) Annual checks were undertaken by the County Council on home-schooled children. Children's services could intervene if safeguarding concerns were raised and advice and support would be given to families if the education standards were identified as low. A School Attendance Order could be issued for the child to go back into a school if required standards could not be met.
  - (viii) The Educational Task Force had set a target that all children would be at the national reading age or above. Members commented on the aspirations of the Group and whether they were realistic. It was suggested that a further scrutiny discussion on evaluation of the Group's targets could be scheduled in the future.
  - (ix) Funds had been put into the Education Task Force for residential activities, and that activities would go ahead during October half term and the Christmas holidays.
  - (x) It was confirmed that SATs were going ahead. Performance measures would be incorporated in the Corporate Strategy and a

future update for the Committee on educational attainment would be scheduled in early 2022.

Conclusion

As identified above, it was **agreed** that the following further information be provided:

- (i) the trend of children being placed outside Essex;
- (ii) the backlog in the Courts and Justice system and the impact on the Youth Offending Team, fostering and adoption;
- (iii) numbers and where laptops were distributed

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting.

**6. Work Programme**

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/10/21 comprising the work programme for the Committee.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 14 October 2021.

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

**Chairman**

<b>Report title: Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 14 October 2021	<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

The Committee has previously been consulted on the development of an Early Years and Childcare Strategy (see Background below). This is a further update on 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 The Committee last discussed the Early Years Strategy as part of a broader Education update at its meeting on 8 October 2020. Links to the relevant meeting paper for that meeting and the minutes are here –

[PAF 8 Oct 2020 agenda paper - Early Years and Childcare Strategy](#)

[PAF 8 Oct 2020 minutes](#)

## 4. Update and Next Steps

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

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**

Power Point Briefing Paper: Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022



# Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022

Page 14 of 61

# Background

- The Early Years and Childcare Strategy (EY&CC) 2015–2018 set out the specific commissioning and operational approach that delivered the strategic direction for the Authority, and the Council’s early years and childcare statutory duties.
- This created the conditions to give all children the best possible opportunity to succeed; to thrive in school and be able to make a positive contribution throughout their lives.
- A cross directorate team was put together to review the EY&CC Strategy 2015–2018, understand the current landscape, produce and implement a new version of the Strategy.
- During the Discovery phase the project team did an;
  - Analysis of the Essex GLD data.
  - Initial engagement with schools, early years settings and parents.
  - Initial review of the impact of Covid-19.
  - Horizon scanning.
  - A series of workshops with key ECC staff
- The Project team then entered the design phase to produce a draft of the new EY&CC Strategy 2022. which was then developed with all key stakeholders during stakeholder engagement and finalised ready for Governance to approve the go live in January 2022.



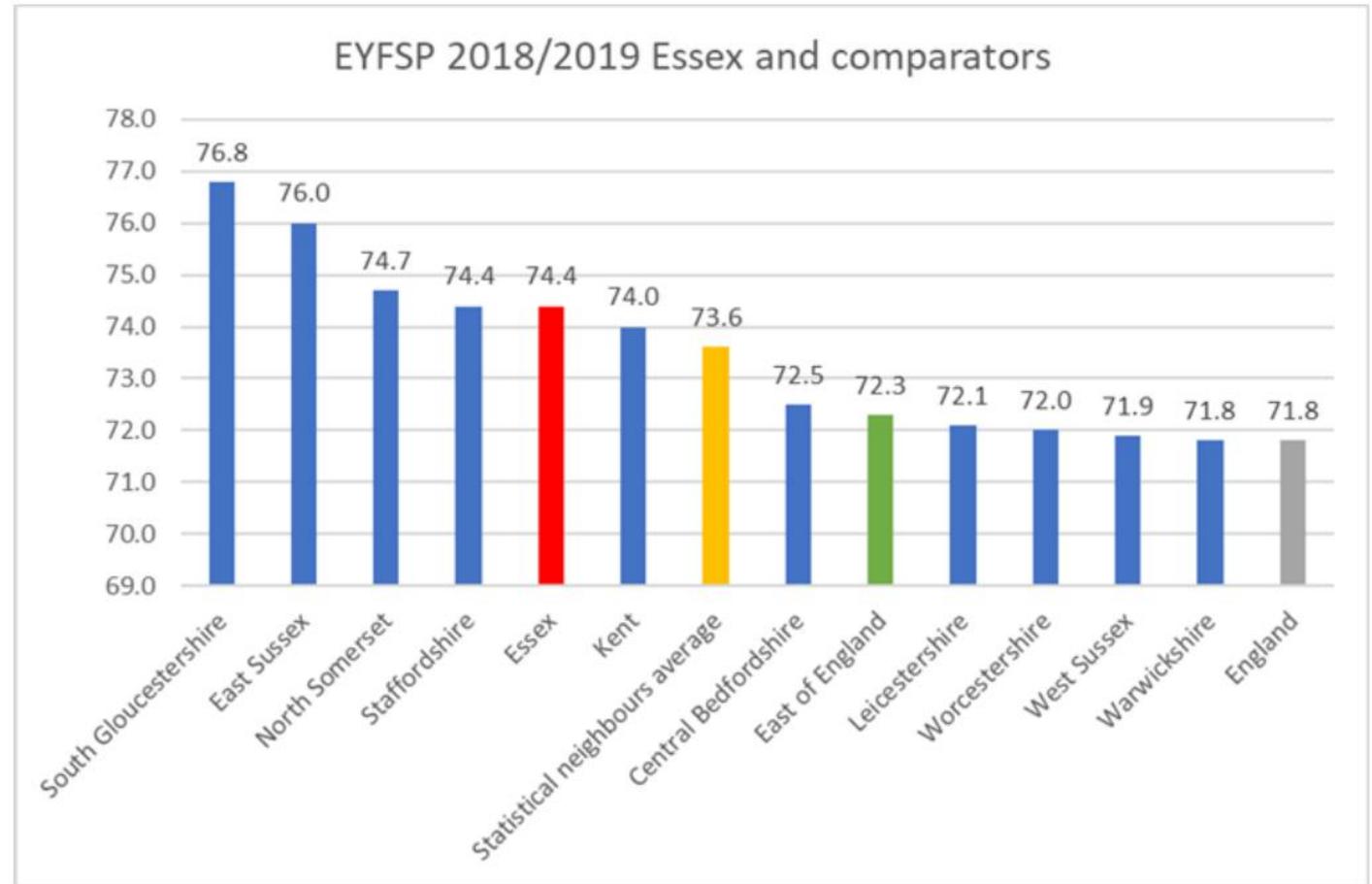
# About this Strategy

- This Strategy sets out a high-level overview of the different things we intend to do to achieve our intentions building on the outcomes of the previous Strategy.
- This Strategy has been developed through engagement with a variety of people who work with children and young people in Essex. We also spoke to families through a survey, to which over 1,200 parents responded.
- We have used this engagement to develop our thinking and have shared back what we have been planning to do to ensure it makes sense to everyone and reflects what they think are the things we should be focusing on.
- As we implement this Strategy, we will continue to engage with parents, professionals and volunteers and with children and young people to ensure we continue to do the right things to address need and so we know if what we are doing is having an impact.



# Positive Impact of the last Strategy

- During the life cycle of the last strategy we continued to improve the Good Level of Development (GLD\*) from 67.7% to 74.4%.
- The introduction of the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing service which is a pre birth to 19 integrated service delivery model
  - Joined up offer
  - Upskilling the workforce
  - Reducing parents need to tell their story more than once
  - Bring all these elements together into one service offer (Early Learning, Health and Family support inc Parenting)
- Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) 93.3% take up for 3&4 year olds, against an England average of 89.7%.
- Of those Childcare providers that have had an Ofsted inspection 96.6% received a Good or Outstanding judgement.



\*GLD is part of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) and refers to a summative assessment judgement which is made for each EYFS child at the end of the Reception year. It is a measure of attainment, not progress. Achieving a good level of development will help a child to make a good start in Year 1.

# Early Years and 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



# Our Strategy Aims

To implement our vision, we have agreed the following six aims:



1. CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES ACHIEVE THEIR POTENTIAL WITH SUPPORT FROM AN EFFECTIVE AND CONNECTED EARLY YEARS SYSTEM THAT HAS A CLEAR VISION, PURPOSE, AND DIRECTION



2. ALL CHILDREN HAVE A POSITIVE JOURNEY THROUGH THEIR EARLY YEARS AND ARE WELL SUPPORTED TO TRANSITION TO RECEPTION AND START YEAR 1



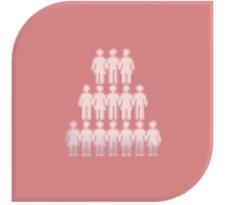
3. CHILDREN WHO MAY BE AT RISK OF POOR OUTCOMES ARE PRIORITISED FOR HIGH QUALITY TARGETED SUPPORT



4. CHILDREN'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IS EXPERTLY SUPPORTED BY A STRONG, SKILLED, AND KNOWLEDGEABLE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE SYSTEM WORKFORCE



5. PARENTS CAN ACCESS AFFORDABLE, SUFFICIENT, HIGH QUALITY AND FULLY INCLUSIVE CHILDCARE PLACES THAT SUPPORT EARLY LEARNING AND WORKING PARENTS



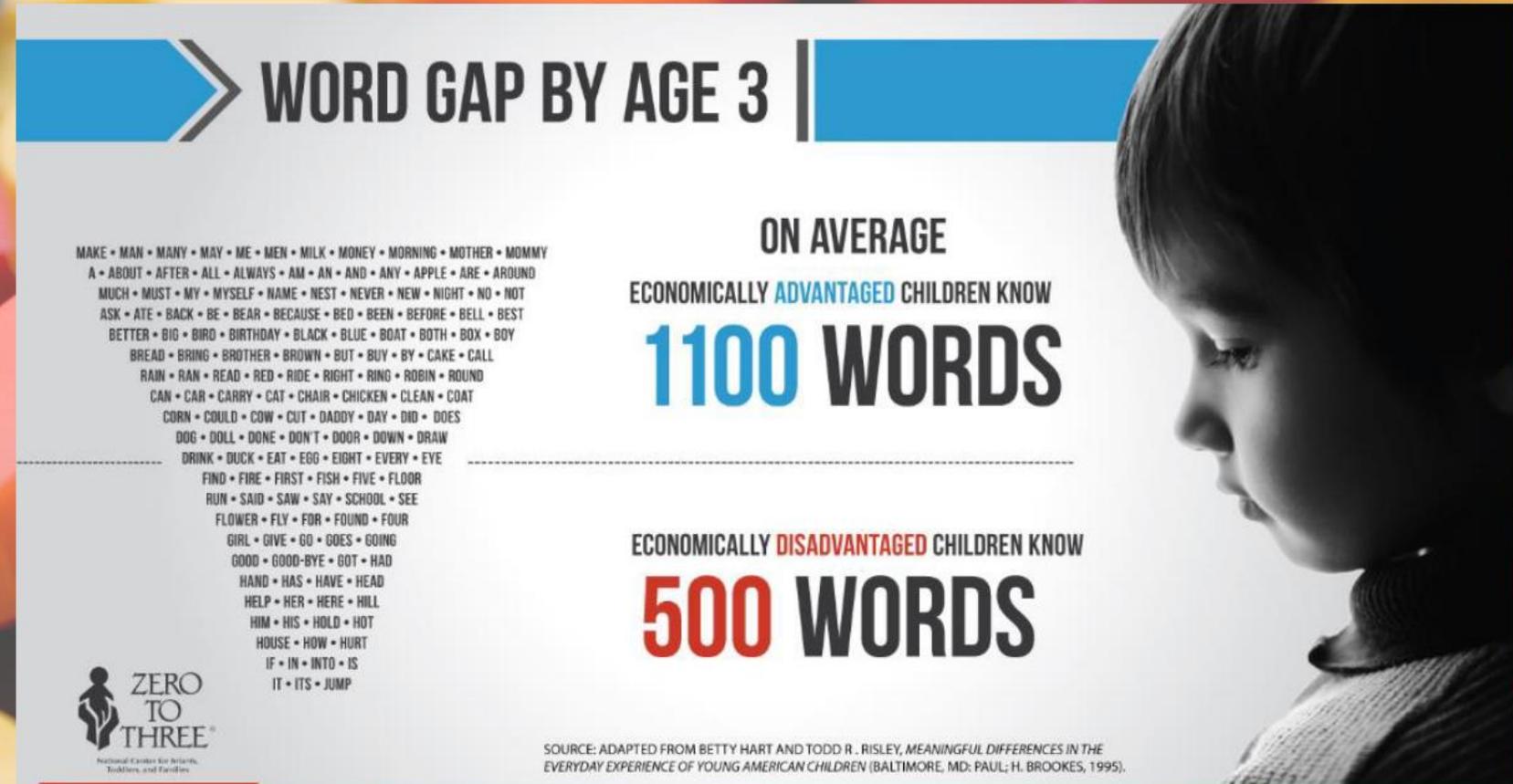
6. FAMILIES ARE ENABLED TO BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE

# Did you know?

- We have: -
  - 84,837 under 5's in Essex.
  - 2,438 early years and childcare (EYCC) settings in Essex.
- The majority of children attend an Essex EYCC provider that is rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted.
- A child formally finishes early years and starts school when they start Year one and not when they start in a Reception class.
- 24% of 2yr olds in Essex are eligible for Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)
- The current Essex annual budget for the FEEE funding for 3 and 4 year olds is £75m and the hourly rate we pay the early years sector is £4.32 per funded hour.

# The Word Gap

- By the age of three, more disadvantaged children are – on average – already almost a full year and a half behind their more affluent peers in their early language development. And around two fifths of disadvantaged five-year-olds are not meeting the expected literacy standard for their age
- A child who is not at the expected standard in language at the age of five is 11 times less likely to achieve the expected level in math's at age 11."



# What's are the key priorities for Year one of the new Strategy?

The insight we have at this point tells us we need to focus our Year One Delivery Plan 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



# Delivery

- This Strategy will be translated into a more detailed five-year delivery plan (which is currently being developed), this will prioritise the actions we intend to take, outline specifically what we are planning to do and when we are planning to do it
- This Plan will be delivered by the Essex Early Years and Childcare Service working in partnership with other parts of Essex County Council and with our partner agencies
- There are many other strategies, plans and programmes of work which we will take account of and ensure alignment with, including our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy, the work of our Education Task Force, our Educational Disadvantage Strategy, our Inclusion Framework, our Early Help Offer, the Levelling Up Agenda and our Working Families Programme
- It is critical that this is seen as a long-term commitment that builds on previous success to ensure positive changes are embedded in a child's formative years to improve outcomes throughout their Education
- There will be a oversight group set up to monitor and oversee the performance of the strategy and its delivery plan
- At this point it is anticipated that the current budget allocated to Early Years and Childcare will be sufficient for its delivery but there may be projects or activity that might need additional funds. Business cases will be produced to request additional funding if needed.
- Implementation of the Essex Early Years and Childcare Charter.

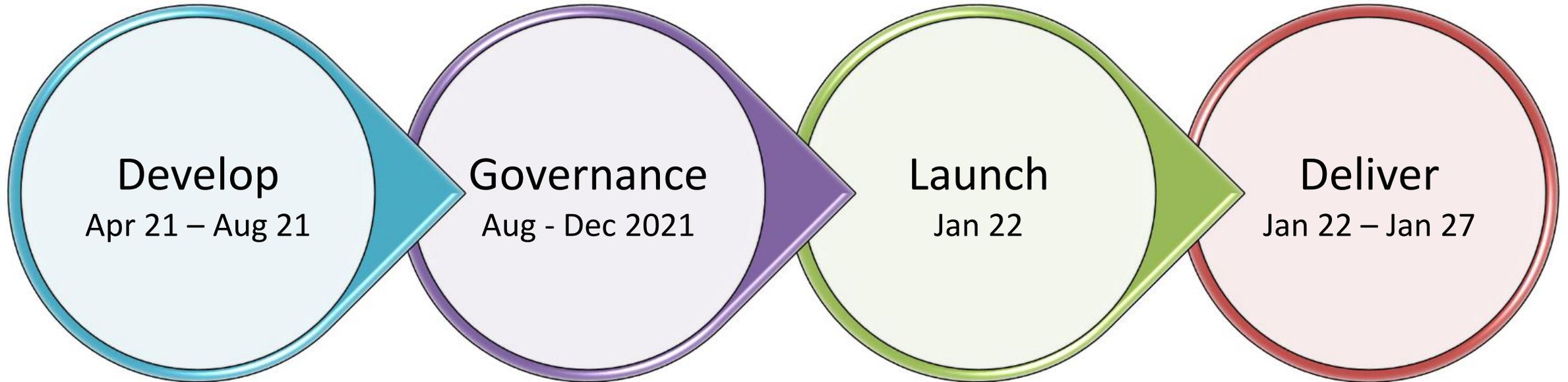


# Questions

We need to deliver the strategy collectively in collaboration with all Districts.

- Would this Strategy help improve outcomes in your District?
- We know we need to ensure on going connections to Strategies such as the Working Families Programme, the Levelling Up Agenda and the Life-Long Learning Strategy. Are there any strategies or programmes of work in your District that we need to be aware of?

# Timeline and Key Deliverables



- Share Strategy with Internal and External Stakeholders
- Develop Strategy following feedback from Stakeholders
- Develop Outcomes and Performance Measures
- Comms & Go Live Plan
- Draft Delivery Plan
- Draft School Readiness Definition
- Draft Early Years Charter

- Project Governance - EY&CC Strategy Contents signed off
- Strategy designed and finalised in an external facing document
- Finalise Delivery Plan

- Launch Strategy
- Launch The Early Years Charter
- Engagement sessions with Key Stakeholders for Strategy Launch and Delivery Plan

- Pilot new ideas
- Realise Outcomes and Measure Success

# Statutory Duties

Essex County Council provides leadership to the Early Years System and has specific legal responsibilities to do the following:

- Ensure there is sufficient childcare available in Essex
- Secure sufficient children's centres that are accessible to all families with young children, and targeted evidence-based interventions for those families in greatest need of support (Family Hubs in Essex)
- Provide information, advice, and assistance to families (which we do through our Families Information Service)
- Secure information, advice, guidance, and training for childcare providers
- Support improvement in the quality of childcare
- Ensure that all children have access to up to six terms of high-quality nursery provision, as reflected in the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework, from the term after their third birthday
- Ensure sufficient and high-quality childcare is available for all 2-year-olds eligible for 'Free Early Education Entitlement funding'
- Meet the childcare needs of families with children over the age of five through out of school care and provision for children and young people up to the age of 14 (or to 25 for children with disabilities)
- Safeguard and promote the welfare of all children throughout all aspects of the work of Early Years and Childcare with specific regard to ensuring that early years and childcare providers understand their responsibilities and are accountable for their practice
- Ensure that all providers delivering funded early education places meet the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and / or Disabilities in accordance with the SEND Code of Practice 2015
- Participate in the identification and planning for the needs of children with SEND, including coordinating joint commissioning arrangements across Education, Health and Social Care and in other legal duties related to Education, Health and Care Plans and Preparing for Adulthood



**Aim 1: Children and their families achieve their potential with support from an effective and connected early years system that as a clear vision, purpose and direction**

**Summary:**

- Successfully delivering this Strategy requires shared commitment, ownership and contribution from the whole early years system.
- The early years system is complex and there are known areas where we need to improve how agencies work together, especially around transition, early identification and disadvantaged groups. There are also many strengths in the system and good opportunities to expand on these.
- We want to improve outcomes for all children by supporting our early years system to work better together.
- We will take a variety of actions to strengthen the cohesion and collaboration of the early years system, targeted at known weaknesses and building on existing strengths. We will exploit opportunities presented by Covid while also supporting the system to recover from its impact.

## What we want to achieve:

- Wide collective ownership of this Strategy from a broad range of partners who are willing to make commitments to furthering its aims
- All aspects of the system feel that their contribution is recognised and valued
- Partners work in collaboration, identifying and exploiting opportunities for improved integration wherever possible
- Transition across the system is well managed, contributed to by a high level of trust between partners
- Parents are recognised as key contributors to the early years system and are supported by it to help their children achieve good outcomes
- Parents' experiences of engaging with the system are positive, they have a good understanding of the help that is available, how they can access it and they experience good, joined up responses from agencies
- The system effectively focuses on those who are in most need and enables them to receive effective early help, including a specific focus on improving the experiences of children with SEND

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need all partners in the Early Years System to sign up to this Strategy, consider the implications of this for their own practice and align what they do to the intended outcomes.
- We need everyone in the System to understand and appreciate the role of others and to identify ways in which they could work better with others around the needs of families, minimising opportunities for gaps and duplication and maximising on the benefits of effective multi-agency working.
- We need everyone across the system to target activity to the same identified groups who are most in need of support.

# Aim 1: Outcomes

1. The system delivers the outcomes in the 'early years system card'
2. The System effectively mobilises to improve outcomes for identified groups
3. Professionals across the early years system work collaboratively with others to ensure best outcomes for children and their families'
4. Each stakeholder can clearly articulate their contribution to this Strategy and report progress to other stakeholders
5. Parents are well informed about how to best help their child develop and are easily able to access help when they need it

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



**Aim 2: All children  
have a positive  
journey through  
their early years and  
are well supported  
to transition to  
Reception and start  
Year 1**

**Summary:**

- We want all children to have lifelong benefits from having a great start in their early years and to arrive at school well prepared to benefit from the experiences they will have their, whatever their individual needs and abilities.
- We know that not all children benefit to the same extent from the good support we currently have in place. To ensure more children benefit, everyone across the system needs to work together to deliver the right support, in the right place, at the right time.
- We want our system to work together better to give more children and their parents/carers the support and tools they need.
- We will take a range of actions aimed at ensuring more children have a successful start to their school journey.

## What we want to achieve:

- All children are well supported by their families and the agencies they work with and as a result receive lifelong benefits from having a great start in their early years
- Everyone, including parents, understands the role they play in supporting children to prepare for starting Reception class at school and moving through this into Year 1
- There is good quality information, advice, and guidance for parents on the options available when children are due to start Reception Year, and on how they can best support their children to start and benefit from this
- Everyone has a good understanding of the groups of children who may be less likely than others to have good outcomes and targeted support is provided at an early stage to enable these children to reach their potential
- All children who would benefit from accessing quality early education provision are encouraged and enabled to do so
- There is an agreed system wide approach to, and acknowledgement of, the importance of early language and communication, and relationships and attachment to children's development
- The system demonstrates an understanding of the latest research and insight about how to best support children in early years
- The system adopts the following statement: School Readiness: A child's early years journey from birth through to the end of reception

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone who works with children under five and their parents and carers to understand the importance of this early period, what needs to be in place to enable children to be well prepared to start Reception class at school, to move through Reception into Year 1, and the options that are available to parents.
- We need health agencies who provide support at an early stage to expectant and new parents to provide access to good quality information and support that enables them to make good choices in the ante and post-natal period.
- We need early years settings and schools to work effectively together to support children moving into school and schools to commit to continuing to provide a positive and inclusive early years experience for children through reception to year 1.
- We need everyone to works with children under five to be alert to children who may need extra support and to ensure that those children are able to access the extra support that is available.
- We need parents to make proactive use of the sources of information, advice and guidance that are available on how to provide quality home learning environments, to actively apply this from conception and to seek help and support when needed.

## Aim 2: Outcomes

1. Improving the % of children achieving a Good Level of Development
2. Children are resilient and able to learn well
3. One agreed definition of School Readiness that is communicated and used across the System.
4. Information and support is easily accessible and able to support parents with home learning environments

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



**Aim 3: Children  
who may be at risk  
of poor outcomes  
are prioritised for  
high quality  
targeted support**

**Summary:**

- Some children are disadvantaged or are at risk of disadvantage. This can make it harder for them to achieve the same outcomes as other children without these disadvantages.
- We have a good understanding of the children who generally do less well than others when using standard measures such as 'Good Level of Development'. We have access to a range of evidenced based approaches which can be used to better support these children to overcome barriers and ensure that all children achieve expected or better than expected progress for their starting points.
- While championing the achievements of all children we want to ensure that children who are at risk of poorer outcomes than others are identified and provided with effective support and opportunities which meets their individual needs at an early stage. We also want to work in partnership to address aspects of our system or society which puts families at disadvantage.

## What we want to achieve:

- The system understands which children are less likely than others to achieve against standard measurements (such as GLD) and has an embedded understanding of how to support these children to achieve their individual potential.
- There are strong and effective system which identify children who need additional support at an early stage and once identified practitioners use a range of targeted early interventions to provide effective early support
- All children are supported to access high quality early years provision and are supported by skilled and knowledgeable early years practitioners
- There is a high level of take up of our early help opportunities, including Free Early Education Entitlement
- All early years services and provisions adhere to the requirements of the Equality Act 2010
- We understand our local communities and, in partnership with others, work towards removing disadvantage and inequality
- We are committed to learning more about and from disadvantaged groups and to taking innovative approaches which we will learn from to inform our longer-term strategies

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone who works in early years to agree to prioritise support and activity around the needs of certain identified children and families who need additional support.
- We need this prioritisation of certain children and families to be reflected in strategic and on the ground decision making around where and how resource is targeted.
- We need everyone who provides services accessed by families to consider what more they can do to make their provision accessible to children with differing needs.
- We need everyone to commit to a shared high aspiring vision for what 'good' looks like for children with specific needs.
- We need parents whose children have identified additional needs or who are in disadvantaged groups to proactively engage with available sources of help and support – for example accessing additional early years entitlement.

## Aim 3: Outcomes

1. Children are supported by their families, their community and where necessary professionals to thrive and be successful
2. Increased take up of Special Educational Needs (SEN) Early Years and School Provision and Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) Placements for Children with SEN
3. Increased take up of FEEE Placements for 2, 3 and 4 yr old from disadvantaged households
4. Early identification of children and young people whose learning and development may require targeted or specialist support
5. For all children to make good progress from their individual starting points

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



**Aim 4: Children's  
early learning and  
development is  
expertly supported  
by a strong, skilled  
and knowledgeable  
early years and  
childcare system  
workforce**

**Summary:**

- The quality of the early years and childcare workforce is a key contributory factor to enabling children to achieve good outcomes in early years and beyond and to successfully implementing this Strategy.
- The early years workforce is complex and multi-faceted and there are many issues to contend with to enable it to be optimally supported. We have specific responsibilities to ensure those who work in early years settings are well trained, but it is also important that we consider those who work in other agencies such as health and in the voluntary sector. Ultimately, we want to give all those who have involvement with early years to work effectively together using core skills and around shared aims.
- We want to enable all aspects of the early years workforce to access continuous professional development through an expanded range of means. We want the training and development accessed to result in more children achieving good early years outcomes.
- We will take a variety of actions to ensure that the overall quality of the early years workforce in Essex is improved, focused both on what practitioners can access and how we enable them to do this.

## What we want to achieve:

- Careers in early years in Essex are well respected, valued and popular; recruitment and retention rates across diverse groups are good
- Agencies, settings and practitioners work together across barriers and boundaries to share good practice, insight and training and development opportunities aimed at developing mutual understanding of each other's roles and strengthening the sector as a whole
- There is a desirable mix and breadth of different skill levels across the sector including strong leadership and an increased number of practitioners holding higher level qualifications at level 3 and above
- The early years workforce is enabled to access a training and development offer which meets its needs and contributes to continued and sustained professional development
- The training and development offer to the early years workforce is joined up and coordinated between the different agencies; it is clear for the workforce to see what is available and how and where they can access this
- Training accessed translates into a positive impact, demonstrated through both the outcomes achieved by children, the quality of settings and changes in practice
- There is good promotion of informal networks and opportunities that can be accessed by those working in early years to improve knowledge and get support from other agencies – for example early help drop-in clinics, local children's partnerships, networking meetings etc

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone working in the early years system to actively commit to continually developing their skills and knowledge and to take an open-minded approach in how they do this.
- We need all providers of early education and childcare or help and support to families to actively commit to delivering and enabling their staff to attend more opportunities to learn together and alongside each other, focusing on the core skills which enable multi-agency working.
- We need all employers to recognise the value of training and development and to actively commit to enabling their staff to attend available opportunities.
- We need Government and other national agencies involved in the delivery and funding of training and development for the early years and childcare sector to recognise and respond to the challenges being faced in respect of funding and accessing quality support. We need training providers to proactively ensure that training is providing workers with the skills and competencies necessary to optimally support young children.

## Aim 4: Outcomes

1. The wider workforce who support children and young people are confident in their role as facilitators of learning and development
2. A workforce that puts a clear focus on children and their families' needs
3. Internal Staff have access to appropriate continued professional development
4. External Staff have access to appropriate continued professional development

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



**Aim 5: Parents can access sufficient, high quality and fully inclusive childcare places that support early learning and Working Parents**

**Summary:**

- Being able to access the right early years and childcare provision is a key contributory factor to enabling parents to work and children to achieve good early years outcomes. Essex County Council is required by law to ensure both pre-school and school age childcare meets parents' needs by being sufficient, accessible, and high quality.
- There are a wide variety of options for early education and childcare, but these do not always meet the needs of all parents. Covid is likely to have long term implications on the sector which may make this worse. Childcare, particularly its cost, is a considerable source of stress for some working parents.
- We want to reduce the barriers to parents accessing the early education and childcare and make childcare less of a source of stress for parents while also supporting the sector to stay sustainable.
- We will take a range of actions aimed at developing a sustainable early years and childcare sector in Essex which better meets the needs of more working parents and those entitled to funded hours. We will ensure that parents are well informed about options and are supported in making decisions.

## What we want to achieve:

- There is sufficient pre-school and school age childcare in Essex to meet the needs of working parents and those wanting to access funded entitlements
- All settings are inclusive and so capable of meeting the diverse needs of all children
- Childcare businesses in Essex are well managed, plan effectively and are financially robust reflected both in their financial security and the quality of care they provide
- We effectively support the long-term sustainability of our early years and childcare sector, including supporting providers to manage and respond to the short, medium, and long-term impacts of the pandemic
- We recognise the strains on working families and seek to help them manage their childcare needs
- There is good quality information, advice and guidance for parents on finding, accessing and affording suitable early education and childcare
- Where parents want to access early education and childcare, we will work with them to help remove barriers to them doing so
- We recognise the importance of informal childcare to parents and support those both using and providing informal childcare

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need childcare providers to work in partnership with Essex County Council to address areas of low childcare sufficiency and to consider how provision could be made more accessible and affordable to families.
- We need childcare providers to work in partnership with Essex County Council to help develop better understanding about the challenges of delivering quality childcare within the existing financial and other restraints.
- We need the whole of the early years system to support ECC and childcare providers in considering innovative approaches that could be taken to address the problems that exist and in supporting our lobbying on the issue at a national level.
- We need all partners, including community organisations and venues and businesses to consider what more they could do to support those delivering and seeking informal childcare, including ensuring there are places that carers can go to access quality learning experiences for the children they are looking after.
- We need schools to consider what more they could potentially do to assist with parents needs for out of school provision. We need parents to proactively make use of the information that is available on the different types of childcare that can be accessed and how this can be made more affordable.

## Aim 5: Outcomes

1. There will be sufficient high quality and fully Inclusive childcare places for the community, that supports working parents and provides funded early learning places.
2. There is clear and accessible information advice and guidance for parents and they are aware of all childcare options available to them
3. The sector is supported to understand and meet the needs of community, including working parents
4. Parents feel confident in the childcare options available to them

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



## **Aim 6: Families are enabled to be the best they can be**

### **Summary:**

- Essex County Council has statutory duties to provide information, advice and guidance to parents. This is a complicated area with many different agencies involved but doing this well has potential to make a large impact on parents' ability to optimally support their children and achieve their own ambitions.
- We need to consider parents' widely varying needs to access information, advice, guidance and support. There are a lot of options available and to best support parents, we need to better coordinate what is available across the system and listen to parents to ensure it is meeting their differing needs.
- In addition to being able to access information, advice, and guidance we want parents to feel well supported by their communities and other parents, so they have strong networks to draw on when needed and enjoy bringing up children in Essex.
- We will undertake a range of actions to ensure that we are effectively meeting our statutory duties, to engage with parents to ensure their needs are being met, and to broaden the available support.

## What we want to achieve:

- Parents in Essex are supported to be resilient and to have high aspirations for themselves and their children
- Parents know what information, advice and guidance is available, from whom, and how to access it
- Agencies across the early years system have a good understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of other agencies in supporting parents and work well together to sign post parents to the most appropriate sources of information, advice and guidance
- Our offer reflects a good understanding of the types of information, advice and guidance parents require and how they would best like this delivered
- Parents feel well supported by strong social networks and can access a good range of support in their local communities
- Parents, children and young people can access a range of resources to meet individual need, including those to help recovery from the impact of the pandemic
- The support we offer to parents is evidence based and reflects insight and learning
- Our information, advice and guidance offer contributes to the delivery of effective early support

## What we need everyone to do:

- We need everyone to prioritise the needs of parents and consider what more could be done to deliver quality support.
- We need everyone to consider the information they provide and how this could be better aligned with that available from other agencies, including how we could make best use of collective information resources, websites etc.
- We need community and voluntary organisations and commissioned services to consider what more they could do to empower parents to develop peer support networks and how we can best enable parents to feel confident to make use of these opportunities.
- We need local councils and business owners to consider what more they could do to make their services and spaces more 'family friendly'.
- We need parents to actively seek out and make use of sources of information and support in their communities, for example that provided by local Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Hubs.
- We need parents to support one another both informally and where possible through volunteering their time where needed.

## Aim 6: Outcomes

1. Parents are well informed about how to best help their child develop and motivated to make great choices
2. Parents feel confident in the childcare options available to them
3. All parents and carers are supported with information and resources to encourage their role as effective partners in their child's learning and development.
4. Families, Parents, Carers and young people are able to make proactive choices with respect to their child's or own needs.

The Strategy delivery plan will be developed incorporating the detailed outcomes and performance measures.



<b>Report title: Home Education and Children Missing Education</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 14 October 2021	<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

This item has been requested by the Chairman as an initial introduction and update on the issue and challenges of Home Education in Essex.

## 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 The Committee last discussed in detail the issue of Home Education on 16 January 2020. At that meeting it was reported that the Cabinet Member had hosted a cross party group of members to look into issues around children missing education and the Committee were asked to support ECC's approach to continue lobbying on this issue. Links to the relevant meeting paper for that meeting and the minutes are here –

[PAF agenda paper 16 January 2020 - Children Missing from Education briefing](#)

[PAF 16 January 2020 minutes](#)

- 3.2 The cross-party group has now been re-established to coordinate shared, ongoing concerns in relation to this cohort of children and young people and to further consider the Education Select Committee report published last year (link below).

House of Commons Education Select Committee – Strengthening Home Education – 26 July 2021

[Strengthening Home Education - 21 July 2021](#)

## Home Education and Children Missing Education

### 4. Update and Next Steps

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

Expected attendees to support the discussion:

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

Clare Kershaw - Director, Education

Michael OBrien - Head of Specialist Education Services

Anita Patel-Lingam - Statutory Education Compliance Manager

### 5 List of Appendices

Briefing Paper: Home Education/Children Missing Education

**Briefing Paper: Home Education/Children Missing Education**

**Background**

The Children's Commissioner's report, 'Invisible Children' (2019), highlighted that 58,000 children nationally were being home schooled. Essex had also noted an increase in the number of those home-schooled over recent years, whilst colleagues in other counties were reporting increases in their home education figures. This pattern was certainly not specific to Essex and appeared to be a national trend which, some may argue, is linked to the ease with which parents can opt to remove their child from a school roll in favour of elective home education. As a result of these factors, a Cross Party Working Group was established to investigate the impact that this was having within Essex and establish means by which this may be addressed, both to manage the issue and provide assistance to parents when they are considering home education.

It was established that children can be outside of the mainstream education system for several reasons (including exclusion from school), but mostly due to parents choosing to home school their children. The Group were, of course, supportive of parents who wish to home educate their children, as this is something parents are entitled to do. However, the concern was around how easy it is for parents to take their children out of school under the reason of home education and issues relating to schools 'off-rolling' pupils, where schools actively encourage parents to home educate. The biggest difficulty is tracking these children and ensuring that the education they are receiving is of a good quality and in line with their age, ability and aptitude.

There are a lack of statutory powers available to local authorities to ensure that we have oversight of the system. As a result, there are considerable variations across local authority areas with regards to support for parents who elect to home school and monitoring oversight (which, legally, can only be undertaken if a referral of concern is raised to the LA). This would suggest that some local authorities are more effective at providing support and monitoring provision for this cohort when compared with others. Indeed, some families that move from one local authority area to another will comment on the lack of consistency in respect of the approach taken and support available. The chairman of the Cross Party Working Group raised these issues with Nick Gibb as a concern.

In January 2020, the Cross Party Working Group submitted a report, requesting that the government consider a number of concerns that the Group had identified, through discussions and data analysis and for which a number of solutions had been put forward to enable local authorities to achieve better consistency in the way in which they work to safeguard this specific cohort of children and young people.

**Post Covid Update**

Essex, like many local authorities, noted a significant rise in the number of children and young people registered as EHE as a direct result of Covid-related anxiety within families across the county. At the start of the academic year 2020/21 there were

1730 children and young people registered as EHE within Essex. This figure rose to 2629 by the end of the academic year.

Whilst, at the start of this new academic year, it is clear that some families are now seeking to return their child/ren back to a school roll, as their Covid-related anxieties reduce, it is apparent that some families will continue to exercise their right to home educate their child/ren on a longer-term basis. With our local home educated cohort remaining above 2200 at this time, the need for increased safeguarding measures and powers to enable us to better safeguard and protect the educational rights of this cohort remains a priority.

The House of Commons' Education Committee Report, "Strengthening Home Education" (published 26 July 2021), echoed many of the concerns and included many of the recommendations that Essex County Council and the original Cross Party Working Group had been highlighting at every available opportunity in recent years. Whilst the Education Committee's Report positively highlights some of the key concerns that were investigated and addressed as part of the original Cross Party Working Group's submission to government in January 2020, Cllr Tony Ball was keen to re-form a Cross Party Group to coordinate shared, ongoing concerns in relation to this cohort of children and young people and to consider this recent Education Committee report and put forward a collaborative response to the Chair of the Education Committee, Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP.

The Cross Party Working Group, chaired by Cllr Tony Ball, met for the first time in late July 2021 and agreed to work collaboratively to fully consider and respond to the Education Committee's recent report, focussing on the recommendations therein and making suggestions as to how practices may be updated, nationally, to address some of the concerns and achieve some of the key recommendations set out within the report.

Weekly meetings of the Cross Party Working Group are underway and a response is being developed, taking into consideration the main concerns which have been flagged by local home educating families and professionals in this field during recent times. The deadline for producing and submitting the Group's collaborative response has been set for the end of October 2021.

<b>Report title: Domestic Abuse update</b>	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 14 October 2021	<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

This item has been requested by the Chairman as an initial introduction to the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and update on the issue and challenges of Domestic Abuse in Essex with a focus on children.

## 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 The Committee last discussed Domestic Abuse within a broader discussion about Children and Families Services and its response to the pandemic on 18 March 2021. A link to the relevant agenda paper (with information on domestic abuse on pages 9-12 of that report), and the minutes are below.

[PAF 18 March 2021 - Children and Families Services update](#) (see pages 9-12)

[PAF 18 March 2021 minutes](#)

## 4. Update and Next Steps

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

Expected attendees to support the discussion:

County Councillor Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member – Children’s Services and  
Page 49 of 61

## **Domestic Abuse update**

Early Years.

Clare Burrell - Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy

### **5 List of Appendices**

Power Point briefing titled - Domestic Abuse Act 2021

# Domestic Abuse Act 2021

People & families Scrutiny 14 October 2021

Councillor Beverley Eagan, Cabinet member for Children's & Early Years

Enquiries to: [clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk](mailto:clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk)

# The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - Overview

The Domestic Abuse Act received Royal Assent on the 29th April 2021

The Act contains both legislative and non legislative functions designed to:

- ▶ promote awareness of domestic abuse
- ▶ protect and support victims and their families
- ▶ transform the justice process to prioritise victim's safety
- ▶ drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies, and sectors.

# The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - Duties

The Act places a duty on Essex County Council as a Tier 1 Local Authority, to provide support to victims of domestic abuse and, where present, their children who are residing within safe accommodation.

To fulfil its duties the Council is required to appoint a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board to support it performing specific functions that are:

- ▶ assess the need for domestic abuse support within safe accommodation
- ▶ prepare and publish a strategy
- ▶ give effect to the strategy through commissioning and de-commissioning decisions
- ▶ monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy
- ▶ report back annually to central government

# The Domestic Abuse Act 2021

## Challenges

- ▶ Funding aligned to The Act does not take into account perpetrators outside of the judicial system
- ▶ The Act does not fully consider early intervention
- ▶ Appropriate safe housing options for victims
- ▶ Uncertainty about future funding allocations which impacts on long term planning
- ▶ Engaging victims and survivors in a meaningful way
- ▶ Building the infrastructures needed to ensure post recovery is included as well as crisis support

## Benefits

- ▶ The Act formally recognises children as victims in their own right
- ▶ Adolescent to parent violence and abuse is considered in the DA guidance, which strengthens the work currently being developed in Essex
- ▶ Requirement to consider the needs of marginalised groups and those with protected characteristics
- ▶ Funding aligned to the new duties will enable a wider reach alongside the current offer
- ▶ Opportunities for innovation and being survivor and victim led

# New Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy 2021 - 2024

A needs assessment was completed to inform the new Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy. A variety of activities were completed, including:

- ▶ quantitative data analysis
- ▶ service mapping
- ▶ desktop research
- ▶ case studies
- ▶ extensive stakeholder engagement
- ▶ interviews with victims and survivors as ‘experts by experience’.

As a result, 5 key objectives were identified to drive the strategy over the next 3 years

# Domestic Abuse Commissioning Strategy Objectives

Five Key Objectives	What will we do
Objective 1: Children and young people residing in safe accommodation can access support that meets their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provide funding to support those already in safe accommodation</li> <li>- Understand what works for children through research</li> <li>- Invest further to develop adequate provision</li> </ul>
Objective 2: Victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access support to improve their psychological and emotional wellbeing and recover from trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct robust service design to understand the full scale of issues</li> <li>- Identify what works well and any barriers</li> <li>- Co-design/commission the appropriate response</li> </ul>
Objective 3: Victims and survivors of domestic abuse will have improved access to safe accommodation through good quality information, advice and guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Allocate funding to the 12 districts/boroughs/city/ councils to increase their domestic abuse offer</li> <li>- Continue to collaborate with Southend, Essex &amp; Thurrock Domestic Abuse Partnership housing sub-group</li> </ul>
Objective 4: Victims and survivors of domestic abuse will be better informed of their legal options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Explore regionally the issues of legal advice and discuss actions to feedback to central government</li> <li>- Work with stakeholders to identify where there are gaps in legal information advice and guidance and address the gaps</li> </ul>
Objective 5: Victims and survivors of domestic abuse will play their part in the co-design of provision, decision making and influence on the wider domestic abuse agenda in Essex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to work with victims/survivors as experts by experience</li> <li>- Co-design a range of mechanisms for their on-going, meaning engagement in decisions that affect their lives and the lives of others</li> </ul>

# The Impact of Domestic Abuse on Children

We welcome that The Act ensures child and young people are now considered victims of domestic abuse and that there is funding to ensure their specific needs are met.

A child or young person is classed as a victim if they see, hear, or experiences the effects of the abuse. The impact on children includes;

- Feeling anxious or depressed
- Having difficulty sleeping, nightmares
- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches or bed wetting
- Reduction in school attendance, attainment, truancy
- Inconsistent regulation of emotions, including becoming distressed, upset or angry
- Becoming aggressive or internalising their distress and becoming withdrawn
- Using alcohol or drugs, or self-harming

# Identifying and addressing the Impacts of Domestic Abuse on Children and young people - Early Intervention

The Act itself now enable us to design specialist and tailored early pathways to support for children and young people.

This means we can dovetail the extensive Early Intervention work we have already been doing in Essex to prevent poor outcomes for children and young people who have been victims

The definition of children and young people as victims serves to strengthen the already extensive work, preceding The Act, happening in Essex that aims to prevent or negate the impacts being a child victim might have

**Trauma Informed Perceptive Practice** – a developmental programme for Schools to develop and informed working and learning environments that will help children and young people disclose that they are victims and feel supported –

**Adolescent to Parent Violence** – *Some* adolescent to parent violence can be the result of a young person having witnessed domestic abuse. Practitioners across Essex, including schools and social care have been training to work with Parents on understanding how Non-Violent Resistant Behaviours will help to reduce that violence.

**Reducing Parental Conflict** – Not all conflict results in domestic abuse, but whether it does or doesn't, it can have devastating long lasting impacts on children and young people. Essex have been part of a national programme help parents understand the impacts their conflict can have on their children.

## Work Programme

Reference Number: PAF/14/21

<b>Report title:</b> Work Programme	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 14 October 2021	<b>For:</b> Discussion 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

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

### 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 The current work programme has been developed further to discussions with portfolio holders at two induction sessions in the summer, subsequent discussions between the Chairman and Vice Chairmen and Cabinet Members and senior officers, and other issues highlighted during the last two formal meetings of PAF.

### 4. Update and Next Steps

See Appendix.

### 5. Appendix –

- current work programme by the Chairman and Vice Chairmen.

**People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

<b>Date/timing</b>	<b>Issue/Topic</b>	<b>Focus, approach and other comments</b>
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 2021	Safeguarding – Children	Children's and Adults Safeguarding Boards present their annual reports to the Board each Autumn. 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 asked to attend.
9 December 2021	Safeguarding - Adults	See above on Safeguarding Children which also applies to the Adults Board.
13 January 2022	Adult Social Care	Update on trends and capacity to include work with market providers to manage an orderly reduction in capacity in the residential market.

Continued 1/2 .....

**Continued 2/2 ....**

**Further issues under consideration**

<b>Date/timing</b>	<b>Issue/Topic</b>	<b>Focus/other comments</b>
Further planning and timing TBC	Working Families Programme	Strategy to go to Full Council in October – during September the Cabinet Member invited comments via email. Any further work TBC
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	Children in care being placed outside Essex	Information on the trend was requested as a result of discussions at September meeting of PAF. Any further follow-up TBC.
Further planning and timing TBC	Backlog in Courts and Justice System	Impact on Youth Offending Team, fostering and adoption. Further information was requested as a result of discussions at September meeting of PAF. Any further follow-up TBC
Further planning and timing TBC	Education - academisation	Academisation impact, role of Regional Schools Commissioner and the role ECC has in supporting general standards.

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

<b>Date/timing</b>	<b>Issue/Topic</b>	<b>Focus/other comments</b>
TBC	Impact of the pandemic on Essex County Council	Cross portfolio/committee - Format TBC - after initial PAF session on 9 September.
TBC	Libraries Strategy	Cross portfolio/committee and incorporates other functions for libraries including levelling up, wider community role and helping with school readiness, literacy, interviews and employability etc.
TBC	Suicide	Approach and structure of review to be confirmed.
TBC	100 Day Plan/Organisation Strategy	Cross-cutting. Possible approach is to establish a cross-committee joint scrutiny review. May incorporate aspects of levelling up agenda or these may be separate scrutiny subjects.