

# **Essex Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-2027**

***Supporting families to enable all children and young people to have the best start  
for life***

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# 1. About this Strategy

This Strategy sets out a high-level overview of the different things we intend to do to achieve our intentions. This overview has been translated into a detailed five-year delivery plan which prioritises the actions we intend to take, outlines 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 align to when implementing this Strategy including our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Strategy, the Lifelong Learning 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.

## 2. Forewords



Essex County Council is committed to ensuring all children and young people get the best start for life. As Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years I have a specific remit for leading targeted and coordinated action across the early years and childcare system to improve outcomes for children. This ensures that Essex County Council has a strong Early Years function, and that Essex County Council provides strong leadership and coordination to the whole Early Years System, supporting all agencies who have a role to play in early years to work in partnership to achieve a joint vision.

I am very proud of the good outcomes that Essex achieves for young children; currently just under 75% of children under 5 consistently achieve well against standard national measures. This is due to our hard work over the course of the last Early Years Strategy and our commitment to exploring innovative approaches to tackling embedded disadvantage. I will ensure that under this Strategy we continue to build on this positive progress and enable even more children to do well by increasing our focus where problems persist, and by better targeting our support to those who need it most.

By working effectively together the Essex Early Years System can do better for all, but there are also important contributions that we need national agencies and Government to make, so I am committed to lobbying for improved support and recognition for children, families, and the early years at a national level.

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the development of this Strategy. Most importantly the parents who gave up their time to feed in their views and whose priorities have shaped this strategy. The Essex Early Years System works in support of families and recognises and values their unique place in it. The next steps in implementing this Strategy will be taken in conjunction with parents and that we will actively seek feedback from them at every stage to assess the impact we are having.

**Cllr Beverley Egan, Cabinet Member for Children and Early Years**

November 2021



As Leader of the Council, I recognise the importance of this work in reaching our strategic aims set out in our Everyone's Essex organisational strategy and helps build our vision of Essex being a great place for children and families to grow.

It is so important that children are able to thrive and achieve the very best that they can at all stages of their development, however the work that is done in those early years of life is invaluable to ensuring that children go on to achieve their full potential, in turn are able to grow up to become responsible adult citizens. This strategy goes a long way towards achieving these goals and I would personally like to recognise all the hard work that our early years workforce are doing in supporting a children's journey and improving outcomes.

Through the measures set out in this strategy, we will see families that are better enabled to be the best they can be and with a stronger emphasis on early intervention, this can only be a good thing for families in Essex, I look forward to seeing its impact over the next 5 years.

**Cllr Kevin Bentley, Leader of the Council**



As Essex County Council Cabinet Member with responsibility for our Essex Plan for Working Families, I am committed to exploring all the available options for easing the burdens on hard working parents. All parents know the difficulties of managing the strains of work, household finances, childcare, and providing quality experiences and support for their children. I welcome the opportunities offered by this Strategy to explore how we can better support families access improved information, advice, and guidance and to work with providers to explore options for expanding affordable, flexible and accessible childcare. This particular stream of work and the Essex Plan for Working Families is a key part of our new Levelling Up agenda, which seeks to improve the lives of Essex residents.

**Cllr Louise McKinlay, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Community, Equality, Partnerships and Performance**



My vision for Education in Essex is to ignite in children and families a passion for lifelong learning enabling all residents to achieve their personal ambitions and to eradicate inequalities in outcomes. I strongly believe that doing this has to start during the earliest stages of life when we have the maximum potential to encourage children to be curious and inquisitive learners and to embed a lifelong love of reading and knowledge acquisition. I welcome the focus of this Strategy on supporting parents to provide quality home learning environments and on working with early years providers to ensure quality and inclusive provision which enables a great start to all children's educational journeys.

**Cllr Tony Ball, Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Skills and Training**



The importance of the early years in enabling children to grow into emotionally and physically healthy adults capable of achieving their full potential can never be over-estimated. It is during this period when we have so many important chances to establish the bedrocks of good health and wellbeing and for all partners in the system to provide early help where problems are identified and to address the impact of inequality. As Cabinet Member with responsibility for Health I therefore strongly endorse the importance of this Strategy and commit to identifying and maximising opportunities to provide quality support to parents, expanding the ways in which parents and children can access support from local services and their communities. I will continue to forge relationships with colleagues in health services and our local district, borough, and city councils so that strong and successful partnerships with others will drive forward the Strategy's successful implementation. This goes further than collaboration; it should be a shared venture with shared ambitions.

**Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care**

### 3. The Importance of the Early Years

The time from which a child is conceived to when they are five is a vitally important one. This is a time during which the things that happen to a child will determine the course of their later life **and creates foundations in them becoming responsible adults**; it is therefore a critical time to provide support to children and families. There are many different people and services who come into the lives of families with young children, all of whom have an important contribution to make. These people and services need to work together effectively, in partnership with parents, to enable all children in Essex to get the Best Start for Life.

In this Early Years and Childcare Strategy, we have set out a vision for the changes we want to make to improve the experiences and outcomes of all young children living in Essex. Through this Strategy we want to enable more children to have positive experiences in their early years and parents to feel better supported.

The early years is important because it is during this time that there is the greatest potential to impact on a child's developing brain. Identifying problems early provides the best chance for families to be provided with support to stop these problems getting worse. We know that having positive early years and childcare experiences leads to:

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

All these things lead to children having more positive experiences in adulthood, being able to make positive **and accountable contributions** to society and their communities, and to being less likely to need to draw on the support of services like social care and the welfare system, including when and if they themselves become parents.



Most children in Essex have positive experiences in their early years and are well prepared for starting school, however we know nationally there are large differences in outcomes between children from different backgrounds and these differences generally continue in later life. We want all Essex residents to be given equal opportunities to have positive and fulfilling lives and are committed to targeting enhanced support to families at as early a stage as possible to remove this outcome gap. If we leave this support to a later stage it can be too late.

During the early years the support that children get from their parents is the most important thing and we are therefore committed to enabling all parents to provide good quality 'home learning environments' for their children. This is not just about helping children to learn specific things like how to count, it is about ensuring children are happy, confident, curious, have good relationships with key people in their lives, **being responsible for their actions** and that they are given the skills to communicate and acquire knowledge. This process begins before a child is even born as there are many things that a parent can do to give their child an optimum start while in the womb. Working with colleagues in health services who support parents in the prenatal and antenatal period is key to this Strategy. We want to work with parents to raise their aspirations for what they can achieve for their children and better support them in realising these aspirations.

## 4. Executive Summary

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

### 4.1 Our Vision for Early Years and Childcare

We have used this understanding of our strengths and challenges to inform our new Vision for this Strategy:

**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

## 4.2 Principles for the Early Years System

When implementing our Vision, we will work to the following principles:

### Targeted

We will effectively target resource to those in greatest need - be that cohort or local area

### Early Intervention

We will ensure families receive the right help, at the right time, in the right place as early as possible in the development of a problem

### Place Based

We will understand the unique assets, resources and challenges of different localities and tailor our approach to these

### Co-designed

We will engage with children, young people, parents and carers, and partners in developing and designing solutions

### Innovation and flexibility

We will trust and enable our partners and staff to take new and experimental approaches to identified problems and will not be afraid to flex and adapt our approach if things are not working out

### Strengths Based

We will focus on the strengths and assets in families and communities

### Whole system

We will consider all opportunities and challenges from the perspective of how they could best be responded to by working in partnership across the system rather than in isolation

### Evidence informed

We will develop our approaches based on an understanding of 'what works'

### **Family Focused**

We will put the lived experience of families and what more we can do to improve their experiences and outcomes at the heart of all we do

### **Childhood First**

We will value and promote the importance of early years and childhood in all that we do

### **Inclusive**

We will develop solutions and responses which take account of the needs of all and enable improved equality of opportunity and outcomes

When engaging with partners and with families we also strongly advocate for the principles of the Essex 'Trauma Perceptive Practice' approach:

***kindness, compassion, connection, hope and belonging.***

## 4.3 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

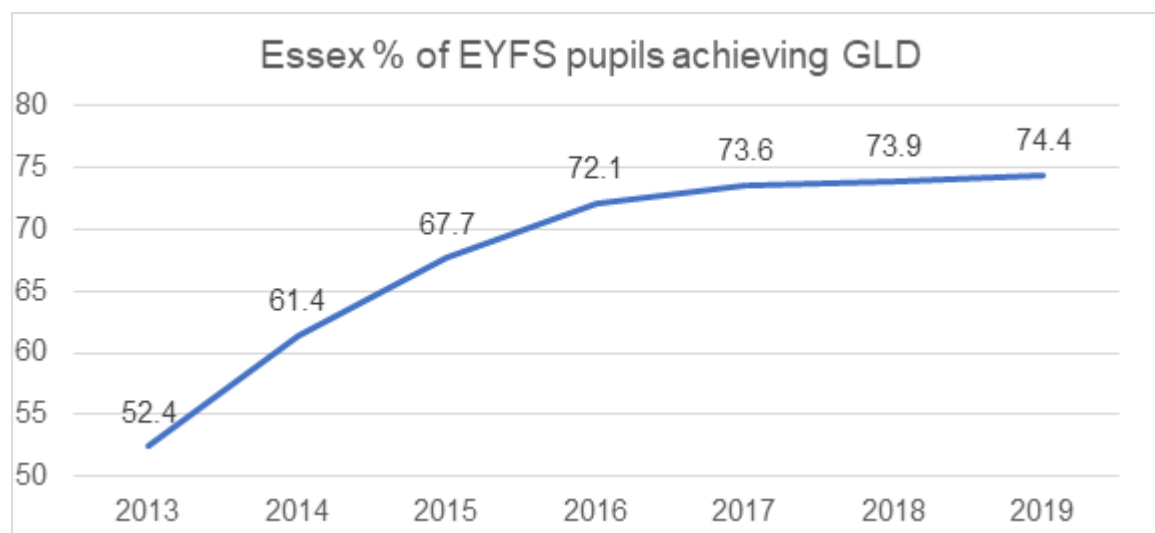
## 5. Performance Overview<sup>1</sup>

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) was introduced nationally in 2013. It sets out key areas for learning and development for children between birth and 5 and sets out 'goals' which children should achieve or be working towards during that time. Pupils are assessed against the EYFS at the end of the school year when they turn 5. The assessment is done by class teachers using observation rather than testing. The outcomes of these tests are used to determine how many children have achieved a 'Good Level of Development' (GLD). In Essex we recognise this is only one way to determine outcomes for children, nevertheless nationally this is one of the key performance measures that is used. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic GLD data was not collected in 2020 or 2021.

Since 2013 Essex has gradually improved the proportions of pupils achieving GLD. In 2016 72.1% of pupils achieved GLD and over the last four years, improvement has continued, but has been more gradual, settling at 74.4% in 2019. This is performance compares well to that of other local authorities with similar pupil numbers.

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<sup>1</sup> Early years and school readiness: Exploring the 25% of Essex early years pupils not achieving 'Good Level of Development' (GLD): Trends in GLD 2016 – 2019 (Essex County Council, March 2020)



Of the 25.6% of children who did not achieve GLD the following characteristics are most prominent:

- **SEND status:** in 2019, only 28.3% SEN support pupils and 6% Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) pupils achieved GLD (the requirements of the EYFS are extremely difficult to achieve for children with complex needs)
- **Disadvantage status:** while 76.7% of non-disadvantaged pupils achieve GLD, only 56% of disadvantaged ones do
- **Term of birth:** overall, Summer born pupils are twice more likely not to achieve GLD compared to those born in the Autumn.
- **Gender:** in 2019 80.6% girls achieved GLD, compared to 68.4% boys.

This Strategy seeks to sustain our already good performance in GLD while seeking to increase the levels of children achieving GLD in the above identified groups, or for those children that are unable to achieve a GLD implement a system that ensures we can support these children to make appropriate good progress. This has informed the actions we will take.

## 6. The Essex Early Years System

Throughout this Strategy we talk about our Early Years and Childcare 'System'. By system we mean parents, children and everyone who works in early years and childcare and in support of families in Essex either in an employed or voluntary capacity.

Parents and their children are the most important part of this system because it is around their needs that it should function. Parents are also the most important influence over the outcomes for their children. Other people and organisations who are part of the system include:

- Early Years and Childcare practitioners and teachers – e.g., people who work in nurseries, pre-schools, out of school provision, and as childminders
- Teachers, teaching assistants and other staff who work in primary schools
- Essex County Council – which has specific legal responsibilities to support parents and the early years system, including Social Care who work with vulnerable children and at-risk children and young people
- District, Borough and City Councils – who provided services which families access such as housing, parks and play facilities
- Health Services – who provide vital services accessed by families such as midwifery, health visiting, inoculations, speech and language support, and support for children with special educational needs and disabilities
- The Voluntary and Community sector – charities, faith groups and other organisations who work in and with communities to provide family support

There are also other organisations who do not work directly in early years and childcare but who work with families and who benefit from children having a great start in their early years – for example the Police, The Youth Offending Service and employers.

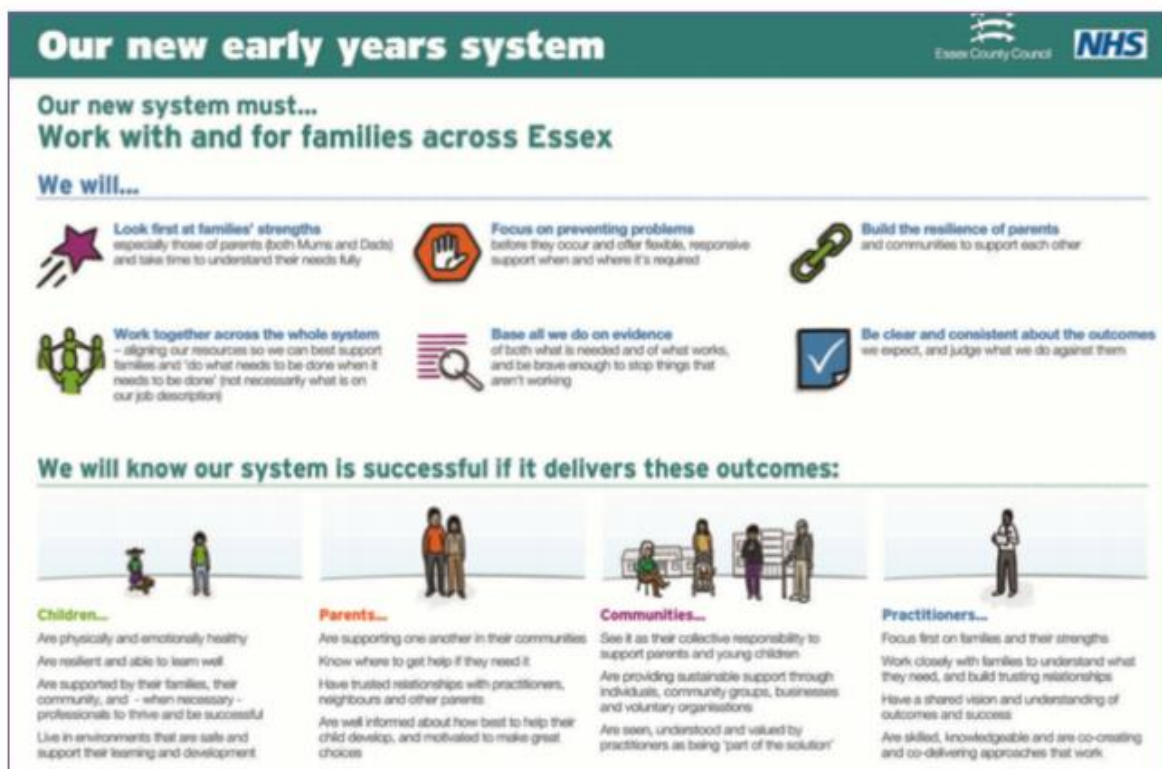
We want to consider how everyone who works in the Early Years 'System' could work more effectively together around the needs of families. We know that there are certain aspects of our current system which are currently not meeting needs as well as they could, and we will target these areas in our approach – this includes how we work together to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and / or disabilities.

The Early Years system connects to the other 'systems' such as the school and education system (everyone who works in schools and education establishments) and the wider children's system (everyone who works with children and young people throughout their



lives). We will take forward this Strategy in partnership with those who work in these other systems to ensure we work together in a mutually supportive way and avoid duplication. We are aligned to the children and young people's plan to ensure we work with in conjunction with partners to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

In 2015 Essex County Council embarked on an ambitious whole scale review of the Early Years and Childcare System in Essex. This involved working with children and families to co-design a new vision for the system which put the needs of families at the centre. We have reviewed and updated this vision in preparing this Strategy and it does and will continue to influence the work we will undertake to implement it.



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

Essex County Council can directly control some aspects of the Early Years System – for example we commission some of the services that are provided and can therefore build into contracts what we need people to do. Where we cannot do this are committed instead to influencing what people do by encouraging them to work with us and share our vision.

National Government is also part of the system. A lot of the things we may want to change in Essex that are outside of our direct control, for example the levels of funding that are available to childcare providers, and the type of training early years practitioners receive. Where this is the case, we will use opportunities available to us to lobby and influence national direction and policy.

## 7. Our Strategy Aims in Detail

**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**

### **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.

**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.

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

### **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 **through to becoming responsible adults**.
- 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:**

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<sup>2</sup> Work is currently on-going to redefine and redevelop the definition of 'school readiness' in Essex, the terminology in this aim will be updated to reflect the outcomes of this work in due course.

- 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 everyone to support children in understanding how and why it is important they become responsible and accountable for their actions.
- 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 providing a positive and inclusive early years' experience through Reception to Year 1, which can meet the needs of all children.
- We need everyone who 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.

#### **Summary:**

- We want all children, whatever their individual needs and abilities, to have the lifelong benefits that result from having a great start in their early years, and to arrive at school well prepared to benefit from the experiences they will have in their Reception Year and when they start Year 1.
- 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.

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

#### **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.

**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.
- We will implement a range of actions focused on the needs of individual disadvantaged groups, linking in with activity already on-going and which enable us to learn about which approaches work best.

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

### **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 qualification 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.

#### **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.

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

### **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 working with providers to manage 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.
- We work with parents who want to access early education and childcare 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 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 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.

### **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 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.

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

### **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 contribute 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.

### **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.



## 8. Our Agreed Actions

Working in partnership with partner organisations and parents we will:

<b>1</b>	Promote the importance of early years and childcare and improve recognition of the value of the early years and childcare workforce in delivering outcomes for children and young people across their lives
<b>2</b>	Ensure that Essex County Council is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities to support the early years and childcare sector and is providing leadership to the early years and childcare system aligned to the aims of this Strategy
<b>3</b>	Build on the way in which the early years system works together around the intentions of this Strategy, including supporting improved information sharing and multi-agency working around the needs of children and families, and increasing opportunities for joint training and development
<b>4</b>	Support the early years and childcare sector in Essex to be strong, well led and appropriately skilled to effectively support the needs of all children and families
<b>5</b>	Improve the positive outcomes already being achieved for young children in Essex by ensuring a continued focus on those things known to contribute to good outcomes, including early language and communication and strong relationships and attachment
<b>6</b>	Ensure all children are well prepared and supported to start reception class and to move through reception into year 1, by maximising how agencies work together around the needs of families and how parents are supported and enabled to provide quality home learning environments from birth

<b>7</b>	Ensure the early years and childcare system is effectively focused on improving outcomes for those most in need of support and who are at risk of poor outcomes, <a href="#">and supporting children to become responsible adults</a> by ensuring the workforce has the skills and understanding needed to effectively support these children and by maximising on opportunities for early intervention
<b>8</b>	Ensure effective inclusive early education, which is responsive to individual need, with a specific focus on improving outcomes, experiences, and opportunities for quality early years education for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
<b>9</b>	Increase the range of options for inclusive, high quality childcare ensuring that parents are aware of what is available to them, and seeking to address the specific problems faced by working parents and areas where sufficiency is low
<b>10</b>	Improve the Essex County Council information, advice and guidance (IAG) offer for parents, working in conjunction with partners and our commissioned services to ensure IAG offers are aligned and mutually supportive
<b>11</b>	Maximise opportunities for parents to access support in their communities through our commissioning arrangements (for example Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Family Hubs), through working in partnership with the voluntary and community sector and with parent forums
<b>12</b>	Improve and embed internal Essex County Council systems and processes which enable a good understanding of the early years sector in Essex, areas of strength and required improvement and the impact we are having, including developing effective mechanisms for continual engagement with parents and stakeholders
<b>13</b>	Ensure effective contribution to the development and implementation of other strategies and initiatives which have impact on early years and childcare, both those owned by Essex County Council and by other agencies and partnerships

<b>14</b>	Support the early years system with learning from and mitigating the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, including identifying opportunities for building on learning moving forward
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## 9. Measuring the Impact of this Strategy

As part of our planning for the delivery of the Strategy we have developed a performance framework which will enable us to demonstrate its overall impact. Through this framework we will:

- Monitor the actions we have or have not taken
- Review the impact of these actions on performance, e.g., have we made a positive difference to selected performance measures
- Engage with key stakeholders to seek feedback on the impact our actions have had

Importantly, the review of impact will include engagement with families. We will develop and embed mechanisms through which this will occur on an on-going basis.

Reports on progress and impact will be made to the Education Sustainability Board on a regular basis. Periodic updates will also be made to relevant Partnership Boards and stakeholder groups, such as the Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Links to the Essex County Council Organisation Strategy

This Strategy will contribute to delivering against the priorities of *Everyone's Essex*, the Essex County Council Organisation Strategy for 2021-2025.

### **A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy**

- We will support the sustainability and development of the Essex Early Years and Childcare Sector
- We will enable parents to work and train by supporting them to access high quality, affordable and accessible childcare options
- We will work across the system to deliver good early years outcomes for children which will enable them to have successful educational journeys and go on to access fulfilling employment opportunities and contribute to the growth of the Essex economy

### **A high-quality environment**

- We will support the early years sector in educating young children about the world and environment and how they can protect this, promoting the use of outdoor learning and environmentally friendly resources
- We will encourage retrofitting of early years settings where possible and deliver net zero buildings for new capital projects
- We will encourage providers, through our Early Years Charter, to adopt environmentally sustainable practices
- We will support parents to make ethical and environmentally friendly choices, for example upcycling baby and children's resources and encourage active travel

### **Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages**

- We will provide and facilitate the availability of information, advice, guidance, and support for parents which enables them to be physically and emotionally healthy – including working across the system to ensure expectant parents make positive choices regarding diet, exercise and substance use and working together to identify and support parents who may be at risk of mental ill health and social isolation
- We will support providers to educate young children about their health and wellbeing and how best to promote this, setting positive foundations for good health outcomes in later life

### **A good place for children and families to grow**

- We will work across the system to deliver good early years outcomes for all children, with a specific focus on improving outcomes for our most vulnerable groups
- We will promote the importance of relationship and attachments across families and family networks and work across the system to support families to develop these
- We will seek to lessen the demands and strains on working families which can threaten family security and stability
- We will work across the system to deliver a range of family support services from early help through to those most in need of support
- We will work with communities to expand the range of opportunities in Essex for families to spend time together including more play space for young children

### **Service Excellence**

- By the earliest identification of children that need additional support this Strategy will contribute to addressing the causing that drive demand.
- Strengthening the Early Years system will improve partnership working leading to more effective collaborating between agencies
- Investing in early intervention for our youngest children will create 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.
- The oversight of this Strategy will ensure continued focus on delivering the best outcomes for our youngest children

### **Levelling Up**

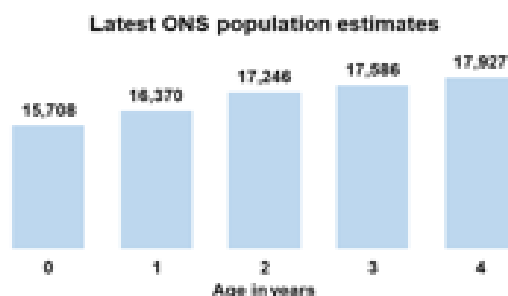
- This Strategy will contribute to the Strong Foundations in Early Year Levelling Up goal
- The focus will be on providing the right level of support at the right time for families and their children that most need it
- We will develop solutions and responses which take account of the needs of all and enable improved equality of opportunity and outcomes

This Strategy also makes an important contribution to the delivery of the outcomes of the **Essex Children and Young People's Plan**:

- Resilient Children and Young People
- Stable and Thriving Families
- Inclusive and Supportive Schools and Communities
- Safe and Accessible Neighbourhoods

## Appendix 2: Early Years and Childcare in Essex

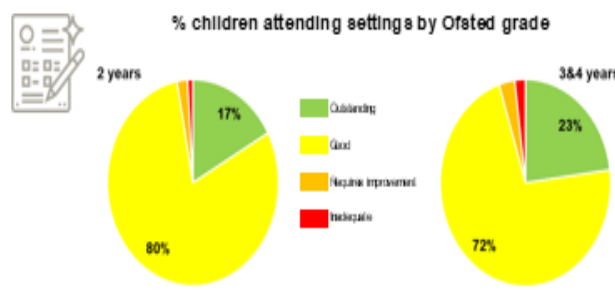
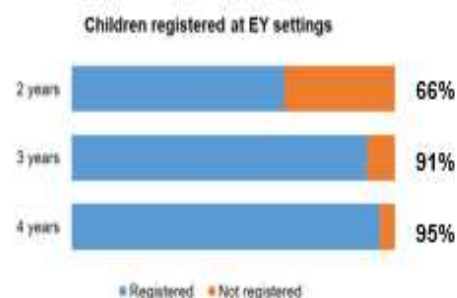
Numbers of under 5s in Essex (Office for National Statistics (ONS) Data)



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

ONS have projected that between 2020-2040 the number of 0–4-year-olds is projected to increase by 5.1%. **This means plans need to be put in place to ensure there are enough childcare places for all children**

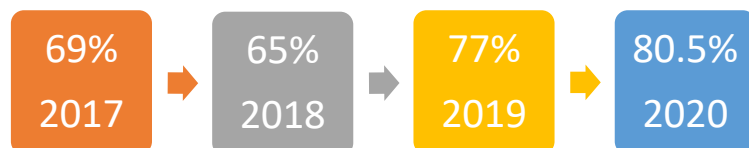
Numbers of children who are registered to attend an early year setting (a private or voluntary sector nursery, childminder or a maintained nursery or school)



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

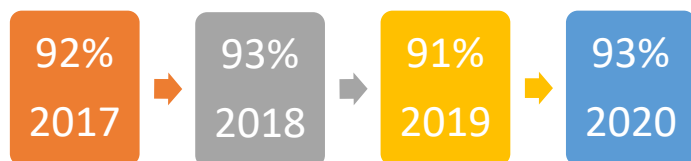


## Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE)



Take up of FEEE2

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

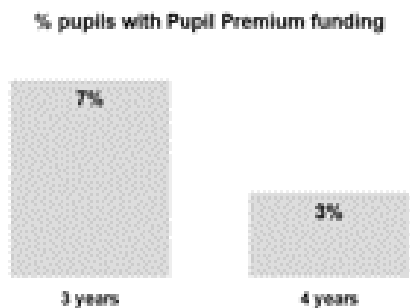


Take up of FEEE3&4

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

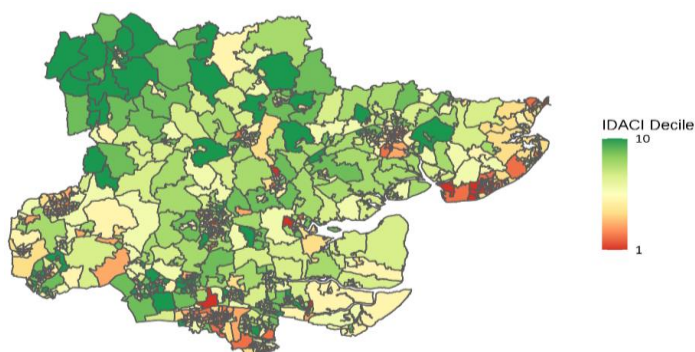
Not all settings offer FEEE but **1447** offer FEEE2 and **1350** offer the extended 30 hours (out of 1866). **The strategy will seek to increase the number of settings offering funded places**

## Children eligible for Pupil Premium Funding



Early Years Pupil Premium Funding is additional funding for early years providers to improve outcomes for children by providing them with enhanced learning and development support. For children from low-income families accessing the Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE), providers are entitled to receive additional funding of up to £300 per eligible child per year.

## Deprivation in Essex



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

### Working Families

Most families in Essex live in the middle of the scale of deprivation and are likely to fall into the category of 'Working Families'. Working Families who are 'just about managing' are defined with reference to the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) using 'people who earn 25% below the MIS after childcare/housing costs'. Working families who are 'just about managing' are a significant proportion of the population in Essex and are not typically eligible for targeted support. Before the pandemic an estimated **180,000 of the county's population of nearly 1.5m were in this cohort.**

### Early Years Providers

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

Primary school nurseries (including academies)	105
Independent schools	32
Day nurseries	326
Preschools	401
Childminders	1297
Breakfast clubs	15
After school clubs	80
Holiday clubs	180
Wrap around care (before and after school)	2

## Appendix 3: Developing this Strategy

Some of the important things we heard from parents were:

- Bringing up children is challenging, not just in the early years but also as they get older; parents need to be supported to 'learn on the job'
- Parents with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities face specific challenges and would like more and improved support
- Parents feel stressed by juggling work, finances, and family life – the cost of childcare puts strain on some families
- While a lot of families feel well supported and acknowledge that there is a lot of information out there for them, many also feel that understanding what is available is too complicated, they find it difficult to know where to go for information or who to speak to. They feel they can get different and conflicting messages from different professionals, their family and friends, and from the internet and they are unsure of who to trust
- Many parents would like more opportunities to engage with other parents and would like more things to do in their communities

Some important things we heard from people who work in early years and childcare are:

- Everyone is committed to working together to improve experiences in the early years, particularly for families and children with specific challenges, such as special education needs and/or disabilities
- Everyone agrees that a lot of benefit can be achieved through supporting families better and earlier

However:

- People don't always work well together – there can be a lack of understanding between different organisations, people do not always talk to each other or share information well and there can be a lot of duplication in how we work and what we do
- Points of transition (e.g., when children and families move between the different services provided by different agencies) are times when there is the greatest opportunity for people not to work well together and the needs of families to get missed
- People working in the system do not always feel well supported or valued for the work they do

# Appendix 4: The Context

## 4.1 Our Strengths and Challenges

### How we work together as a system

- Essex has a strong and diverse early years and childcare sector including private and voluntary sector settings, childminders, maintained nursery schools and primary schools, in addition to hundreds of voluntary and community sector organisations and commissioned services working in support of parents. Services are also provided by health agencies and local councils. This gives parents a large amount of choice; however, it is also difficult to bring everyone involved together behind one clear vision and to effectively support the sector when the needs across it are so diverse.
- Professionals across our system work together well, they share information and do what they can in partnership to best support families, however parents often feel like the system is not working for them and that professionals are not engaging well and that there are 'gaps'. This is especially so when children have specific needs, for example special educational needs and/or disabilities
- In Essex we understand the importance of early intervention – that is providing support to families early in the development of a problem. There are a lot of opportunities across our system to provide good quality early intervention and we understand the groups of children most likely to benefit from this. In most cases this works well and results in good outcomes, however for some children we are not making the most of these opportunities, we are not picking up problems early enough and the support we are providing is not effective. This is because different parts of the system are not effectively engaging with one another.

### The outcomes we achieve for children

- In Essex most children achieve good outcomes in early years. They are already achieving well against early learning goals and arrive in the school Reception class ready to make a great start. We have made positive progress in this over the years and want to continue to sustain this in taking this Strategy forward.

- There are some children who generally need more support to help them make good progress, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, children from financially disadvantaged households, children who are looked after or whose families are involved with social care. Some children can be impacted by multiple disadvantages and for these children and their families there is more we can do to provide more and better coordinated support.
- Essex is a large and diverse county – different parts of Essex have different strengths and challenges and have access to different resources. As a result of this outcomes for children and families across Essex differ a lot. To level up access to opportunities we need to understand the differences between different places and come up with solutions which address the specific needs of each local area.

### **How we support those working in early years and childcare**

- Most early years settings and childminders in Essex are rated good and outstanding by Ofsted which is a good indication of our workforce being strong and skilled. Essex provides information on how the workforce can access a diverse training and support offer and provides training and support itself. There are however specific challenges in optimally supporting all settings, in ensuring recruitment and retention is good, and that our workforce is diverse and appropriately skilled, especially when it comes to supporting the needs of the most vulnerable. Funding and release staff to access training is a challenge for providers.

### **How we support parents accessing early years and childcare**

- Most parents can access the early education and childcare that they want and need. Parents find childcare expensive but are aware of support they can access and often use informal childcare (for example provided by family members) as an alternative.
- There are however persistent problems for some parents finding childcare which meets their needs, including parents whose children have special educational needs and / or disabilities, parents seeking care outside of standard working hours and parents who have school age children.
- The costs to providers of providing childcare are considerable and this is exacerbated by the funding levels including for Free Early Education Entitlement. Balancing the needs of parents for more affordable care alongside supporting the sustainability of the market is a challenge.

### **How we support parents and families**

- We have good engagement of families with our services and there is a wide variety of support available for parents, however we know that not everyone is well engaged in this and for a lot of parents they are still confused about where to go for support or are unaware of what is available, often this is parents are most in need of support.
- The way our provision falls across the county also means that services are unevenly available to all and that, especially in rural areas, people feel they cannot access provision that meets their needs.

## 4.2 The Impact of the Pandemic

Like nothing before the Coronavirus pandemic has highlighted the importance of early years and childcare. There have been significant negative impacts on the experiences of children and their families and on how schools and settings have been expected to work. There have also been positive opportunities to think about how we could do things differently, and some positive impacts on families as they have had more time to spend together. This Strategy is timely in enabling us to consider how we can help families and those who work in the system to recover from the impacts and while also 'building back better'.

Some of the key things about which we are concerned which we either know to have already happened or which may impact in future are:

- Negative experiences for those who have become parents during the course of the pandemic
- Disruption to normal activity to support children starting school or childcare
- Disruption to standard development checks
- Lost opportunities to pick up and support with concerns in respect of both children and parents – e.g., developmental delay, potential indicators of SEND, mental health concerns in parents
- Delay in support and assessment for children with SEND
- Disruption to support normally provided to children with additional needs
- Children living in stressful family situations resulting from the economic impacts of the pandemic and parents juggling working alongside lack of childcare
- Economic impacts of the pandemic increasing financial pressures on families, potentially increasing the numbers of families who are deprived
- Lack of opportunities for children to interact with other children and family members and people outside the home

- Parents not being able to access face to face support opportunities, including meeting other parents
- Lack of data on some groups of children where formal assessments have not taken place
- Financial pressures on childcare providers impacting on longer term sustainability and the ability to invest in training and development
- Destabilisation of our childcare sector as parents' needs for childcare change
- Losses in the early years workforce, especially within the childminding sector
- Move to virtual working causing some disruption of how agencies and practitioners have been able to work together

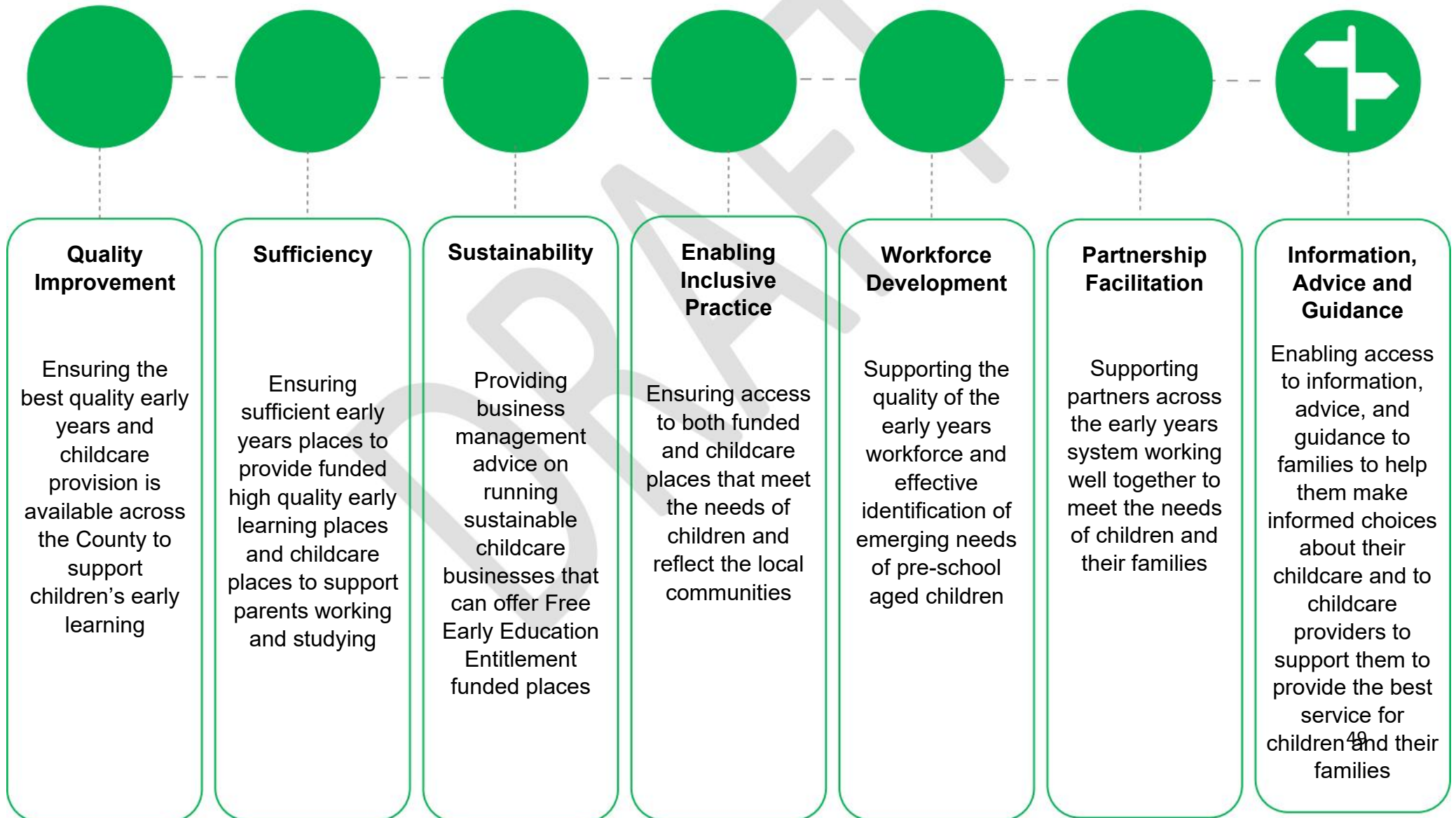
Some opportunities we would like to build on across the course of this Strategy:

- Virtual working offering opportunities for greater participation in multi-agency working and training and development
- Developing an expanded virtual support offer for parents (alongside a face-to-face offer)
- Continuation of the enhanced focus given by the system to the needs of vulnerable children
- Exploiting the enhanced leadership and support that Essex County Council has been able to provide to the sector throughout the pandemic
- The enhanced focus and awareness of the importance of early years and childcare nationally

The longer-term impacts of the pandemic, or even how these will continue to play out across the course of this Strategy, are currently unknown. We, therefore, in all our areas of activity, **commit to continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic, seeking feedback from parents and practitioners, to inform our future plans. We will keep these plans flexible to enable us to reflect our learning.**



## Appendix 5: The Essex County Council Early Years and Childcare Service



# Appendix 6: Legislative Framework

## **Children Act 1989**

The Children Act 1989 is key legislation in ensuring that children are safeguarded, and their welfare promoted. Section 17 of this Act places a duty on every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need within their area. Section 47 of the Act requires local authorities to make enquiries to enable it to decide whether the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and assess whether action is required to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. The Children Act also places a general duty on local authorities in relation to children with disabilities.

## **Education and Inspections Act 1996**

This Act places a duty on local authorities to promote high standards, and the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. It also places a duty on local authorities in England to promote fair access to educational opportunity.

## **Children Act 2004**

The Children Act 2004 focuses principally on improving the effectiveness of safeguarding through promoting better inter-agency co-operation and improved information sharing.

## **Childcare Act 2006**

The Childcare Act 2006 provided legal duties on local authorities to improve outcomes for the under 5s, to ensure the availability of sufficient childcare and to provide information to parents and families covering childcare and a range of other areas. The Act introduced the Early Years Foundation Stage and reformed regulation and inspection for early years providers. It introduced the availability of 15 hours free early education provision for eligible 2,3 and 4-year-olds. The Act also made included provisions for local authorities to ensure sufficient children's centres in their local areas and various other stipulations about how children's centres should be run.

## **Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009**

The key elements of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act include reform of 14 to 19 education and training, the establishment of Children's Trust Boards and enabling the Government to set statutory targets for children's services authorities in England for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. The Act makes provision about children's centres which updates requirements originally set out in the Children Act 2006.

## **The Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act brought together multiple separate pieces of legislation into one single Act which provides a legal framework to protect the rights of individuals and advance equality and opportunity for all. It provides protection against direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation for anyone using public services, businesses or providers of goods and services, clubs and associations and for anyone in the workplace. This includes all local authorities, schools and early years and childcare providers. The Public Sector Equality Duty, established by the Act, provides a legal requirement on public bodies to consider the impact of their decisions and policies on anyone who has a protected characteristic – including age, pregnancy and maternity. It so provides specific protection to women who are breastfeeding.

## **The Children and Families Act 2014**

The Children and Families Act 2014 includes sections on childcare, children's welfare and changes in local authority statutory duties in relation to the Local Offer for children with SEND. The Act brings together the separate arrangements for children with SEND in schools and young people in post-16 institutions and training up to their 25th birthday, and the integrated Education, Health and Care Plan to replace the statement of Special Educational Needs.

## **SEND Code of Practice 2015**

The SEND Code of Practice provided statutory guidance on the SEND system for children and young people from 0-25. It outlines the legal requirements and statutory guidelines for schools, academies and local authorities, as set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014. The Code requires educational establishments to identify and address the needs of their pupils with SEND.

## **The Childcare Act 2016**

The Childcare Act 2016 provided for an extension of Free Early Education Entitlement so that working parents of 3- and 4-year-olds can access up to 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year (or equivalent time).

## **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018**

Statutory guidance setting out responsibilities that everyone must safeguard and promote the welfare of children and the expected arrangements that local areas should establish to enable collaboration between professionals and agencies.

## Appendix 7: Useful Links

Childcare Choices <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>

Children with SEND <https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help>

Development Matters <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/development-matters--2>

Early Years Foundation Stage <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>

Equalities Act 2010 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Essex Child and family Wellbeing service <https://essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk/>

Essex Children and Young People's Plan  
<https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/v89y1/essex-children-and-young-peoples-strategic-plan>

Essex Childcare Search [secureweb1.essex.gov.uk/FIS](https://secureweb1.essex.gov.uk/FIS)

Essex Childcare sufficiency assessment [www.essex.gov.uk/childcare-sufficiency-assessment](https://www.essex.gov.uk/childcare-sufficiency-assessment)

Essex County Council [www.essex.gov.uk/](https://www.essex.gov.uk/)

Essex Early Years and Childcare <https://eycp.essex.gov.uk/>

Essex Family Information Service [www.essex.gov.uk/family-information-service](https://www.essex.gov.uk/family-information-service)

Essex Local offer [www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/](https://www.essexlocaloffer.org.uk/)

Essex Organisational Strategy <https://data.essex.gov.uk/dataset/v89y1/essex-children-and-young-peoples-strategic-plan>

Essex Safeguarding Children Board <https://www.escb.co.uk/>

Minimum Standards <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-minimum-standards>

Office for National Statistics <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>

Ofsted <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted>

Public Health Best start <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-best-start-for-life-a-vision-for-the-1001-critical-days>

Special Education Needs Code of Practice  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25>

## Appendix 8: Glossary of Terms

**Best start for life** - *Giving children the best start in life is a fundamental part of improving health and reducing inequalities*

**Children and Young Peoples Partnership Board** – *Brings together representatives from different agencies who work with children, young people and their families to focus on working together to improve outcomes*

**Development Matters** - *Non-statutory curriculum guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage*

**Early Years and Childcare System** – *By system we mean parents, children and everyone who works in early years and childcare and in support of families in Essex either in an employed or voluntary capacity*

**Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS)** - *EYFS is the standards that school and childcare providers must meet for the learning, development, and care of children from birth to 5*

**Early Intervention** – *Identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes or need more help to do well*

**Education Task Force** – *An independently chaired Board that will focus on driving and overseeing the Essex response to the long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children and young people's education*

**Education Disadvantage Strategy** – *The aim of the strategy is to focus on an effective system wide approach that understands the impact of disadvantage on children and young people and actions needed to take to reverse these*

**Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)** – *EHCPs are for children and young people aged up to 25 years old that have specific identified needs. It will include identification of educational, health and social care needs and sets out the additional support required to meet those needs*

**Education Sustainability Board** - *A board consisting of the wider Essex County Council Education Leadership team with the aim of progressing the implementation and change management of the directorate's key strategies and our highest priority projects*

**Early Years Charter** – *A set of principles and values on how to best work together to improve outcomes for children to be agreed and adopted across the whole Essex Childcare system*

**Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service Family Hubs** – *One in each district of Essex that have integrated teams providing a range of child and family services throughout Essex that are free at the point of delivery to families from pregnancy up to 19*



**Formal Childcare** – Formal childcare refers to an Ofsted registered childcare provider. A childcare provider can be one of the following.

- Primary school nursery (including academies), Day Nursery, Preschool and Childminder.
- Wraparound care for school age children includes Breakfast, After School and Holiday Clubs.
- Independent school (registered and inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate)

**Good Level of Development (GLD)** - Is a national measure of a child's attainment at the end of the reception year and focuses on the early learning goals in the prime areas of learning (personal, social, and emotional development; physical development; and communication and language) and the early learning goals in the specific areas of mathematics and literacy

**Healthy Child Programme** - Healthy Child Programme offers every family an evidence-base programme of interventions, including screening tests, immunisations, developmental reviews, and information and guidance to support parenting and healthy choices. It focuses on the contribution of health visiting and school nursing services leading and co-ordinating the delivery of public health for children aged 0 to 19

**Home learning environment** - Home learning environment is the combination of everything you and your family do and the spaces your child has access to that contributes to your child's development and learning

**IDACI** – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index measures the proportion of all children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families / communities

**Inclusion Framework** - The Inclusion Framework is a life-planning, skills-based tool, which allows for identification of barriers and approaches for early intervention

**Informal Childcare** – Informal childcare is an arrangement where care is provided by grandparents, relatives, friends, or a babysitter outside of Ofsted registered childcare providers

**Office for National Statistics (ONS)** – Are responsible for collecting and publishing statistics related to the economy, population and society that are shared with organisations such as Essex County Council to enable planning of service levels and needs and to evaluate performance

**Ofsted** - Ofsted is the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills. They inspect services providing education and skills for learners of all ages. They also inspect and regulate services that care for children and young people

**Ofsted grades** – Ofsted Inspectors use a 4-point grading scale to make judgements on the quality of a childcare setting during inspections. There are 4 grades: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate

**Levelling up Agenda** – *By levelling up we mean tackling the root causes and impacts of inequalities existing in Essex*

**Looked after Children by the Local Authority** – *Means children in public care who are placed with foster carers or in residential homes*

**Lower Super Output Areas** – *Super output areas are the lowest geographical level at which the census estimates are provided*

**Minimum Income Standard (MIS)** – *MIS produces budgets for household types based on what members of the public think you need for a minimum acceptable standard of living in the UK*

**Parents** – *Someone who looks after a person in the same way a parent would, this includes but not limited to parents, legal guardian, foster carers, primary and secondary care givers*

**Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Strategy** - *the aim of the strategy is to improve the educational, health and emotional wellbeing outcomes for all of Essex's children and young people with special Educational Needs*

**Sufficient Childcare** – *Is a local authority duty to provide enough childcare places to meet the needs of parents to help them to take up work or access education or training as well as providing enough early learning funded places for eligible 2-year-olds and all 3- and 4-year-olds*

**Transition** - *When children and families move between the different services provided by different agencies such as an early year setting into a reception class*

**Trauma Perceptive Practice** – *The Essex approach to understanding behaviour and supporting emotional well-being and focuses on Compassion and Kindness, Hope and Connection and Belonging*

**Working Families Programme** – *To gain a deeper understanding of the families who are just about managing to identify how they can receive better support*