

Note of discussion during a conference call between members of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee and Essex County Council officers at 10:30am on Thursday 9 April 2020**Contact for further information:** Graham Hughes (Graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk)

County Councillors present by video conference:

J Chandler (Chairman of the discussion)	J Baker
G Butland (until 11am)	J Deakin (until 12pm)
M Durham	B Egan
J Henry	M Maddocks (substitute)
P May	P Reid
R Pratt	

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, was in attendance throughout to support the discussion.

Purpose

The discussion was to update on the Meaningful Lives Matter Programme. The following joined the conference call for the discussion and to introduce the item:

Chris Martin, Director, Strategic Commissioning & Policy (Children & Families), Essex County Council
Jessica Stewart, Head of Strategic Commissioning and Policy, Essex County Council

Update

Officers presented an update via a power point presentation and the following was either acknowledged, highlighted and/or noted during the discussion:

- (i) There were increasing challenges in meeting the complexity of needs of service users.

- (ii) A transformation programme was underway to respond to the stated ambitions and aspirations of current service users. As a result, the transformation programme aimed to change the approach to the future commissioning of services.
- (iii) The County Council had worked both with partners (such as CCGs to further link health and social care) and specialist research organisations such as FutureGov and NESTA (National Endowment for Science Technology and Arts), in developing a future strategy. Some of the further challenges that had been identified were that it was not always clear to service users or professionals as to the role and responsibilities of each service provider within the overall system, that service users were struggling to connect to their local communities, that service users needed further help in making reasonable adjustments to their lifestyle, that there needed to be improved progression and forward planning for service users, and further embedding of needs based support in future planning.
- (iv) A new local approach was also being developed with providers which planned to do more place-based commissioning rather than just county wide and thematic commissioning. Engagement sessions have been held with providers in Braintree, Canvey and Saffron Walden, following the learning from the 100 Day Challenge, to see how local partners can work differently and more collaboratively to achieve more outcomes focussed local activities. However, work had been paused due to the current Corona Virus crisis.
- (v) The transformation programme had linked-in with representatives from special schools, the Essex multi schools council ([Multi schools council](#)) and was working with the SEND transformation programme and the CQC/OFSTED inspection actions.
- (vi) As part of the NESTA 100 day challenge a multi-disciplinary team had been established in three different areas in Essex to identify priorities for service users. All three teams had reported that having employment opportunities was very important to service users and helping them overcome the barriers to those opportunities (e.g. transport, employer expectations, parents readiness and willingness, support needs to retain job, necessary skills and training, implications on benefits/myth busting). It was stressed that this should also include promoting flexibility in working patterns and hours and not exclude adults with complex needs and that access to opportunities should be same for everyone.
- (vii) There was a desire now to increase the percentage of those with Learning Disabilities in employment. The contract with Essex Cares Limited (ECL) to deliver services in Day Centres had been changed to incentivise ECL to increase the focus on helping service users find and retain employment. Although the revised contract had gone live at 1st April 2020, the current Corona Virus crisis had slowed down the initial pace of change.

- (viii) There had also been some consideration given to the County Council establishing its own social enterprises and generating its own income stream. Planning for training programmes for social workers to be delivered by those with autism and learning disabilities had been paused due to the Corona virus crisis.
- (ix) Overall, the current Corona virus crisis had significantly impacted on planned work and some had been put on hold as staff were re-assigned to other operational duties and ensuring that vulnerable service users were contacted and linked-in with Operation Shield and the Essex Welfare Service where appropriate.

Actions

The following actions would be progressed:

	Issue	Action	By
1.	Facilitating independence in the community and providing a broader spectrum of accommodation options	Suggest officers look at Castle Point District Council sheltered accommodation scheme which has on an on-site warden and gives community feel and independence.	Chris Martin/Jess Stewart
2.	Ensuring ongoing support for vulnerable people in the community	Involve and ensure parish councils are linked to the appropriate support streams as they will know of the local vulnerable people in their area.	Chris Martin/Jess Stewart
3.	Future committee business/work programme	Catch-up video conference meetings to be arranged with appropriate Cabinet Members and senior officers to discuss realistic expectations of scrutiny activity in the short term.	Senior Democratic Services Officer

The discussion ended at 12.10pm.