

Essex Early Help Offer



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Foreword

This document aims to bring together all the key components of the current Essex Early Help Offer and provides a cohesive picture of that offer for organisations and professionals who support vulnerable children, young people and families.

A child or young person can experience difficulties at any time during their childhood and adolescence and evidence shows that if those difficulties are addressed early enough, it avoids the need for more costly specialist services.

Family stability is the key to delivering the best outcomes for children and young people and at the heart of that stability are effective relationships, positive behaviour and social connectedness. Lack of help and support when needed can have a significant detrimental effect on children and young people's social, emotional, health and educational development and outcomes.

We operate in financially challenging times and against a backdrop of the impacts of the 2020 pandemic. Now more than ever, partners are committed to working together and aligning activity to ensure we support our most vulnerable families.

It is vital that we respond to what the evidence tells us and embrace Early Help, not just as a concept of service provision, but as a way of empowering families and communities to take control over their own lives and live independently from public and statutory services.

Councillor Beverley Egan

Essex County Council Cabinet Member
for Children's Services and Early Years

Helen Lincoln

Essex County Council Executive Director
for Children and Families

Introduction

Early Help is the identification of, and response to, emerging problems for children, young people, and their families. It is a way of working that supports them to overcome difficulties quickly and build their resilience so that problems do not escalate.

A plethora of evidence, and our experience of service delivery and provision over the past decade, demonstrates that the long-term prospects of children and young people receiving Early Help at the right time will significantly improve.

Effective delivery of Early Help is based on a clear understanding of local needs, and appreciation of local conditions influencing the lives of children, young people, and families.

We contextualise our shared understanding of those needs within the Essex Effective Support Windscreen (page 13). Locally based professionals contribute to the development of a rich perspective through the creation of geographical and thematic Joint Strategic Needs Assessments with particular attention to defined vulnerable groups set out in the **'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance 2018**.

In Essex our knowledge and understanding has been deepened by the ethnographic approach we take to understand the world families live in from their own experiences. We provide effective system leadership, putting families and communities at the centre of our work.

We recognise that families' strengths are their biggest asset and that if support is needed, it is best co-produced with families and communities themselves. That support will be enabled by valued, highly qualified and confident front-line staff who play a critical role in the early identification of need.

This document is one of a suite of documents that support the delivery of our Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Approach, and it articulates the Essex Early Help Offer for children, young people and their families living in our county.



Our Early Help System Vision

In Essex we all believe that every child and young person should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that they are best supported to grow and thrive within their own families, in their local communities.

There will always be some children, young people and families that will need our support and we are committed to ensuring we work with them to identify their own solutions, building on their own strengths and assets. In doing so we will ensure that, where services are delivered, they will be flexible to meet children's and families' needs. Our approach supports a shift of focus away from managing short-term crises and towards effective support for children and young people and their families at an earlier stage, with them at the centre of enabling environments rather than them being dependent on organised public services.

Wherever possible the needs of children, young people and families will be met by universal services. However, as soon as any practitioner is aware that they may have additional needs he/she will talk with them to offer advice and support in order to meet those needs.

In Essex we have a shared partnership system vision that, if Early Help is needed, we will ensure we:

- **work to families' strengths** – especially those of parents and carers and take the time to understand their needs fully
- **focus on preventing problems** before they occur and offer flexible responsive support when and where it is required
- **build the resilience** of parents, children, young people and communities to support each other
- **work together across the whole system** aligning our resources so we can best support families and do what needs to be done, when it needs to be done
- **base all that we do on evidence** of both what is needed and of what works and be brave enough to stop things that are wrong
- **be clear and consistent about the outcomes** we expect, and judge what we do against them



The Essex Context – A Pen Portrait

Essex is a diverse county with a population of approximately 1.5 million; around 21% of that population is under 18. During the last twenty years our population has grown by almost 200,000, with our child population rising slightly during this time by just under 20,000, to approximately 313,591.

72% of Essex is rural and whilst we are a relatively affluent county, there are pockets of high deprivation particularly in the South and North. It is estimated that 23% of Essex children and young people are living in poverty, with 38,600 children living in the top 20 most deprived neighbourhoods in Essex. The number of Essex residents living in deprived areas has doubled since 2007. 19.9% of primary and 18.7% of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals.

Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 16.1% of all children and young people living in Essex and the proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language in primary schools has increased to 10.2% and in secondary schools to 7.5%.

32,170 Essex school pupils (15.7%) have special educational needs (SEN), 24,450 (11.9%) receive SEN support and 7,720 (3.8%) have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Our child population is approximately **313,591**

23% of Essex children and young people are living in poverty

38,600 children living in the top 20 most deprived neighbourhoods in Essex

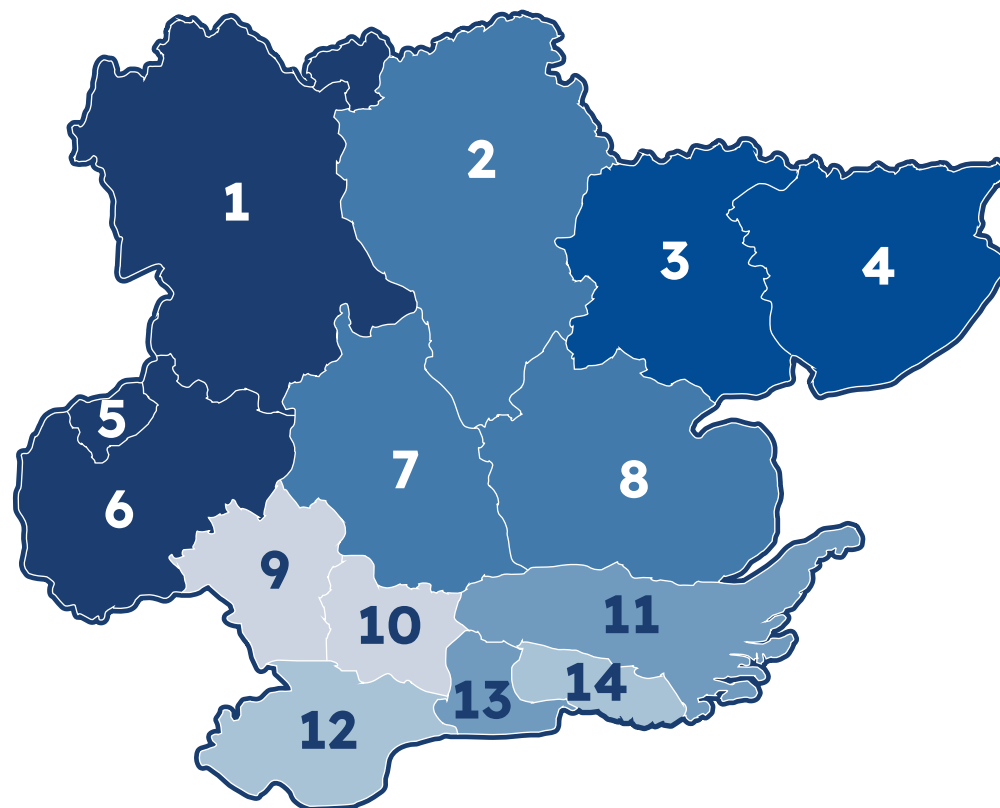
19.9% of primary and **18.7%** of secondary pupils are entitled to free school meals

The overarching picture for Essex is that overall outcomes for most children and young people are good and have improved over the past 8 years.

However, this picture is not the same for all and there are children and young people in need of protection and those who are at risk around whom we need to focus preventative activity.

The Children and Young People's Partnership Approach and this Essex Early Help Offer encourage partners to make all the efforts they can to understand those who are at risk and to target resource appropriately. We are very aware that the pandemic and current cost of living crisis has increased levels of vulnerability in Essex. This includes making things more challenging for just about managing working families. We will continue to monitor the impact across our communities on an on-going basis and develop tailored responses.

The Essex Joint Strategic Needs Analysis provides more detail on the social, health and educational needs of children and young people in Essex.



- | | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Uttlesford | 6 Epping Forest | 11 Rochford |
| 2 Braintree | 7 Chelmsford | 12 Thurrock |
| 3 Colchester | 8 Maldon | 13 Castle Point |
| 4 Tendring | 9 Brentwood | 14 Southend |
| 5 Harlow | 10 Basildon | |

Vulnerability and Risk

Certain groups of children and young people are exposed to higher risk of poor outcomes when compared to their peers, and professionals need to be particularly alert to these individuals' and their families' needs.

72% of Essex is rural and whilst we are a relatively affluent county, Early Help can be particularly pertinent for children and young people who are living in an unstable and challenging family environment, for example those experiencing frequent conflict, living in low income households, and/or those who may be at risk of exploitation.

This can include children who:

- have parents with mental health needs
- have parents in prison
- are homeless, in temporary housing, or poor housing
- have caring responsibilities
- are not in full time or mainstream education
- have Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- are not in Education, Employment or Training
- have migrated to Essex (from within or outside the UK)
- are in or leaving care

The complexity of problems being experienced by families is increasing and compounded by the global pandemic and the current cost of living crisis, the long-term outcomes for those vulnerable young people affected can be poor. We continue to coordinate action to ensure that we are effectively promoting the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. The 2020 pandemic heightened the importance of these issues and of the system coming together in a coordinated multi-agency Early Help response.



The Essex Early Help Strategic Context

The Council's corporate strategy, **Everyone's Essex**, sets out how ECC intends to improve outcomes for the citizens of Essex, including children and young people. This document articulates a long-term vision for the county, which is shared with partners.

The **Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy** is jointly owned by all partners who sit on the Health and Wellbeing Board. It sets out a small number of key strategic priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Essex. Our Early Help Offer is aligned to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and helps deliver against its five strategic priorities:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Physical activity and healthy weight
- Supporting long-term independence
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Health inequalities and the wider determinants of health

Essex County Council is now also part of three Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) (Mid and South Essex, Herts and West Essex, Suffolk and North East Essex). Each ICS was required to agree by the end of 2022, a joint Integrated Care Strategy which sets out how commissioners in the NHS and local authorities, working with providers and other partners, will deliver more joined-up, preventative and person-centred care, considering the wider determinants of health. The three Integrated Care Strategies covering Essex have different priorities and delivery aims, reflective of local circumstances, but they all centre around aligned common outcomes which include the importance of embedding effective Early Help across all aspects of the system.



Partnership Working and Systems Approach

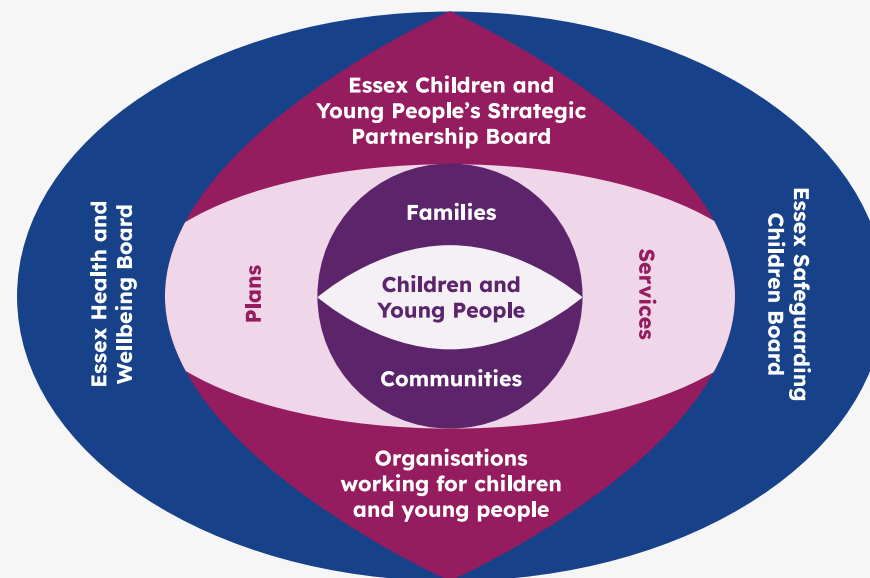
Partnership delivery of the Early Help Offer is enabled from within a complex children's landscape that incorporates upwards of 550 schools and academies, three Integrated Care Partnerships, five Essex Health Alliances, three police divisions, twelve district, borough and city councils and the two bordering unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend.

There is also a thriving voluntary and community sector providing support to children, young people and adults which is critical to the delivery of our Early Help Offer.

Achieving the best outcomes for our children and young people within this complex network of service delivery is challenging, and we know that the consistent and coherent delivery of Early Help is critical to this. The context of financial pressures and the impacts of the 2020 pandemic make this challenging, however, they have also brought about opportunity to think and act differently together to ensure that Early Help plays a critical role in resolving some of our biggest challenges, for example improving our SEND offer, supporting the increasing emotional health and wellbeing needs of children and young people, and working to enable parents to support their children confidently at the right time.

Against a backdrop of increasing contextual safeguarding issues such as child and criminal exploitation, we have developed the right system foundations for us to ensure that the Early Help Offer is enhanced and improved through our work and our ability to innovate as a system.

The Children and Young People's System



The Essex Children's System

The 2016 Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Approach was refreshed in 2020. This sets out four system objectives that were co-developed with families and system partners.

These are that:

- 1 Children and young people are resilient
- 2 Families are stable and thriving
- 3 Schools and communities are inclusive
- 4 Neighbourhoods are safe and accessible

In addition to the Children and Young People's Strategic Approach, there are a wide range of strategies, plans and partnerships that enable us to do our work and they are all inextricably linked and critical to the delivery of both our respective agencies' visions and objectives and our shared vision and objectives set out in our approach. These include the business plans of all system partners and joint plans and strategies, for example: SEND, Domestic Abuse, All Age Autism and Violence and Vulnerability, all of which are integral to the delivery of Early Help.

There is an effective network of local strategic partnership arrangements that enable us to plan and deliver Early Help for children, young people and families. These arrangements include quadrant-based Locality Children's Partnerships that deliver their own local action plans within the framework of the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Approach. These groups form part of local systems of partnership arrangements that include the local Health Alliances, Community Safety Partnerships, a range of primary and secondary school-led improvement cluster group arrangements and local Youth Strategy Groups.



Children and Young People's Partnership Landscape

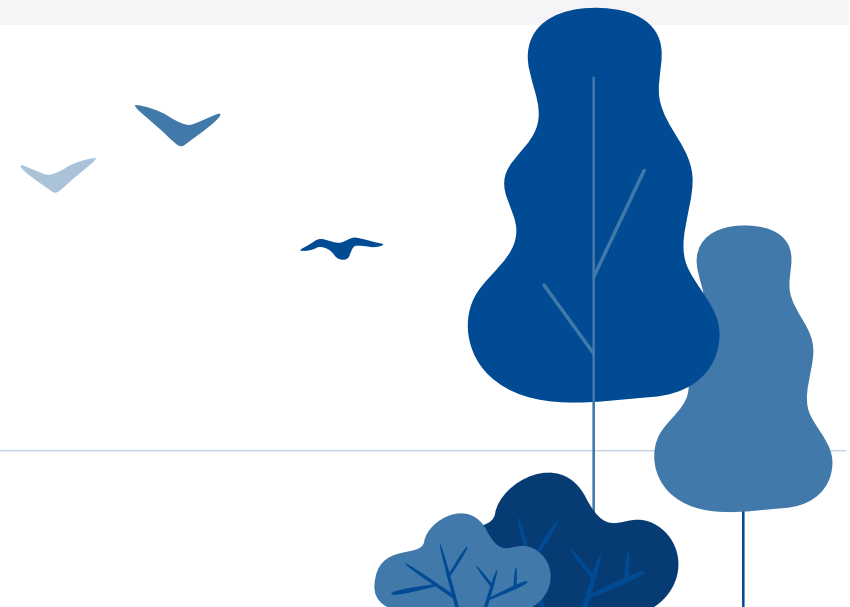
The Locality Children's Partnerships work collaboratively with a range of partners to identify and respond to the needs of their local communities and families and galvanise resource to deliver their plans.

This includes strengthening links with adult services such as adult mental health, housing providers, The Department for Work and Pensions, as well as local Think Family forums.

Fulfilling a vital safeguarding role, the Locality Children's Partnerships have a robust and effective relationship with the Essex Safeguarding Children Board through four local Stay Safe Groups. These groups fulfil a support and challenge role on safeguarding issues at a local level and lead on the development of local Stay Safe Plans. These include oversight of safeguarding matters, including the dissemination of information across all partners, for example the findings from multi-agency reviews, and working together to implement the learning from them.

Children and Young People's Partnership Landscape

- Essex Health and Wellbeing Board
- Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board
- Local Children and Young People's Partnerships
- Local Stay Safe Groups
- Essex Safeguarding Children Board



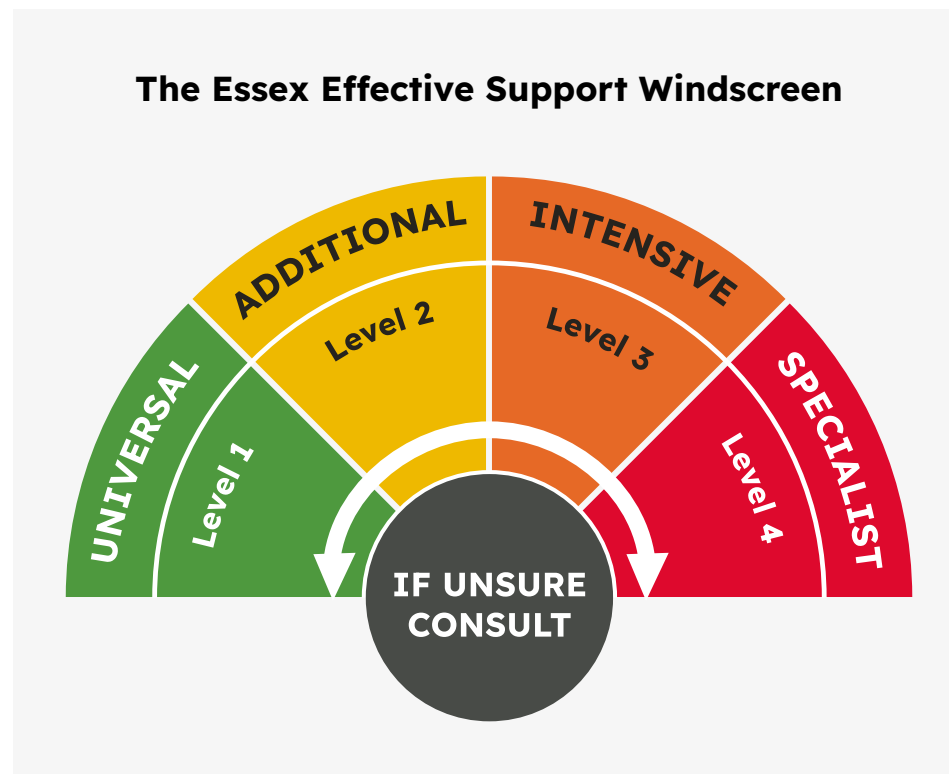
Early Help Framework

Supported by universal services, largely within the education and health system, most children and young people in Essex live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives.

However, for a few, there are times when a little bit of additional Early Help can make the difference. It can support and enhance their skills and resilience to cope, rather than waiting until a problem becomes so bad that more specialist interventions are required and the wait results in long term detrimental impact. The Essex Early Help framework is made up of four components: Guidance, Assessment, Access and Support.

Guidance for Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex

In Essex, partners work to the **Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex Guidance** which lays out the principles for everyone who works with children and young people and their families. It is about the way we all work together, share information, put the child and their family at the centre of our work, and provide effective support to help them solve problems and find solutions at an early stage, to prevent the need for specialist statutory interventions. This guidance outlines the levels of need within the Essex Effective Support Windscreen (right).



Assessment

Practitioners work to the principle that families will be enabled to identify their own problems, aspirations, needs and solutions, with the aim of building resilience so they use their strengths to develop capacity to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives.

Many “universal” agencies in Essex, particularly schools, use a range of assessment tools to identify the needs of the children and young people they work with. However, in order to support the holistic family approach, Early Help guidance tools have been co-produced with families and frontline practitioners from adults’ and children’s services. The Early Help Plan (EHP) and Shared Family Assessment (SFA) provide Early Help guidance tools for families and practitioners taking a multi-agency approach. They are used in conjunction with the family to discuss and record needs, strengths, goals and views, which lead to the production of a plan to support them. This is a strengths-based holistic model of assessment and through the practitioner, families are enabled to identify, plan and review the effectiveness of their support. This approach ensures that every member of the family, including young children, siblings and parents contribute their views, enabling good quality plans to be developed, with clearly defined actions to deliver the desired outcomes.

In 2018 Essex County Council introduced Team Around the Family (TAF) Support Officers (TAFSO) specifically to support partners working at level 2 additional need, to apply Early Help approaches with families. This approach helps build the capacity within partner organisations to adopt use of Early Help Plans and convene Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings thereby building sustainable capacity across the workforce.

Accessing Early Help Support

In addition to the local systems of direct access to Early Help provided through the range of provision there are several centralised access points through which access to Early Help can be received. In April 2018 a new **website** was launched which brings together in one place the Essex Directory of Services, the online Request For Support guidance and tools to support practitioners in their work with children and families across levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Windscreen of Need.

The Children and Families Hub

The **Children and Families Hub** is a key component of the Early Help Offer, where information, advice and guidance are available to all practitioners working with children, young people and families as well as directly to families themselves.

The Hub’s key functions are:

- to provide advice and guidance to the public and professionals looking for support at levels 2 and 3 – Additional and Intensive as set out in the **Effective Support Windscreen**
- be the referral pathway to request support from Family Solutions – level 3 Intensive Support on the Effective Support Windscreen
- be the referral pathway for any safeguarding concerns at level 4 – Specialist on the Effective Support Windscreen

There will be circumstances where a practitioner, having done everything they can within their own and partner resources, requires additional support. The Children and Families Hub offers the opportunity to consult with social care professionals to discuss

concerns practitioners may have before submitting a request for support. This could involve advice on levels of need, having difficult conversations or how to co-ordinate a Team Around the Child/ Family meeting (TAC/TAF). There are clear pathways set out in the guidance that support and enable practitioners in their decision making. This decision making is supported by integrated training on levels of need set out in the **Effective Support for Children and Families 2021 Guidance**.

All partners are committed to keeping children and young people safe by embedding safeguarding in our practice and will remain vigilant and act quickly on new information or changing presenting needs. Where disagreement emerges, we agree that we will work together to resolve those differences, always keeping children and young people at the centre of our activity.

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (ECFWS)

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service was established in 2017 and is designed on the principles of our system vision for children and young people from conception to adulthood.

The service represents the integration of our 0-5 and 5-19 Healthy Child Programmes, Healthy Schools Programme and Children's Centres and provides an integrated offer from Healthy Family Teams made up of health visitors, school nurses and family workers. As a result, services are less fragmented and collaborate to deliver a common set of outcomes for children, young people and families across the system that works for them rather than a system that works for us.

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

The CAMHS is a jointly commissioned service that is a collaboration between the five Health Alliances, Essex County Council and the 2 Unitary Authorities of Southend and Thurrock.

It provides services for anyone aged between 0-18, and young people with special educational needs (SEND) up to the age of 25. There is a Single Point of Access (SPA) through which any child or young person can get the right support and which also provides advice and guidance for any parent, guardian, professional or teacher of a child who is experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties. SET CAMHS is based on the Thrive Framework, which is needs-led, outcomes focussed and works in partnership with young people and families through shared decision-making to be accessible, use common language, reduce stigma and be proactive in helping communities to support mental health and wellbeing.

The service is designed on our Early Help principles and provides:

- a single point of access
- preventative programmes of training and support
- information, advice, guidance and signposting
- psychological treatments and therapies
- crisis support

Family Solutions

Family Solutions is a level 3 intervention service for families with multiple needs at a complex level who require intensive family support, but whose needs do not meet the threshold for level 4 specialist intervention.

The 8 operational teams work on the basis of family agreement and can offer up to 12 months of support. They work holistically from bases within the local community, taking a strengths-based approach to enable and empower families to make and sustain significant positive changes in their lives. Each team has a Social Worker post and other Family Workers are alternatively qualified from multi-disciplinary backgrounds. There are also some internally and externally funded partnership workers.

Family Solutions is the Essex response to the Government's Supporting Families Programme. This is a programme that aims to improve outcomes for families and transform local services whilst saving on cost and reducing duplication. The initiative spans many areas of family need including physical and mental health, crime and anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, and children in need. A multi-agency partnership approach is at the heart of its 'whole family' working philosophy, and, accordingly, Family Solutions work alongside commissioned services and agencies making up the wider Essex Partnership in delivering the Family Solutions Programme.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Team (MARAC)

MARAC in Essex is a twice daily meeting of dedicated multi agency professionals who produce action plans which focus on the safety of victims, young people and children who have been identified as at high risk due to domestic abuse.

These professionals include representatives from Essex Police, Essex County Council, the IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) Service, Substance Misuse, Health, and the National Probation Service. There is also the opportunity for other agencies to be part of the action plan and discussion about risk. Actions could include a range of options and in many cases, this will take the form of Early Help and support for children and young people. There are commissioned services to offer that help.



Responding to missing children

Social care receives notifications from the Police every time a child living in Essex goes missing. If there are concerns that warrant an immediate safeguarding response the Police will raise this through a referral to social care.

If the missing child is already open to social care the missing notification will be sent to the allocated worker to progress. If the missing child is not open to social care the Children and Families Hub will screen the missing episode, if a tier 1 or 2 (see The Essex Effective Support Windscreen page 13) response is required, the Children and Families Hub can signpost families to appropriate services or suggest a Team Around the Family (TAF). If a tier 3 or 4 response is required, the Children and Families Hub will have a Social Worker review the information and ensure an appropriate response is made.

The Involvement Service offer independent 'Missing Chats' to all children and young people aged between 10 and 18 years old that have returned from a missing episode. In addition, Parental Missing Chats for parents of children and young people who go missing are offered. All children under 10 who go missing have their missing episodes individually scrutinised by the Missing Co-ordinator who sits within the Children and Families workforce.

Responding to exploitation

Young people might be exploited sexually and/or criminally, some may be more likely to be targeted by exploiters if they experience vulnerabilities in their life, or these vulnerabilities may mean they feel less confident in alerting safe adults about what is happening. Exploitation, and the targeting of young people, can happen in variety of settings, both in person and online.

Professionals who hold concerns that a child could be a victim of exploitation can refer to the SET Child Exploitation Partner Pathway document to help them navigate next steps. Professionals must always report suspicious activity to Essex Police to assist with developing an accurate picture of exploitation or vulnerability to exploitation and so that the Police can agree an appropriate response at both a strategic and individual level.

For children where it is suspected they could be exploited or vulnerable to exploitation, with consent from parents, support can be offered from the Team Around the Family (TAF) service to support the family and professionals to develop a plan, or Family Solutions. If professionals are confident the child is being exploited, then they must be referred to Social Care. Children and their families can also access advice and support from the Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service and the Children's Society offer 1:1 support for children and link to Barnardos who offer support to parents. The Directory of Services sets out the range of local services that can be accessed.

Protecting young people from exploitation requires a broad group of professionals to focus on community safety, whilst also supporting the young person and their family. Services therefore come together to take a preventative approach with the aim of creating safety in vulnerable areas to prevent young people becoming victims, focusing on both place and exploiter.

MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation)

MACE is the Essex partnership response to protecting the most vulnerable children and young people from exploitation.

MACE 1 works by identifying and reviewing individual cases of children assessed to be at high risk of being exploited, or vulnerable perpetrators of exploitation to their peers. Relevant information sharing supports the agreement of plans to protect those young people and build evidence to prosecute offenders. MACE 2 is a multi-agency meeting that considers the joint operational activity necessary to tackle Child Exploitation threats within the Essex geographical quadrants. Through local data analysis and intelligence, local solutions and actions are taken to safeguard children, young people and vulnerable populations. Working alongside the 12 District, Borough and City Community Safety Partnerships, their governance and regulatory powers are utilised to take appropriate action to detect, disrupt and prevent exploitation.

School-Led Improvement System

Building on the success of the School-Led Improvement Strategy, the School Partnership Strategy seeks to expand and mature the system of school partnerships across Essex to accelerate school improvement and outcomes for all children and young people.

Despite the extreme challenges posed by the financial climate and increasing central government demands, many schools continue to work together to provide an access point to commissioned Early Help interventions such as parenting programmes and counselling, as well as funding their own Early Help practitioners. Local Authorities have a vital role in supporting and challenging schools to improve and tackle under performance, however the context in which local authorities support school improvement has changed.

Schools have been given increased autonomy and are therefore expected to take more responsibility for their own improvement. Essex County Council has supported the School Partnership Strategy by facilitating the formation of partnerships across the county and allocating School Effectiveness Partner time to collaborations of schools. Most schools in Essex are working in partnerships with other schools. Partnerships are engaging in activities together including peer review, joint training and staff collaborations and the impact of this partnership working is being evidenced in Ofsted reports.

In response to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) reforms, we have worked with families to develop a new **Essex Local Offer website**. The site makes it easier to find to information and support for children and young people with SEND. If you are new to the SEND system, you can find out how to get help for your child. There is also advice on what to do if you have questions about the support your child is currently receiving.

Statutory Support

All the above is of course underpinned by a range of statutory activity that makes a significant contribution to the Essex Early Help Offer.

This includes the Education Access Service, the Employability and Skills Team supporting 16-19 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training, the Transitions Pathways team who deliver supportive intervention for those with Special

Educational Needs, and the Targeted Youth Advisors who provide support for Children in Care. Health, Schools and Children's Social Care are working together to ensure the implementation of effective planning and delivery of Education Health and Care Plans for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Police, City, Districts, and Boroughs are working closely to fulfil statutory obligations in relation to a number of prevent, detect and protect agendas.



Delivery of Early Help Support Services

The Guidance, Assessment and Access components of the Early Help Framework are augmented by the range of Early Help support services, including a thriving Voluntary and Community Sector that is critical to supporting children, young people and families. Examples of services which deliver Essex wide and within the four localities are illustrated below:

Universal

- Nurseries
- Schools
- GPs
- Pharmacies
- School Nursing
- Health Visiting
- Healthy Schools
- Leisure Services
- Libraries
- Active Essex
- Grassroots clubs and organisations

Additional

- Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service
- NHS111
- Free Early Years Education for disadvantaged 2 year olds
- Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service
- Family Innovation Fund
- Education Access
- Youth Work Programmes
- Essex Victims Gateway
- District Housing Support
- SEN Local Offer
- Targeted Youth Advisors
- Voluntary & Community Sector delivery

Intensive

- Family Solutions
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- Minor Injuries Clinics
- Voluntary & Community Sector delivery

Specialist

- Divisional Based Intervention Teams
- Social Care
- Youth Offending Service
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre
- Voluntary & Community Sector delivery



Early Help and the Workforce

In Essex we invest in quality training to develop competence and confidence in our frontline practitioners and our ethos is to support practitioners to work together, share information, and to put the child and their family at the centre.

There is an extensive network of multi-agency training available throughout Essex which is delivered across the partnership. This includes the Voluntary and Community Sector which provides invaluable insight and expertise on issues such as domestic violence, early years and parenting.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) is a key source for multi-agency learning and development opportunities. The ESCB learning and development offer includes courses on Early Help, working together, effective support for children and families in Essex, and safeguarding at level 2 and designated lead level. Learning and development opportunities can be found on the [ESCB website](#).

The training provision across Essex provides an extensive range of themed coverage from domestic abuse to gang violence, from child sexual exploitation to teenage suicide. It supports practitioners to identify early signs of risk and to respond appropriately either directly or by referral to support such as Multi- Agency Risk Assessment Team (MARAC), the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS) or Family Solutions.

All partners work closely and proactively together which means Essex can respond quickly to the lessons learned from Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and the emerging needs for practitioners to look for early signs of issues such as radicalisation and violent extremism.

The training in Essex is augmented by a network of practitioner 'Champions' for a range of issues including Child Exploitation and Domestic Abuse. Consistent approaches are also being developed to identifying teenagers who have a high probability of engaging in risky behaviours. The Risk Avert Approach enables practitioners to identify children who are most likely to engage in risky behaviours and to respond appropriately through intervention or referral.



Making Early Help Count

We want to ensure that we take a systematic approach to ensuring our Early Help Offer is effective.

This is achieved through a range of processes so that we can:

- Identify areas of poor performance and then decide on and take action to address this
- Identify areas of good performance and then decide on and take action to promote and further replicate this

Our Early Help Offer underpins and enables delivery of the system objectives outlined in the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Approach, for which partners are held accountable.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board plays a critical role in monitoring that our systems and processes are effective and supports the work of partners by providing challenge and scrutiny of their safeguarding practices. The Board has a Business Plan and Learning and Improvement Framework to ensure that key areas of safeguarding practice are addressed by agencies. Progress is monitored via a range of means including a Section 11 audit of safeguarding practice across agencies which is undertaken every 2 years, the monitoring of safeguarding learning and development provision by agencies including the evaluation of the impact of learning, case audits and the gathering and analysis of multi-agency safeguarding data. The Board also carries out a robust case review

process which includes Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and ensures that learning from such cases is disseminated to agencies for action in order to improve safeguarding practice.

Our quality assurance and performance activity is complemented by other programmes of work with our schools and youth councils, Young Essex Assembly, Children in Care Council and with our trained Young Inspectors and Health Youth Champions. Extensive on-going dialogue with children, young people and their families ensures we are grounded in their perspective of how things are working and what works best.

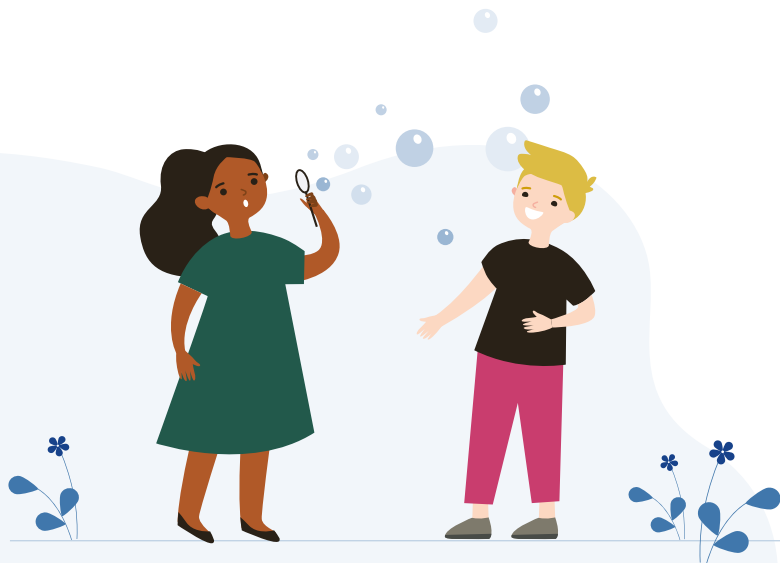
Partners in Essex know that good management oversight and effective supervision of families receiving Early Help support are critical to ensuring good sustainable outcomes. We have a range of mechanisms for ensuring this is taking place in Essex, both through each partner organisations' own internal structures and processes, and the quality assurance processes of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

For those public services that commission external organisations to deliver Early Help, we assure ourselves through a robust procurement process that effective management and supervision are embedded within a safeguarding context with our providers. The effectiveness of the systems and processes are monitored regularly through contract management arrangements and quality assurance visits.

Innovating the Essex Early Help Offer

Integrated Commissioning

Where it makes sense to, partners are committed to join up and/or integrate their commissioning activity. This can be across local authority areas for example, Eastern Region adoption support services, across partners, for example integrated domestic abuse services commissioned by Essex County Council with the Office for Fire and Police Crime Commissioner, or all age advocacy services across adult and children's social care. This ensures we continue to build on our systems approach to leadership and delivery and build a cohesive Early Help Offer that makes sense to and meets the needs of our families.



Data, Research and Evidence

In Essex we have a good track record of creating opportunities to build on our knowledge base of what works and the impact it has for children, young people and families. There are a number of programmes being delivered over the next three years that aim to support better community planning and commissioning at a strategic and local level and enhance our approach to Early Help.

Example

Following the pandemic, the Council's Financial Wellbeing Programme wanted to understand what would a "financial wellbeing for life" programme response look like for young adults. Undergraduates from the University of Essex spent 6 months researching this question and made a number of recommendations. These will be taken forward by commissioners to ensure fit for purpose financial programmes and tools are available for young adults.

Insight, Influence and Co-production

The voice of children and families is vital in delivering our Early Help Offer and we continue to build on our innovative and creative techniques to engage children, young people and families to develop a greater insight into 'what works' for them, which undoubtedly delivers better outcomes. All partners are committed to investing in an ongoing conversation with children, young people and families so that the Early Help offer is informed by a 'live feed' from the people that really count; all the more important as a result of the pandemic.

Example

The Short Breaks community offer for children and young people with disabilities has involved a range of listening events that have provided a meaningful and deeper understanding of the needs of families. This engagement has provided the right foundation to progress the review of the whole Short Breaks offer enabling families to co-design those services together. Families are also pivotal to the decision making process, with 24 families evaluating the procurement of Short Breaks Community Clubs and Activities, and plans to develop young commissioners to assist with the delivery of an annual fund to improve access to activities in mainstream settings.

Example

Young people have been working with youth workers to co-produce a 'Healthy Relationships' resource for children and young people in Essex. The young people set up a project group and have completed a variety of tasks to bring the resource to life, which has included; research on current healthy relationships resources and the type of resources young people find appealing, developing their ideas and concept and testing these with other young people, writing a script and designing a 'live' storyboard for a 'Healthy Relationships' animation and going back out to young people to retest their concept and gain further feedback before working with a production company to create their animation.

They will also be developing their own communications plan and will be working with the Council's communications team to deliver on promoting their animation. Their work on co-producing this fabulous resource will contribute significantly to meeting outcome 1 of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Strategy 'Children and young people can recognise and form healthy relationships'.



Strengthening Communities

There is a range of exciting activity happening at the heart of communities across Essex that is critical to Early Help. Enabled by local City, District and Borough Council partnerships and services such as Active Essex and the Essex Youth Service this activity enables local people to identify and act on their own needs to make their areas even better and more resilient places to live, both now and in years to come.

Example

Essex County Council has been part of a national programme of work with central government to reduce parental conflict and the impact it can have on children's outcomes. In Essex we have co-produced resources with parents, developed a healthy relationships webpage and provided training to 400+ practitioners. We have match funded a grant from central government for a 2 year programme of work to fully embed the reducing parental conflict work in Essex. This includes four new Healthy Relationship Coordinators roles based in the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service. The coordinators will be working in local quadrants to raise awareness of parental conflict, develop resources and facilitate action learning sets and practice forums with practitioners. We have also invested in more training and a reducing parental conflict toolkit for practitioners to help them in their work with parents.

The Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) is a key conduit between grassroots voluntary sector organisations and partners in Essex and supports a vast and diverse membership of voluntary youth organisations spanning a network of over 22,000 volunteers that support in excess of 134,000 young people and 99,700 children. The voluntary sector know how to do what they do best but this important relationship with ECVYS, which is facilitated through the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnerships, ensures that where needed partners can help them strengthen & grow the voluntary youth sector and thereby enhance the development of young people in Essex.

Example

Essex County Council has been developing public facing Bystander Intervention Training. The aim of the training is for participants to learn more about what sexual harassment is, the myths and stereotypes that continue to enable and facilitate sexual harassment in our communities, and the importance of not colluding with these myths or minimising unacceptable behaviour. They will learn what actions you can safely undertake to intervene or to refer or signpost victims to suitable support services. By empowering communities to support one another and encourage active allyship this training will help to send a message that behaviour that makes anyone feel uncomfortable or threatened is not accepted by Essex.

Our Early Help Offer Activity

In this section we set out some of the current and planned activity over the next three years that will augment the Essex Early Help Offer.

Whilst delivery will be monitored by the relevant organisations and partnerships within which the activity sits, the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will play a role in monitoring progress.



On-going Early Help Activity

- continue to deliver our SEND Joint Commissioning Strategy
- develop the Total and Local Offers for families
- section 11 Audits
- embed learning from research programmes (on learning from the pandemic)
- continue embedding of the Risk Avert approach
- embed Non-Violent Resistant training to combat adolescent to parent violence
- undertake a system redesign of support for victims of domestic abuse
- extend champion networks
- continue to embed co-production and co-delivery concepts
- evaluate the impact of training on practice
- implement learning from Child Safeguarding Practice, Child Death and Domestic Homicide Reviews
- continue to embed Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP) within our schools and educational settings

Appendix 1 – Our System Vision

Our system must... Work with and for families across Essex

We will...



Work to families' strengths especially those of parents and carers and take time to understand their needs fully.



Focus on preventing problems before they occur and offer flexible, responsive support when and where it's required.



Build the resilience of parents, young people, children and communities to support each other.



Be clear and consistent about the outcomes we expect, and judge what we do against them.



Base all we do on evidence of both what is needed and of what works and be brave enough to stop things that are wrong.



Work together across the whole system aligning our resources so we can best support families and do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.

We will know our system is successful if it delivers these outcomes

Children and Young People...

- are physically and emotionally healthy
- are resilient and able to learn well
- are supported by their families, their community, and, when necessary, professionals to thrive and be successful
- live in environments that are safe and support their learning and development.

Practitioners...

- focus first on families and their strengths
- work closely with families to understand what they need, and build trusting relationships
- have a shared vision and understanding of outcomes and success
- are skilled, knowledgeable and are co-creating and co-delivering approaches that work.

Parents and Carers...

- are supporting one another in their communities
- know where to get help if they need it
- have trusted relationships with practitioners, neighbours and other parents
- are well informed about how best to help their child develop, and motivated to make great choices.

Communities...

- see it as their collective responsibility to support parents, children and young people
- are providing sustainable support through individuals, community groups, businesses and voluntary organisations
- are seen, understood and valued by practitioners as being 'part of the solution'.

This information is issued by:
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The information contained in this document
can be translated, and/or made available in
alternative formats, on request.

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