

# Essex Children and Young People's Plan

2016 onwards

Refreshed September 2020



Essex County Council

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# Foreword

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The Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership brings together representatives from the different agencies in our County who work with children, young people and their families.

The Partnership discusses what the most important issues and problems for children, young people and families in Essex are, and decides what to do about them. We want to ensure we are undertaking our public duties to the best of our abilities. When something has gone well, we celebrate success together but when things are not going well, we explore why and agree a response. In short, the Partnership thinks together and acts together in order to drive the change that will deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families.

We want all children and young people, but especially those who are most vulnerable, to have access to a good education and to lead safe, happy, healthy lives. We are working in exceptionally demanding and challenging times. In 2020, a global pandemic has impacted the physical and emotional wellbeing of many individuals and has disrupted family stability. This places additional pressure on us all, even more so when coupled with the economic impacts on families and wider society.

Whilst there is no new money, we know from our track record that as a partnership we will continue to do better for families through strengthening our joint working arrangements. The pandemic has shown that as organisations we are adaptable and will continue to be so in meeting future challenges together. The pandemic has also revealed previously hidden strengths in communities and spurred people into unprecedented efforts to support one another. We need to build on this into the future.

Whilst all partners have their own statutory duties, we know that by working together in genuine and effective partnership across our system, we can add significant value to each other's work, resulting in better support for those who need it most. Our Children and Young People's Plan seeks to bring about the strategic changes needed across our children's system that will enable us to meet the needs of our most vulnerable children and young people within the financially difficult and complex landscape we operate in.

We want to thank the children, young people, parents, carers and staff from all organisations who have helped develop this Plan and deepen our understanding of what needs to happen to continue to make Essex a great place for children and young people to grow, develop and thrive.

## **Councillor Beverley Egan**

Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Early Years  
Chair of the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board



# Background

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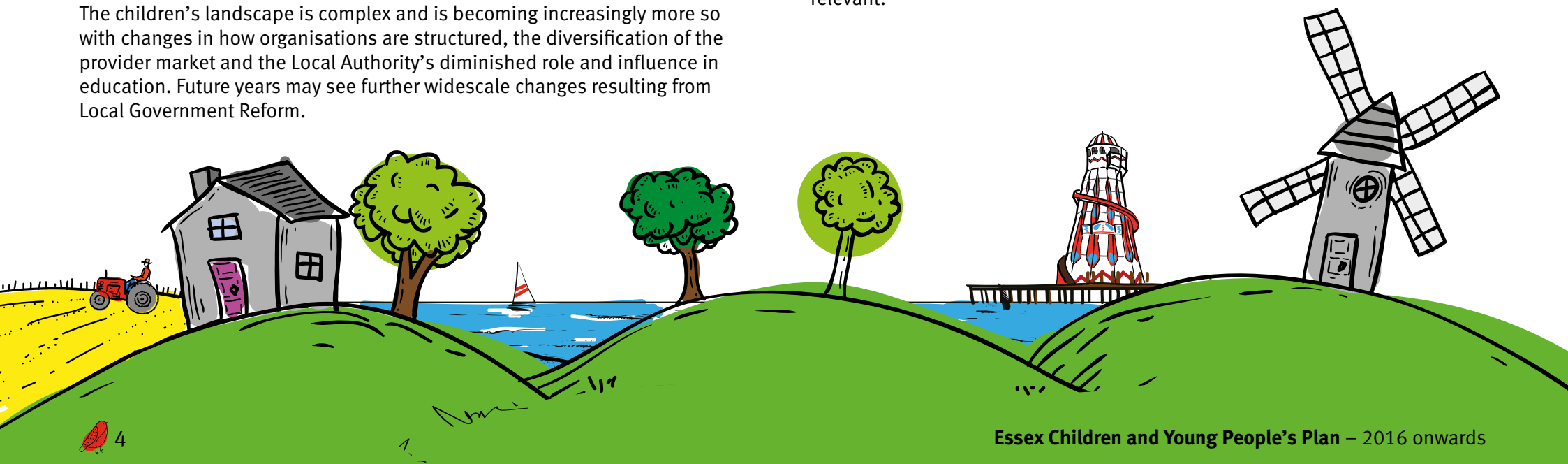
We agreed this Children and Young People's Plan in 2016 following an extensive period of engagement with children and young people, parents and carers and those who support them. The Plan set out commitments for how people who work with children and young people would work together to achieve common goals. The goals reflected what children and young people told us was important. Things have changed a lot since 2016 so we have now reviewed what we agreed before and refreshed this to reflect changes to our partnership landscape and our changed priorities.

This latest version of our Plan sets out our ambitions for the coming few years and provides a strategic framework that affirms partners' commitment to work together with a joint approach (our system principles) to achieve four system outcomes. The system outcomes are what we think we need to have in place to enable all children, young people and their families to achieve their full potential. They reflect the key things that children, young people, parents and professionals told us matter.

The children's landscape is complex and is becoming increasingly more so with changes in how organisations are structured, the diversification of the provider market and the Local Authority's diminished role and influence in education. Future years may see further widescale changes resulting from Local Government Reform.

This Plan cannot be everything to everyone, but it has been designed to provide a framework within which we can all work, which is flexible enough to allow for and respond to change. Through this we aim to ensure it is meaningful for everyone who works in Essex. The Plan says that the first step in engaging with a problem should be to fully understand the drivers behind it. It then encourages agencies to identify how they can most effectively connect around the problem to both prevent harm and protect those who are already experiencing it.

The Plan will be a 'live' document and will be the basis of on-going conversations across the Partnership, with other aspects of our wider Essex system and with children, young people, families and those who work with them. These conversations, in addition to relevant data, will help us to understand whether we are achieving what we have set out to and if we are addressing the most important issues. The priority areas that we agree to work together on will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure they remain relevant.



# Progress and developments since 2016

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Since 2016, there has been significant progress across our children's system. Our Children's Social Care and Youth Offending Services are now judged Outstanding by Ofsted. The significant majority of our school and early years settings are Good or Outstanding. Educational outcomes for the majority of children and young people are good. Our numbers of Looked After Children are stable and have remained low compared to elsewhere in the country. We have an effective range of community-based early help services provided both by our commissioned services and by the voluntary sector. We deliver interventions which divert young people from entrance to care which are based on innovative and evidence-based approaches. Once in care, we work hard to improve outcomes and to enable young people to return home if safe to do so.

We have taken a robust approach to growing concerns around violence and vulnerability and partners have come together to establish a joint Violence and Vulnerability Framework and a new Violence and Vulnerability Unit to deliver against this. The Children's Partnership has also developed a coordinated multi-agency response to increasing levels of emotional wellbeing and mental health concerns for children and young people. In 2018, a new Strategic Board for Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health was set up under the Children's Partnership to focus on strengthening level 1 and 2 services and the support that is provided to schools in working with children and young people experiencing difficulties.

Our Youth Services are delivered in a way that builds capacity in the communities our children and young people live and grow up in. This model has been highly successful and the numbers of young people we have engaged with and the number of youth work sessions we deliver continue to increase. We also have an active and large voluntary and community sector which harnesses and develops the capacity of volunteers to provide early intervention and safe and supportive environments and activities which enable families, children and young people to grow and flourish.

There remains though much to do. The complexity of the problems being experienced by families is increasing due to societal factors including poverty, mental health and substance misuse. The long-term outcomes for our vulnerable groups of children and young people are not good. There are on-going concerns about vulnerable families migrating into Essex from elsewhere in the country. More coordinated action is required around our housing services and to ensure that we are effectively promoting the wider determinants of health and wellbeing. The coronavirus pandemic has heightened the importance of these issues and the system needs to come together in a coordinated multi-agency response. Our delivery of the legislative changes concerning Special Educational Needs and Disabilities was externally inspected in 2019. Whereas good progress was noted, it was also identified that there was more to do and that outcomes had not yet improved as much as needed.

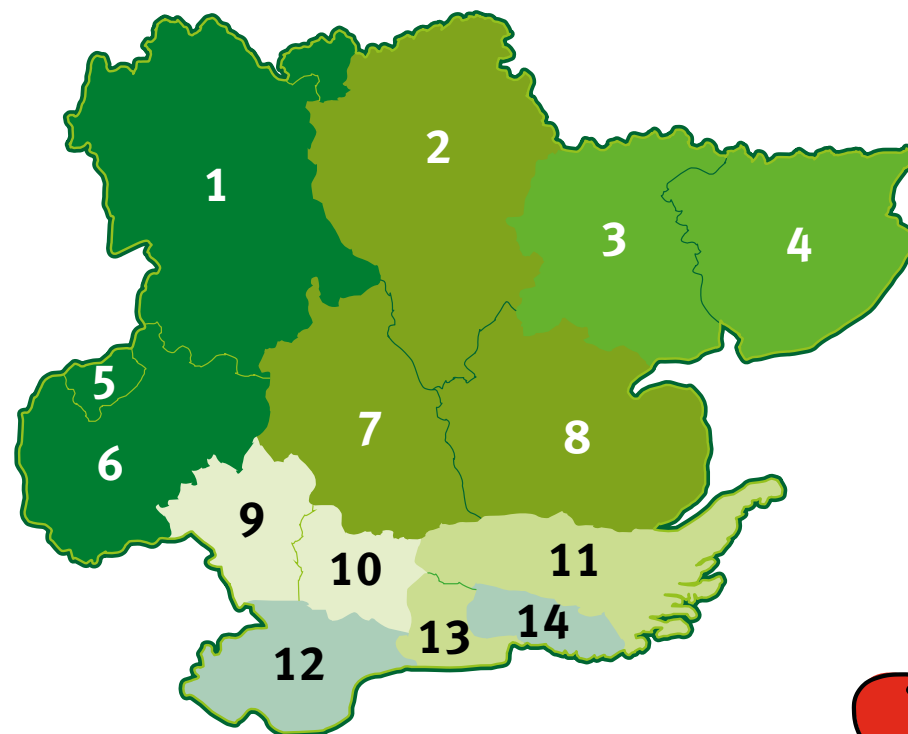


# About Essex

Essex is a diverse county with a population of approximately 1.4 million; around 22% of that population is under 18. Our population is expected to grow by close to 70,000 by 2023, with the child population increasing by 7%. 72% of Essex is rural. Whilst a relatively affluent county, there are pockets of high deprivation particularly in the South and North. Approximately 14.1% of Essex children and young people are living in poverty. 38,600 children live in the top 20 most deprived neighbourhoods in Essex and the number of Essex residents living in deprived areas has doubled since 2007. 12.4% of primary and 9.5% 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 the area. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language in primary schools is 8.3% and in secondary schools is 6.2%. 30,090 Essex school pupils (13.5%) have special educational needs (SEN), 22,570 (10%) receive SEN support and 7,520 (3.4%) have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The overarching picture for Essex is that overall outcomes for most children and young people are good and have improved across the course of this Plan. This picture however is not the same for all children and young people in Essex. There are children and young people in need of protection and those who are at risk, around whom we need to focus preventative activity. This Plan encourages partners to make all the efforts they can to understand those who are at risk and to target resource appropriately. We are aware that the coronavirus pandemic is very likely to increase levels of vulnerability in our County, including potentially making things much harder for families who were previously only just about managing. This impact is likely to be different in the different geographies of Essex. 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 and has informed the development of this Plan.



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

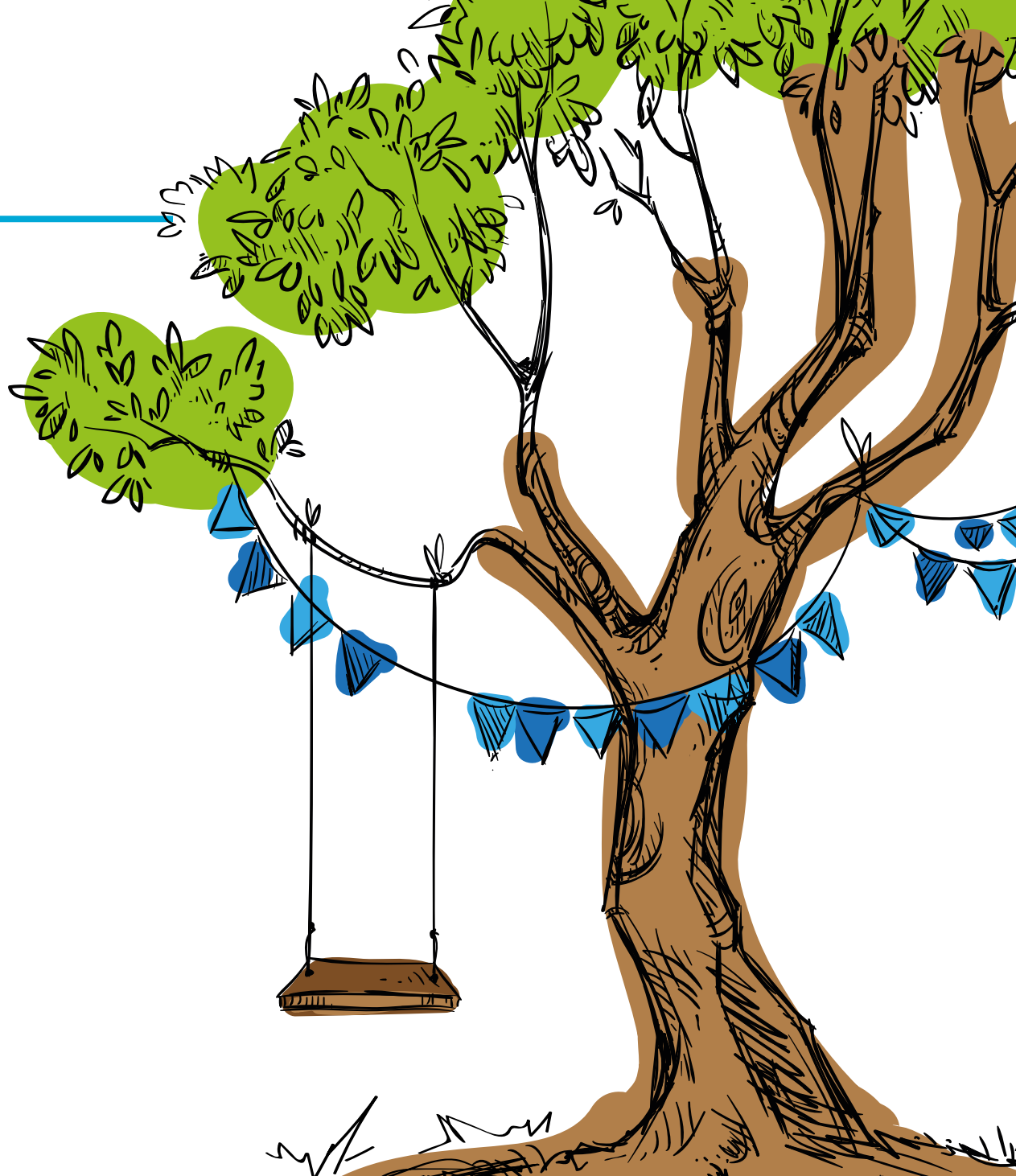




# The context

We work within a complex children and young people's landscape that incorporates upwards of 550 schools and academies, three Sustainability and Transformation Partnerships, of which the 5 Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups are part, 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 Plan.

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 this Plan. There are some issues (for example housing and transport) that are significant in achieving the outcomes of this Plan, but which are outside of the direct remit of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership. For these issues, the Partnership will seek to engage with and exert influence over other relevant partnerships and organisations, highlighting the potential impact they could have and encouraging them to act.



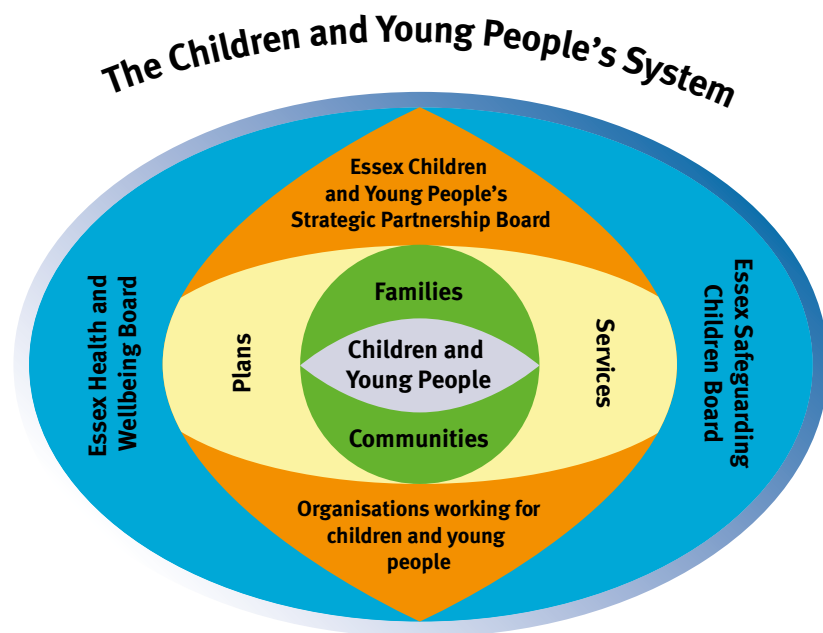
# The Essex Children's System

The Children and Young People's Plan provides a clear vision to unite and influence the Essex children's system. The Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership is made up of representatives from its partner organisations and provides leadership for that system. The Partnership changes or improves the system through its influence and actions and seeks to add value to business as usual activity. The Partnership sits within the governance framework of the Essex Health and Wellbeing Board, which itself is made up of key leaders from health and social care, who work together to improve the health and wellbeing of the Essex population. The Partnership also sits alongside the local safeguarding arrangements of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board, which leads activity to ensure the safety of children and young people in Essex.

Essex is big and diverse and because of this, there are four Locality Children's Partnerships in North East, West, Mid and South Essex. Whilst there are similarities across the areas, there are also differences in the needs of their children and young people. The Locality Children's Partnerships will work to ensure the priorities of this Plan are delivered locally, and as experts on their areas, will use their knowledge to focus local activity on the things that will make the most difference.

In delivering this Plan the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership seeks to add value to business as usual activity by:

- Keeping children, young people and families at the heart of all we do
- Working collectively, innovatively and influentially together to deliver our Plan
- Communicating with and on behalf of each other in the interests of delivering the Plan
- Providing assurance, challenge and support for each other's statutory responsibilities
- Being open and honest with each other.



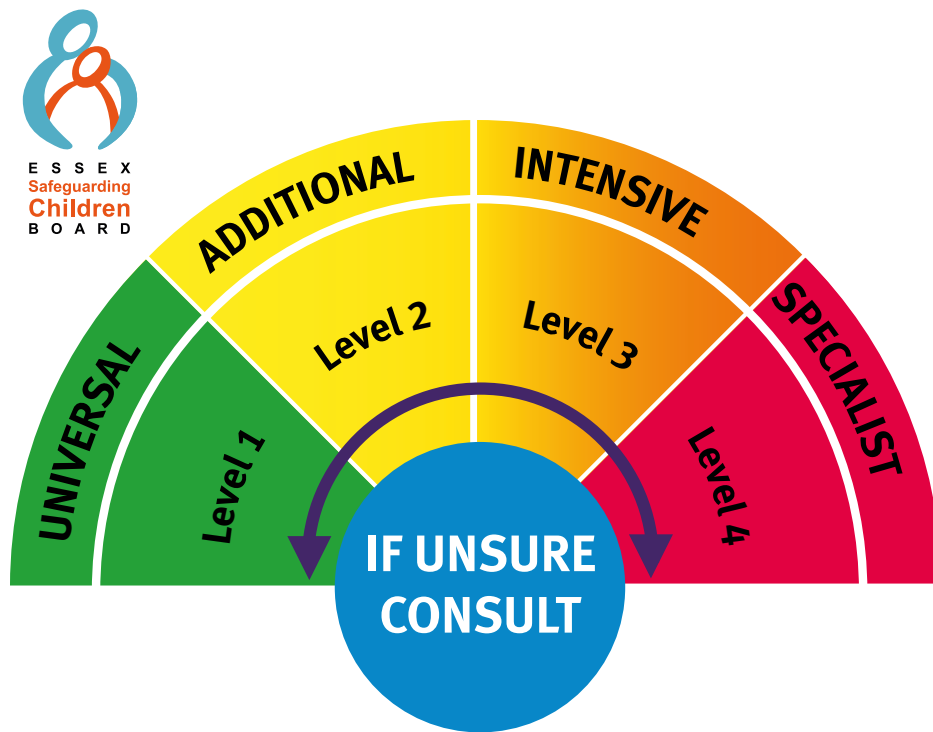


# Needs-led, right time, right place

Most children and young people in Essex will have their needs met through universal services that everyone can access, e.g. schools, doctors and dentists. They have ready access to a range of activities they can go to with their friends and families and through which they can grow and develop, for example, parks and leisure centres. Things not working out can happen to any child or young person and when that happens, support is there should it be needed.

This Plan seeks to provide support for the continued delivery of good quality universal services. Importantly however, it focuses on how we can make the most of our shared capacity to address the needs of those most vulnerable children and young people who have additional, complex or more specialist needs as outlined in the Essex Effective Support Windscreen.

The Essex Early Help Offer sets out in detail how we support children, young people and families and provides the framework for multi-agency roles and responsibilities for working with children and young people, including thresholds of need and how the front-line delivery of our system works together at an operational level. In Essex our knowledge and understanding of children, young people and families is deepened by the ethnographic approach we take to understand the world families live in from their own experiences.



# Refreshing our Plan

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There has been a range of engagement across the Essex system, and with children, young people and families to develop this 2020 refreshed Plan. From this, we have agreed new principles and priorities through and around which we will work to deliver our agreed outcomes. The pandemic has not changed our understanding of what the key issues are for the Essex children's system, rather it has made it all the more important that we deliver against the outcomes we have agreed to focus on.

## Our system outcomes – what we want to achieve



### Resilient children and young people

The most common issue raised by those we engaged with was emotional resilience and how it is critical to enable children and young people to cope with and adapt to stressful situations and to recover quickly from difficulties. We have a wide range of support available to children and young people in Essex and we will continue to work with schools and communities to develop resilience. We will ensure we have good pathways to support for children, young people and parents when needed and as early as possible.



### Stable and thriving families

Stable families and strong social networks are key to enabling the best outcomes for children and young people. Employment, finances and housing were commonly identified as being at the forefront of parents' concerns. Stress around these issues means parents, whether together or not, can find themselves in conflict, which then impacts the wellbeing of their children. We know that in some circumstances domestic abuse is having devastating impacts on lives. Partners have worked closely with parents over the past three years to improve our parenting offer through the development of good quality information, support and guidance. We will strengthen our collective efforts to ensure we build on this.





### **Inclusive and supportive schools and communities**

Most children, young people and parents we spoke to said schools had a significant influence and positive impact on their lives. As partners we will continue to ensure that schools are supported to deliver positive outcomes. There are a minority who do not feel as included in their school or their local communities as they should. Some people feel that they are not getting the right support; this is particularly so for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Partners must ensure that children and young people who feel marginalised are supported to achieve their potential, release their ambitions and make a positive contribution. We can do this by ensuring they have the right access to more formal processes of support such as Education, Health and Care Plans, but also by opening up other forms of support and inclusion, for example, local activities such as youth and sports clubs, parenting groups or early help in the form of commissioned services.



### **Safe and accessible neighbourhoods**

We heard that feeling safe where they live is important to children, young people and parents. They felt that more effort is needed to support children, young people and parents to know how to stay safe and make good decisions that avoid risk. Parents said they would like to understand more about how to protect themselves and their children from things they worry about, such as anti-social behaviour, exploitation and county lines. We need to improve our collective endeavours to ensure the huge range of information and support we have in

Essex is better organised and channelled to help families and young people keep safe. We have an extensive amount of informal educational programmes and commissioned services and we need to ensure that our local grassroots clubs and activities are promoted and accessible for those who could most benefit.

### **Our system principles – how we are going to achieve our outcomes**

Achieving any of our desired outcomes is not easy but as partners we adopt four system principles to help us. We will seek to:

**Understand** a problem based on the evidence before we act

**Prevent** things getting worse by working to the principles of early intervention: needs-led, right time, right place, outcomes driven

**Protect** the most vulnerable by using all the powers available to us and taking collective action to safeguard those at most risk, with the Statutory Partners for safeguarding providing the support and challenge to do so

**Connect** as partners to support each other, share assets and align funding in the pursuit of common goals; working in partnership with parents, children and young people, listening and responding through engagement, co-design and co-production

# Our Partnership's priorities – what we are going to focus on

The Partnership has a wide scope of activity and to deliver the identified outcomes we will work from now until the next plan review by organising ourselves around three key priorities:

## Parenting

We will embed this priority within existing parent forums led by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Parenting Reference Group, with the aim of strengthening our collective efforts to continue to share and develop good quality information, advice and guidance, and where appropriate, support to ensure parents' personal needs and those of their children are met.

## Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

We will work together within existing forums, led by the SEND Improvement Board, to ensure that collectively we each play our part in delivering the actions identified in the 2019 Essex Local Area SEND Inspection.

## Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health (EWMH)

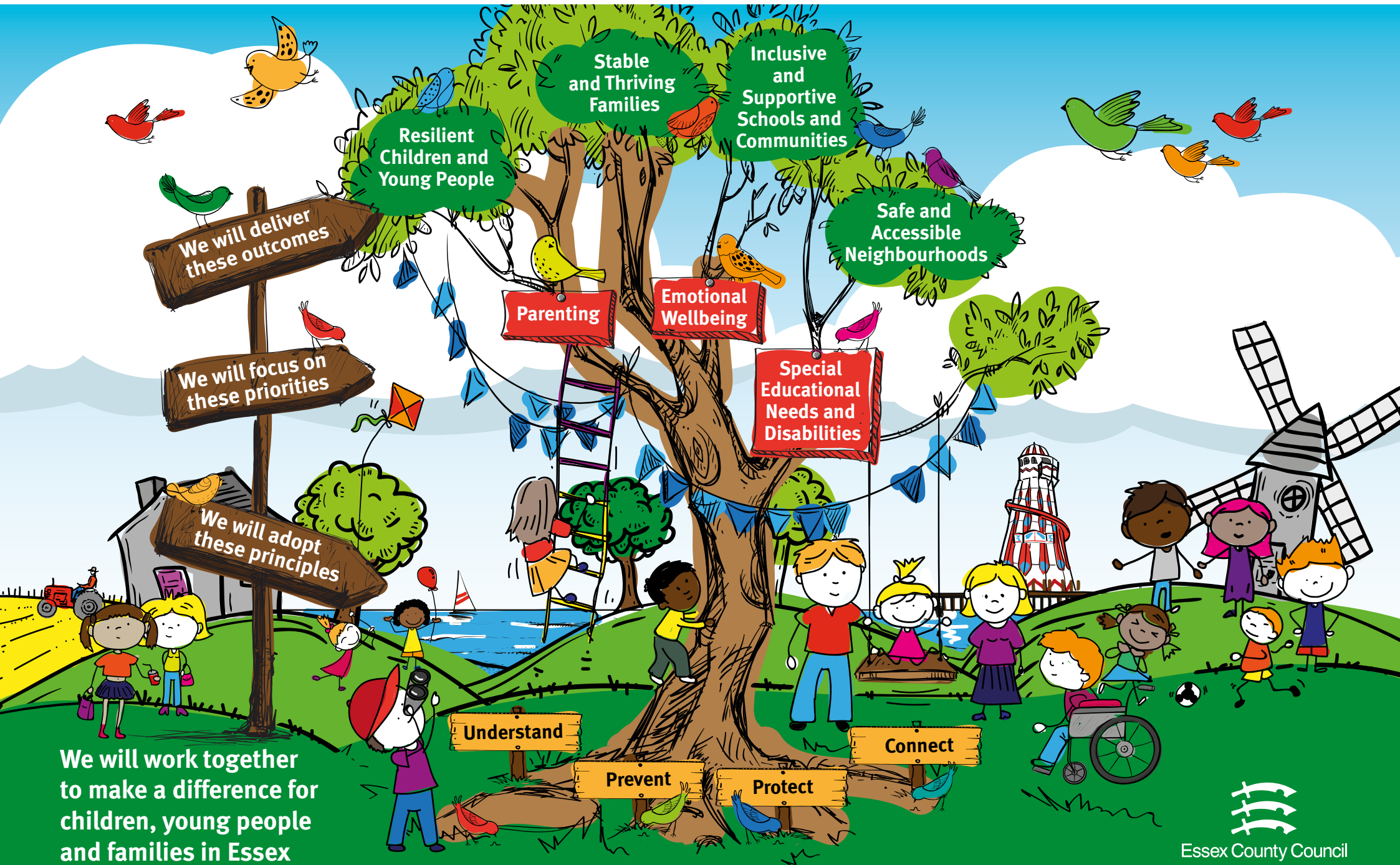
We will continue to work through our existing forums, led by the EWMH sub group of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, to ensure we collaborate across the system to provide good quality, accessible support for children and young people experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties. We will embed national and local programmes of support.

A lead for each of these outcomes will sit on the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board. This lead will report progress with the existing action plans for each outcome to the Board. The Board will provide support and challenge and identify where added value could come from further collaborative activity.

Each Locality Children's Partnership will ensure that the priorities and system principles are reflected in the work of the local partnerships in order to ensure the impact of this Plan is felt within local systems, communities and families.

We recognise that all agencies are also currently committed to continuing to support children, young people and families through the coronavirus pandemic and to recovering their organisations and the system from the impacts of this. This will remain as an underpinning priority for all our activity for the coming years.





We will work together to make a difference for children, young people and families in Essex





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**This Plan has been endorsed and is collectively owned by all member agencies of the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership.**





This information is issued by:  
**Essex County Council**  
**Children and Young People's Commissioning**

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