

# Essex Children in Care and Leaving Care

Partnership Strategy  
2022-2027



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# About this strategy

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## Our vision

We provide early help to children and their families, to prevent them from becoming children in need and to protect children and young people from neglect and abuse. We want to support and enable them to grow up healthily and safely, enjoying life, learning and working, so that through their achievements they can make a positive contribution to society as adults. To do this, we work across our Partnership to provide a whole system approach.

We work together to intervene early, listen to the lived experience of children and young people and work creatively with families. We have a systemic, strengths and relationship based practice model of work that supports us to work pro-actively and alongside families to identify individual and family strengths and build resilience. We work on bringing the right children into care for the right amount of time. When children are in our care, we help them to maintain relationships with their families and friends and reunite them with their families as safely and as soon as possible.

All partner agencies are committed to this vision, to working together and to holding each other to account to achieve it. This will be through an improved integrated and co-ordinated approach including enabling participation in universal, mainstream services in the community, providing specialist services when required and developing or commissioning new or additional services when shortfalls or gaps in services are identified. Where services are commissioned, we will act as responsible commissioners in having high expectations and holding those services to account for delivering good, timely and effective services for our children in care and care leavers. All agencies will contribute to the protection and safeguarding of children in care and care leavers and work together to divert young people from crime.

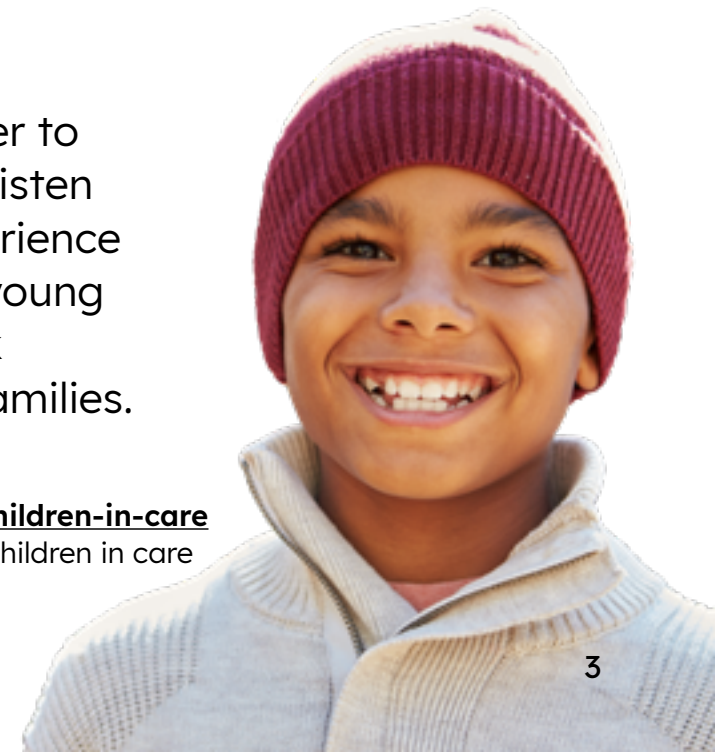
## The Essex Co-Parenting Strategy

In May 2022, Essex County Council (ECC) published its new **Corporate Parenting Strategy**. The new strategy approach was developed with partners and reviewed and endorsed by the Children in Care and Leaving Care (CICLC) Partnership.

Our Co-Parenting Strategy has at its heart the thoughts and feelings of children, young people, their families and carers. The new brand of “Co-Parenting” was suggested by a group of care leavers we worked with to develop the strategy. Language is important, and they wanted to move away from the “business-like” feel of the term corporate parenting. They suggested that Co-Parenting recognises all the different people who work together to care for them. This echoes the recognition by the CICLC Partnership that no one organisation can achieve good outcomes for children in and leaving care in isolation.

We work together to  
intervene early, listen  
to the lived experience  
of children and young  
people and work  
creatively with families.

Visit [www.essex.gov.uk/children-in-care](http://www.essex.gov.uk/children-in-care) to read our strategies for children in care and leaving care in full.



# About this strategy

## Our Co-Parenting Mission

We will work together across all aspects of children and young people's lives, so that all children in care and leaving care are happy, loved, safe and able to achieve their aspirations.

We want everyone in our Partnership, whatever their role, to ask themselves two questions:

**“What can I do in my role to help children and young people in and leaving care?”**

and when making a decision:

**“Would this be good enough for my child?”**



## Priorities

We have five Priorities based on what matters most to children and young people. For more detail on what children and young people have told us about these Priorities, please refer to the **Co-Parenting Strategy**



1. **Self:** Celebrating individuality, championing diversity and inclusion and helping children and young people understand where they come from



2. **Health:** Supporting emotional wellbeing, championing healthy lifestyles and keeping children and young people safe



3. **Home:** Providing good, stable homes and ensuring children and young people feel cared for



4. **Learning:** Helping children and young people learn, have high aspirations, grow as people and enjoy school, college, university and training



5. **Independence:** Helping care leavers achieve independence as successful, happy adults who can feel confident in work and if they become parents themselves

# About this strategy

## Co-Grandparents

We have also launched our new concept of being “Co-Grandparents”. This means providing extra support for care leavers who have children of their own by adopting some of the grandparent roles that many new parents benefit from when starting a family. This could include practical and financial advice, support with childcare and emotional support. We can help to build confidence and capability of young parents who may not have had the chance to learn parenting skills from their own family.



## The Essex Pledge

The Co-Parenting Strategy includes a new Essex Pledge (attached in Appendix 1) which is a set of promises made to children in care and care leavers by Elected Members of Essex County Council. This was signed by Members at Full Council on 11 October 2022.



Figure 1: Cllr Beverley Egan, Portfolio Holder for Children, Families & Early Years, signing The Essex Pledge after Full Council October 2022



# CICLC Partnership Board

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# CICLC Partnership Board

## Governance

To improve the lives of our children and young people in and leaving care, we will secure commitment and seek innovation from colleagues at all levels in our Partnership and beyond. This includes political and professional leaders, those working directly with children and young people every day, and those with responsibility for the environment around them and the opportunities to which they have access (such as housing, schools and employment).

The CICLC Partnership Strategy is co-produced and owned by all members of the CICLC Partnership Board. It is accompanied by a live Delivery Plan, which will be reviewed at quarterly Board meetings. All partners hold the responsibility for its implementation within their respective agencies and/or commissioned services, and for holding other partners to account.

### **The Partnership Board is made up of the following members:**

- Essex County Council
- Essex Foster Carer Association
- Essex Police
- Designated Doctor for Looked After Children
- Representation from local health providers including Southend, Essex and Thurrock Children's and Adolescent's Mental Health Service (SET CAMHS) and the Named Nurses for Looked After Children
- Representation from the district, borough and city councils
- Children in Care Council (represented by the Involvement Service)

As set out in the CICLC Partnership Board Terms of Reference, the Board will:

- Ensure Essex County Council and its partners fulfil our Corporate Parenting duties and priorities for children in the care of Essex County Council in accordance with legislation and as set out in our Children in Care and Leaving Care Partnership Strategy and Corporate Parenting Pledge (Appendix 1)
- Inform the commissioning and provision of services for children in care and care leavers where appropriate
- Ensure children in and leaving care and those who have left care are offered a consistent, timely and high-quality service

The Board is accountable to the Corporate Parenting Panel, the Children and Young People's Partnership Board and the Children in Care Council (via the Involvement Service).





# Background

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# Background



## Wider Context

Since the last CICLC Partnership Strategy was published, we have experienced a global pandemic which had immediate impacts on health, emotional wellbeing and service provision. It will continue to have long lasting impacts on our children and young people, families, services and the professionals that deliver them.

We are now in a cost of living crisis which, along with the pandemic, is causing family poverty and increased family tension. We know from the evidence<sup>1</sup> that there is a direct link between poverty and child abuse and neglect. Like everywhere in the UK, the Essex system is under enormous strain due to increasing demand for services and a workforce that is at risk of burnout. Our care leavers who are managing with little or no family support are going to be especially vulnerable to the financial and emotional wellbeing impacts of the increased cost of living.

<sup>1</sup> Bywaters et al (2016) The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review  
[www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review)

## Systems approach

We need to work together as a Partnership on these and other challenges that we can't solve alone. We want to bring in new partners, such as the Essex Partners Anchor Network, the business community, and voluntary and community groups, to find new solutions to our challenges.

We must also share and celebrate our achievements and strengths as organisations and a Partnership, as well as those of our children and young people in and leaving care themselves.

We are taking the opportunity of our new, collaborative Co-Parenting approach to do things differently and provide a more seamless, caring experience for the children and young people we care for.

Our Co-Parenting Strategy has been contributed to and is endorsed by Elected Members and leaders across Essex via the Corporate Parenting Panel, People and Families Scrutiny Committee, Cabinet and Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board, all lending their support and commitment to improving the lives of children and young people in and leaving care.



# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

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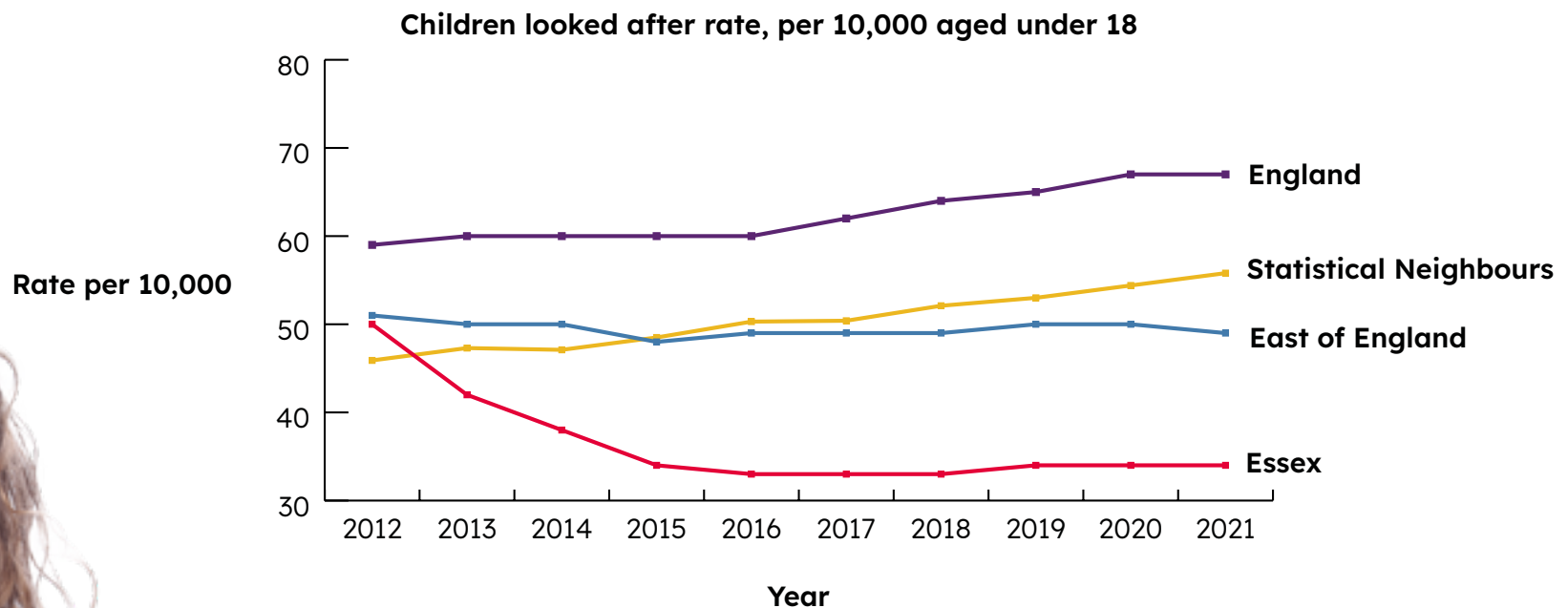


# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

## Rates of children in care

As a Partnership, we provide a whole system approach to children's needs, intervening early and providing wrap-around support for children, young people, their carers and their families to ensure the right children are in care for the right amount of time.

Our approach results in relatively low rates of children in care: 34/10,000 in Essex, compared to 67/10,000 for the UK and 56/10,000 for statistically-comparable local authorities. We have been consistent at this rate since 2015.



# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

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## Responding to performance management data

Within ECC, we hold quarterly performance meetings for our services including Children in Care and Leaving Care and Children and Young People with Disabilities workstreams and recently started a separate one for the Leaving and Aftercare Service. Directors, Service Managers, and other key leaders attend to discuss both quantitative and qualitative data, and Service Managers provide additional analysis from their knowledge of delivery.

Performance management information is shared and discussed at our quarterly CICLC Partnership Board meetings where we collaborate to address issues or emerging trends identified through the data.

We also gather and share qualitative feedback. This includes insights from from children, young people (including It's My Life festivals, Have Your Say, Children in Care Council and engagement on programmes and strategies such as Essex Police Children & Young People's Plan), families and carers, self-reflection from practitioners, Missing Chats, statutory reviews for children in care, case audit, and multi-agency case audit.





# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

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## Achievements since our last Strategy

Since our Partnership Strategy was last updated (2018), we have made significant progress across the Partnership. Below are highlights of our achievements in Essex, arranged under our 2018-21 Outcomes:



## OUTCOME 1

**The right children are in care and the length of time in care is safely reduced**

- **Divisional Based Intervention Team (D-Bit):** The D-Bit service works alongside the allocated social worker to support children and families on the edge of care, and also reconnecting children with families where the plan is for a return home. For children on the edge of care, it delivers 8-12 sessions of solution-focused brief intervention with children on the edge of care and their families. Consistently, year on year, it continues to prevent over 70% of the young people it works with from entering the care system. In 20/21, 82% of those referred had a successful outcome, with young people remaining in the care of their families and kinship arrangements. 71% of families reported improvement in relationships with family members at the close of intervention.
- **Independent Review Officers:** The IRO service maintains an overview of children in care. The IROs have their own caseloads and they are organised into Quadrants to ensure that there are consistent relationships between IROs, the individual young people and the Quadrant social work services.
- **Public Law Outline:** We have improved our Public Law Outline (PLO) support which helps families to avoid court where possible and have developed a Toolkit for other local authorities which is now recognised nationally as best practice. We are supporting all regions to embed the recommendations from the Public Law Working Group Report 2021.

# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

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## OUTCOME 2

**Children in care are safe, afforded stability and the opportunity for a positive future**

- **Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE):** Overseen by the Essex Safeguarding Children Board's Missing and Child Exploitation Sub-Committee, MACE meetings are held in each Quadrant. Meetings are in two parts. MACE 1 focuses on individual children and young people assessed as high risk of exploitation and/or going missing, it reviews the Safety Plan devised by practitioners and families and may make suggestions about additional steps to help make the young person safer. MACE 2 shares trends, hotspots, and prevention activities, to tackle exploitation in vulnerable communities and groups, by the partnership and agree further multi-agency activity. Relevant information is shared between Quadrants.
- **Youth Offending:** We continue to support young people exploited into crime and work closely with a range of partners to do this to both protect young people and reduce the risk of serious harm associated with crimes of violence. We have further developed our 'offer' and adopt a strengths based approach to our work, building resilience within young people and their families and provide high quality restorative justice to support victims of crime.
- **Fostering:** We are part-way through a 10-year strategy to increase the proportion of children fostered who are placed with Essex Fostering Service carers. We have invested in strengthening and expanding our in-house fostering service by improving our fees, providing wraparound therapeutic fostering using a trauma-informed model with psychologists and mental health co-ordinators. We have created Oasis Networks, offering informal support, advice and sleepovers between fostering households. At end March 2020, 79% of fostered children were cared for by in-house foster carers, a significant increase from 73% in March 2018.
- **Sufficiency Strategy:** We have refreshed our Children in Care Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy which sets out how we will fulfil our Sufficiency Duty to, as far as possible, secure accommodation within our boundaries to meet the needs of children in care, consistent with their welfare needs. It considers the current conditions of the local market and demand for local provision, the amount and type of supply that currently exists, as well as the capacity, quality and suitability of all providers and unique challenges to Essex. It aligns with our new Co-Parenting Strategy and Priorities. Through a strategic partnership with Barnardo's, we have co-designed with young people a re-imagined model of residential group care. We are using this to inform the development of our own children's homes, alongside our relational commissioning approach to ensure access to good quality local residential placements when we need them.
- **Anti-Racist Practice:** ECC has appointed an Anti-Racist Practice Lead for Children & Families to develop an Anti-Racist Practice Strategic Plan, recognising that more needs to be done to support Black, Asian and ethnically diverse children, families and staff and provide the best service for their racial, ethnic and cultural identities. The draft strategic plan includes educating ourselves to the experiences of ethnically diverse children, families and staff, upskilling our leadership and workforce to understand and challenge racism, and to strive for racial equity across ECC and our partners so that everyone can achieve their potential.



# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

## OUTCOME 3

### Children in care and care leavers make a successful transition to adulthood and independence

- **Leaving and after care:** At the end of 2021/22 we had 793 care leavers, 185 of which were aged 21+. A significant proportion of them (32%) were previously Separated Migrant Children with their own unique needs. 91 care leavers are staying put with their foster carers. We are in touch with 94% of all care leavers. We have participated in the national pilot programme 'Become' to improve the skills and knowledge of Personal Advisors in supporting our care leavers.
- **Life Plans:** We have transformed our statutory care plan documents into Life Plans, co-designed by the Children in Care Council. Life Plans are live documents that social workers and children and young people complete together.
- **Care leaver employment:** Our Targeted Youth Advisers and Employability Workers have helped 63% (March 2022) of care leavers into education, training and employment. We support employers to keep young care leavers in employment with a range of adjustments and wellbeing support. ECC also provides a guaranteed interview and interview support for care leavers applying for roles, a policy and practice which we can share with our partners.
- **Council tax:** We worked together to secure a council tax exemption for care leavers across all 12 of our district, borough and city councils.
- **Care leaver housing:** The Essex Housing Officers Group (EHOG) is working with ECC to develop a new joint protocol to commit to support care leavers into housing across the different district, borough and city councils across Essex



# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

## OUTCOME 4

**Children in care and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are supported to prepare for adulthood by maximising their independence**

- **The Children and Young People with Disabilities Service (CYPWD):** This service supports children and young people aged 0 to 25 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and has continued to develop its offer and services to children. Every social care team has a SEND Champion who is supported by a quadrant SEND link worker. This network of Champions ensures that Social Workers have easy access to peers who have developed additional expertise in working with SEND and has resulted in closer links with colleagues in SEND. 55.7% of Children in Care have an EHCP plan.
- **Essex SEND Strategy: My Life, My Rights** Essex established a SEND Partnership Board in early 2021 to be accountable for the direction, delivery and impact of the SEND Improvement Programme, as well as oversight of the statutory responsibilities for SEND and the delivery of Essex's 5-year SEND Strategy. The leads for each element of the local area SEND Improvement Programme and each geographical area sit on the SEND Partnership Board, alongside school representatives, the Essex Family Forum, and key providers providing good representation from all partners across education, health and social care. The Essex local area SEND system is better connected, with collaborative and streamlined structures in place to identify, assess and respond to opportunities and challenges, and to deliver improved services, provision and outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- **My Assessment and Plan (MAP):** MAP enables a person-centred approach with a strong influence on the voice of the child being central to the plan. MAP helps social workers capture the views, wishes and feelings of CYPWD in a more creative way, such as using photographs.



# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

## OUTCOME 5

### Children in care and leaving care have good health outcomes

- **Health initiatives:** We have introduced the dental Mini Mouth Care Matters triage tool and identified NHS dentists who will prioritise children in care. Progress has been made towards introducing an Initial Health Assessment (IHA) Digital Tool. Specialist training has been delivered on the emotional wellbeing and specific needs of Separated Migrant Children. Bespoke training on the Mental Capacity Act has been provided for specialist practitioners within 0-19 service to be embedded as “practice as normal”. An Escalation Pathway has been implemented for identifying and reporting placements at risk of breakdown. An Escalation Process has been developed for escalating from community to acute care.
- **Mental Health/Emotional Wellbeing:** In 2022, North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT) and HRCG Care Group were commissioned as a partnership to provide Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for Southend, Essex and Thurrock. The partnership approach enables a shared workforce and joint activities to deliver an integrated model of care, with both partners bringing their strengths and experience to the service to achieve the ambition of reducing waiting times for children and young people.

## OUTCOME 6

### Children in care and leaving care attend education provisions which suit their learning and training needs well, allowing them to make good progress and achieve their potential

- **Education collaboration:** The Virtual School and Education teams have worked with schools to support children in care to have high aspirations and achieve their goals. We have rolled out innovative emotional and behaviour awareness training, bespoke learning support and a new Personal Education Plan (PEP) process which involves children and young people to create a live record of their experience and progress.





# Progress since the last Partnership Strategy

## OUTCOME 7

Children in care and care leavers are involved in and connected with services and their local communities

- **Involvement Service:** Building relationships is at the heart of the work of our Involvement Service. The Service uses a range of meaningful participatory methodologies including action research, co-design and peer research to inform service design, governance and evaluation, underpinned by a nurturing approach that builds resilience. The Involvement Service supports the Children in Care Council to meet regularly with the Corporate Parenting Panel members as well as enabling young people to attend and present at meetings and take part in discussions with directors, partner agencies, service managers and team managers. During 2021/22 there were approx. 4000 Children in Care Council contacts with children in care and care leavers.
- **Co-production of Essex Police CYP Strategy:** Essex Police has launched its new Children and Young People Strategy 2022-25, which has been co-produced with children and young people. This includes consulting with care leavers via the Involvement Team, during sessions where young people shared their lived experience of being a child or young person in care, their interactions and experiences of policing and ideas for how to improve relationships between police and children in care and care leavers, including being aware of past trauma and having less support around them.
- **Local Offer:** A refreshed Local Offer PDF is on the ECC website and work is underway with children in care and care leavers to create a co-designed Local Offer on a new ECC platform.

## Over-arching user needs for The Local Offer, Care Leavers

### As a young person leaving care

I need someone I can trust to take me step by step through everything I need to do

so that I am not overwhelmed building my life.

### As a Personal Advisor

I need to ensure young people feel safe and are supported

so that they build confidence and independence in all areas of their life.

### As the corporate parent Essex County Council

We need to ensure we provide young people with the information resources they are legally entitled to

so that care leavers make a successful transition to independence.

Figure 2: User needs identified by research by Nel Mathams, 2022



# Children in care and leaving care demographics

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# Children in care and leaving care demographics

## In March 2022 (End of 2021/22 Q4):

- There were 1124 Children in Care, including Separated Migrant Children and Young People (also known as Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC))
- In 2021, 104 Separated Migrant Children and Young People entered care in Essex.
- The most common ages of children in care are 15, 16 and 17 years. For Separated Migrant Children and Young People in care, this is 17 years.
- 15.7% of our children and young people in care are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME), excluding Separated Migrant Children. Including Separated Migrant Children, this proportion is 24.8%.
- The number of care leavers aged 18-25 was 782 in March 2022
- 63% of our care leavers are in education, employment or training (EET)

## In March 2022

- 51 children in care were recorded as at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation. In January-March 2022, 80 children and young people went missing for a total of 271 times

## In April 2022, 69.5% of our children and young people were living in foster care. Of these:

- 64.7% have been in placements for 2+ years (of those that have been in care for 2.5+ years)
- 10.5% had experienced three or more placements the 12 months to April 2022
- The HCRG Care Group Annual Report 2021-22 reported:
  - 94% of children in care in Essex are up to date with their Review Health Assessments
  - 59% of Essex children in care have been identified as having significant health issues
  - 69% have complex needs
  - 26% have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
  - 33% have been identified as having mental health needs

## Data and information sharing

Our data is currently held in a number of data systems across our organisations. As a Partnership, we will work together to understand how we can better share information to identify children and families our different organisations are working with that may need support from other agencies.

We will also use performance data to spot trends, identify what is working well and work together on solutions to emerging challenges.



# Delivering the Strategy

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# Delivering the Strategy

## Our Outcomes and Actions

Our previous strategy had seven Outcomes against which we have monitored our performance.

In co-producing the Co-Parenting Strategy, we have evolved these seven Outcomes to what currently matters to children, young people, their carers and families and our professionals working across the Partnership, linked closely to our 5 Priorities. Each Outcome has a designated Sponsor on the Partnership Board.

Under each Outcome, the Partnership has gathered a long-list of suggested actions (see below) to be turned into more specific deliverables and implemented in a phased approach. These are held in a live Delivery Plan, owned and reviewed regularly by the Partnership Board.



## OUTCOME 1 >>

**The right children are in care, the length of time in care is safely reduced, and families feel involved and supported**

### Sponsor(s)

**ECC Director of Local Delivery (CiC) and IRO Service Manager**

#### Actions:

- Continue to prevent the need for children entering care through the provision of effective early intervention services such as the Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, CAMHS, collaboration with schools, and through targeted specialist services such as Family Solutions, D-BIT and other locally based targeted services
- Work with Partners to share data, help identify families in need of Early Help support coming into contact with other services and signpost across organisations
- Continue to involve children and families in shaping and improving care services
- Expand training on having strengths-based conversations and trauma-perceptive practice throughout partner organisations. Work on solutions to standardise training across organisations

# Delivering the Strategy

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## OUTCOME 2 >>

**Children and young people in care, care leavers and families feel listened to, involved and understand what is happening to them**

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### **Sponsor(s)**

**Involvement Service/CiCC**

#### **Actions:**

- Embed Co-Parenting across the Partnership and communicate the change in language within organisations and wider partners
  - Invite CiCC to contribute to Corporate Parenting Panel meetings to provide insight and feedback on how we are doing with their Priorities – in person or by video, including feedback from It's My Life festivals
  - Create promotional material to share what Co-Parenting means to children and young people in and leaving care, professionals, carers and senior leaders
  - Support children and young people and their carers to understand the purpose of health assessments, feel involved and able to contribute
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## OUTCOME 3 >>

**Children and young people in care and leaving care are proud to be who they are and feel a sense of belonging**

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### **Sponsor(s)**

**ECC Anti-Racist Practice Lead**

#### **Actions:**

- Build on existing 'Welcome Pack' for young people in care, to support those from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds by providing local information on things ranging from local hairdressers/barbers and religious communities and ensure the workforce is aware and sharing it
  - Implement actions in the Anti-Racist Practice Strategy (currently in development)
  - Reach out to community and voluntary organisations across the system to widen the community of support for those with diverse needs, such as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic or SEND care leavers
  - Work with the Virtual School to address any occurrences where harm has been identified in schools, including racist incidences and bullying
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# Delivering the Strategy

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## OUTCOME 4 >>

**Children and young people in care and leaving care are happy, healthy and safe**

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### **Sponsor(s)**

**CAMHS & LAC Nurses, Essex Police**

#### **Actions:**

- Work with partners to improve access to mental health and emotional wellbeing support including strengths and solution-focussed therapies
- Stay open to new, light-touch forms of communication to help children and young people know someone is there for them, learning from the pandemic
- Strengthen links with safeguarding forums such as Essex Safeguarding Children's Board to reduce risk in the community and missing episodes
- Update Welcome Packs locally to provide information on youth clubs and activities to help children and young people make friends and have fun outside of school; share same information on local clubs and activities with foster carers
- Work together to implement relevant recommendations in Essex Police Children and Young People's Strategy
- Work with partners to improve access to physical/ general health provision that supports timely access to relevant services
- Work with new Integrated Care Systems to highlight needs of children in care and care leavers to be considered in developing new integrated services to improve all aspects of health
- Ensure care leavers understand and receive their health history (Health Passports) and ensure care leavers know that they have designated LAC doctor and nurse support up to age 25

# Delivering the Strategy

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## OUTCOME 5 >>

**Children and young people in care are settled and secure in their homes and feel part of a family**

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### Sponsor(s)

**ECC Head of Permanency, Placements & Sufficiency**

#### **Actions:**

- Strengthen relationships with local residential and supported accommodation providers, supporting children and young people to feel happy in their homes
- Support implementation of ECC's Sufficiency and Commissioning Strategy
- Promote and support the Oasis Network - building a local ecosystem of support for foster carers in difficult times, such as when a young person goes missing
- Continue trauma-awareness training, access to therapeutic support, emotional wellbeing, and other targeted support to children in care and their carers to support placement stability
- Support foster carers to improve confidence when caring for children of a different ethnic or cultural background and support recruitment drives for ethnically diverse foster carers
- Rapid collaborative specialist mental health and multi-agency intervention to children in care and their carers to support placement stability
- Progress joint protocol for prioritising care leavers for accommodation across all districts, borough and city councils
- Leaders to use their platform to promote fostering as a positive choice for local residents

# Delivering the Strategy

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## OUTCOME 6 >>

**Children and young people in care and leaving care feel happy, confident and secure in school, college, university or training, have improved educational outcomes and high aspirations for the future**

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### Sponsor(s)

Head of Virtual School

#### Actions:

- Promote Co-Parenting approach to schools, sharing what children in and leaving care have told us around their Priority of 'Learning' and their experiences of being a child in care attending school in Essex
- Continue to implement Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for schools on trauma and attachment awareness, and improve understanding of other children to reduce bullying
- Explore alternatives to taking children out of lessons for social worker and health care visits
- Involve children in care in campaigns and programmes such as the Year of Reading and Year of Numbers, with extra support given to foster carers and residential carers
- Streamline education and social work data collection and reporting to improve PEP process
- Continue the work of the Virtual School to come up with solutions for schools to reduce exclusions, such as part-time timetables and use of alternative training outside of a school setting
- Find work experience opportunities for those who want to go into public sector jobs with guaranteed interviews/ preparation for care leavers e.g. police, health, education, social care, fire service, and with on-going mentorship



# Delivering the Strategy

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## OUTCOME 7 >>

**Care leavers feel cared for, settled, connected to others, involved and are supported to find jobs and start adult life**

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### **Sponsor(s)**

**ECC Service Manager Leaving and After Care & LAC Designated Nurses**

#### **Actions:**

- Revise and refresh Local Offer web content and explore options to make more accessible and user-friendly for care leavers
- Continue to reach out to care leavers who have stopped contacting us and be welcoming and flexible on how we support those re-establishing contact
- Offer care leavers apprenticeships and employment opportunities in ECC and support anchor institutions to support care leavers into work and work experience. Sign up to Care Leavers Employment Charter and share best practice on supporting care leavers into employment, such as Career Insight Days
- Recruit Care Leavers Champions in each district, borough or city council to work collaboratively across the system
- Formalise Co-Grandparent role and explore new initiatives such as help with managing finances, navigating benefits, accessing health, childcare and role-modelling to improve confidence and capability of new parents
- Continue to improve transition at end of care – start preparing for independence earlier, e.g. working with SEND teams on forward planning for those coming back into Essex at 18

# Delivering the Strategy

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## Delivery Plan 2022-27

A Delivery Plan will be agreed by the Partnership following the publication of this strategy. This will be a live document, reviewed every six months at CICLC Partnership Board meetings to monitor progress and discuss where new actions are needed to respond to any emerging challenges or new trends identified by the Partnership members and/or in our performance data.

Progress will also be reported to the Children in Care Council and Corporate Parenting Panel, who will hold us to account on delivering on this CICLC Partnership Strategy.



# Appendix 1 – The Essex Pledge

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# The Essex Pledge

As Corporate Parents, Essex County Council is required to make a Pledge to our children in care and leaving care. The Pledge is a set of promises written by children and young people being looked after by us.

Each year they get to have a say about what is important to them and whether the promises need to change. This is signed by Essex County Council's Elected Members who commit to the Pledge.



## We promise:



To do everything we can to make you feel cared about, valued and respected as an individual



To do our very best to keep you safe, healthy and well



To make sure you have a social worker or personal adviser who will spend time with you and get to know you



To do our best to help you keep in touch with your family, brothers and sisters, and friends when you come into care



To make sure you have opportunities to achieve and succeed



To fully involve you in decision making so your views are listened to and to explain when we have to make a decision that you may not like or agree with



To help you become independent

This information is issued by:  
Essex County Council  
Children and Families

Contact us:  
[www.essex.gov.uk/topic/children-young-people-and-families](http://www.essex.gov.uk/topic/children-young-people-and-families)

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and/or made available in alternative  
formats, on request.

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