



Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan 2016 onwards



Foreword

*“The Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan is about how we can do things better”**

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 are the most important issues and problems for children, young people and families in Essex and decides what we are going to do about them. When something has gone well we celebrate success together and when things are not going well we establish why this is the case and how we can prevent or change the situation. Whether things go well or not, we share learning so that we can undertake our public duties to the best of our ability. 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 to ensure that the most vulnerable children and young people have access to a good education and are enabled to lead safe, happy, healthy lives like the majority of their peers across Essex. We work in exceptionally financially demanding times and with changing legislation and expectations from Central Government, this provides a significantly challenging situation in which to work. Whilst there is no new money we can do better with what we already have and this may mean that we stop doing some of the things we have always done and encourage communities and families to do more for themselves.

Whilst all partners have their own statutory duties to fulfil, we know that working together in genuine and effective partnership across our system, we can add significant value to each others’ work, resulting in better support for those who need it most. Our Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan, articulated in our “plan on a page”, aims to bring about the strategic changes needed across our children’s system to ensure we can 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 Dick Madden
Cabinet Member Children and Adults

*All the quotes in this document were provided to us during our engagement activity.

Background



“We’ve made good progress but there is much more to do”

Following an extensive programme of engagement in the development of this Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan (the Plan) there was overwhelming agreement amongst those we worked with that partners should continue to come together under the Children’s Act 2004 “Duty to Co-operate” and set the direction and vision for children’s services within a joint plan.

There has been significant progress since our last plan (appendix 1). The numbers of Looked After Children have reduced to under 1,000; there are more schools in Essex judged by Ofsted to be “Good” and “Outstanding” and our last Social Care Ofsted judgement in 2014 was “Good”. Our Family Solutions teams are supporting some of the most complex families in the County and have worked with over 1,800 families since the service started in October 2013. There is still much to do on health inequalities but we are starting to see a downward trend in obesity amongst children and young people. There has been positive multi-agency engagement to support the introduction of Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans to more appropriately meet the needs of children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and in 2015 a new jointly commissioned emotional health and well-being service become operational. Additionally there has been a significant rise in the number of young people participating in the National Citizenship Service, with over 1,000 taking part since 2011. Whilst we have much to celebrate there is still much to do to build on our success and to focus efforts where there are still poor outcomes for a minority of children and young people.

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 on six “system objectives” that will deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their parents and carers.

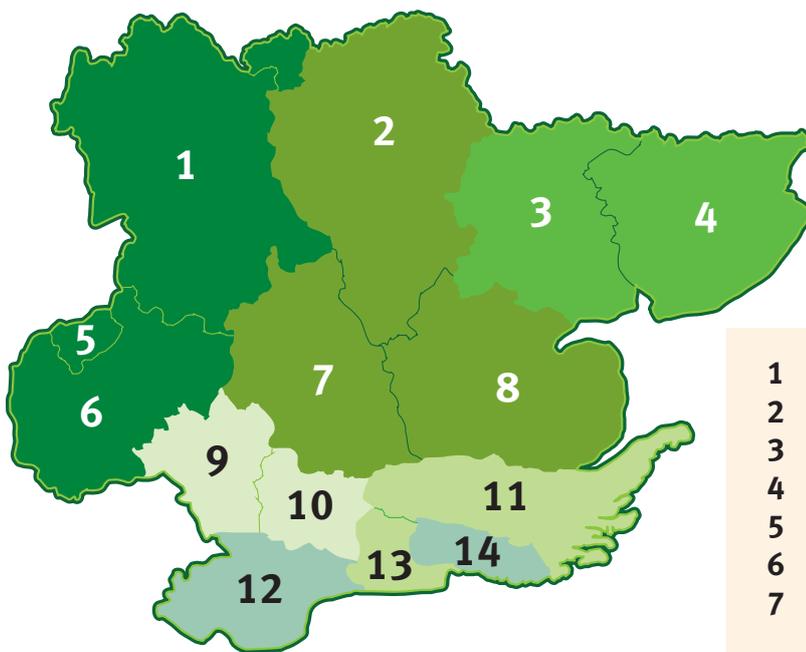
The children’s landscape is complex and is becoming increasingly more so with the diversification of the provider market and the Local Authority’s diminishing role and influence in education. This Plan cannot be everything to everyone but it is flexible enough to allow for and recognise change. We are determined the Plan will be a “live” document and will be the basis of on-going conversations not only across the Partnership but with children, young people, families and front line professionals. This will help us understand beyond the data, that we are doing what we have set out to and that it is still the right thing to do.

About Essex



“You get the best of both worlds in Essex, towns for things to do and countryside for green and quiet”

Essex is a diverse county with a population of 1,393,000, approximately 296,683 (21.1%) being under the age of 18. Whilst a relatively affluent county, there are pockets of high deprivation particularly in the South and North and approximately 14.7% of children are living in poverty. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 8.5% of all children and young people living in the area, compared with 21.5% in the country as a whole. The proportion of children and young people with English as an additional language in primary schools is 5.7% (the national average is 18.1%) and in secondary schools is 4.1% (the national average is 13.6%).



- | | | | |
|---|---------------|----|--------------|
| 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 overarching picture for Essex is that during the past three years children living in poverty and teenage conception rates have reduced. Early years and educational achievement have improved and those not in education and employment or training is down. Of course this positive picture is not the same for all children and young people in Essex and this plan seeks to target our resource to those who will benefit most. In particular we need some concerted effort on ensuring we support those with low emotional health and wellbeing and those who are living in challenging circumstances, for example those witnessing domestic violence. The 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 (appendix 2).

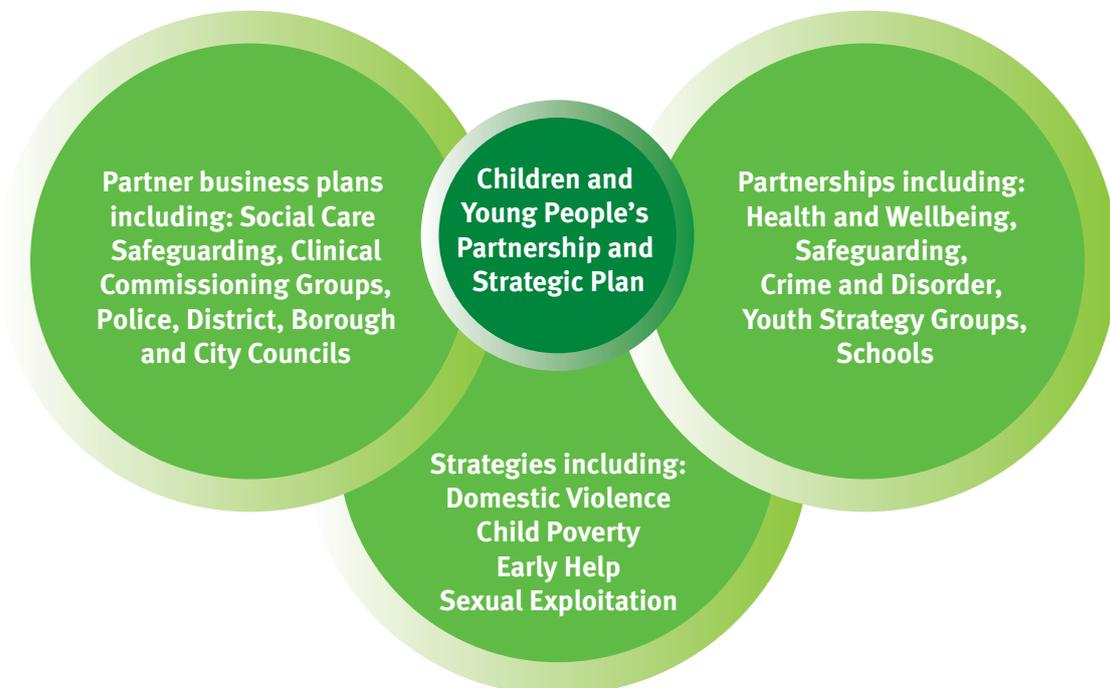
The context



“There cannot be the passing on of a problem or issue... all agencies have a joint responsibility to work in this way with children, young people and families”

We work within a complex children and young people’s landscape that incorporates upwards of 550 schools and academies, five Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), three police divisions, twelve districts/boroughs/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 of significant importance to 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 take action.

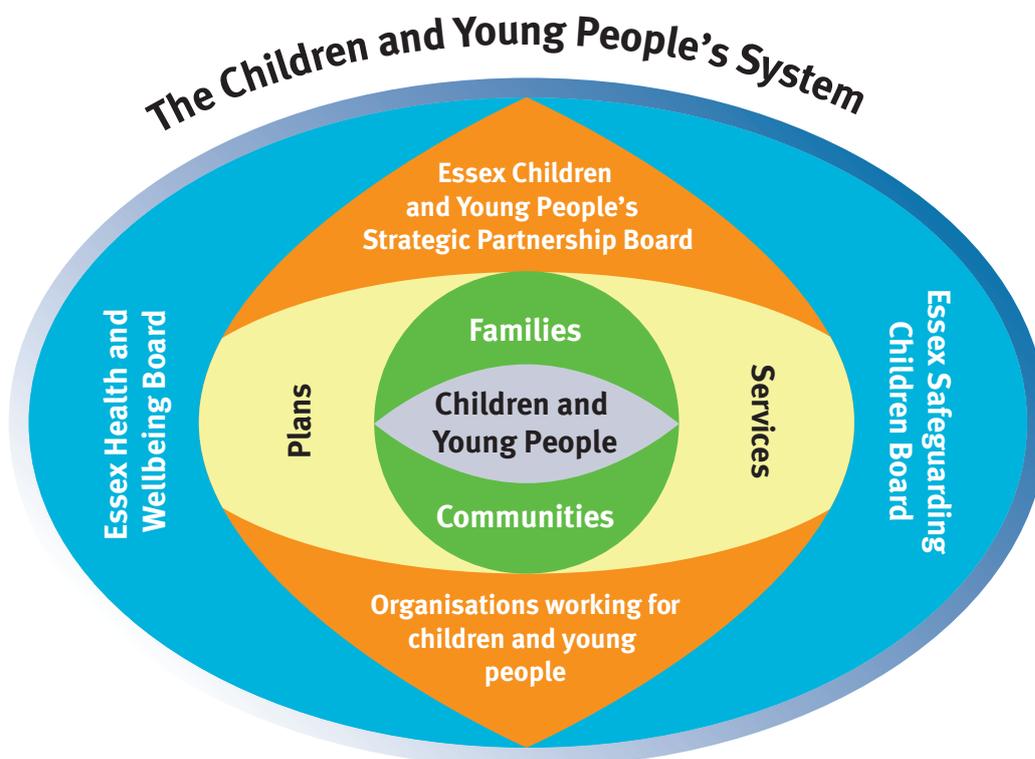


The Essex Children's System



“The plan gives a clear vision and needs to be adopted throughout the County”

The Essex wide Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (the Partnership) has representatives from across the partner organisations and provides leadership for the children's system. The Partnership makes decisions and changes, or improves the system through its influence and actions. The Partnership sits within the governance framework of the 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 Essex Safeguarding Children Board, whose responsibility is to ensure the safety of children and people in Essex is looked after.



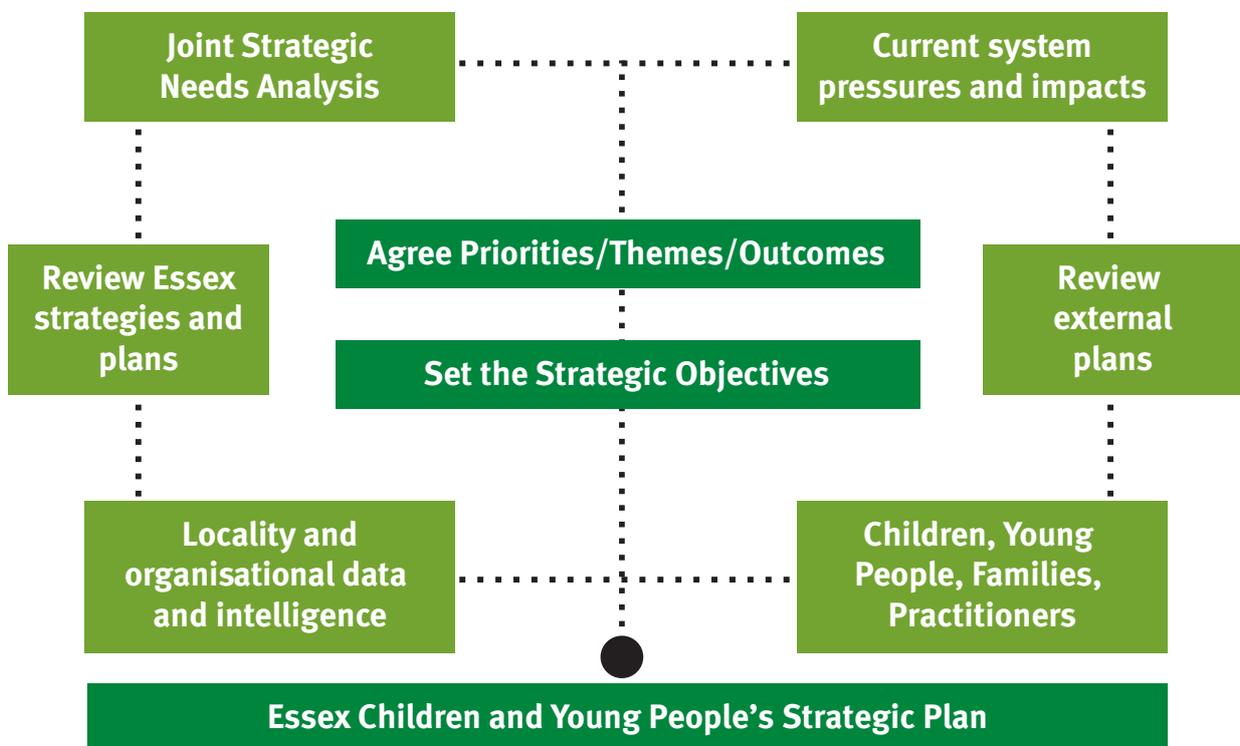
Essex is big and diverse and because of this there are four Locality Children's Partnerships in North East, West, Mid and South Essex. Whilst there are similarities across the areas, there are also differences in the needs of their children and young people. This can be for a variety of reasons including location, for example rural isolation, or local issues like high unemployment. The Locality Children's Partnerships are the experts on their areas and use their knowledge to focus local activity. Like the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, they will use the framework of this Plan to develop a more detailed delivery plan for the changes they want to see in their areas and will be given support, and when necessary, challenge, from the wider Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership in doing so.

Developing our vision, priorities and strategic objectives



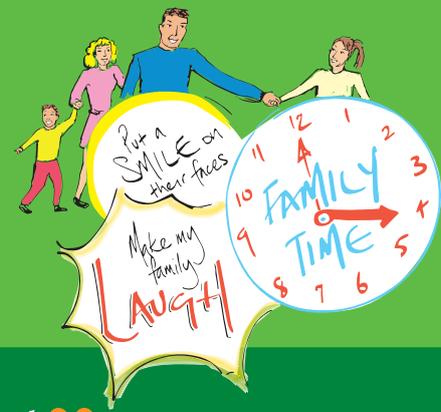
“Real conversations give meaningful insight”

We set out a clear methodology to develop this Plan and as well as using our data we ensured we gathered views and opinions from everyone who is important when setting our system objectives.



We spent nine months listening to children, young people and their parents and carers about their hopes and wishes for themselves, their families and their communities and in doing so heard about their day to day lives, their strengths and their challenges (page 12). We heard from front line practitioners about the issues they face, what they are observing and how they are supporting families. In order to identify risks and opportunities, leaders from across services identified together the impacts that new legislation and austerity are having on our own work and what this means collectively for the children’s system. We also surveyed over 300 senior managers to gather their experiences and seek their views. As a result the Partnership has a renewed and deepened understanding of the issues from all perspectives and we are focussed and energised for the challenges ahead.

Our system vision and principles



“It aspires to support everyone by strengthening communities and providing targeted and early support”

We know that there will always be some children, young people and families who will need our support and that the earlier we can provide it the higher probability there is of good long term sustainable outcomes. We want however to shift the focus away from dependency on organised public services, enabling people and communities to build on their own strengths and assets to support themselves.

Having deepened our understanding from our engagement with children, young people and families our six system objectives are set in a framework that determines what needs to happen to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. This framework provides the direction for the Locality Children’s Partnerships as well as the Essex Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership and illustrates how we will add value to our business as usual 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 others’ statutory responsibilities;
- **Being open and honest** with each other

We have tried to keep our strategic plan simple, focused and manageable, concentrating on just six system objectives that we believe will deliver the real change we want to see across the children’s system and subsequently deliver better outcomes for children, young people, parents, carers and communities.

We want everyone across the children’s landscape in Essex to see the part they play in delivering our objectives, including children and young people. Having listened carefully, we collated the information with our data to set out the **priorities** (what is important) and the **outcomes** (how we all want things to be). With this deepened understanding we were able to define **the system vision** (how we want the system to work together) and the **system objectives** (how we will deliver that vision). This is articulated in our “plan on page” (page 12/13).

The focus of work - Vulnerability and risk



“ I like people’s reactions when they see we’re not the Essex stereotype that’s been created ”

The majority of children and young people in Essex have their needs met through universal services that everyone can access e.g. schools, GPs 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, the majority can cope because they are resilient and have support around them. For some children and young people however there is a higher chance of things going wrong because their circumstances mean they are exposed to higher risks and vulnerabilities. We want to ensure that these children and young people are supported to have every opportunity of achieving the same social, educational, health and economic outcomes as their peers and to live happily, achieve personal growth and be aspirational about their futures. This means we will be putting particular focus on the children and young people who:

- ✓ Are in care or leaving care
- ✓ Are young offenders
- ✓ Are living in low income families**
- ✓ Are affected by domestic violence
- ✓ Are at risk of sexual exploitation
- ✓ At risk of engaging in youth violence
- ✓ Are homeless or in temporary housing
- ✓ Are not in full time or mainstream education
- ✓ Are not in education, employment or training
- ✓ Go missing and/or runaway
- ✓ Have a child protection plan
- ✓ Have a child in need plan
- ✓ Have long term health conditions
- ✓ Have parents with mental health needs
- ✓ Have parents in prison
- ✓ Have caring responsibilities
- ✓ Have special educational needs and/or disabilities
- ✓ Have migrated to Essex (from within or outside the UK)

There are some children and young people who do not appear vulnerable but who may not be coping as well as we think or whose circumstances are not secure; for these children and young people only small changes or challenges in life may make things difficult. Being aware of children and young people “on the edge” of vulnerability is important. Early help may be needed at any point in a child or young person’s life and includes both interventions early in life as well as interventions early in the development of a problem. It can offer support early to help families solve problems or to reduce the impact of problems that have already emerged.

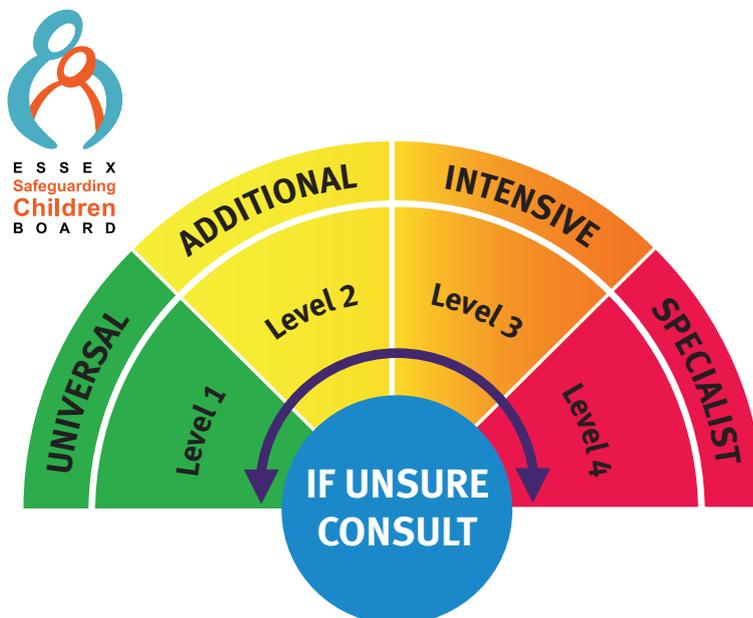
** Defined as those in receipt of free school meals, early years pupil premium, pupil premium, free two year early years education entitlement and families in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation as measured by the index of multiple deprivation.

Needs led Right time, right place



“After just three conversations with a local worker we got things back on track”

This Plan seeks to provide support for the continued delivery of good quality universal services: that is the services that everyone can access. 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 (appendix 3) 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. The principles outlined in the system vision on our ‘plan on a page’ articulate how we plan to work effectively with them.

Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Plan Vision

What Practitioners said	What Parents and Carers said	What Children and Young People said	Priorities What's important	Outcomes How we want things to be	Our System Vision How we want things to work	Joint System objectives How we will effect change
<p>Issues for parents: Low level poor mental health issues. Conflict in parent relationships. Parents engaging in risky behaviours. Lack of parenting skills and confidence. Families falling into debt.</p>	<p>For themselves they want: To be able to socialise with peers, friends and neighbours. To have access to local places and have family time at no or low cost. To feel part of a community. To be free from worry about things like anti-social behaviour and debt.</p>	<p>Parents, carers, siblings, and their pets are the most important things to them. They want to cope better with personal worries about things like seeing absent parents, money and family members who are ill. They like to be loved, liked and get on with people, including having good friends and relationships. They want to be able to deal with things like bullying and negative behaviours of other people and not worry about things they hear about like radicalisation. They enjoy physical activities like football, gymnastics, swimming and going to clubs and want to know their communities better. They want to do more activities, especially with family and friends but they can be expensive and not always easy to get to. They are ambitious and aspirational and positive about the future. They want to do well at school and get support to get a good job and have nice things.</p>	<p>Stable, resilient, safe families</p> <p>Emotionally healthy</p> <p>Physically healthy</p> <p>Involved and Connected</p> <p>Positive Futures</p>	<p>Children and Young People are well looked after and safe with their basic needs being met within resilient families. Children and Young People are emotionally healthy and make good decisions. Children and young people are engaged in positive activities and are physically healthy. Children, young people and families positively support each other within their communities. Children and young people have a good quality education, training and work opportunities.</p>	<p>Work to children, young people and families' strengths. Focus on preventing problems before they occur and offering early support if they do. Promote self-reliance and resilience. Be clear and consistent about expected outcomes and judge what we do against them. Work together across the whole system to deliver the right services, in the right place, at the right time. Use the evidence base for what works whilst having room for innovation. Be brave enough to stop things that are wrong. Be inclusive and actively address discrimination of all forms, appreciating and understanding difference. Use our collective influence to bring about change that will support delivery of the Plan. Provide assurance, challenge and support for each-others' statutory responsibilities. Keep and engage children, young people and families at the heart of all we do.</p>	<p>Protect the most vulnerable: keep children and young people safe from harm and neglect by working together to strengthen safeguarding across the system. Close the gap for the most vulnerable: close the gap in outcomes for those who experience social, educational and health inequalities to improve lives and break cycles of deprivation. Promote resilience and positive choices: innovate solutions for resilience and informed decision making so that people have more choice and control in their lives and are not unnecessarily reliant on public services. Achieve better from the use of collective resources: effectively manage and maximise resources, working innovatively together to achieve better outcomes. Maximise the use of community assets: make the best use of local assets for the benefit of children, young people and families, deliver a better environment and stronger communities through informal educational and social activity. Develop the system's workforce and culture: Nurture a high quality workforce that is supported and valued.</p> <p>Track and measure impact: use meaningful data with feedback from children, young people, parents/carers and practitioners.</p>

Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Plan on a Page

Outcomes for Children and Young People				
Stable, Resilient, Safe Families	Children and young people are well looked after and safe, with their basic needs being met within resilient families	Children and young people are engaged in positive activities and are physically healthy	Children, young people and families positively support each other within their communities	Children and young people attend good quality education, training and work opportunities
Emotionally Healthy	Children and young people are emotionally healthy and make good decisions	Children and young people are well looked after and safe, with their basic needs being met within resilient families	Children, young people and families positively support each other within their communities	Children and young people attend good quality education, training and work opportunities
Physically Healthy				
Involved and Connected				
Positive Futures				

System Objectives

1. Protect the most vulnerable

We will work to strengthen safeguarding across the children's system through, systems, procedures and well managed operational delivery and commissioning. We will act on serious case and child death reviews and section 11 audits findings and concentrate our efforts on tackling all aspects of abuse and neglect including high profile issues such as sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, youth violence and e-safety. **We will measure our success through a range of impact measures including indicators such as domestic abuse incidences, child protection plans and children who go missing, as well as feedback from those who are supported and who we are trying to protect.**

2. Close the gap for the most vulnerable

We will work together to close the gap for those who experience social, educational and health inequalities and improve their social, emotional, educational and health outcomes. For example, we will support each other to improve school attendance, collaborate to continue to embed the SEND reforms and increase access to preventative health care, for example health checks and vaccinations. **We will make best use of pupil premiums. When needed, we will signpost families to early help as soon as problems occur, that they nor universal services alone can resolve. We will measure our success through a range of indicators such as persistent school absence, children on part time timetables, Education Health Care Plans and health vaccinations. We will listen to what children and young people tell us about their development and experiences so we can learn from them.**

3. Behaviour change for resilience and positive choices

We will provide information that enables children, young people and families to become resilient and self-reliant and stop and think before they access public services. When we work directly with children, young people and families we will enable them to build on their strengths and work with each other and others in their communities to find solutions to the issues they are facing. **We will enable well informed and good decision making that leads to them being safe and emotionally and physically healthy. Success will be measured by people reporting a change in behaviour and choices as well indicators like number of attendances at accident and emergency, referrals to social care and increased use of local pharmacies.**

4. Efficient use of collective resources to deliver outcomes

We will map partnership resource against our priorities and plan to use it more efficiently and effectively, for example in developing and sustaining early help. We will encourage new partners, for example businesses, to support the delivery of our objectives by boosting contribution through volunteering and mentoring. **We will capitalise our own capability to support the aspirations of children and young people in developing more public sector work experience opportunities and collaborate to integrate and jointly commission services such as the Emotional Health and Wellbeing and pre-birth-19 delivery. We will use a range of indicators to measure success, including outcomes delivered as a result of engagement with services and children, young people and parent/carers' experiences.**

5. Mobilising Community Assets

We will work with children, young people, parents and carers to gain the skills to identify and develop locality based assets that will enable them to think, act and play together. Children and young people will be safe, happy and proud to live in communities where they will be valued. With their families they will be enabled to develop and access their own positive recreational activities that enable informal and social educational opportunities leading to increased self-esteem. **Increased local provision and use of local community assets such as parks, community centres and libraries will be an indication of success as well as listening to whether or not children, young people and parents and carers have access to and feel part of, and safe in their communities.**

6. System workforce culture and development

We will ensure that we have sufficient, high quality people working across our children's workforce in both the statutory and community and voluntary sector and that this workforce is well supported and valued. In particular we will ensure the workforce is properly equipped to work with families, focussing on their strengths and finding their own solutions. **Success will be judged by analysing, for example, the impact of training delivered and levels of vacancies across key services. We will ask our workforce how well they feel they are supported and valued and will ask the children, young people and families we work with about their experiences with us, what is good and what we need to do to improve.**

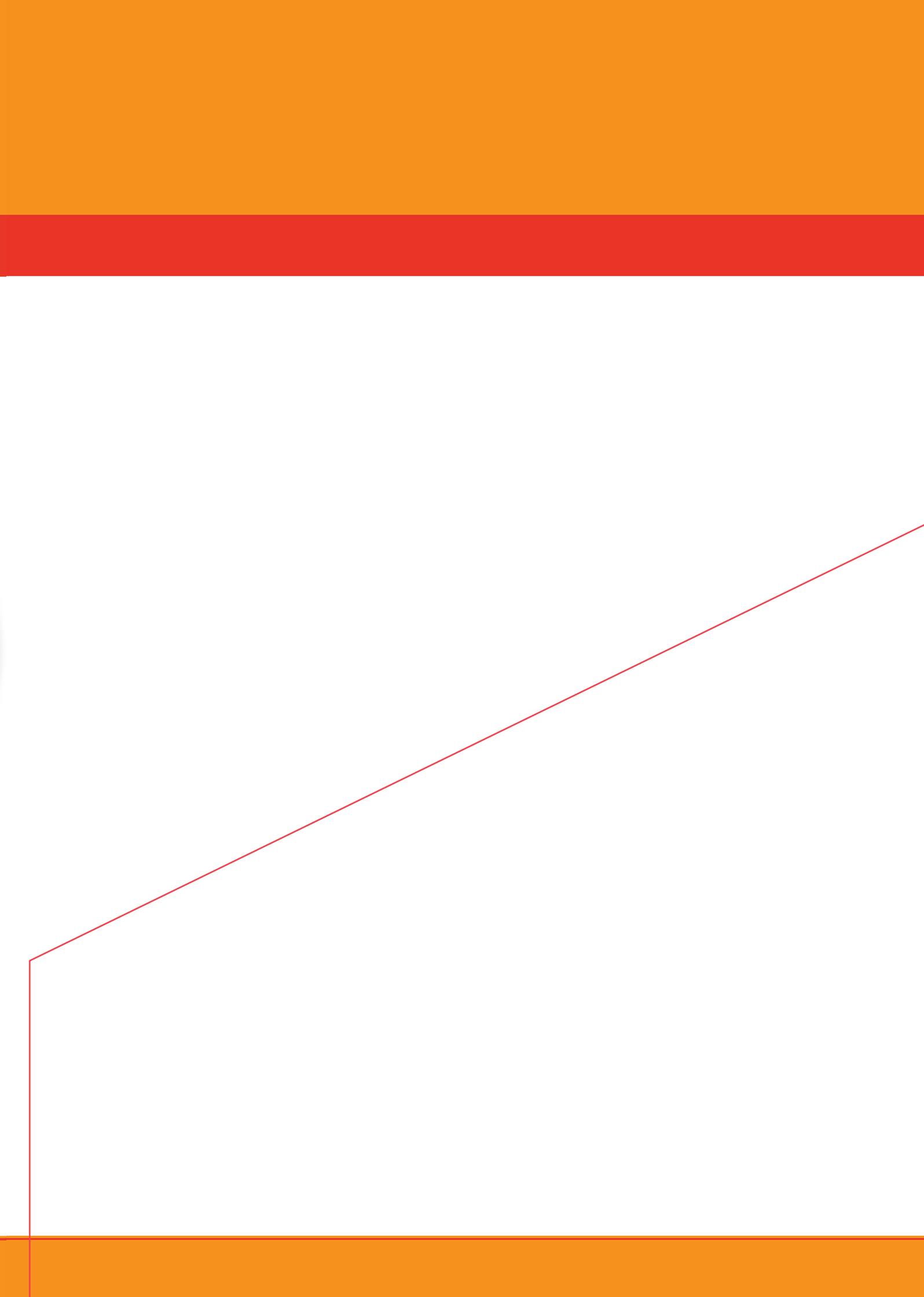
Appendices

- Appendix 1** Children and Young People's Plan Performance Report 2015
www.essexinsight.org.uk
- Appendix 2** Joint Strategic Needs Assessment
www.essexinsight.org.uk
- Appendix 3** Essex Early Help Offer
www.essexpartnershipportal.org
- Appendix 4** Children and Young People's Plan and Performance Framework
www.essexpartnershipportal.org

Essex County Council



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Essex County Council, People Commissioning

You can contact us in the following ways

@ Clare.burrell@essex.gov.uk or nicola.park@essex.gov.uk

🌐 www.essex.gov.uk

☎ 0345 743 0430

People Commissioning
Essex County Council
County Hall
Chelmsford
CM1 1XZ

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