



# MEET THE DREAM TEAM

Thanks to the children and young people of Bocking Church Street Community School, Ingatestone and Fryerning Church of England VA Junior School and Mildmay Junior School for developing their Early Help dream team Suzin and Freddie, featured on our front cover.



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# Foreword

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

A child or young person can experience difficulties at any time during their childhood and adolescence and there is now a substantial body of evidence to confirm that if those difficulties are addressed early enough it avoids the need for more costly specialist services.

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

We operate in financially challenging times and against a backdrop of dramatically reducing resources but as partners we commit to consistent application of thresholds and the alignment of resources. Now more than ever we must respond to what the evidence tells us and embrace Early Help, not just as a concept of service provision, but as a way of empowering families, and indeed communities, to take control over their own lives and live independently from public and statutory services.



Phil Picton  
Independent Chair  
Essex Safeguarding Children Board



Councillor Dick Madden  
Children and Young People's Partnership Chair  
Cabinet Member Children and Families  
Essex County Council

# Introduction

Early Help is the identification of, and response to, emerging problems for children, young people and their families. It is a way of working that supports families, children and young people to overcome difficulties and build their resilience, so that problems do not escalate and they are able to thrive and live and engage happily in their communities.

The Essex Early Help Offer builds from the considerable research of leading individuals such as Frank Field (2010), Graham Allen (2011), and Professor Eileen Munro (2011) who have led our collective understanding of Early Help and how the long term prospects of children and young people receiving Early Help at the right time will significantly improve.

Effective delivery of Early Help is based on a clear understanding of local needs and appreciation of local conditions influencing the lives of children, young people and families. In Essex we contextualise our shared understanding of those needs within the Essex Effective Support Windscreen (p.14). Locally based professionals contribute to the development of a rich local perspective through the creation of geographical and thematic Joint Strategic Needs Assessments with particular attention to defined vulnerable groups set out in the 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance 2018.

In Essex our knowledge and understanding is deepened by the ethnographic approach we take to understand the world families live in from their own experiences. This is reflected in the importance we are placing on developing an effective system leadership vision which places the family and communities at the centre, recognising their strengths are the biggest asset and that if support is needed, it is co-produced with families and communities themselves. When support is necessary it will be enabled by valued and highly qualified, confident front line staff who play a critical role in the early identification of families needing Early Help.

Partners in Essex have been contributing to the body of evidence to support the notion that Early Help when a child, young person or family needs it delivers significantly better outcomes that are more likely to be sustained. We have been pleased to be one of the Early Intervention Foundation '20 Pioneering Places' since 2012 and to share and learn with colleagues across the country to strengthen our Early Help Offer.

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

# Our Early Help System Vision

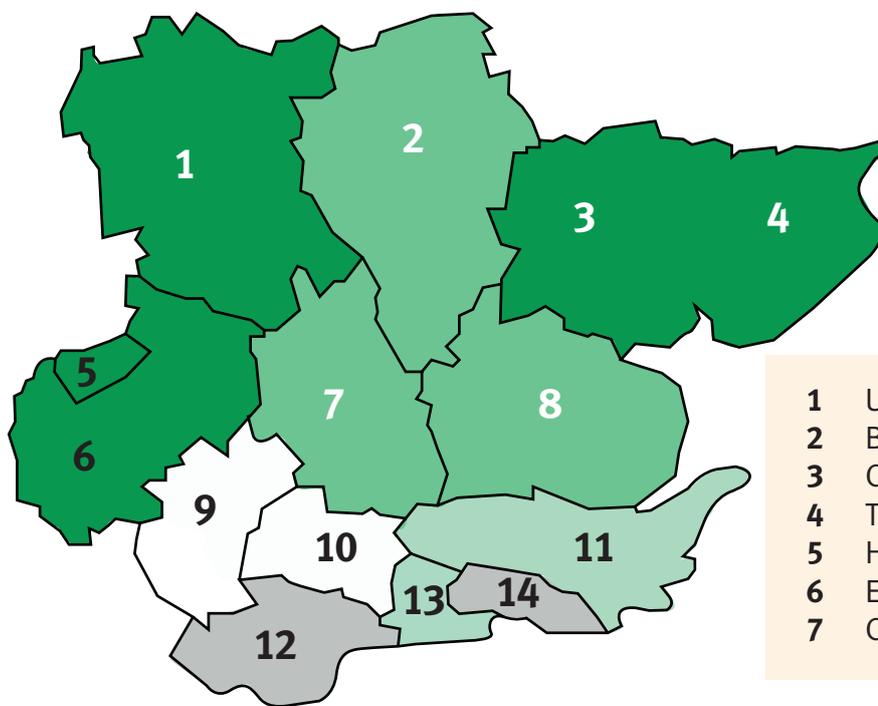
In Essex we all believe that every child and young person should have the opportunity to reach their full potential and that they are best supported to grow and achieve within their own families and their communities. There will always be some children, young people and families that will need our support and we are committed to ensuring we work with them to identify their own solutions, building on their own strengths and assets. In doing so we will ensure that, where services are delivered, they will be flexible to meet children's and families' needs. Our [approach](#) supports a shift of focus away from managing short-term crises and towards effective support for children and young people and their families at an earlier stage, with them at the centre of enabling environments rather than them being dependent on organised public services.

Wherever possible the needs of children, young people and families will be met by universal services. However, as soon as any practitioner is aware that they may have any additional needs he/she will talk with them to offer advice and support in order to meet that need. In Essex we have a shared partnership system vision that, in the event that Early Help is needed, we will ensure we;

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

Please see Appendix 1 for the full system vision and the outcomes expected to be delivered through the application of these principles.

# The Essex Context – A Pen Portrait



- |   |               |    |              |
|---|---------------|----|--------------|
| 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     |

## Essex

Essex is a diverse county with a population of 1,455,340, approximately 305,569 (20.9%) 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 13.7% of children are living in poverty across the county. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups account for 8.5% of all children and young people living in Essex, 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 7.5% (the national average is 20.6%) and in secondary schools is 5.7% (the national average is 16.2%).

The overarching picture for Essex is that during the past three years numbers of children living in poverty have reduced, teenage conception rates are down, early years and educational achievement have improved and numbers of those not in education, employment or training are down. Of course this positive picture is not the same for all children and young people in Essex and we will ensure we target Early Help to support those who are not so fortunate. [The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) provides more detail on the social, health and educational needs of children and young people in Essex.

## Vulnerability and Risk

Particular cohorts of children and young people are exposed to higher risk of poor outcomes when compared to their peers and, as noted in Working Together 2018, professionals need to be particularly alert to these individuals' and their families' needs. Early Help can be particularly pertinent for children and young people who:

- ✓ Are in Care or Leaving Care
- ✓ Are young offenders
- ✓ Are living in low income families\*
- ✓ Are affected by domestic abuse
- ✓ Are at risk of sexual exploitation
- ✓ Are 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 a number of strategies that aim to mitigate the eventuality of these risks to children and young people and these form a suite of documents that support the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan (page 11).

\*Defined as those in receipt of free school meals, early year's 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.

# The Essex Early Help Strategic Context

The Essex County Council (ECC) [Organisational Strategy](#) sets out how ECC intends to improve outcomes for the citizens of Essex, including children and young people. This document was developed in consultation with partners and aligns with [the Future of Essex](#). This is a vision document which articulates a long term vision for the county, which is shared with partners. The Essex Health and Wellbeing Strategy is jointly owned by all partners who sit on our Health and Wellbeing Board. This sets out a small number of key strategic priorities to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Essex. Delivery of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy will enable the delivery of both the Future of Essex and the ECC Organisational Strategy. Our Early Help Offer is aligned to the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and helps deliver against its four areas of focus.

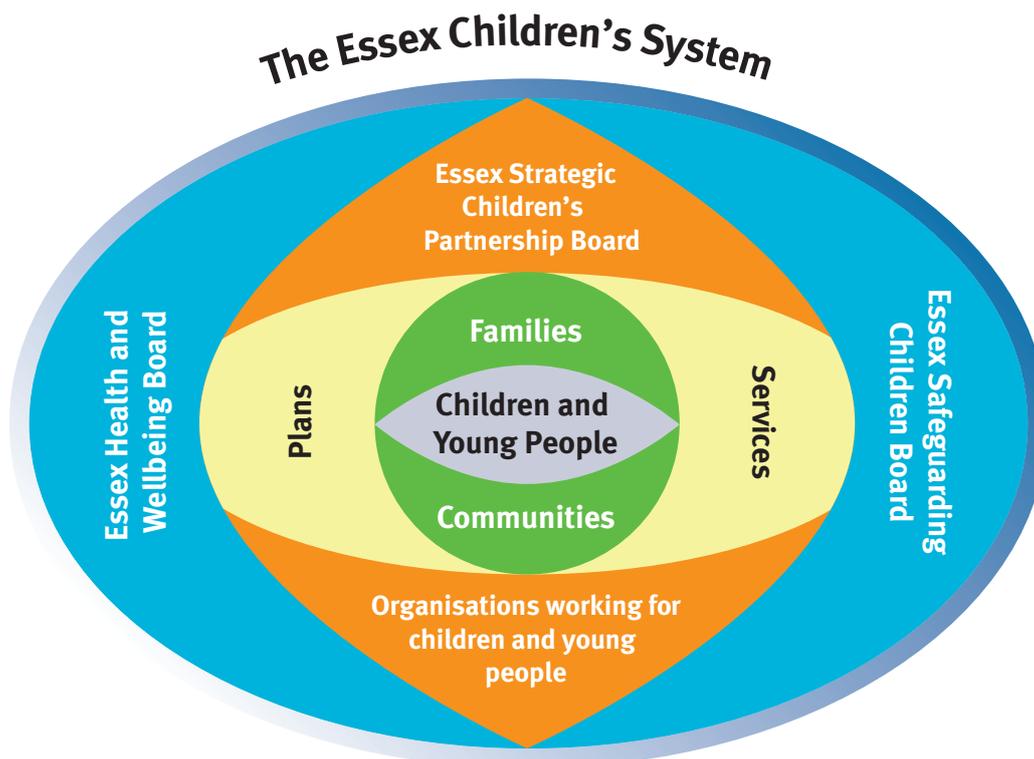
## Essex Health and Wellbeing Board Ambitions



# Partnership Working and Systems Approach

Partnership delivery of the Early Help Offer is enabled from within a complex children's landscape that incorporates upwards of 550 schools and academies, five Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), three police divisions, twelve District/Borough/City councils and the two bordering unitary authorities of Thurrock and Southend. The advent of further integration between, for example, health, education and social care has resulted in stronger system wide collaboration. This is evident in examples such as the Education, Health and Care needs assessment as a result of the SEND Reforms, and our response through the [Essex Local Offer](#) to develop integrated support pathways through [One Planning](#) to achieve a person-centred approach to the assess, plan, do, review cycle, and provide opportunity to ensure we identify those in need of support even earlier. There is also a thriving voluntary and community sector delivering children, young people and adults' support which makes a critical contribution to the Early Help Offer.

Delivering the best outcomes within this complex network of service delivery is challenging, and we know that the consistent and coherent delivery of Early Help is critical to producing the best outcomes for our children and young people. The context of financial pressures and public service delivery change, such as the transfer of school nursing and health visiting to the Local Authority, has given us the opportunity to think differently about what we do in the context of county wide and local systems, and how we can organise Early Help differently, together with families and communities. We have made a good start to our system approach, the foundations of which lay in our existing partnership arrangements through which our shared priorities are delivered.



The 2016 [Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan](#) sets out 6 system objectives by which outcomes for children and young people will be improved and the Plan forms the basis for shared accountability at a strategic and local level.

### Six System Objectives

- Protect the most vulnerable
- Close the gap for the most vulnerable
- Promote resilience and positive choices
- Achieve better from the use of collective resources
- Maximise the use of community assets
- Develop the system's workforce and culture



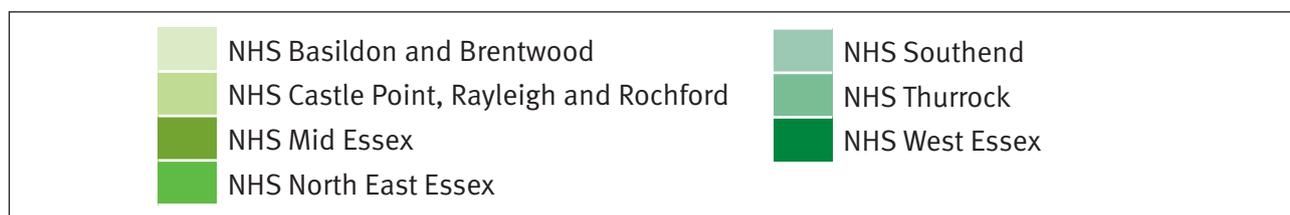
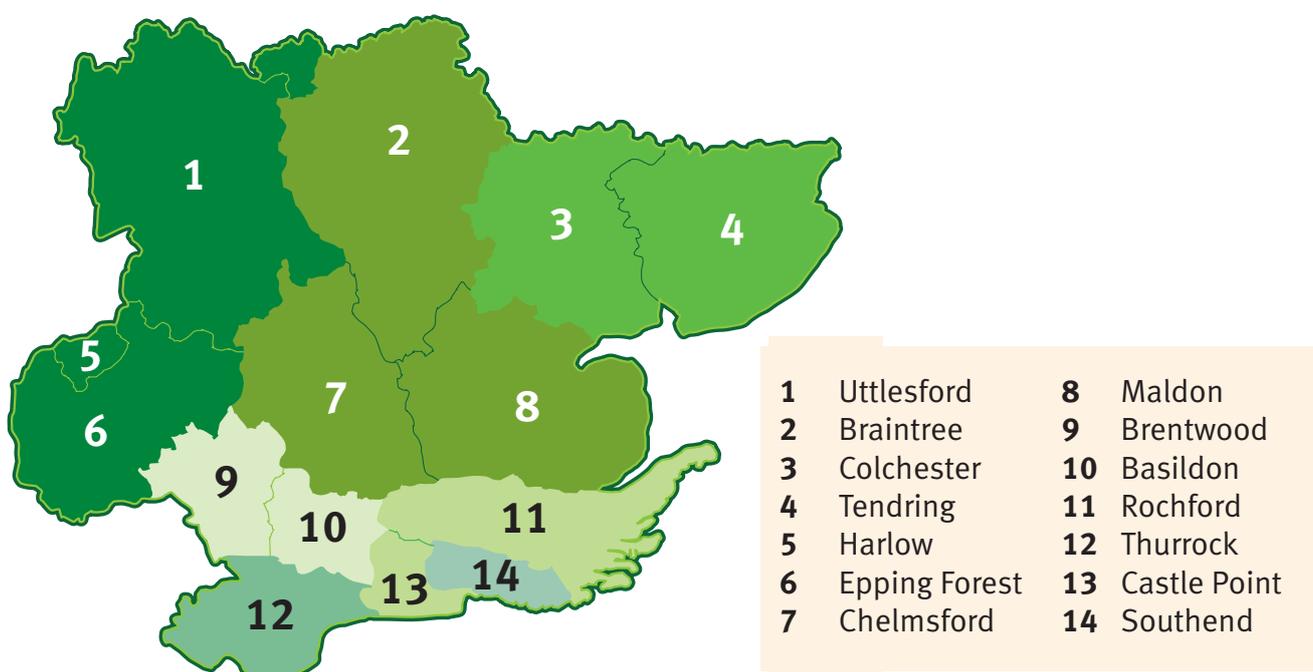
There are a wide range of strategies, plans and partnerships that enable us to do our work and they are all inextricably linked and critical to the delivery of both our respective agencies' visions and objectives and our shared vision and objectives set out in the Plan.

### Plans, strategies and partnerships delivering the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan



Aligned with the 5 Clinical Commissioning Groups, there is an effective network of local strategic partnership arrangements that enable us to plan and deliver Early Help for children, young people and families.

### Locality Children’s Partnerships (green) aligned with the 5 Clinical Commissioning Groups



These arrangements include four quadrant based Locality Children’s Partnerships (one covering both South CCGs) that deliver their own local action plans within the framework of the Essex Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership system objectives. These groups are part of a local system of partnership arrangements that include Local Strategic Partnerships, Community Safety Partnerships, a range of primary and secondary school-led improvement cluster group arrangements and local Youth Strategy Groups.

# Children and Young People's Partnership Landscape

The Locality Children's Partnerships work collaboratively with a range of partners to identify and respond to the needs of their local communities and families and galvanise resources to deliver their plans. This includes strengthening links with adult services such as adult mental health, working with the parents and carers of children and young people, The Department for Work and Pensions and housing providers.

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

## Children and young people's partnership landscape



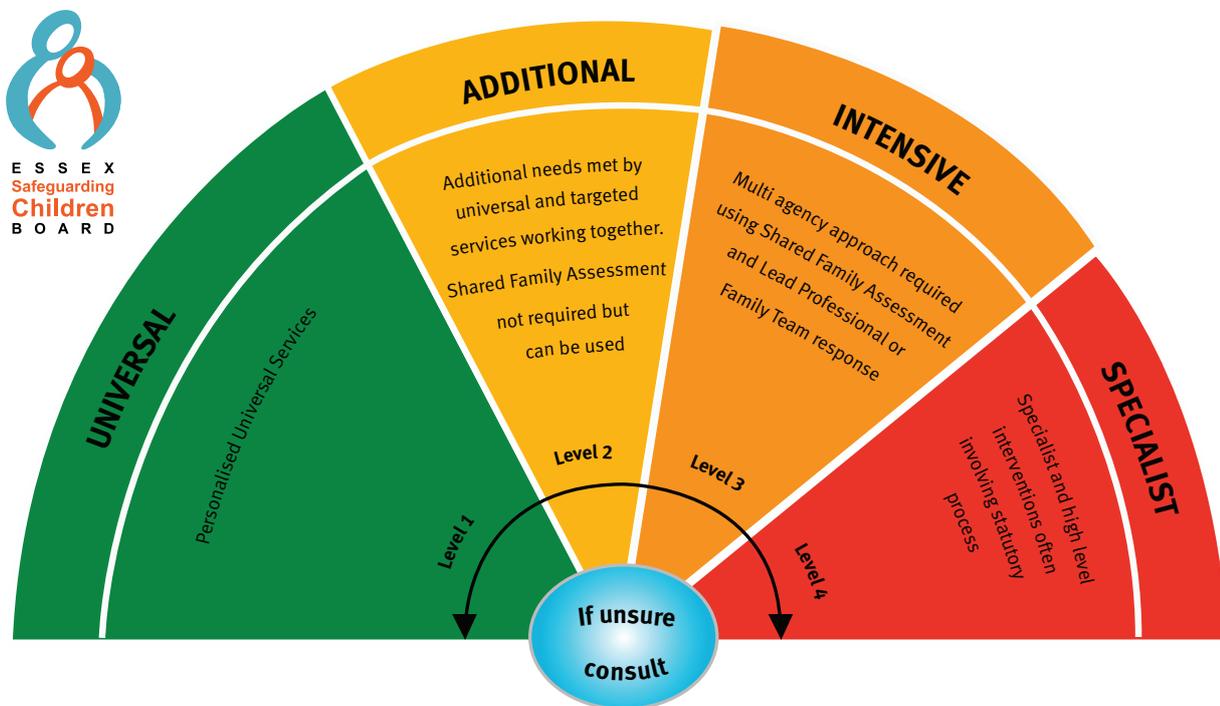
# Early Help Framework

Supported by universal services, largely within the education and health system, the majority of children and young people in Essex live happy, healthy and fulfilling lives. However, for a few, there are times when a little bit of additional Early Help can make the difference. This can support and enhance their skills and resilience to cope, rather than waiting until a problem becomes so bad that more specialist interventions are required and the wait results in long term detrimental impact. The Essex Early Help framework is made up of four components: Guidance, Assessment, Access and Support.

## Guidance for Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex

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

### The Essex Effective Support Windscreen



## Assessment

Practitioners work to the principle that families will be empowered to identify their own problems, needs and solutions, with the aim of building resilience in children, young people and families so that they have capacity to overcome their own difficulties for the remainder of their lives.

Many “universal” agencies in Essex, particularly schools use a range of assessment tools to identify the needs of the children and young people they work with. However, in order to support the holistic family approach [early help guidance tools](#) have been co-produced with families and front line practitioners from adults’ and children’s services. A Shared Family Assessment (SFA)/Early Help Plan (EHP) provide early help guidance tools for families and practitioners taking a multi-agency approach. They are used in conjunction with the family to discuss and record needs, strengths, goals and views that are identified, which lead to the production of a plan to support them. This is a strengths based holistic model of assessment and through the practitioner, families are enabled to identify, plan and review the effectiveness of their support. This approach ensures that every member of the family, including young children, siblings and parents contribute their views, enabling good quality plans to be developed, with clearly defined actions to deliver the desired outcomes. In 2018 Essex County Council introduced Team Around the Family (TAF) Support Officers (TAFSO) specifically to support partners working at level 2 additional need, to apply Early Help approaches with families. This approach helps build the capacity within partner organisations to adopt use of Early Help Plans and convene Team Around the Family (TAF) meetings thereby building sustainable capacity across the workforce.

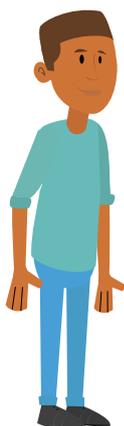
## Accessing Early Help Support

In addition to the local systems of direct access to Early Help provided through the range of provision there are several centralised access points to receiving Early Help in Essex. In April 2018 a new website, [Essex Effective Support for Children and Families](#) was launched which brings together in one place the Essex Directory of Services, the online Request For Support guidance and tools to support practitioners in their work with children and families across Levels 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Windscreen of Need.

## The Children & Families Hub

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

The Hub's key functions are to:



- Provide appropriate information and signposting
- Give advice on services available in Essex and within the four localities
- Give advice on service pathways and processes
- Provide an opportunity for worried practitioners to discuss a concern
- Be the single point of access for Family Solutions and Children's Social Care



The Children and Families Hub:

- provides advice and guidance to the public and professionals looking for support at levels 2 and 3 - Additional and Intensive as set out in the [Essex Effective Support Windscreen](#)
- is the referral pathway to request for support from Family Solutions - Level 3 Intensive Support on the Effective Support Windscreen
- is the referral pathway for any safeguarding concerns at level 4 - Specialist on the Effective Support Windscreen.

There will be circumstances where a practitioner, having done everything they can within their own and partner resources, requires additional support. The Children and Families Hub offers the opportunity to consult with social care professionals to discuss concerns practitioners may have before submitting a request for support. This could involve advice on levels of need, having difficult conversations or how to co-ordinate a Team Around the Child/Family meeting (TAC/TAF). There are clear pathways set out in the guidance that support and enable practitioners in their decision making. This decision making is supported by integrated training on levels of need set out in the [Effective Support for Children and Families 2017 Guidance](#).

All partners are committed to keeping children and young people safe by embedding safeguarding in our practice. We all agree that when some children and young people do not meet thresholds we will be vigilant and act quickly on new information or changing presenting needs. Where disagreement emerges we agree that we will work together to resolve those differences, always keeping children and young people at the centre of our activity.

### **Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS)**

The EWMHS is a jointly commissioned service that is a collaboration between the five Essex CCGs, Essex County Council and the 2 Unitary Authorities/CCGs of Southend and Thurrock. It provides a service for anyone aged between 0-18, and young people with special educational needs (SEND) up to the age of 25. There is a Single Point of Access (SPA) through which young people access the right support and which also provides advice and guidance for any parent, guardian, professional or teacher of a child who is experiencing emotional wellbeing and mental health difficulties. The service works to ensure that children and young people access the right pathways of support through a single service rather than be allocated to traditional tier 2/3 services. The service is designed on our early help principles and provides;



A single point of access  
Preventative programmes of training and support  
Information, advice, guidance and signposting  
Psychological treatments and therapies  
Crisis support



### **The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (ECFWS)**

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service was mobilised in 2017 and is designed on the principles of our system vision for children and young people from conception to adulthood. The service represents the integration of our 0-5 and 5-19 Healthy Child Programmes, Healthy Schools Programme, Family Nurse Partnership and Children's Centres and provides an integrated offer from Healthy Family Teams made up of health visitors, school nurses and family workers. As a result services are less fragmented and collaborate to deliver a common set of outcomes for children, young people and families across the system that works for them rather than a system that works for us.

## **Family Solutions**

Family Solutions was set up by ECC, supported by financial and in kind contributions from schools and other partners such as districts and boroughs, police and job centre plus, and consists of local multi-disciplinary teams that work to support complex families. The teams work on a strengths based approach to ensure that families are able to build resilience and maintain good outcomes after they have benefited from early help support. Access to the service is through the Children and Families Hub where support advice and guidance can also be given to professionals with concerns about families.

## **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Team (MARAT)**

MARAT in Essex is a twice daily meeting of dedicated multi agency professionals who produce action plans which focus on the safety of victims, young people and children who have been identified as at high risk due to domestic abuse. These professionals include representatives from Essex Police, Essex County Council, IDVA (Independent Domestic Violence Advocate) Service, Substance Misuse, Health, National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Company. There is also the opportunity for other agencies to be part of the action plan and discussion about risk. Actions could include a range of options and in many cases, where they are impacted by domestic abuse, this will take the form of early help and support for children and young people. There are commissioned services to offer that help.

## **MACE (Missing and Child Exploitation)**

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

## School-Led Improvement System

Across Essex, school-led improvement clusters have originated from local delivery groups as part of the Extended Schools Services arrangements. These continue to enable strengthened local school partnership working. Despite the extreme challenges posed by the financial climate and increasing central government demands, many schools continue to work together to provide an access point to commissioned Early Help interventions such as parenting programmes and counselling, as well as funding their own Early Help practitioners. Local Authorities have a vital role in supporting and challenging local schools to improve and tackle under performance, however the context in which local authorities support school improvement has changed significantly. Schools are being given increased autonomy and are therefore expected to take more responsibility for their own improvement. Local Authorities have responded in a variety of ways to this challenge; however a common model is to develop a range of school improvement partnerships where schools work together to lead a ‘self-improving’ model. Essex County Council has supported the School Led Improvement System strategy by facilitating the formation of partnerships across the county and the majority of schools in Essex are working in partnerships with other schools. Partnerships are engaging in a number of activities together including peer review, joint training and staff collaborations and the impact of this partnership working is being evidenced in Ofsted reports. As a result of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reforms, and our response through the [Essex Local Offer](#) to develop integrated support pathways through [One Planning](#) to achieve a person-centred approach to the assess, plan, do, review cycle, and provide opportunity to ensure we identify those in need of support even earlier.

## Statutory Support

All the above is of course underpinned by a range of statutory activity that makes a significant contribution to the Essex Early Help Offer. This includes the Education Access Service, the Employability and Skills team supporting 16-19 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training; the Transitions Pathways team who deliver supportive intervention for those with Special Educational Needs and the Targeted Youth Advisors who provide support for Children in Care. Health providers, Clinical Commissioning Groups, Schools and Social Care are working together to ensure the implementation of effective planning and delivery of Education Health and Care Plans for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Police, City, Districts, and Boroughs are working closely to fulfil statutory obligations in relation to a number of prevent, detect and protect agendas.

## Delivery of Early Help Support Services

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

### Universal

Nurseries; Schools; GPs; Pharmacies; School Nursing; Education Entitlement 3&4 years; Integrated 2 year check; Health Visiting; Healthy Schools; Leisure Services; Libraries; Active Essex; Voluntary & Community Sector delivery.



### Additional

Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service; NHS111; Free Education for disadvantaged 2 years; EWMHS; Family Innovation Fund; Education Access; Youth Work Programmes; Essex Victims Gateway; District Housing Support; Voluntary & Community Sector delivery; SEN Local Offer; Targeted Youth Advisors.

### Intensive

Family Solutions; EWMHS; Minor Injuries Clinics; Voluntary & Community Sector delivery.



### Specialist

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

# Early Help and the Workforce

In Essex we invest in quality training to develop competency and confidence in our front line practitioners and our Working Together ethos is to ‘support practitioners to work together, share information, and to put the child and their family at the centre’.



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

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board is a primary source of multi-agency learning and development opportunities. In addition to Safeguarding Children level 2 and Designated Person training, there are learning and development opportunities on topics such as child protection conferences, child in need and child sexual exploitation. There will also be ongoing learning and development opportunities related to the findings from local reviews. This support can be accessed via [training opportunities](#) on the ESCB website.

Working together through multi-agency training and development is also supported through the Essex Social Care Academy (ESCA) which enables practitioners to access online training courses through the LEARN portal.

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

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

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

# Making Early Help Count

We want to ensure that we take a systematic approach to ensuring our Early Help Offer is effective. This is achieved through a range of quantitative and qualitative processes so that we can:



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



## Performance Measures

The 6 system objectives of the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan are critical to ensuring successful early help. There is a performance framework that sits behind the Plan, used to ensure our detailed actions plans are being delivered. Performance is regularly reported to the Essex Strategic Children and Young People's Partnership Board and that information is utilised to help us understand what is working and what needs improving. Partners have robust monitoring arrangements in place for the commissioned activity that forms part of the Early Help Offer and we are able to share all our information through the partnership arenas to improve delivery and practice.

## Quality Assurance

Our Early Help Offer underpins and enables delivery of the system objectives outlined in the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Plan, for which partners are held accountable to through the performance monitoring processes. However, we recognise confidence in our Early Help Offer cannot be demonstrated through performance monitoring alone and there are a variety of ways in which we ensure quality.

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

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

### **Management and Supervision**

Partners in Essex know that good management oversight and effective supervision of families receiving Early Help support are critical to ensuring good sustainable outcomes. We have a range of mechanisms for ensuring this is taking place in Essex, both through each partner organisations' own internal structures and processes, and the quality assurance processes of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board. For those public services that commission external organisations to deliver Early Help, we assure ourselves through a robust procurement process that effective management and supervision are embedded within a safeguarding context with our providers. The effectiveness of the systems and processes are monitored regularly through contract management arrangements and quality assurance visits.

### **Partnership Maturity**

Our developing systems approach to Early Help will make further demands on our partnerships and we have adopted the [Early Intervention Foundation's Maturity Matrix Assessment Tool](#) to deepen our understanding of where we need to improve our system as well as collaborate to deliver better outcomes. This annual self-assessment will ensure that we maximise our ability to work together for children, young people and families.

# Innovating the Essex Early Help Offer

## Integrated Commissioning

The Integrated Commissioning Intentions are, like our strategies and business plans, integral to the delivery of Children and Young People's Strategic Plan system objectives. The advent of more robust integrated commissioning across the Council's functions and with our partners has provided the opportunity for us to build on our systems approach to leadership and delivery. This affords greater opportunity to have a cohesive Early Help Offer that meets the needs of our families.

In Essex partners are committed to taking a systems approach to tackle some of the most fundamental challenges we face and this is no different for children, young people and families. We know that a systems approach will ensure that our Early Help vision can be delivered and that families will be better off as a result.

### Example

Essex County Council has developed and procured a new approach to commissioning advocacy services which has resulted in an All Age Advocacy hub. This approach is based on the appointment of a single lead provider responsible for the delivery of all advocacy services in Essex. This is intended to provide a more integrated service, to prevent individuals from falling through gaps between different elements of the provision. The new contract is countywide, and will work with all user groups who require advocacy services including children and young people, people using mental health services, individuals with learning disabilities, people with sensory impairments and those who lack mental capacity, as well as additional services for young people with mental health issues funded by Clinical Commissioning Group partners.

### Example

Essex is one of 11 local authorities working with the Department of Work and Pensions developing a Local Family Offer. In Essex over 100 multi-disciplinary front line practitioners are trained to identify and respond to inter-parental conflict and the impacts on outcomes for their children. This work is being embedded and made sustainable through a Train the Trainer approach as well as self-help healthy relationships campaigns and resources like the "We All have Arguments" pack that has been co-produced with mums and dads to enable parents to recognise, acknowledge and respond to their own relationship needs early and ultimately co-parent effectively together.

## Insight, Influence and Co-production

We increasingly use more innovative and creative techniques to engage children, young people and families to develop a greater insight into ‘what works’ and this undoubtedly delivers better outcomes. The voice of children and families is vital in delivering our Early Help Offer. Understanding what it is like to be a child in Essex and what the day to day challenges are that families face provides a constant flow of ideas, thoughts and feelings that will drive decision making and ensure ‘sensible’ intervention that looks right at a community level. All partners are committed to investing in an ongoing conversation with children, young people and families so that the Early Help offer is informed by a ‘live feed’ from the people that really count.

### Example

The priority setting for our 2016 Children and Young People’s Strategic Plan was launched through our Junior Commissioning Takeover Day, followed by 12 months of co-production with children, young people, parents and carers and colleagues from across the children’s system. The plan is the start of on-going conversations with children, young people and families to make sure we are getting Early Help right.

### Example

The Youth Service’s specially designed Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Young Commissioner programme is designed to develop young people’s skills and confidence to get fully involved in developing services for young people who have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) , for example developing the Essex Local Offer website, shaping the short breaks programme or quality-assuring services. As a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Young Commissioner they also support other young people to have a voice in their local community, to ensure that youth projects and services are the best they can be to meet everyone’s needs.

### Example

We are committed to children, young people and parents/carers being engaged in the design of and decision making about commissioned services. There was an extensive range of activity in 2018, for example, the recommissioning of domestic abuse services and the Family Innovation Fund. We listened to the lived experiences of children, young people and parents/carers and their experiences of services and together shaped the services and devised questions for the procurement. Families evaluated questions they had set, thereby having a significant stake in the decision regarding which providers are commissioned and how they will deliver.

## Strengthening Communities

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

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

### Example

In 2016 The Essex Challenge Prize set out to encourage people to think about solutions to important problems and to develop and test new ideas. The first Essex Challenge Prize, Families Included was set up to tackle isolation and loneliness in parents with pre-school children, as we know a strong, resilient family is an important part of ensuring that children in Essex get the best start in life. This was won by a mum from South Essex who received an award of £10,000 to invest in the development of her idea and support the growth of Mums and Families UK, in collaboration with her local mental health service establishing a post-natal peer support programme.

### Example

Community initiatives across Essex include;

- Care navigation
- Frontline
- Essex Connects
- Tendring and Basildon Wellbeing Hub
- [Strengthening Communities Video](#)
- [Future of Essex](#)

## Research and Evidence

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

### Example

[Risk Avert](#) has been developed by our Public Health team in partnership with The Training Effect and is an evidence based, independently evaluated school based programme which identifies young people vulnerable to multiple risk-taking behaviours and offers universal and targeted intervention. Risk-Avert supports young people in schools to make positive choices that can help them navigate life and avoid situations and behaviours that may be harmful to their health or well-being. This approach enables partnerships and schools to better target resources because the extent of risk-taking is clearly defined; allowing resources to be targeted where they are needed most and on the most prevalent behaviours.

### Example

The local Children's and Young People's Partnerships are utilising 'collaborative enquiry' to capture the voice and lived experiences of citizens. This enables our thinking to be disrupted by gathering new insights about what is working well and how solutions might be developed to improve outcomes. This enables us to build an evidence base using the voices of children, young people, families and the workforce to effect change. The initial idea was tested in North Essex and captured on film, and is now being rolled out through the other local Children and Young Peoples Partnerships.

### Example

In Essex we are using a Data Predictive Risk Analytics tool and information sharing data platform, to provide meaningful [Essex Data](#) that supports the effective targeting of Early Help. This enables partners to plan together with communities to build resilience, prevent demand and ultimately improve health, education, social and economic well-being. The first prototype, New Generations, focuses on a small community in Basildon and brings partners together to focus on how that community can work together to mobilise resources to find solutions that support children getting the best start in life.

# Our Early Help Offer Activity

In this section we set out some of the current and planned activity over the next three years that will augment the Essex Early Help Offer. This is inextricably linked with those actions in our Children and Young People's Strategic Plan, and whilst delivery will be monitored by the relevant organisations and partnerships within which the activity sits, the Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership will play a role in monitoring progress.

## On-going Early Help Activity

Review progress against the 2016 Children and Young People's Plan

Section 11 Audits

Re-refresh of locality Early Help mapping

Strategic and Locality Partnership Maturity Matrix implementation

Embedding of learning from research programmes

Implementation of the Risk Prediction Profile Tool

Embedding of the Risk Avert approach

Development of integrated early intervention funding

Extending champion networks

Mobilisation of the integrated commissioning of pre-birth – 19 services

Embed co-production and co-delivery concepts

Embedding of Serious Case Review lessons

Implement the Transforming Care for children and young people programme

Embed learning from the DWP Local Family Offer couple relationships project

Organisations' evaluation of the impact of training on practice

Developing procurement and contract management practice

Implement learning from the Essex Domestic Homicide Review

Young people's domestic abuse campaigns

# Appendix 1 – Our System Vision

## Our system must...

### Work with and for families across Essex

#### We will...



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



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



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



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



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



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

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

<p><b>Children and Young People...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are physically and emotionally healthy</li> <li>• Are resilient and able to learn well</li> <li>• Are supported by their families, their community, and - when necessary - professionals to thrive and be successful</li> <li>• Live in environments that are safe and support their learning and development.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Parents and Carers...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are supporting one another in their communities</li> <li>• Know where to get help if they need it</li> <li>• Have trusted relationships with practitioners, neighbours and other parents</li> <li>• Are well informed about how best to help their child develop, and motivated to make great choices.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communities...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See it as their collective responsibility to support parents, children and young people</li> <li>• Are providing sustainable support through individuals, community groups, businesses and voluntary organisations</li> <li>• Are seen, understood and valued by practitioners as being 'part of the solution'.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Practitioners...</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus first on families and their strengths</li> <li>• Work closely with families to understand what they need, and build trusting relationships</li> <li>• Have a shared vision and understanding of outcomes and success</li> <li>• Are skilled, knowledgeable and are co-creating and co-delivering approaches that work.</li> </ul>

**This information is issued by**

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