

Essex SEND Sufficiency Plan

For engagement

Autumn 2023



Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. Current SEND landscape in Essex.....	3
Number and type of schools in Essex	3
Number of Essex children and young people with SEND.....	3
Growth over time	4
3. Forecasting future need	5
4. Essex Vision for SEND and SEND Sufficiency	7
5. Statement of Intent	8
6. Enablers	8
7. Financial landscape	9
8. High Level Delivery Plans	10
9. Engagement.....	13

1. Introduction

This SEND Sufficiency Plan sets out how Essex County Council and our partners, intend to ensure that there is sufficient high-quality specialist provision, in both mainstream and special school settings, to meet the future needs of children and young people with SEND in Essex.

There has never been a greater need for a SEND sufficiency plan for Essex. The SEND population has grown significantly since the 2014 SEND reforms, with the greatest growth taking place in the statutory EHCP category. Despite an ambitious SEND capital programme, and investment in inclusive practices, the number of children and young people requiring a special school place has outgrown the capacity of the provisions in Essex. This has resulted in a greater number of children and young people with higher needs being in mainstream schools and more parents using the appeal process to seek a place at an Essex special school. There has also been a sharp rise in the number of children and young people placed in independent special schools which has placed a strain on SEND funding via the High Needs Block.

2. Current SEND landscape in Essex

Number and type of schools in Essex

The below table lists the number of provisions in Essex by type:

Provision Type	Number of Provisions
Primary Including nursey, infants, junior and primary	447
All-through	2
Secondary Phase	79
Special	22
Total Number of Schools	550
Enhanced Provisions Are attached to a school, so would be included within the above numbers also.	40

Number of Essex children and young people with SEND

There are 222,423 pupils attending Essex schools; of which 37,527 have been identified with SEND. In Essex there are 24,862 children and young people who receive SEN Support and 12,665 with an EHCP (as of November 2023).

The current population of children and young people **with EHCPs** is broken down below:

Provision Type	Number of EHCPs Age 4-18
Mainstream	5698 (plus 1459 in post 16)
Special School	3651
Independent School	351
SEN Unit / Resourced Provision	302
Alternative Provision	169
Home Education	156

Some of the 12,665 children and young people with an EHCP for whom Essex is responsible, attend a provision outside of Essex.

Growth over time

The number of children and young people with an EHCP has risen continually since the implementation of the SEND reforms. The below table shows the number of children and young people with an EHCP from 2016 to 2023.

Jul-16	7550
Jul-17	8057
Jul-18	8536
Jul-19	9183
Jul-20	9768
Jul-21	10,824
Jul-22	11,275
Jul-23	12,193

The increase in children and young people with an EHCP in Essex has been one factor in the steady rise in the growth in numbers in Essex's special schools. The below tables show the number of children and young people attending special schools in each quadrant of Essex, over time:

Mid Essex

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Chatten Free School								26	50
Columbus	230	235	229	233	243	258	261	263	275
Edith Borthwick	196	223	234	235	234	236	246	242	244
Southview	71	73	73	75	70	75	78	72	78
Thritfwood	193	213	222	220	227	233	253	257	261
Total	690	744	758	763	774	802	838	834	908

North East Essex

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Kingswode Hoe	121	124	135	129	132	147	148	154	151
Langham Oaks		68	69	69	69	64	78	77	77
Lexden Springs	129	141	159	170	166	174	207	250	278
Market Field	198	223	234	272	311	352	376	410	446
Shorefields	129	128	138	138	136	141	145	148	153
Total	577	684	735	778	814	878	954	1039	1105

South Essex

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Castledon	139	141	147	167	195	216	222	224	223
Cedar Hall	150	159	154	150	152	157	164	163	169
Endeavour	121	118	119	120	117	118	117	135	150
Glenwood	122	136	147	193	218	222	224	219	223
Grove House		33	55	76	89	102	104	113	118
Pioneer	142	145	144	148	148	149	157	163	165
Ramsden Hall	121	50	84	90	96	95	92	94	95
Total	795	782	850	944	1015	1059	1080	1111	1143

West Essex

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Harlow Fields	107	110	122	147	152	157	161	158	153
Oak View	83	85	91	105	119	131	132	126	134
Wells Park	41	46	48	45	53	51	52	56	55
Total	231	241	261	297	324	339	345	340	342

Despite an ambitious SEND capital programme, the number of children and young people requiring a special school place has outgrown the capacity of the provisions in Essex. The SEND Capital Programme has delivered expansions at eight Essex special schools and created new facilities for residential provision at two schools. As well as investment from ECC and the Essex Schools Forum, the County Council was able to successfully develop plans for four new special schools via the Department for Education's free school route. Three of these schools (Chatten, Greenwell and Hawthorns) are now fully or partially open.

Essex County Council undertook capacity assessments of our special schools in 2021 and from 2023 will be required to make an annual return to the Department for Education setting out the relationship between capacity and numbers in our special schools. It is clear that the current capacity and approach cannot support the growing SEND population in future years.

One consequence of the pressures on special school capacity has been a continued growth in the number of children and young people who are placed in independent special schools on 38-week day placements. Whilst we see independent special schools as important partners, we must also recognise that they are likely to cost significantly more per pupil place, which reduces the amount of money we have available to invest in our own mainstream and special schools. There have been similar increases in the number of placements made with alternative provisions whilst longer-term specialist provision is identified.

The lack of available capacity within special schools is contributory factor in a rise in appeals to the SEND Tribunal. Families seeking a special school place where there is no capacity are left with little choice other than waiting for one to become available, maintaining a place within a mainstream school and/or appealing to the SEND tribunal; the SEND tribunal in all likelihood will result in a direction to admit regardless of the capacity pressures. This process is placing overwhelming stress on the system and, most importantly, children, young people and their families.

3. Forecasting future need

In 2021 a five-year SEND forecasting model was developed, which has been reviewed and refreshed each year. The process has been tested and has proven to have a high level of accuracy.

The 2023 refresh* information is detailed in the table below:

<p>Overall size of the EHCP population</p>	<p>In 2016 1.7% of the Essex under-25 population had an EHCP. This rose to 2.7% in 2023 and is forecast to rise to 2.9% by 2026.</p> <p>The number of children with an EHCP each year has been increasing (on average) by just over 600 plans each calendar year since 2016.</p>
<p>Phase type</p>	<p>We are anticipating larger increases for secondary and Post 16 age groups as the existing cohort ages. The primary phase cohort is forecast to plateau as birth rates fall.</p>
<p>Need type</p>	<p>Substantial increases are forecast between 2021 and 2026 across the biggest need types –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASD (31% increase), to 4888 pupils with ASD • SEMH (31% increase), to 2252 pupils with SEMH • SLCD (48% increase), to 2211 pupils with SLCD
<p>Provision type</p>	<p>A 32% increase across the mainstream settings (to 5550 pupils), and 18% (4043 pupils) across special school settings.</p>
<p>Geographical location</p>	<p>Both home (where the child/young person lives) and provision (where they attend school) districts forecast to experience the most growth between 2021 and 2026, across the EHCP cohort are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basildon • Colchester • Tendring

*Source: SEND Forecast Final 2023 Update – ECC Data and Analytics, Policy Unit.

4. Essex Vision for SEND and SEND Sufficiency

The [Essex SEND strategy](#) sets out our vision for a SEND system which is equitable, inclusive and ambitious:

Inclusion

All children have a right to effective teaching and full participation in the community of a school or setting, as set out in international agreements (the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989) and education law in England (the Equality Act, 2010 and the Children and Families Act, 2014).

Equity

Focus everyone in the system on providing the same, high standard for all children, young people and families, no matter where they live or which school, setting or college they attend.

Ambition

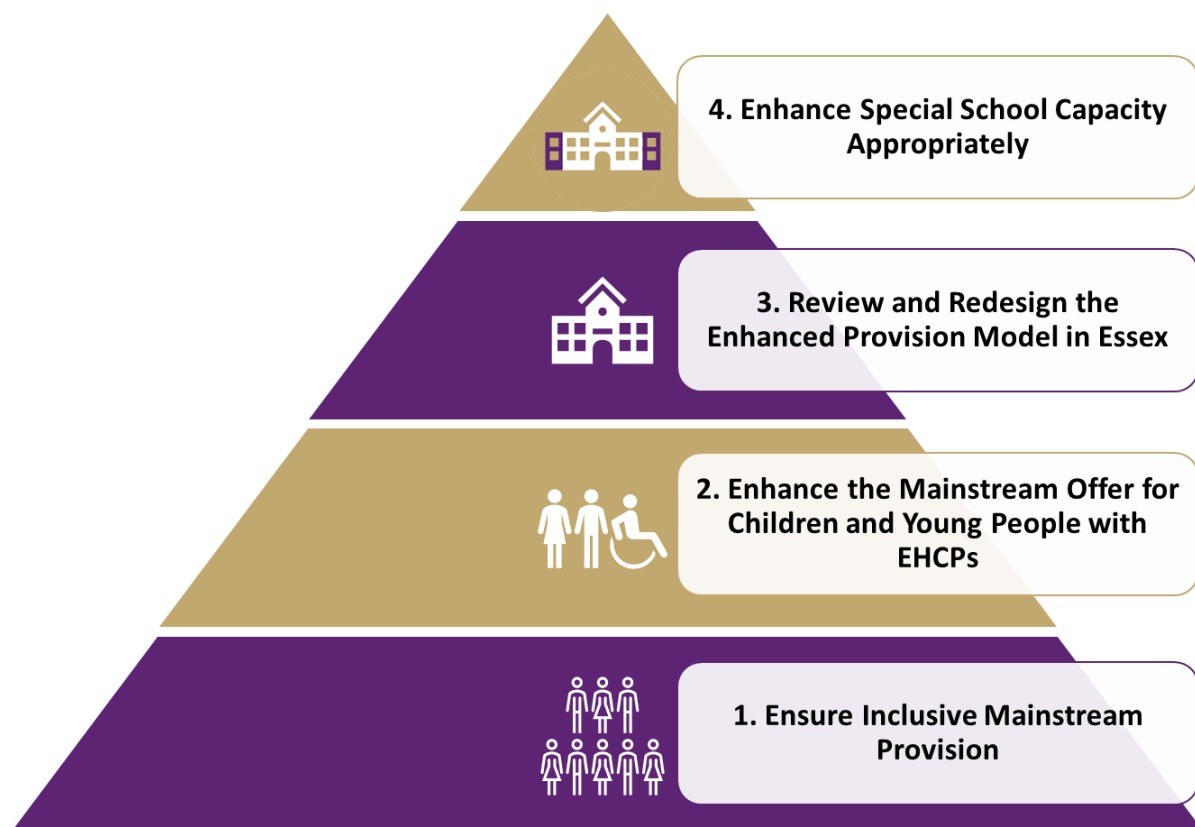
Raising the bar, together in partnership – not a minimum standard. Considering, is this the very best that we can do?



All children and young people in Essex deserve a high-quality education, with the health, care, and educational support that they need to flourish. We will ensure that SEND provision in Essex is adequate in volume, appropriate in type and location to meet the needs of the children and young people with SEND in Essex. We will ensure that specialist provision is supported by the workforce and funding available to deliver such provision sustainably. We acknowledge this means significant changes will be needed to the existing landscape across Essex and we are committed to achieving these changes with appropriate pace, sensitivity and collaboration with children, young people and their families and our partners.

5. Statement of Intent

To better meet the forecast needs of children and young people with SEND in Essex, we have four key intentions:



6. Enablers

To enable the above, we will need to review and improve the opportunities to work together as a system:

- Develop processes for health partners to share with ECC where a child is very likely to require specialist education provision at the earliest stage.
- Review the impact on special schools of Social Care thresholds and wider system capacity gaps.
- Develop an effective model of outreach/ in-reach between sectors.
- Through the Balanced System, ensure appropriate and effective therapy provision across universal, targeted and specialist tiers.

- Develop approaches to transition children back to mainstream provision when appropriate. This will mean working closely with parents to ensure that they are confident that their child/ young person can successfully transition.
- Explore all potential opportunities to access additional funding for SEND provision and use the developers guide to set out our ambitions.
- Work with our special schools to consider the range of need that each of them meets and explore how we support more children and young people with moderate needs in mainstream schools.
- Reviewing appropriate routes for returning children to in-county provision.

7. Financial landscape

The intentions set out in this plan are in the context of a challenging financial landscape – both in terms of revenue funding (the mid to long-term sustainability of the High Needs Block) and capital funding (the funding available to develop new provision). With this in mind, it is recognised that to deliver the full extent of our ambitions will need innovation and new ways of working, rather than just relying on financial investment:

- Further exploration of the funding mechanisms which have enabled the 2015 SEND and PRU capital programmes to be delivered – a combination of ECC and Schools Forum investment
- Making the best use of any future DfE special free school opportunities. This will mean being clear about what and where our priorities for growth lie, with a strong evidence base to support any applications
- Maximising the opportunities for growth and investment delivered through developed contributions (section 106 funding). This will need a more strategic approach set out in the Developers Guide
- Exploring where savings against current spend (for example, high-cost independent placements) can be invested into Essex schools and settings to enable new provision to be developed

8. High Level Delivery Plans

The first step in our delivery plan is engagement. We are engaging with all partners and stakeholders on whether the four intentions of our SEND Sufficiency Plan are the right intentions for the Essex SEND system.

To support all SEND Sufficiency Plan intentions, we will:

1. Consult on the SEND Sufficiency Plan Statement of Intent
2. Develop a cohesive SEND workforce development offer
3. Develop a Strategic Business Case to allocate sufficient funding and ensure appropriate governance
4. Develop a SEND Capital Programme to deliver parts of ambition 4 – enhancing special school capacity

1	Ensure Inclusive Mainstream Provision	<p>Through the implementation of the agreed ‘Ordinarily Available’ provision across all Essex mainstream schools, at universal and targeted levels, we will together enable high quality inclusive teaching for all pupils, with a particular spotlight on children with SEND or who may be disadvantaged.</p> <p>Making higher quality teaching ‘ordinarily available’ to the whole class is likely to mean that fewer pupils will require specific SEND support to make progress in their learning.</p> <p>The Essex Ordinarily Available sets out the agreed expectations about the provision and practice in all Early Years settings, mainstream schools and Post 16 providers for all children and young people, including those with SEND. It is what a young person, parent/carer or family can expect to be “ordinarily” available to their child without the need for involving specialist support.</p> <p>Delivery of early intervention through the Inclusion Support Offer, including the Inclusion Framework, Inclusion Reviews, outreach, Continual Professional Development, access to evidence</p>
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		<p>informed advice and guidance and proactive support from Inclusion Partners and Educational Psychologists are key in enabling schools to meet this challenge.</p> <p>We will support the wider system to come together and collaborate with schools as well as across school partnerships, to ensure early help is available, accessed, and effective for children and young people, their families and schools.</p>
2	<p>Enhance the Mainstream Offer for Children and Young People with EHCPs</p>	<p>Effective implementation of the provision specified in high quality EHCPs, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a comprehensive SEND workforce development offer; • Development of an Essex outreach model to support inclusion and SEND provision through collaboration between mainstream and specialist settings and partners; • Sustainable funding of EHCPs; • Investing in increased capacity/ spaces/ resources for mainstream schools that enable effective SEND provision; • Sensory specialist teacher service support. <p>Support for mainstream schools with children for whom special school has been deemed appropriate but where there is insufficient capacity at present to source a special school place. We have an increasing number of children and young people in mainstream schools where both the LA and the parent/s carer/s agree that special school is appropriate. Whilst our ambition is to ensure placement in the most appropriate provision, we must be able to support mainstream schools and provide additional levels of confidence to parents as we work towards making that ambition a reality.</p>
3	<p>Review and Redesign the Enhanced Provision Model in Essex</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the current landscape of enhanced provisions • Develop new and reclassify existing enhanced provisions appropriate to the needs of Essex children and young people e.g. provision for children/young people with Moderate Learning Difficulties • Ensure that pupils are placed appropriately in Enhanced Provisions across Essex, in relation to their needs, banding and postcode

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that pupils who attend Enhanced Provisions in Essex have measurable value added to their educational and wider outcomes • Develop Service Level Agreements to ensure quality and accountability
4	<p>Enhance Special School Capacity Appropriately</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity consideration - what 'full' looks like. Work with ESSET (the Essex Special School Education Trust) to ensure that we do not have disparities by locality • Re-modelling and re-classification of current specialist provision to better match need, for example more provision for Severe Learning Difficulties (children and young people with higher levels of assessed need) and less special school provision for Moderate Learning Difficulties where that need can be met in mainstream schools • Support special schools to be more flexible in the needs they are able to meet • Satellite provisions of special schools on mainstream sites • Seizing opportunities where council owned buildings become vacant • Developer contributions and maximising external funding • Free school applications. We have both supported and led five special free school applications in Essex since the 2014 reforms; the priority for future waves will be applications for those needs types where we have the most significant identified gaps in provision. • Making best use of independent provision through working with Eastern Region partners, quality assurance processes and market development to commission appropriate places in good quality independent provision • Analysing current post 16 destination data, determine what provision is needed to ensure sufficient, high-quality post 16 opportunities

9. Engagement

To provide feedback on this draft SEND Sufficiency Plan, please complete the survey via the link below, which will be available from midnight 11th December.

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/send-strategy-and-innovation/send-sufficiency-plan-engagement>

We will also hold virtual engagement sessions, where you can discuss the plan and provide feedback if you would like to join:

- 18th January 10am – Parent/Carer Support Groups and Essex Family Forum representatives (via regular support group meeting)
- 7th Feb 10am – schools and post 16 settings
- 7th Feb 6pm – schools and post 16 settings

To join one of these sessions, or express an interest in a future session. Please let us know here: <https://forms.office.com/e/wQUAMevce>.