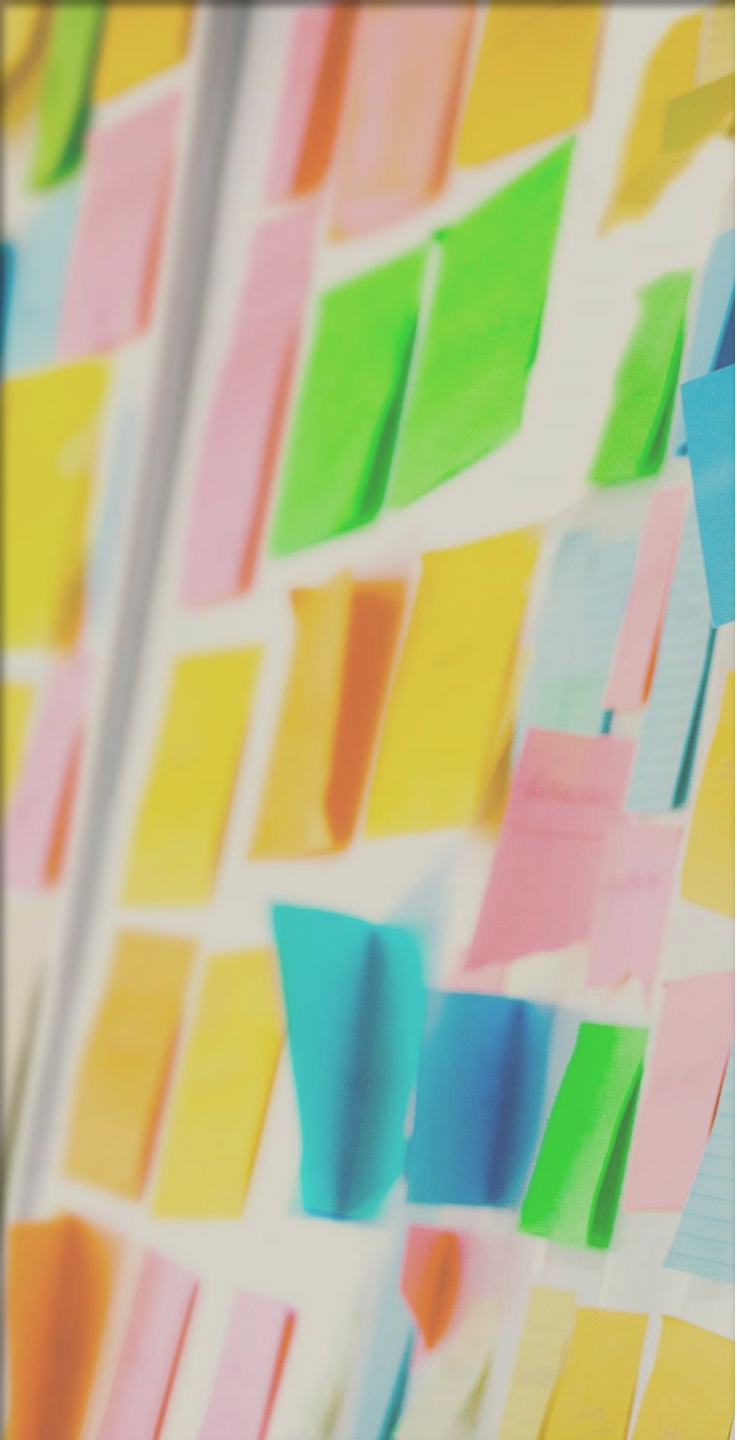


# YOU SAID, WE DID

What has changed since the Family  
Impact Survey 2020/2021?



Essex County Council



Essex Family Forum hosted their first Family Impact Survey for all parents and carers in Essex who have a child/ren (0-25) with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities in October 2020.

The survey measures the levels of parental satisfaction with local SEND services. The Forum can then compare the responses with the data collected in previous years.

The Forum want to find out what has improved for families and where the impact of improvement work has yet to be felt by families.

## WHAT IS THE FAMILY IMPACT SURVEY?

Challenge 1:  
Children and Young  
People's voice

Challenge 2:  
Navigation of the  
SEND system

Challenge 3:  
SEN support

Challenge 4:  
One Planning

Challenge 5:  
The Essex Local Offer

Challenge 6:  
EHC Needs  
Assessments and  
EHC Plans

Challenge 7:  
Annual Reviews

Challenge 8:  
Provision in EHC plans

Challenge 9:  
Communication

Challenge 10:  
Home Education

Challenge 11:  
Appeals

WHAT  
CHALLENGES  
WERE RAISED IN  
2020/2021?



# FOR EACH CHALLENGE

We will tell you what we have been doing and what is different now.

We will signpost where you can find out more.

We will continue to update you. Every month, a SEND newsletter (The Bridge) for parents and carers will be produced with the latest updates. We will share the newsletter on the Local Offer and with all the support groups for families with a child with additional needs. We will also share the link with school SENCOs, designated leads in colleges and Early Years settings.

❖ [Take a look at The Bridge newsletter](#)

# 1. Children and young people's voice

Children and young people were not considered to have been part of reviewing and setting their outcomes as part of One Planning and Annual Reviews.

*Family impact survey 2020/1*

Feedback from 2020/1



**CHALLENGE 1**  
YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
VOICE

# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021 we told you that we were working with a group of young people to raise awareness of the findings of the POET survey through a video challenge. We can now update you:

- ▶ Practitioners across Essex have been watching the POET challenge and making their pledges. My Voice, My Choice has been adopted as one of the five priorities for the new SEND strategy in Essex. All adults will be asked to sign the pledge to always consider and take seriously a child or young people's views in all they do. We will tell you more as this happens.
- ▶ The Local Area have agreed to fully fund the growth of the [Multi-Schools Council \(MSC\)](#) - including new staff to help the MSC grow, so that more children and young people can have their views heard.
- ▶ A group of young people have written and delivered a training programme to support other young people to have the confidence to speak out and have their voices heard. This has been delivered by children to children and we are planning how to share the training more widely.
- ▶ Another group of young people, The Good Practice Seekers, have been visiting schools to give their views on the quality of SEN support and inclusion. Their chosen hashtag is #BetterThanOfsted

❖ Find out more about the [POET challenge 2020](#).

❖ Listen to the song by the MultiSchools Council "[All Stand Strong](#)"



What has changed?  
February 2022.



1: YOUNG PEOPLE'S  
VOICE

## 2. Navigating the 'system'

Parents described feeling overwhelmed by the “system” which can be so complex that families often feel unequipped to navigate alone. At the beginning of their journey and, indeed, at many different points throughout their child/young person’s life, parents find themselves in a world they are unfamiliar with, have received no prior training for and have no colleagues to lean on for support and guidance.

*Family impact survey 2020/1*

Feedback from 2020/1



**CHALLENGE 2**  
NAVIGATION OF THE  
SYSTEM

# What has happened since the survey?

- The information on the Local Offer was updated to make sure the contact details for all family support groups were correct and easy to find. Essex Family Forum and two local charities, Takiwatanga Support Services and SEND the Right Message produced '[Supporting your neurodiverse child](#)'. The guide has been written for parents, by parents – full of information and tips specifically to help parents at the start of their journey.
- The SEND Navigation Leads, the Essex Family Forum, SENDIASS, the Local Offer and practitioners across Health, Education and Social Care have taken to the road to meet more families and help point parents in the right direction. Look out for a SEND Roadshow in your area!
- We have introduced a Family Newsletter: [The Bridge](#). This newsletter is offered to parents as a way to share some of what is happening across the Local Area and what is coming next. It covers news from education, health and social care teams. The pilot edition was viewed more than 2,400 times.

- ❖ [Where are my local family support groups?](#)
- ❖ [Where are the next SEND roadshows?](#)
- ❖ [Take a look at 'supporting your neurodiverse child'](#)
- ❖ [Take a look at The Bridge newsletter](#)



What has changed?  
February 2022.



**2: NAVIGATING  
THE SYSTEM**



### 3. SEN support

Responses were mixed. The majority reported that teaching and support staff in schools and settings understood their child's needs, well or very well and had good or excellent knowledge and training in effectively supporting the child/young person. However, some of the survey respondents reported that schools are sometimes unsure of, unable or unwilling to support the needs of their children and young people with SEND. There is a difference in experience across the county.

*Family impact survey 2020/1*

Feedback from 2020/1



# What has happened since the survey?



In May 2021 we told you about two new initiatives – The Inclusion Framework and the Ordinarily Available. Both have now been introduced to schools, colleges and Early Years settings across Essex.

## WHAT IS THE INCLUSION FRAMEWORK?

The Inclusion Framework helps identify any barriers that might be preventing a pupil from making progress and brings everyone together (parents, schools and other practitioners) to devise a plan to overcome these barriers.

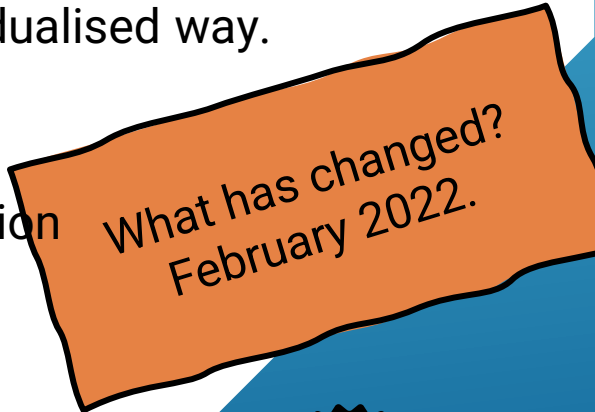
**Progress?** An increasing number of schools are now using the Inclusion Framework across all of Essex.

**Impact?** Feedback shows an increase in parental confidence in the ability of schools to meet pupil need. There are also examples of alternatives to exclusion being implemented in a creative and individualised way.

## WHAT IS THE ORDINARILY AVAILABLE (OA)?

The OA is an agreement between the Local Authority and schools about what good inclusion looks like. The aim is that all pupils, wherever they live, or wherever they go to school, will benefit from the same high quality offer.

**Progress?** More than fifty schools have volunteered to be the first to try out the 'Ordinarily Available (OA)'. This work is just starting and will take place from February to July 2022. We will keep you informed about the progress and how children, young people and their families are taking part.



**CHALLENGE 3**  
**SEN SUPPORT**

## 4. One Planning

Three issues were raised:

- (i) a school not providing support outlined in plan or following external advice;
- (ii) a poor quality One Plan (outcomes not measurable, provision not specific);
- (iii) external professionals not involved.

*Family impact survey 2020/1*

Feedback from 2020/1



# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021 we told you that the section on the Local Offer had recently been updated with help from a group of parent carers and the Essex Family Forum Family Champions.

- Training on One Planning has taken place for SENCOs, SEND Champions in Social Care and colleagues in Health.
- We have continued to improve the information on the Local Offer. [The MAZE group](#), a parent support group in NE Essex, and [Families in Focus](#) (who support families across the whole of Essex) have kindly given the Local Offer permission to share their videos to help families plan for One Planning meetings and learn more about what makes a good One Plan.
- Children and young people are also helping us improve the information available to young people. KIDS, a national charity, have been working with a group of young people from the MultiSchools Council to help us improve One Planning for children and young people.

- [Watch a video about One Planning](#)
- [Have a look at some One Planning examples on the Local Offer](#)
- [Find the full guide to One Planning here](#)



What has changed?  
February 2022.



CHALLENGE 4  
ONE PLANNING

## 5. The Essex Local Offer

54% of respondents were aware of the Local Offer and have used the Local Offer. Of those that have used the Local Offer, 59% were able to find the information and the vast majority reported that the information was up to date and useful. Most common themes running through the comments: that the site needs to be easier to navigate; some parents would rather speak to a person; there were parents who had no knowledge of any of the support groups or how to contact them.

*Family impact survey 2020/1*

Feedback from 2020/1



**CHALLENGE 5**  
THE LOCAL OFFER

# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021 we told you that there is going to be a new Essex Local Offer! We can now update you.

- The transformation team have worked with an 'Interest Group' to really understand what it is that families want and need from the Essex Local Offer. They have listened to people's experiences and tested out lots of ideas and ways forward.
- The Local Area have agreed to fund the cost of building a new website for the Local Offer. The company building the website will work together with the transformation team and interest group to develop the new Local Offer. This will take approximately 4 months.
- A new content writer role has been created so we can make sure that the information on the Local Offer is much easier to access.
- We are still on track for a new Local Offer by September 2022.
- Until then, please bear with us, and remember, if you can't find what you are looking for on the current Local Offer, you can always email the Local Offer team who will be happy to point you in the right direction:

[Essex.LocalOffer@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Essex.LocalOffer@essex.gov.uk)



What has changed?  
February 2022.



CHALLENGE 5  
LOCAL OFFER

## 6. EHC Needs Assessments and EHC plans

Parents stated that provision, support, and outcomes outlined in EHC Plans were not specific and that the language contained within the plans need to be simplified. Parents and carers find the EHC process an extremely stressful and overwhelming experience, even when they feel supported by schools/settings, SEND Inclusion and SEND Operations Teams. Although parents said they felt supported during the process, their overall experience was not particularly positive, with 59% reporting it was just OK or poor.

Family Impact Survey 2020/21

Feedback from 2020/1



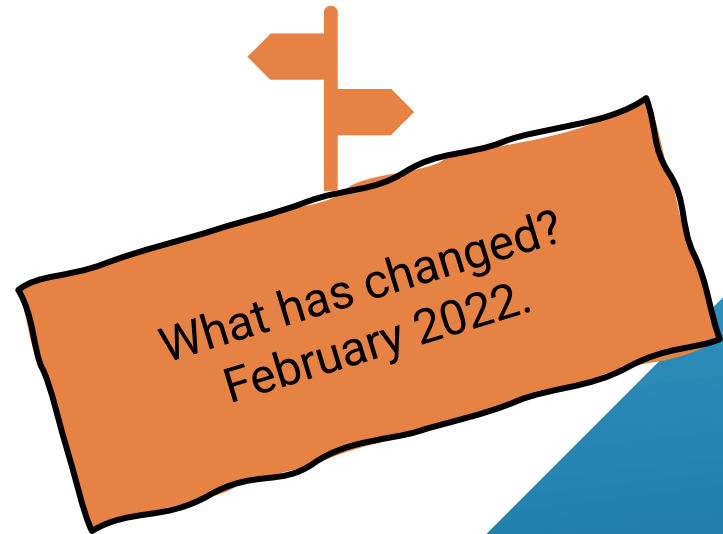
CHALLENGE 6  
EHC PLANS

# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021 we told you that the quality of EHC plans was one of our priorities. We can now update you.

- We have put a new system of Quality Assurance in place where new EHC plans are considered and scored. This exercise includes the Essex Family Forum, SENCOs, Headteachers, staff from SEND Operations, Social Care and Health.
- The information from this process is helping plan writers to improve new EHCPs.
- The Essex Family Forum have produced a survey to gather the views of parents and carers when a new EHC plan is issued – on both the content of the plan and their experience. This information will help the Local Area understand what is working and what needs to improve on a monthly basis.

There is an [online guide](#) which sets out all the improvement work and gives a lot more detail.



CHALLENGE 6  
EHC PLANS



## 7. Annual Reviews of Education, Health and Care plans

Overall experience of the Annual Review was thought to be Good or OK by 66% of families. Improvements: attendance/contribution from professionals is 50%; 50% response in 4 weeks from Local Authority; excessive delays to or non-issuance of revisions/amendments.

Family Impact Survey 2020/21

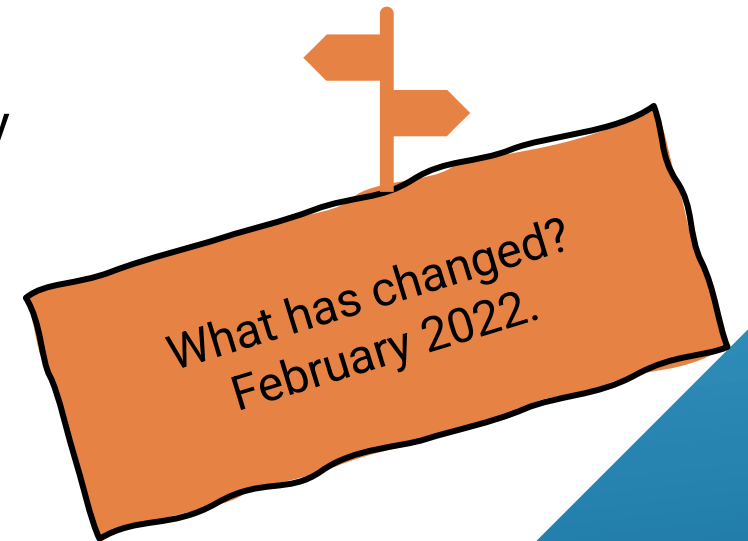
Feedback from 2020/1



# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021 we told you that we were working on our systems to make sure that we have the right input from the right practitioners at Annual Reviews. We can now update you:

- Education, health and social care teams have agreed improved ways of working so that everyone knows which annual reviews are due and can prioritise their time to either attend or give good quality written advice.
- Guidance for practitioners has been produced and this is being taken through our governance channels. We will be able to share it with you shortly.
- SEND Operations have created new roles in their teams to work specifically with schools on timeliness of annual reviews and amending plans following reviews.
- We are asking all families for their feedback after their child's annual review. The Essex Family Forum have produced an online survey for families to complete after their child's annual review. This will help us to understand what is working well and where we need to keep improving.



**CHALLENGE 7**  
**ANNUAL REVIEWS**

## 8. Therapy Provision in Education, Health and Care plans

High number of parents reporting that provision outlined in the plan is not received: therapies not being delivered, failure of school and therapists to work together, provision not being specific in the plan, schools not delivering the provision. Only 26% report that their child receives all their provision.

*Family Impact Survey 2020/21*

Feedback from 2020/1



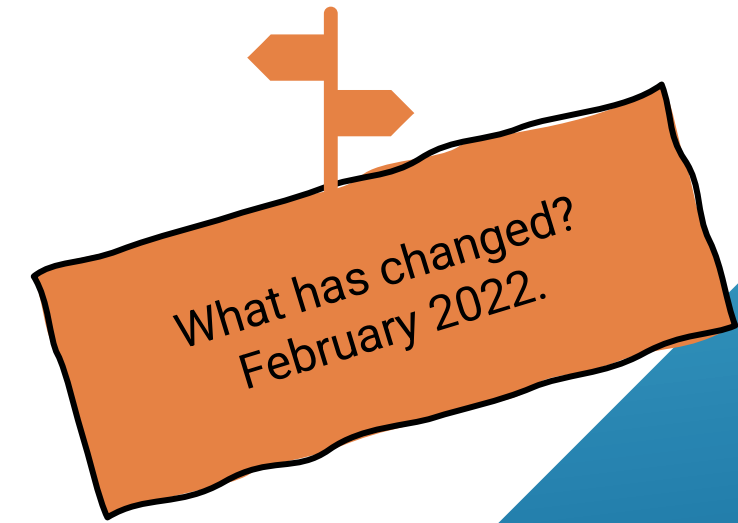
**CHALLENGE 8**  
THERAPY PROVISION

## What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021, we told you that we were working with a company called 'Better Communication' to improve how therapy services are delivered in Essex. We can now update you.

- ▶ We held a series of engagement sessions for parents, schools and settings and worked closely with the Essex Therapy Teams. We now have clearer picture of what works, what doesn't and what needs to change.
- ▶ We have made changes to the way therapy reports are written by our commissioned provider (Provide) so that they clearly identify the number of direct (with a therapist) and indirect (training, liaison, report writing) hours are required to support a child.
- ▶ We are delivering training to schools and settings that gives them the knowledge and skills to support children and young people, with their speech, language and communication needs.

Information about the project can be [found here](#)



**CHALLENGE 8**  
THERAPY PROVISION

## 9. Communication

At the simplest explanation, communication appears to be the key component which is felt by many families to be currently missing. There is poor communication reported at every level, from between individuals within a school setting, between services, and all the way up to strategic level. 35% of parents do not feel that the professionals involved with their child/young person communicate well with each other

Family Impact Survey 2020/21

Feedback from 2020/1



## What has happened since the survey?

Communication is one of the key challenges in Essex. The size of Essex is a strength, but it also makes communication difficult. The education system alone has over 500 schools and colleges, and over 2000 Early Years settings. For many families, SEND services extends beyond education and into Health services and Social Care services too.

- ▶ The Local Area inspection asked us to begin by addressing (i) the communication between Education, Health and Social Care, and (ii) communication with families during the EHC Needs assessment process. The Essex Family Forum and Local support groups asked us to keep families better informed and provide more accessible information for families.
- ▶ You can read in Challenges 2, 5 and 6 how we have addressed those areas – and what we are still doing.
- Our next step is to look at the feedback we receive from the Essex Family Forum surveys (during the EHC Needs assessment process and annual reviews) and to make changes to improve the experience. If we can begin by getting communication correct for families at these times – which is often reported to be highly stressful – we believe this is a good starting point.



What has changed?  
February 2022.

**CHALLENGE 9**  
COMMUNICATION

## 10. Elective Home Education

There is clearly a need to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced by parents who decide to home-school their child/young person, as well the reasons that led to that decision, given the high proportion of parents that feel there is no alternative option. 81% of respondents who home school their child/young person stated they do so because they have no choice.

Family Impact Survey 2020/21

Feedback from 2020/1

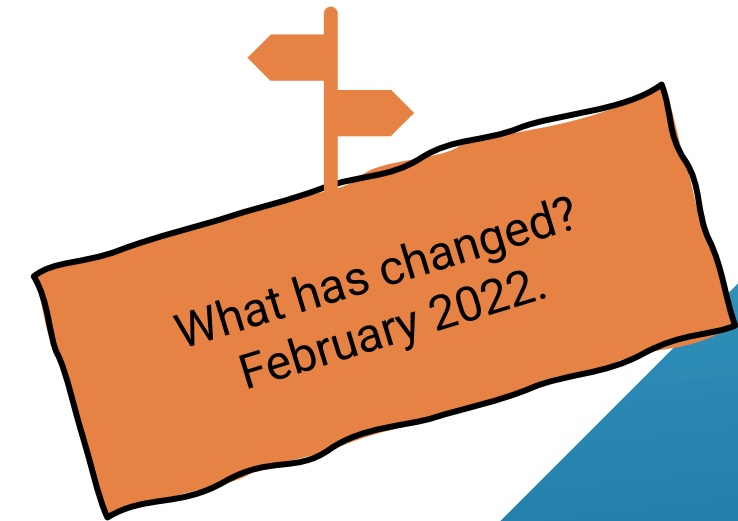


# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021, we told you that the Elective Home Education team made contact with all families who had made the decision to home educate during the pandemic to understand their reason and discuss the support they may need.

- ▶ The team are no longer contacting all families by telephone as the previous rise in home education has settled across the County. A significant number of families have been returning their child/ren back to school, as Covid-related anxieties have eased.
- ▶ The team are now operating a Business As Usual model – undertaking assessments of home education with those families that have been prioritised for such intervention.
- ▶ Essex is in the process of reviewing existing policy and practice in relation to elective home education, in light of a recent Judicial Review outcome, involving Portsmouth City Council.
- ▶ A meeting has been arranged between the Essex Family Forum and the Education Access Team to discuss some of the negative drivers that compel some families to make the decision to home educate.
- ▶ A meeting will be arranged between the Essex Family Forum and ECC's Home Education Working Group. This will be led by Councillor Ball.

- ▶ [Education outside mainstream schools: Home education - Essex County Council](#)
- ▶ [Elective home education: guide for parents \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)





# 11. Appeals

As the parent carer forum for Essex, we are concerned about the number of tribunal cases that are conceded before the hearing and the significant negative impact this must have on the well-being of families that reach this stage of the process. We would like to explore further how learning from these cases is shared with the SEND services within Essex and how it influences future decisions.

Family Impact Survey 2020/21

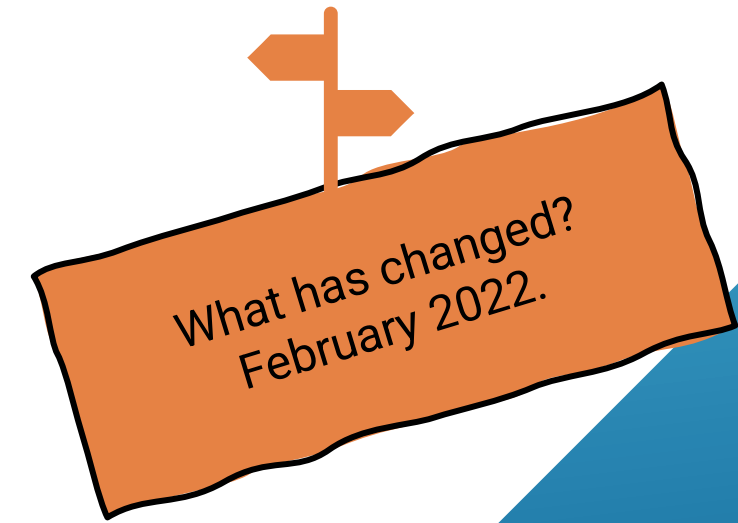
Feedback from 2020/1



# What has happened since the survey?

In May 2021, we shared our intention to commission an independent review of the tribunal process and system in Essex.

- ▶ Over the summer of 2021, Essex County Council carried out this work and commissioned an internal review of the tribunal system in by an independent consultant; he spoke to the range of stakeholders including the Essex Family Forum. The review made several recommendations.
- ▶ As a result of that work we have made some changes to our leadership arrangements for the team.
- ▶ We are now working on stage 2 which is how we resolve appeals earlier and to mutual satisfaction. Essex County Council will fully engage with parents to examine how we can enable more positive experiences. We will continue to keep you updated and informed of the changes that are put into place.
- ▶ The Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation (Ralph Holloway) will meet with the Essex Family Forum to share the recommendations from the internal review and to discuss how we can work together to make improvements to the process and, as far as possible, reduce the number of appeals through collaborative working.



## What else is happening?

- ❖ Young people from the Multi-Schools Council are planning a festival in June 2022 (United in Diversity) and a midnight walk in the summer. We will bring you more news about each of these events as we get closer.
- ❖ Young people are continuing to help us make improvements to home to school SEND transport, One Planning and Annual Reviews.
- ❖ A new Local Offer is on it's way. Look out for communications in the summer of 2022.
- ❖ More funding has been agreed to increase the capacity of SEND IAS – the independent information advice service. We will keep you updated as this happens.
- ❖ As a Local area, we continue to work on the quality of advice that is received when the Local Authority asks for a report during an EHC Needs Assessment.
- ❖ As a Local Area, we continue to monitor and improve the quality of new EHC plans and will extend this to include amended EHC plans following an annual review.
- ❖ As a Local Area, we are developing new annual review paperwork and guidelines around 'good conversations' ; so that more families feel that their experience at an annual review is good or excellent. This piece of work is being done with young people, with SENCOs and with families.
- ❖ At ECC, we continue to work on the best way to ensure that Education, Health and Care plans are revised and amended more promptly so that plans stay up-to-date.

## And what next?

- ▶ The new five year SEND Strategy is due to be published soon. This sets five key priorities for the Local Area and is based on the feedback that we have heard from everyone, across the system, about what needs to improve. Feedback from families and young people is at the very heart of the new strategy.
- ▶ Listening – and acting upon – the views and lived experiences of children, young people and their parents and carers is a key commitment going forward. Included within that, is the importance of finding ways to hear from an ever-increasing number of children, young people and families from all walks of life.
- ▶ We are very grateful for the amount of information and challenge provided by Essex Family Forum and will continue to develop our ways of working together, so that the feedback provided has maximum effect and the Forum feel they are recognised as equal partners.
- ▶ Expectations around coproduction with children, young people and families is embedded in the new strategy, setting out a clearly defined process for all parties to agree how best to involve children, young people and their families at the start of any planned change to services.
- ▶ We will also continue to build links with as many local groups supporting families as possible and continue to offer opportunities directly to families who may not be part of a support group.

# Contacts

Please do take a look at the Local Offer and see if there is a [family support groups](#) close to you. We want to be sure the Local Offer includes every support group, however small or however new. If you belong to a support group that is not included on the Essex Local Offer, please email [Essex.LocalOffer@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Essex.LocalOffer@essex.gov.uk)

Pop along to a SEND Roadshow and ask your question. You can meet The SEND Navigators, Essex Family Forum, SENDIASS, the Local Offer and practitioners from across Health, Education and Social Care. [Where are the next SEND roadshows?](#)

If you need advice, information or guidance, please do get in touch with the team at [SENDIASS](#)





We hope this has given you a flavour of the improvement work that happened (or is happening) as a result of the October 2020 Family Impact Survey.

We are now very much looking forward to receiving the feedback from the second Family Impact Survey (February 2022) and would like to thank every family who took the time to complete the 2022 survey.

THANK YOU



Essex County Council