



## Weekly Snapshot from EFF

### Week ending- 04/07/25

Essex Family Forum receives many comments through our online Graffiti Wall, at events and through our Family Champions. Although we are not able to address all of these through this snapshot, please be assured that all feedback is raised with services and issues that are shared repeatedly are being highlighted.

You said:	We did:
<p><b>Eligibility for Specialist Provision:</b> Families often encounter difficulties when children with complex needs do not fit neatly into existing placement criteria, creating uncertainty around the most appropriate setting. While mainstream schools can offer some support, a more specialised environment is needed for some children. Greater clarity on how eligibility for different provisions is determined would be helpful.</p>	<p>These points have been raised with the Local Authority, who will be working with us to improve the clarity of information available to families.</p> <p>We'll provide an update on this as soon as we can.</p>
<p><b>Annual Reviews</b> Concerns were raised about delays in annual reviews and limited communication or follow-up from SEND services. Queries centred on whether schools are routinely prompted when reviews are due, the steps families can take if reviews are missed, and the timing of Preparing for Adulthood involvement. Feedback pointed to uncertainty around these processes and the impact on young people without appropriate provision.</p>	<p>We've contacted the Local Authority, who have acknowledged that information is missing from the Local Offer website in relation to the concerns raised on our Graffiti Wall. The team is now working to add this content. Once the updates have been tested, the information will be published. We'll share a link and provide an update as soon as it's available.</p>
<p><b>Supporting Your Neurodivergent Child</b> Families asked whether an audio version of the Neurodiversity pack is planned, to support those with literacy challenges or who find the written format overwhelming. While the pack is viewed as informative, some shared that they've struggled to engage with it in its current format.</p>	<p>The book is designed as a reference tool. We recommend using the index or contents page to go straight to the sections most relevant to you, rather than reading it all in one go.</p> <p>To listen to the online book being read aloud, open it in your browser, go to the section you want, right-click anywhere on the page, and choose 'Read aloud'.</p>



	<p>To translate a section, highlight the text you want to change, right-click, select 'Translate selection', and choose your language. You can either read the translated text or enable audio to have it read aloud.</p> <p>You can find the online version of the book here: <a href="#">Neurodiversity   Essex Family Forum</a></p> <p>We always welcome feedback on how we can make the format more accessible: <a href="#">Feedback Wall   Essex Family Forum</a></p>
<p><b>Support After EHCP: DSA and University</b> Families raised concerns about the lack of clear support for young people with EHCPs transitioning to university, particularly around understanding and accessing DSA. Expectations around available support doesn't always match the reality, leaving some students at risk of unmet needs.</p>	<p>This was raised at a Preparing for Adulthood meeting last week. A new factsheet is being developed to guide families on university support, including key steps and contacts. It will be shared on Snapshot when available.</p> <p>Other factsheets are already available on Supported Internships, Supported Apprenticeships, and Being Your Own Boss.</p> <p>We're continuing to work together to improve how information is shared with families.</p>
<p><b>Secure Mail Feedback</b> We are receiving feedback regarding the Secure mail that is sent for EHCP's etc. Numerous parent/carers and school SENCO's have commented how difficult this is to access.</p>	<p>We are taking this to our Feedback COG (Co.ordination &amp; Oversight Group) To ask if there is a better way of sending this information.</p>
<p><b>EHC Needs Assessment Process</b> We have received feedback via the Graffiti Wall which highlighted the need for clearer guidelines on the EHC Needs Assessment process.</p> <p>One area highlighted was who can be asked for for advice/input during the assessment as conflicting information had been given.</p>	<p>We raised this with the relevant team within ECC. They have acknowledged the need for clearer guidance for families and have committed to reviewing and updating the information which we will share when available.</p> <p>The current information and guidance can be found on the Local Offer website (<a href="#">Continuing the EHC needs assessment (weeks 6 to 16)   Essex Local Offer</a>)</p>



	<p>Information regarding who should be asked for advice as part of the EHC Needs Assessment process can be found via the IPSEA website (<a href="#">What happens in an EHC needs assessment</a>)</p>
<p><b>SEND Sensation (Mid &amp; NE Essex Shortbreaks Provider)</b></p> <p>Parents have fed back that the website information about holiday/weekend clubs is not user friendly and quite daunting to access. Also there is much available for under 8s in Chelmsford. Holiday clubs are difficult to access for working parents due to hours.</p>	<p>We raised these issues with SEND Sensation. They are aware that their website is not as user friendly as they would like it to be and they are working with played to develop a user-friendly Short Breaks activity finder. They have invited EFF to be part of the working group to improve the website, and to give the parent perspective on the changes.</p> <p>SEND Sensation has offered an U8's provision in Chelmsford for two years through Disability 4 Sport and SENTre, including after school, weekend and school holidays. However, these sessions were not well attended despite recommended changes from families, and a decision was made to stop these activities in April.</p> <p>Currently, InterAct and Independence Project offer clubs and activities in Chelmsford for 8-14 years and 15-18 years, and SEND Sensation are working to bring some new partners to offer some gymnastic, parkour, and trampoline activities in Maldon, Witham and Chelmsford respectfully for U8's.</p> <p>Happy Hill are currently the main provider for respite for U8s and they have received feedback from parents that there is limited demand for after school clubs for U8s, and more preference for school holiday clubs at the Happy Hub.</p> <p>Relaxed Swim sessions have been offered at Fusion Leisure in Witham and similar at Riverside in Chelmsford, although demand was very low. They are re-thinking that offer and working with Families In Focus.</p>



	<p>SEND Sensation have also said that whilst their clubs understand the need for childcare for working parents, their Short Breaks offer does not provide childcare as such, It offers more shorter clubs to allow more children and families to access activities with short respite. They have listened to parents around short 1-2 hours family sessions and introduced relaxed swim and zoo tours through their support partner programme and focus budgets on longer sessions during the week. Their summer holiday programme offers activities ranging from 8 hours at Mistley Kids Club and InterAct holiday clubs and days trips, 5 hours at Happy Hill, 4 hours at Disability 4 Sport and Independence Project.</p> <p>All partners try to allocate a fair usage policy and often work along other funding models including SEND ActiViAte and Summer of SEND to build extra capacity. They would always recommend speaking with the individual providers about additional services outside of Short Breaks, such as early start and late finishes, as these services maybe available.</p>
<p><b>Challenges in post-16 provision for young people with SEND, including those without an EHCP.</b></p> <p>Key themes raised include:</p> <p><i>Limited Flexibility in Resit Options: Young people wishing to resit English and maths are currently required to enrol in a full college course, even when they are not interested in or suited to the available options. This lack of flexibility can hinder engagement and progress.</i></p> <p><i>Unmet Needs and Transition Challenges: Some students transition to college without having had their needs identified or supported during school years. This often leads to difficulties in post-16 settings,</i></p>	<p>We raised these issues at the Family Feedback Co-ordination Oversight Group (COG), where representatives from education, health, and social care were present. The Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Lead clarified that the requirement to attend a course while resitting exams is part of national government guidelines and therefore cannot be changed at a local level.</p> <p><b>Next steps and ongoing work</b> - The PFA team is working with local post-16 providers to develop a consistent and supportive pathway for the school-to-college transition. It was recognised that there should be clearer signposting to other post-16 support pathways, for example through the Jobcentre.</p>



<p><i>adversely affecting their wellbeing and long-term outcomes.</i></p>	<p>We remain committed to sharing your experiences and insights to inform improvements, and we will continue to monitor progress on this work closely.</p>
<p><b>**UPDATE** - Pre School SEND Sessions</b>  <b>Some families are telling us that some pre schools will only offer a few sessions a week for a child with SEND due to their additional needs</b></p>	<p>The Early Years teams within Essex County Council have said that there are several reasons why this may happen:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preschools sometimes start a child on reduced sessions to make sure they are able to fully support the child's needs and so this may require a reduced attendance pattern to start, which builds up as the child is ready.</li> <li>• Some settings may be very full, especially at this time of year, with limited capacity to increase any child's hours.</li> <li>• Some settings have been unable to recruit additional staff.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>This should all be communicated with the parents though in the first instance.</i></b></p> <p>All settings should offer inclusive places for all children and to help to support this, Essex does offer SEN inclusion funding to help to meet the additional costs that a setting may incur in delivering a place that may (for example), require a higher ratio of staffing at times, or specific resources.</p> <p>Settings should be aware of the process, but they can always ask or visit the funding pages of our website. SENIF funding cannot be paid to the parent. An Inclusion Partner is always available to support settings to provide inclusive practice too. However, sometimes the Early Years team do still need to challenge settings.</p> <p>The Local Authority have a duty to secure childcare for families of children with SEND. They always encourage parents and settings</p>



to work together but if that isn't working, parents can always contact the Early Years team at [fis@essex.gov.uk](mailto:fis@essex.gov.uk).

## In other news.....

- Stacey has been busy recruiting new volunteers. There were a couple interested at the recent roadshow in West Essex. We really appreciate our volunteers, they help gather feedback so we can get a good grasp of issues and services that need improving in Essex. If you would like to join our team, please get in touch. To find out more click here: <https://essexfamilyforum.org/get-involved/family-champion>
- We are receiving a lot of positive feedback regarding health care staff and how friendly and helpful they are. We also always hear a lot of praise for charities and support groups. These organisations are a lifeline for a lot of our families, and are very much appreciated 😊
- Claire attended a feedback session on the work going on to produce a “Young Peoples’ Local Offer”. She provided feedback on the ideas so far to produce an information centre for Young People with SEND and their families to help them find opportunities, ideas and support for their future.
- Sarah attended the Healthier Habits Hub in Harwich this week which was held at ‘The Lounge, Esplanade Hall’.

***Please note: The Graffiti Wall and Snapshot is designed to give anonymised feedback and cannot be used to answer individual queries.***

***All EFF staff are part time and work on a flexible basis. If there are weeks when a quadrant does not appear represented in this snapshot, we are still working hard. Please bear this in mind.***