

PB19

The Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service

In partnership with:

ThePublicOffice

Part of the Local Authority for Essex



Essex County Council

Overview

We're on a mission to give children and young people in Essex the **best start in life**

Children and young people getting the best start in life is perhaps our most important and unifying passion for Essex.

We know that supporting children and their families from conception, through birth and the early years, and into young adulthood will give them the best possible chance to succeed.



A close-up photograph of a man with glasses reading a book to a young child. The man is on the right, looking down at the book. The child is on the left, looking at the book. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf.

Overview

We know that parents are key

Parents are children's first and most enduring educators. Building the capability and capacity of parents and family members to support themselves and support one another must be central to our approach.

Communities too can play a big role in providing support and growing the protective factors that help families navigate the ups and downs of life successfully.

Current ECFWS Commissioning & Delivery Structure

Strategic Influences



Essex Children and Young People's Partnership Plan



Essex Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2022-2027



Public Health England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Best start in life and beyond

Improving public health outcomes for children, young people and families



National Centre for Family Hubs

Summary guide for designing and implementing family hubs in England



The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Strategy



Working together for a healthier future

NHS Long Term Plan

#NHSLongTermPlan

Commissioner Partners



Essex County Council



NHS
Hertfordshire and West Essex
Integrated Care Board

Essex Child & Family Wellbeing Service



hcrq
Care Group

Delivery Partners



Believe in children
Barnardo's



YES
Supporting Young People



HOME START

Where we've come from...

In-depth ethnographic research helped us to:

- explore the lived experience of families
- understand their experiences of existing support, needs, and preferences
- understand the hopes and aspirations of families and perceived enablers and blockers to achieving their goals

Pre-Birth to 19: A New Vision for Essex



Where we've come from...

We uncovered some disruptive insights

- Families tell us that, despite everyone's best efforts, they don't always get the right help at the right time
- Parents are isolated, lonely and struggling to make friends
- Chances to help parents build relationships are being missed
- Parents don't want or need more provision — they don't get value from what's already there
- There are few places where young parents feel comfortable
- Parents get conflicting advice from different practitioners
- Parents recognise good parenting advice, but they struggle to make it work at home



Insights from Essex Research 2024/25

1. Social Isolation & Lack of Support Networks

Parents and caregivers often experience social isolation, which limits their access to informal support networks. This is particularly true for single parents, young parents, and those living in temporary or

Children and young people also experience isolation, especially in rural areas or during periods like lockdowns. Parents' social isolation affects their children's social and emotional development.

2. Emotional & Mental Wellbeing Challenges

Both parents and children frequently struggle with emotional wellbeing. Stressors include financial instability, lack of adequate housing, and poor mental health support.

Children's emotional and mental health is further impacted by stress at school, social pressures, and often feeling disconnected from their parents or other support structures.

3. Barriers to Accessing Services

Limited awareness of available services and difficulty accessing them due to practical issues like:

- transportation
- financial constraints
- lack of time (especially for working parents)

Parents' reluctance to engage with certain local services. Particularly due to previous negative experiences or feelings of being judged, emerged as a recurring.

4. Parental Confidence & Capabilities

Many parents expressed low confidence in their parenting skills, particularly when facing additional pressures such:

- mental health challenges
- difficult work-life balances

Early Years provisions often focus heavily on children, with less emphasis on building sustainable parental capabilities. Opportunities to foster better parenting behaviour and improve parent-child relationships are being missed.

5. Physical & Developmental Health Needs

Children's physical health is influenced by socioeconomic factors. Children from low-income households face greater developmental and health challenges.

Access to opportunities for physical activity is limited by costs, availability of facilities, and safety concerns, contributing to lower levels of engagement in sports and active lifestyles. Particularly for older children & girls.

6. Housing & Financial Instability

Poor housing conditions, including overcrowding and substandard accommodations, were prevalent across many families. This creates a ripple effect, negatively impacting both the

Financial difficulties, exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, limit parents' ability to focus on child development. This often leads to reliance on food banks and other short-term support systems.

7. School Readiness & Child Development

Parents often lack understanding or are unaware of what constitutes school readiness. Particularly in practical life skills like:

- communication
- socialisation

Developmental progress is often deprioritised due to immediate family stressors, such as:

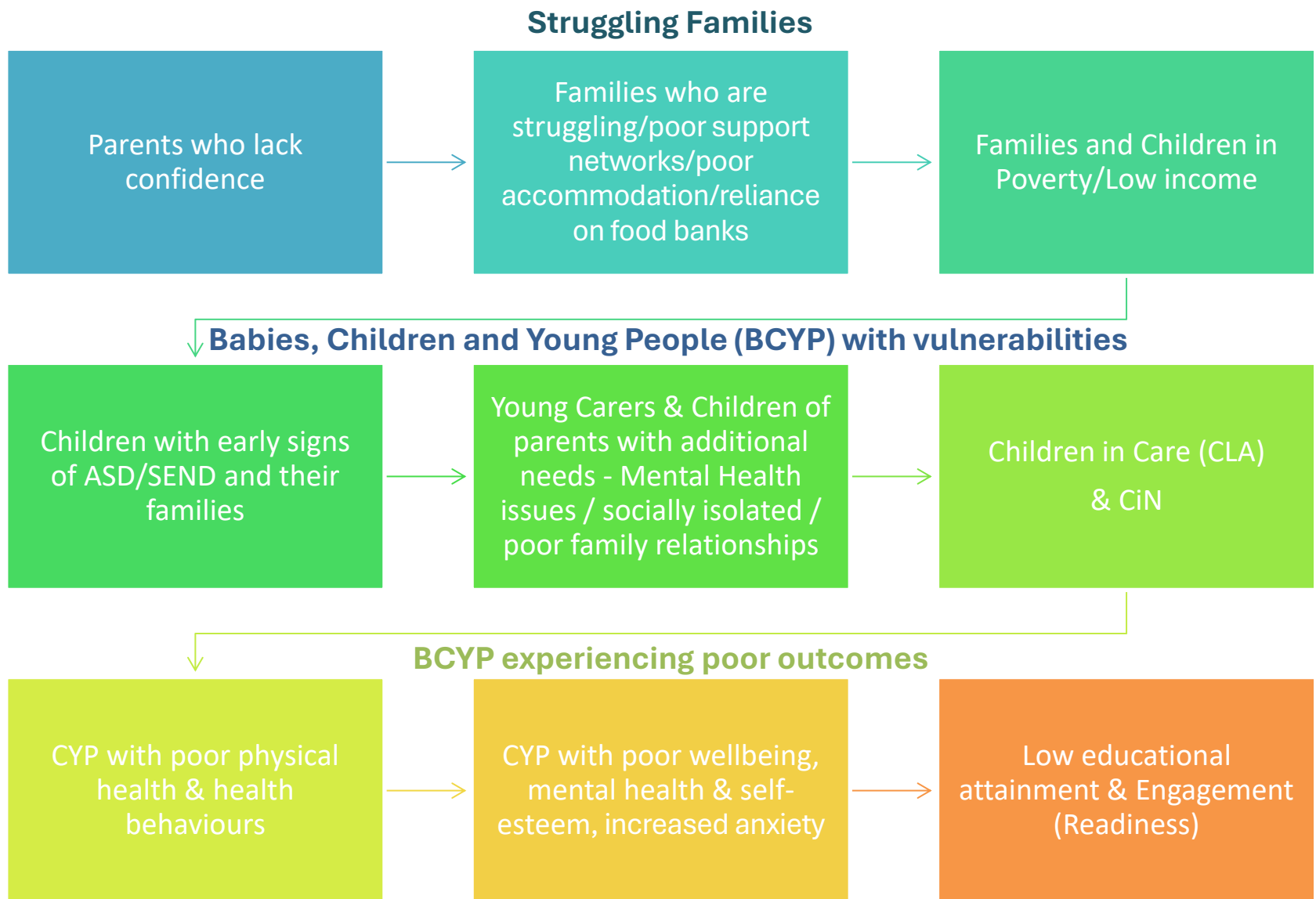
- financial instability
- mental health challenges

8. Children's & Parents' Aspirations

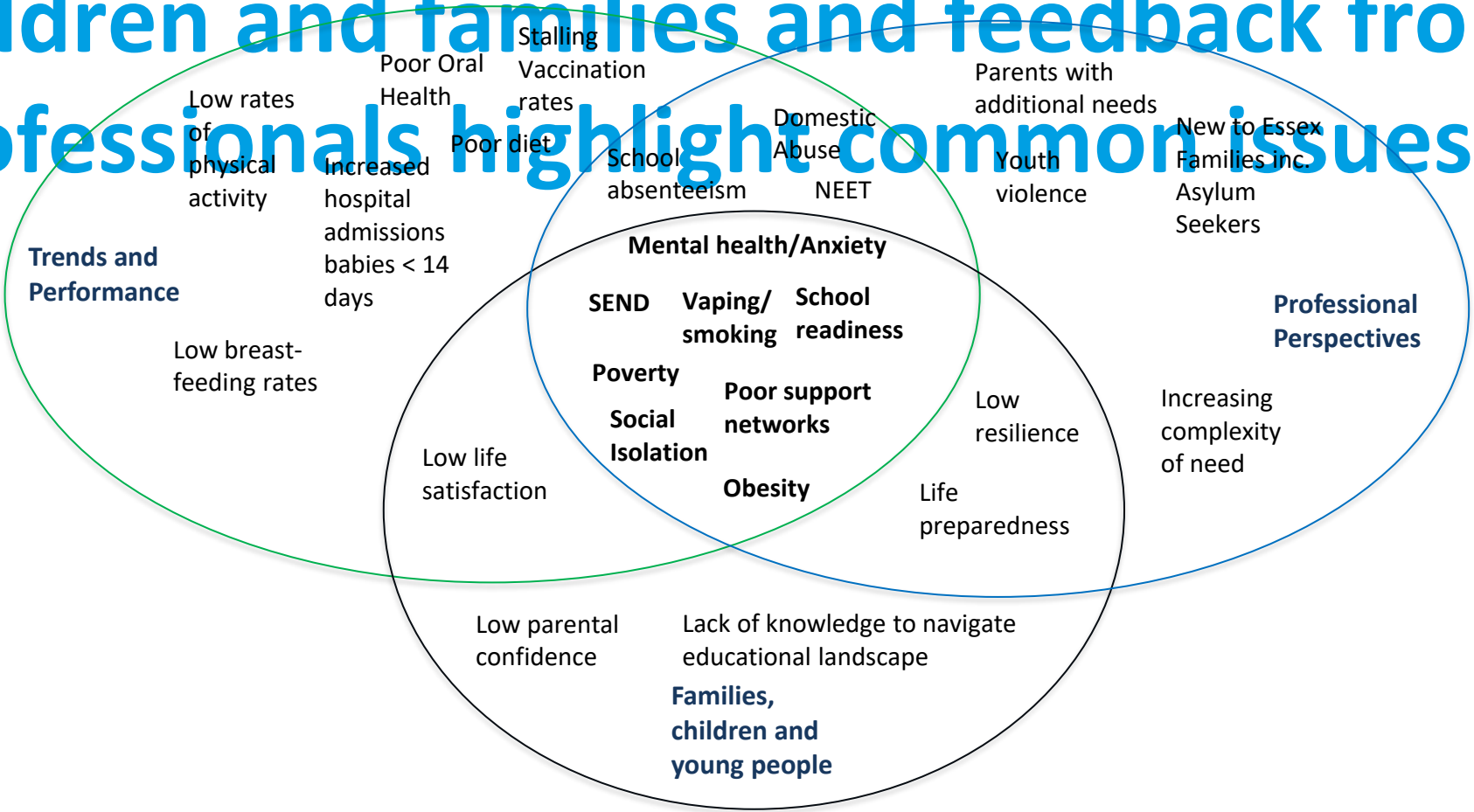
Despite these challenges, parents and children have high aspirations. Parents want their children to succeed academically and professionally, though they often lack the tools and knowledge to

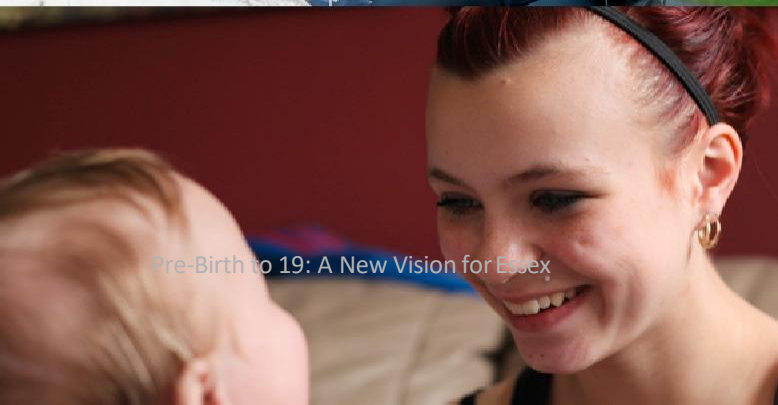
Young people expressed a desire for freedom and independence. But this was often at odds with the constraints imposed by financial insecurity and safety concerns.

Priority People



Performance data, research with local children and families and feedback from professionals highlight common issues...





What now?

Working in this way we are confident that together we can deliver...

- **Genuinely strengths-based work** that is not orientated around services or family failure
- **Better outcomes for children** especially the most disadvantaged
- **Tenacity to hold onto a shared, long-term view**, recognising that this is about securing generational change
- **Parents feeling more confident in their abilities** and less reliant on the usual touch points (e.g. GPs, A&E)
- Essex children - especially the most disadvantaged - living in communities where they **feel more loved, valued, supported and included than ever before.**