

# Meaningful Lives Matter Equal Lives for All



## EasyRead Version



# Contents

3	Foreword
5	About this strategy
10	Who this strategy is for
12	Why this strategy is important
15	What do we need to do?
18	Adult Social Care in Essex
20	Good Relationships
28	A Place to Call Home
34	Staying Healthy, Safe and Well
42	Being Active
49	How we will make it happen
56	How we will know it's worked





# Foreword



Essex County Council

When we say 'we' in this document, we mean 'Essex County Council'.



When we say 'you' we mean adults with disabilities or people who care for someone with disabilities.



You have the same rights as everyone else.



You have the right a **Meaningful Life**.

This means you can do the things that make you happy and feel fulfilled.



We know that this doesn't always happen.

Sometimes you are excluded. This is because the way things are set can be a barrier to you being included.



We want to remove these barriers so you have the same opportunities as everyone else.



The Meaningful Lives project already helps people with learning disabilities and autism.



This strategy will also include:

- People with sight loss
- People with hearing loss
- People with physical disabilities

# About this strategy



We have written this strategy, so we are clear about how we aim to help people.



It tells you what we are aiming to do, by when, and who with.



This strategy will tell us:

- What we do now.
- How you feel about how things are now.
- What we need to do to make things better.





We are looking at the things that help you.  
This includes:

- Where you live.



- Who you spend your time with.



- What you do for work or in your free time.



- Health services.



- Social care services.



To help us write this strategy to spoke to:

- People with disabilities



- Their families



- Their carers



- Other groups and organisations





We have learnt that:

- We need to keep talking to and working with all the people who are included in this strategy.



- We need to be creative and try new ideas.



- We need to take some risks.



- We need to find out if we are making things better and by how much.





This strategy will last for 4 years, from 2023 to 2027.



We know that we won't be able to do everything in these 4 years, but we can make a good start.

# Who this strategy is for



This strategy is for adults over the age of 18 who have:

- A learning disability.



- A sensory impairment.

This means losing all or part of your sight and/or hearing.



- A physical disability.

This includes brain injuries.



It also includes people who have more than one disability.



If you have a disability, this strategy is for you, whether you have support from social care or not.



If you have autism you might also be interested in the All Age Autism Strategy.

# Why this strategy is important



About 1 in every 6 people in Essex has a long term health problem or disability.



Every year there are more people with disabilities in Essex.

More people need help each year too.



Some people have needed help because of the Covid-19 pandemic.



We think that the number of people with a sensory impairment will increase from 240,000 in 2020 to 310,000 in 2030.





We think that the number of people with learning disabilities will increase by 8% by the year 2030.



Some people get help from social care.



Some people get help from their families, their friends, their community or other places.



We want to make sure that you get the help you need.



And we want to stop your needs from getting worse.



But it is getting harder to pay for all the things we would like to.



We don't know how much money we will have in the future, so we need to spend money carefully.

This strategy will help us spend it on the right things to help you as much as we can.



This strategy will work together with our other strategies and plans:

- Carers Strategy
- Ageing Well Approach
- SEND Strategy
- Autism Strategy
- Mental Health Strategy

# What do we need to do?



When we asked you what you want from your life you told us that:

- You want to have good relationships with people.



- You want to live somewhere that feels like home.



- You want to be safe and healthy.



- You want to be able to do things in your community.

This might be getting a job or learning something new.



Many of the things you want are linked to each other. Some of the main themes that keep coming up are:

- Making your own choices.



- Being able to get the care and support you need, when you need it.



- Being treated as an individual, where people consider what you can do as well as what you can't.



- Being treated with respect.





We still want to talk to some more people.

We will do this between November 2022 and January 2023.



We will host some face to face events where you can have your say.

An illustration of an EasyRead questionnaire form. The form has a light blue background and a white border. At the top left, there is a small icon of a person with the text 'easy read'. To the right of this, the text 'Please fill in this easy read form' is written. Below this, there are three sections, each with a small icon and a label: 'Your name' with a person icon, 'Address' with a house icon, and 'Phone' with a mobile phone icon. Each section has a large white box for writing the information.

There will be an EasyRead questionnaire form for you to fill in.

# Adult social care in Essex



In Adult Social Care we want to help you and your community to live the best life you can.



This strategy will help us to work towards the things we want to make happen. We want you to:

- Have friends and people around you that you love.
- Have choice and control over your life.
- Be able to work if you want to.





- Have access to meaningful activities.



- Get the same good health and care service as everyone else.



- Have a comfortable home.



- Be involved and safe in your local community.

# Good Relationships



You told us that you want to have and keep good relationships in your life.

- You like to spend time with people that you get on well with.



- You want to love and be loved.



- You want people around you who understand you and your disability.



Sometimes you need help from other people.

This might be from your family, friends, or from a person whose job it is to help you.





Sometimes you feel left out from the things other people do.

This might be because you find it hard to access local places.



You also said that you do not know about groups you could join.



You said that you don't feel safe going out alone.

This makes you feel lonely and might cause difficulties with your health and wellbeing.



The Covid 19 pandemic has made things worse.



Sometimes you only have a small group of people to rely on.

This means that your carers are very important to you and they must work very hard.



Carers and support workers don't always understand disabilities.

This might mean you don't get support in the way you need it.



We also know that:

- You are more likely to feel lonely than other people.



- Other people often don't understand how your health problems or disabilities affect you.



You have said that you have a good relationship with your social worker.

You said that they see you as an individual, not just your disability.

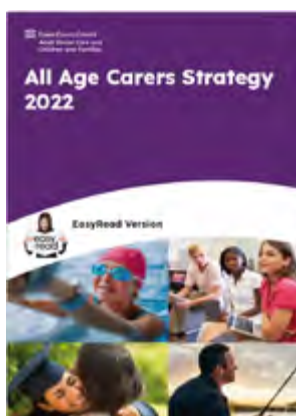


At the moment there are not enough social workers. This means that you sometimes have to wait a long time to see one.



Social workers are very busy, so they have less time to spend with you.

Sometimes they don't have enough time to help you plan for the future.



We recently talked to carers to find out what they need.

You can read what we found out in our All Age Carer's Strategy.

# Our Promises



We promise that in the future:

- You will have more opportunity to love others and be loved.



- You will feel more part of your community.



- You will feel closer to other people who like the same things as you.



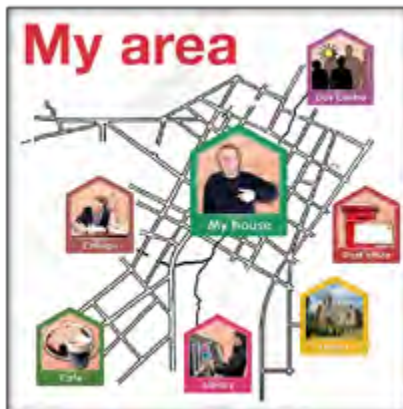
- You will feel that staff who support you understand you better.





We are making changes to how people who work in social care help people. They will:

- Understand that everyone deserves to have loving relationships.



- Help you to stay close to your friends and family.



- Help you to make new friends if you want to.



- Understand that your needs are individual.

This includes better understanding different disabilities and trauma.



To do this we will:

- Make sure we have the right staff within our services and the services we pay for.



- Train staff so that they have the right skills.



- Make sure staff have enough time to meet you face to face.



- Make sure that staff think about how they can help you to have good relationships.



We will also work with communities.

We want communities to welcome and include you.

We want community spaces to be easy to access and feel safe.

# A place to call home



You told us that where you live is important.

- You want to live in a safe place that feels like home.



- You need your home to be right for your needs.

This means you can move around and do things inside your home.



- You want to live close to transport so that you can get out and about.



- You want to have a choice of where you live.



- You want to live close to family and friends and feel part of your community.



- Getting the right support is important. This means that sometimes you have to live a long way from your friends and family.



We know that there are not enough of the right places to live, especially if you have complex needs.

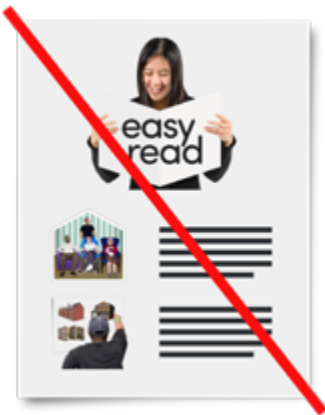


There are not enough care workers in some areas.





Sometimes you can live more independently than you do now, but services are not always set up to help you to be independent.



You do not have enough information about what housing is available for you.

# Our Promises



We promise that in the future:

- More people will live in their own home. This might be in a private home, or in Shared Living.

This will help you to be more independent.



- More people will have short term help to learn independent living skills.

This could be through living with a Shared Lives carer, or a care home for a short period.



- More housing will be available for people with complex needs.



To do this we are making changes to how social workers and care staff help people. They will:

- Work to help you to be more independent.



- Focus on what you can do instead of what you cannot do.



- Help you to make choices and plans.



We will also work with care providers to increase the choice of places to live within Essex.



We want as many people as possible to have their own front door.



We will help to make sure you have the information you need to find the right home for you.



The right technology and equipment can help you to live in your own home.

We will help to make sure there is enough of this and that it is easy to find.

# Staying healthy, safe and well



You told us that looking after your health is important.

- You want to stay well and be able to get help quickly if you are unwell.



- You also want to feel safe.



You said you do not always have the right information about what could help you, especially early in adult life.

This makes it hard to keep yourself well.



Sometimes you have to wait a long time for services.





When you use services you might have to give the same information about yourself lots of times.



You would like to feel more in control of your health and care.



If you need help with your mental health, this needs to be from someone who understands your disability.



Sometimes you find it hard to plan for your future.

You do not think always about how your health might change as you get older.



We also know that:

- Illness can cause disability.

Disability can make it more likely to have poor health.



- People with learning disabilities on average die 15 to 20 years younger than other people.



- They are also more likely to get ill or have mental ill health.



- Often they do not get the right treatment fast enough.



- When you have poor health you are more likely to need help from social care.



- Since the Covid-19 pandemic more of you are lonely or have mental illness.



- This is because many of the things that helped you have stopped or have delays.



- Health and social care services do not always work together.

Services can be difficult to access.

# Our Promises



We promise that in the future:

- More of you will feel that you have good health.



- You will know what to do to improve your health.



- You will have technology and equipment that helps you to live your life.



To do this we will work with partners, including health services to:

- Increase skills and awareness around disability.



- Help to protect you from becoming unwell where we can.



- Diagnose you quickly and make sure we understand your needs.



- Help you to recover after an illness or injury.

This may include relearning skills or learning how to do things differently so you can be more independent.



- Make sure services help you to be active and healthy.





- Give you control over your own health and care records.



- Help you to plan for changes in your health.



We will share information, staff and costs to make sure services work together.



We will take action on things that make it more likely for you to get unwell.

For example, where housing is poor and there are not enough jobs or money.



We will help you to get the information and treatment you need to get well and stay well.

This includes if you are a young person who is leaving school or college.



All health and social care services will meet the **Accessible Information Standard**.



The **Accessible Information Standard** is a law that says people with a disability must be given information that they can understand, and the communication support they need.

# Being Active



You told us that you like to do things that are important to you and your community.

You want to feel a part of something.



Some of you would like to have a job or keep the jobs you have.



Some of you want to learn new things.



Some of you want to help other people.



You feel that your preferred methods of communication are not being recorded.



You feel that some reasonable adjustments are not well known.

This can be things like booking longer doctors appointments.



We also know that:

- You find it more difficult to find paid work than other people.



- There are barriers that stop you from applying for a job or finding work.



- You feel that there are only a few types of job that you can do or apply for.



- Some of you are not confident in your skills and abilities.

Lots of you feel that other people have low expectations for you.



- People don't understand how your health problems or disabilities affect you.

This can make it harder to work with a disability.



You find it hard to:

- Find a job or find out what it's like to have a job.





- Find out about getting help to find a job.



- Find out what will happen to your benefits if you get a job.



3/4 of you have the chance to learn new skills to progress.



But only 1/4 of you have a plan to make it happen.

# Our Promises



We promise that in the future:

- More of you will be able to work if you want to.



- If you are already working you will feel supported in your job and can make progress.



- You will have choice and control over what you do every day.



To do this we will:

- Make sure that social workers and support workers talk to you about getting a job.



- Talk to your family about you getting and keeping a job.



- Focus on what you can do instead of what you can't.



- Talk to businesses about why they should give more paid jobs to people with disabilities and help them to do this.



- Make sure there is the right transport so that you can get to work.



We will help young people to get ready for their adult lives.

An important part of this is getting ready to get a job and go to work.



We will help people who can't work right now to do other things that are important to them.

This might be things like going out in their community, or to learn a new skill or hobby.

## Section 3: How we will make it happen



The Meaningful Lives Matter project is working on these 4 goals:

1. Good Relationships
2. A place to feel at home
3. Staying healthy, safe and well
4. Being active



To achieve our goals for Good Relationships we are helping you to be included and live as independently as possible through things like:

- Local Linked Support which gives early help and advice in local areas.
- Bfriends in Chelmsford. This is a new idea where people with disabilities support each other.



To achieve our goals for A Place to Feel at Home we are:

- Making sure social care teams talk to you about becoming more independent.





- Helping you to be more ready when you move home.



- Talking to housing and care providers about the sorts of homes and types of support you need.



To achieve our goals for Staying Healthy, Safe and Well we will:

- Teach staff about what happens as people with learning disabilities get older.



- Learn more about how Covid 19 affects you.



- Help you to learn to look after your own health.



- Work with health services to make it easier for you to use them.



To achieve our goals for Being Active we will:

- Give **grants** to local businesses to them employ people with disabilities.

A **grant** is when the council gives money to help someone, for example, to buy equipment so they can help someone to get a job.



- Help you to get a job.



- Make sure the activities that services provide help you to learn new skills and to be included in your community.



We will also:

- Include people with sensory and physical disabilities as well as learning disabilities if they are not already included.



- Think about what things need to happen first and what is most important.



- Continue to involve and listen to you.



- Keep you up to date with what is happening using the Meaningful Lives Matter Facebook group and newsletter.



- Test new ideas before we use them with everyone.



- Spend money carefully and on the right things.



We will make sure that other work going on supports this strategy. This includes work involving:

- Social care



- The different services that are on offer. For example, making more suitable places for you to live.



- Health and care services working together. For example, asking health partners to look at how their plans can keep you healthy.



- Technology.



- Data and information.





We will think about other ways we can make changes. This could include:

- Teaching people to be more aware of disabilities and how to make sure that services are easy to access.



- Working with different organisations like the police, job centres and teams that plan new places.



- Sharing information with people and communities.



The Adult Leadership Team at Essex County Council (ECC) will be in charge of what needs to happen in Adult Social Care.

This group has directors for different parts of Essex. It also has other senior people from ECC.

# How we will know it has worked



We will talk to you to find out how things are going for you.



We will also look at data.



We want to understand how things are changing.

We want to make sure things get better over time.



At the moment we can measure:

- The number of people with disabilities who have a paid job.

We want this to go up.



- How many people with disabilities live in a care home compared to those who live more independently.

We want this to go down.



In the future we will measure:

- How many people who have help from social care have a goal for the future.

We want this to go up.



- The number of people who have help from social care who have 3 or more good relationships in their life.

We want this to go up.



Where we can, we will look at how things are changing in different parts of Essex.



We will also look at how things are changing for people of different race, gender, and sexual orientation.

We want the change to be fair.







This information is issued by: Essex County Council  
Adult Social Care and Children and Families

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