

priorities to
improve
the lives of
our **children** and
young people

Draft for consultation

ESSEX CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN 2006

KEY PRIORITIES FOR CONSULTATION

INTRODUCTION

The Children and Young People's Plan is a strategic plan outlining the key priorities for all agencies supporting children and young people in Essex. Essex County Council is responsible for preparing the Plan which comes into operation in April 2006; it will replace a number of statutory plans which have previously been required.

We want to involve stakeholders in drafting the Plan from an early stage. We would appreciate your views on the suggested set of key priorities the plan should include; these have been identified from data we have collected from our partner agencies. Our data sources can be seen at www.essexcypsp.org. We are also inviting you to contribute ideas to a short vision statement which summarises our aims for children and young people in Essex. The consultation is planned to run from the middle of September to the beginning of November.

You can send us your views by completing the response form which is available on our website www.essexcc.gov.uk/cypplanconsultation. Please email the response form to cypplan@essexcc.gov.uk; or post to: Linda Bewsey, Children's Directorate, Essex County Council, PO Box 11, County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1LX.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please contact us by email at cypplan@essexcc.gov.uk or on 01245 431348 if you have any queries.

Responses should be returned by **4 November 2005**.

IMPROVEMENTS TO THE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

We want the best possible outcomes for our children and young people in Essex. We know that the quality of life for some of our children is poor and that there are significant differences in the life chances of children across Essex. We know that lots of our children are very successful and that overall this generally enables us to report an above average performance on most things. However, this is not good enough. Essex County Council and its partners have high aspirations for all and we are seeking to improve achievement and well being of all children and young people from all backgrounds.

The Children and Young People's Plan which we are required to prepare will set out how we aim to improve the lives of children and young people. The Plan will focus on a relatively small number of key issues that affect children's lives and will not include all services that are provided to children and young people.

We have looked at the data and information that is available to us and have identified some draft priorities on which we could focus; we have also included some areas of good performance to provide a more complete picture. We recognise that not every priority will be relevant to every locality in Essex; therefore, each local partnership will concentrate on those priorities which are supported by information in its respective locality.

We want to work in all five of the key outcome areas of the *Every Child Matters* agenda to enable children and young people to:

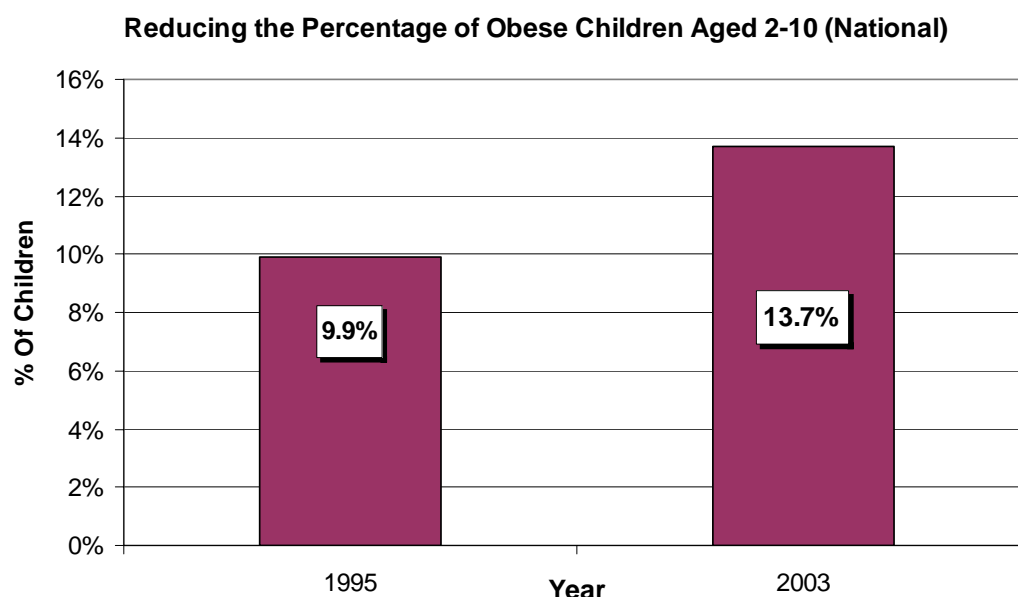
- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve
- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being

Being healthy

Under the “be healthy” outcome we particularly want to target those issues that will have a longer term impact on individual children throughout their lives if they are not tackled during their childhood. We see these as being:

A. Reducing obesity

We want to reduce the percentage of obese children under 11 years of age. The graph below illustrates that childhood obesity is a problem increasing in significance.



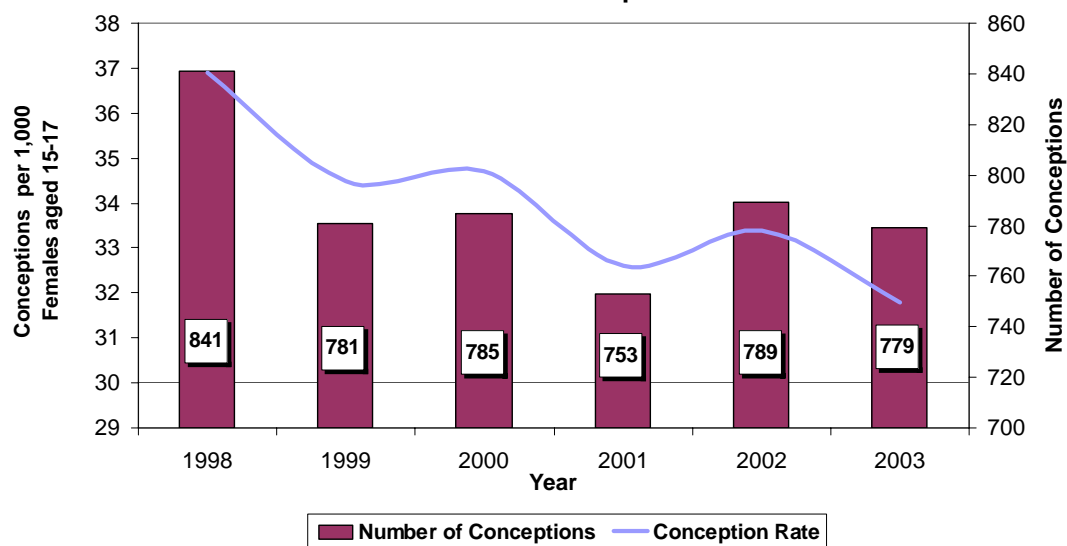
Childhood obesity is increasing at national level and local data also suggests that obesity is increasing amongst the overall Essex population. The county is located in the East of England, and although local child obesity rates appear below regional averages (the regional rate was 14.1% for 2001-02),

we anticipate continued increase without action. The situation is urgent: the East of England is already falling behind the UK's best performing regions (11.4% for 2001-02 in Yorkshire and the Humber).

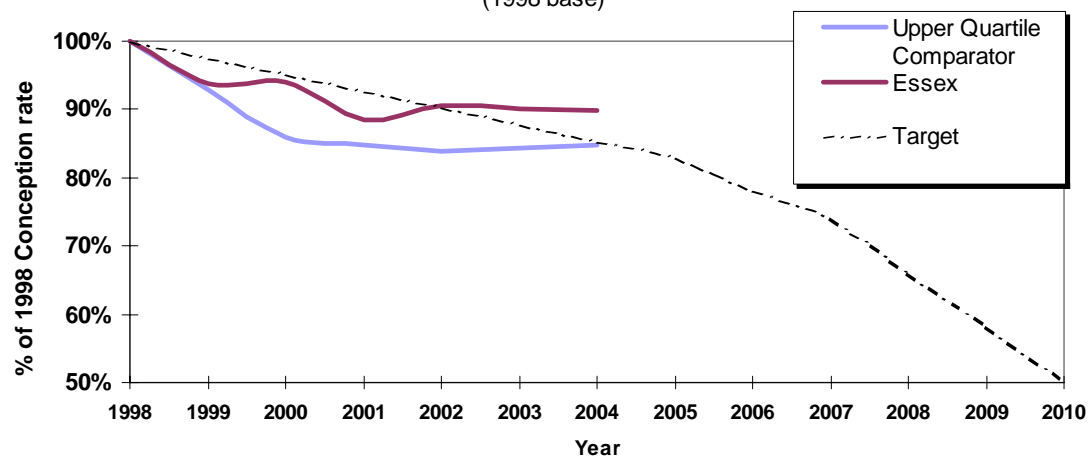
B. Reducing teenage pregnancies

We want to reduce the percentage of pregnancies of young women under 18 years of age. Our target is to reduce the under-18 pregnancy rate by 50% by 2010 compared with the rate for 1998. The graphs below show that we have made some progress in reducing conception rates since 1998. However, they suggest that local reductions have been smaller than in the most successful comparable areas. They also suggest that the number of teenage conceptions has not fallen significantly since 1999.

Under 18 Conceptions: Numbers and Conception Rate per 1,000 of the 15-17 Female Population



Change in the Number of Conceptions per 1,000 Females Ages 15-17 (1998 base)



C. Reducing alcohol and drug misuse

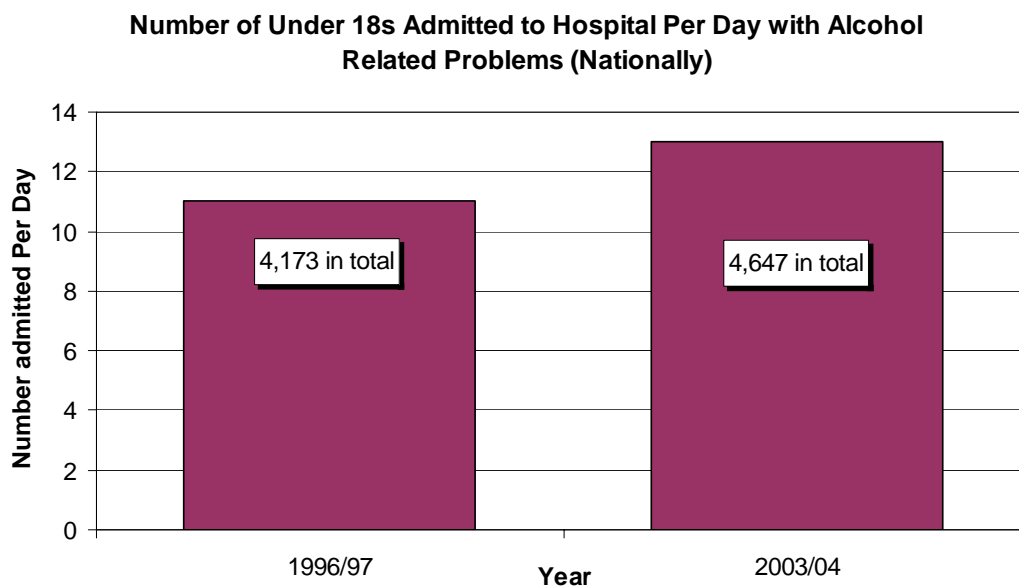
We want to reduce the misuse of drugs and alcohol among young people in Essex. Part of this aim will involve collecting reliable and comprehensive data for Essex.

C1. Alcohol misuse

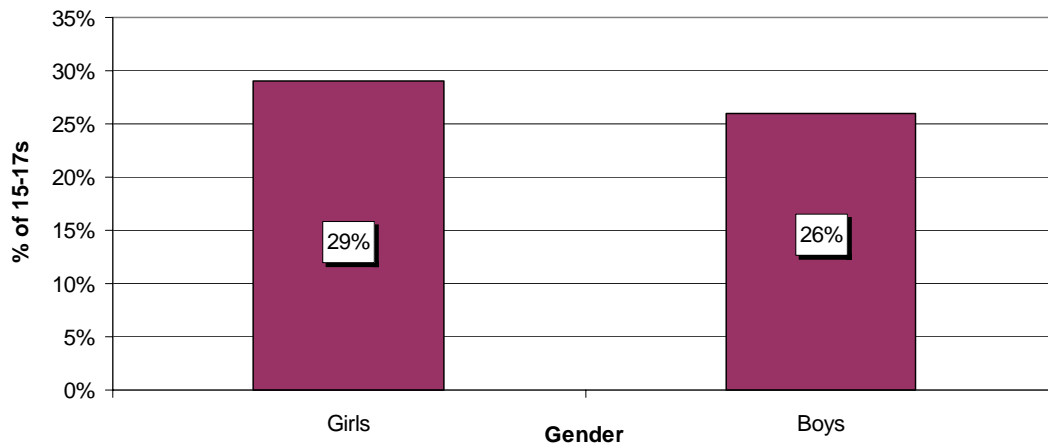
The charts below suggest that a significant number of young males and females regularly indulge in binge drinking. They also suggest that these young people drink more than ever before (weekly alcohol consumption has doubled since 1990), and that a growing number are being admitted to hospital with alcohol related problems (there has been an 11% increase since 1996-97).

An Essex sample survey found that under-age drinking was highly prevalent and the usual start age for public drinking in streets and parks etc was around 15 or 16 years. It was easy for many under-age young people to access alcohol. Alcohol was by far young people's favourite substance: 54% admitted to drinking on a regular basis and 27% admitted to binge drinking on a regular basis.

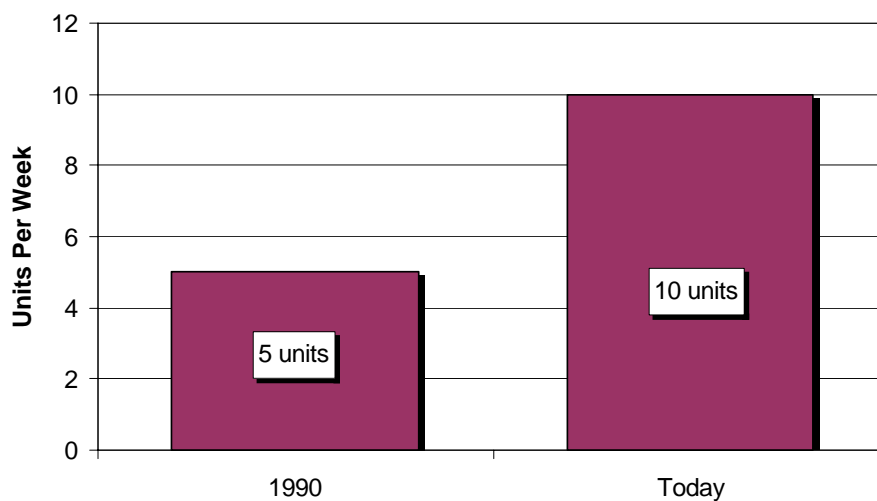
We wish to target about 250 premises in the areas of greatest concern from which traders are willing to supply alcohol to young people in Essex.



Percentage of 15-17 Year Olds Indulging in Binge Drinking at Least Three Times in the Previous Month (December 2004)



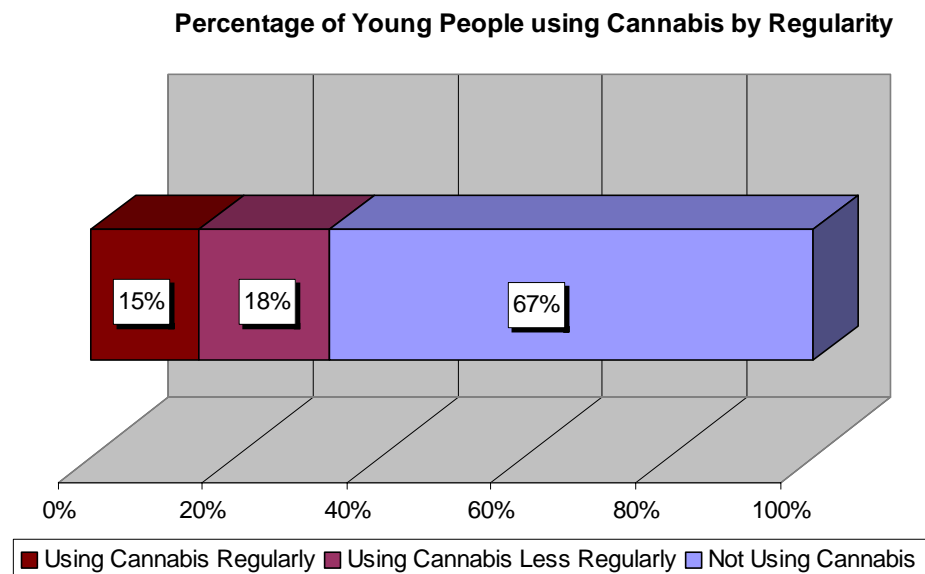
Units of Alcohol Consumed Per Week by Adolescents who Drink Alcohol



We are particularly concerned about drug and alcohol abuse among vulnerable young people in Essex, as they have higher levels of substance misuse than non-vulnerable young people. Approximately 520 young people receive support from the Leaving and After Care Service, part of the Essex County Council's Looked After Children's Service; about 23% of these are misusing drugs and alcohol at any one time. These young adults are also more likely to be taking a variety of drugs and using them in problematic and chaotic ways.

C2. Drug misuse

From the Essex sample survey one third of young people (33%) said that they used cannabis. The chart below details regularity of cannabis use.



More males used cannabis than females. Cannabis, followed by ecstasy and cocaine were the main drugs used in leisure venues. Only a small minority admitted to using Class A drugs on a regular basis.

The majority of young people thought that most drugs were easy to get hold of – 50% said that friends had offered them drugs, and 11% that a close family member had offered them drugs.

Around 40% of the young people drinking alcohol regularly were using drugs and alcohol together. There is concern that solvents are making a reappearance.

Young people thought they knew more than they actually did about various drugs, including alcohol and their effects. Respondents knew little about the risks of cannabis and they had little knowledge of Class A drugs.

Both alcohol and cannabis misuse were seen as 'normal' behaviours and were rarely seen as a problem by young people. 21% agreed that taking drugs and 17% that drinking alcohol had affected their school work. Most did not see their drinking was a problem but a few had stopped using drugs because they had decided that it had become a problem.

D. Promoting children's mental health and emotional well-being

The number of cases accepted as referrals across Essex to the child and adolescent mental health services was over 7,000 in the 2004-05 year. We wish to continue to reduce waiting times for referrals.

Good performance in the 'being healthy' outcome

Our performance is good in the following areas:

A. Children and adolescent mental health services

- a) There has been increased investment of 10% into children and adolescent mental health services 2004-05.
- b) As at 30 November no child or young person referred to children and adolescent mental health services was waiting more than 13 weeks to be seen (national target).

Waiting Time	South Essex	North Essex
Less than 4 weeks	245	186
Between 4 and 13 weeks	265	89
Over 13 weeks	0	0

B. Combating bullying

Baseline – funded by the Children's Fund Essex is an anti-bullying project which can be extended; it has involved 30 schools and 8,000 pupils especially Years 5 and 6 in small groups; curriculum materials have been developed and resources disseminated.

Staying safe

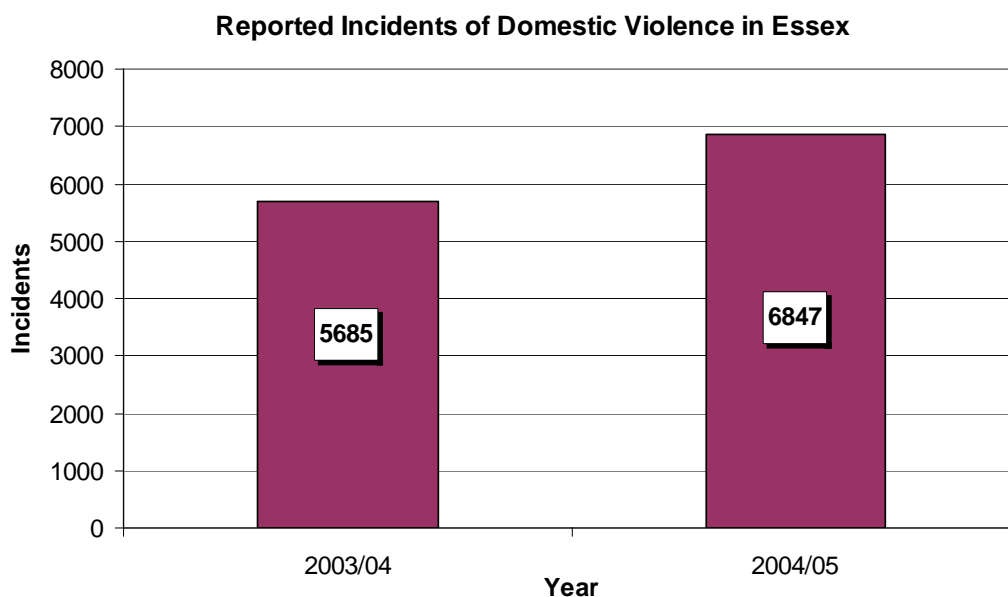
In staying safe we want to focus our efforts on protecting children from physical and emotional harm. We want to:

A. Safeguard children and young people missing from home or care and to reduce the number of these occurrences

We are working hard to collect and analyse data in order to identify these children and young people early, to inform interagency plans to find these youngsters and to reduce the risks to which they are exposed.

B. Safeguard those children and young people who live in families where there is domestic violence and alcohol misuse or drug taking

Essex has experienced a 20.4% increase in the reporting of domestic violence incidents from 2003-04 to 2004-05 (although some of this increase may be due to better reporting). Children and young people are often adversely affected by these experiences.

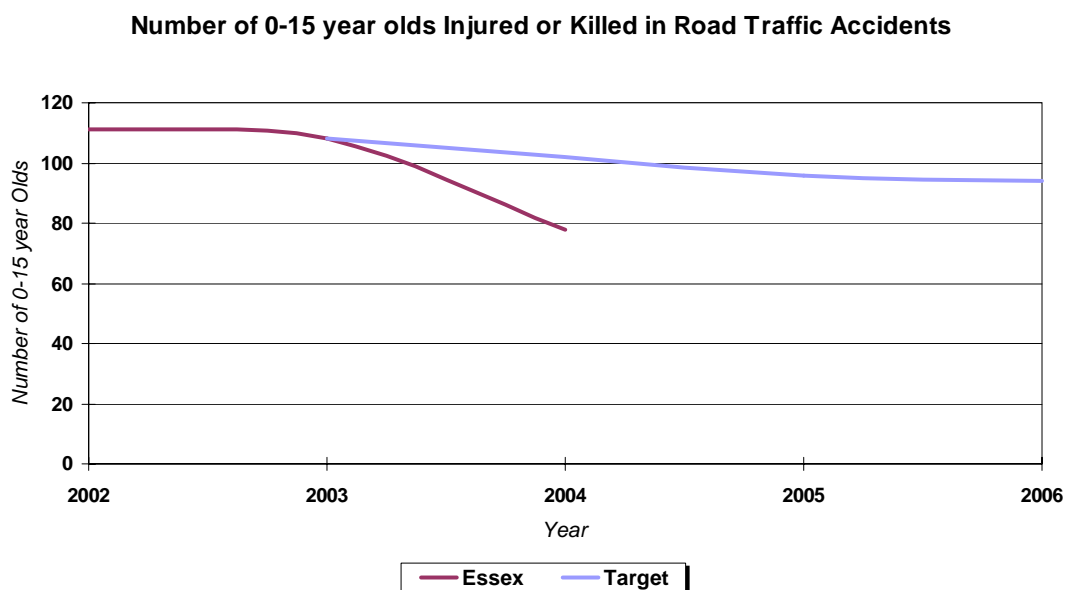


C. Safeguard children and young people who live with private foster carers

We are working hard to collect and analyse data in order to identify these children and young people early and to ensure that visits are made within relevant timescales.

D. Reduce the number of children injured or killed in road traffic accidents

The chart below shows Essex has a lower number of children killed or seriously injured in road traffic accidents than national targets for prevention require. However, with an increasing number of vehicles on the roads of Essex, we wish to reduce further loss of life and injuries.



E. Reduce the number of child victims of crime

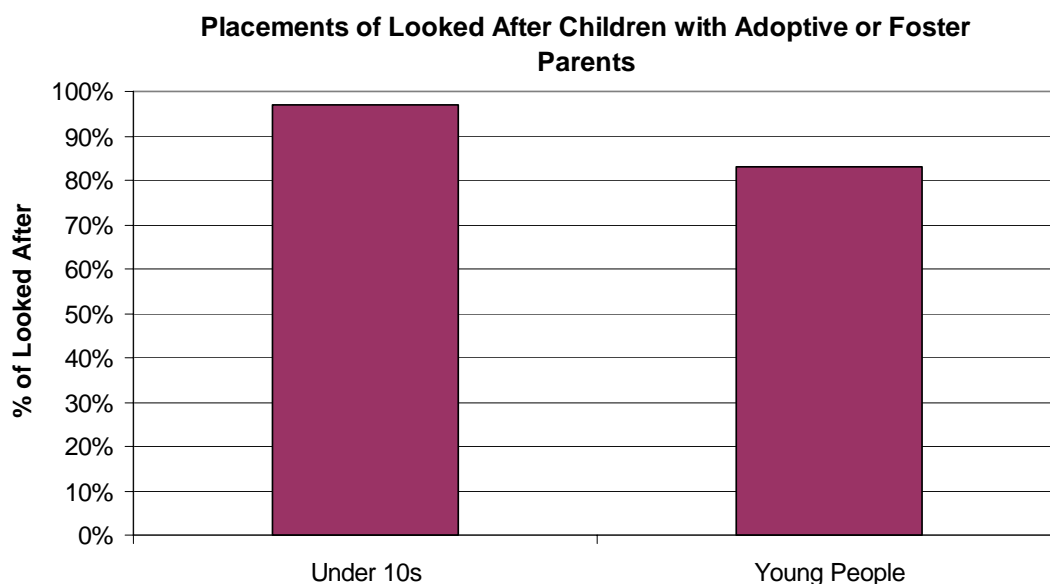
In 2004 there were over 13,000 recorded incidents of crime against children and young people. This figure would be augmented by incidents which were not reported to the police.

Good performance in the 'staying safe' outcome

Our performance is already good in the following areas:

A. Placements of looked after children with adoptive or foster parents.

Although 97% of children under 10 years old and 83% of those aged 11 plus who are looked after are placed with adoptive or foster parents, we aim to do even better.



B. Increase in positive behaviour of young children with autism

Improvements in behaviour have been noted as an outcome of early intervention for young children and their families through the *Good Beginnings* project.

C. Children and young people who are at risk have well managed interagency child protection plans

All children on the child protection register have an allocated social worker and all reviews have been held on time. We are committed to continue our improvement in this area.

Enjoying and Achieving

In education we will concentrate our efforts to ensure that our children have the right basic skills to enable them as young people and adults to get the most out of education and training. Therefore, we want to:

A. Reduce the number of underperforming schools

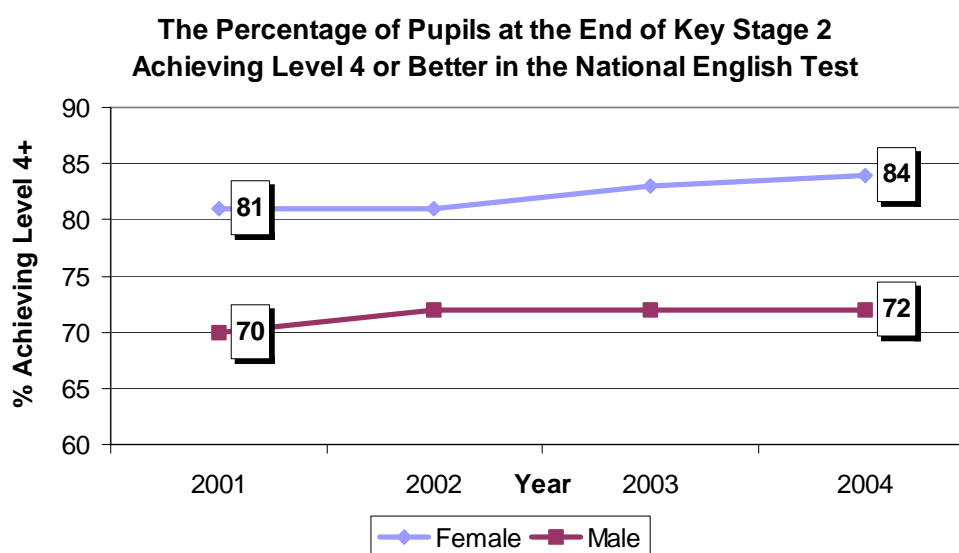
In 2004 there were 126 junior and primary schools where fewer than 65% of pupils were achieving level 4 at Key Stage 2, and where fewer than 70% pupils are expected to achieve this in English and mathematics in 2007. Approximately 4,300 pupils are involved, about 25% of the age group.

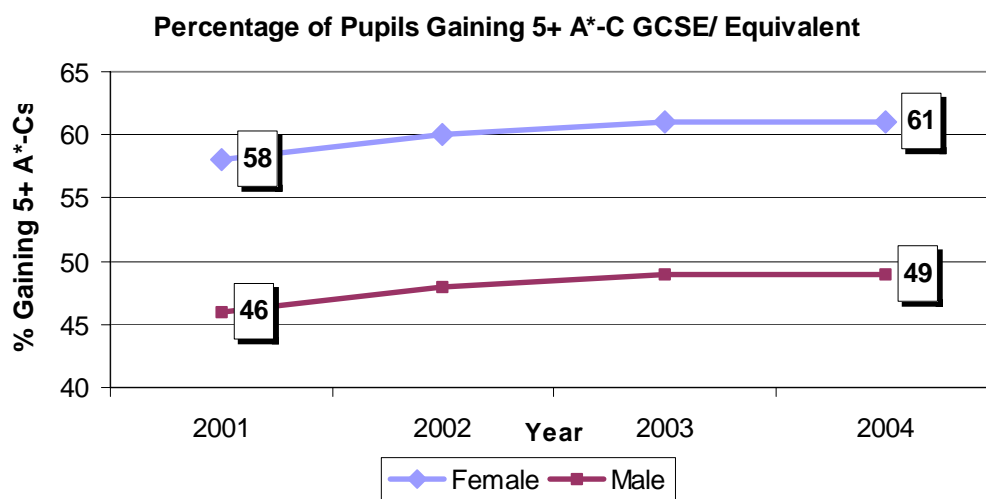
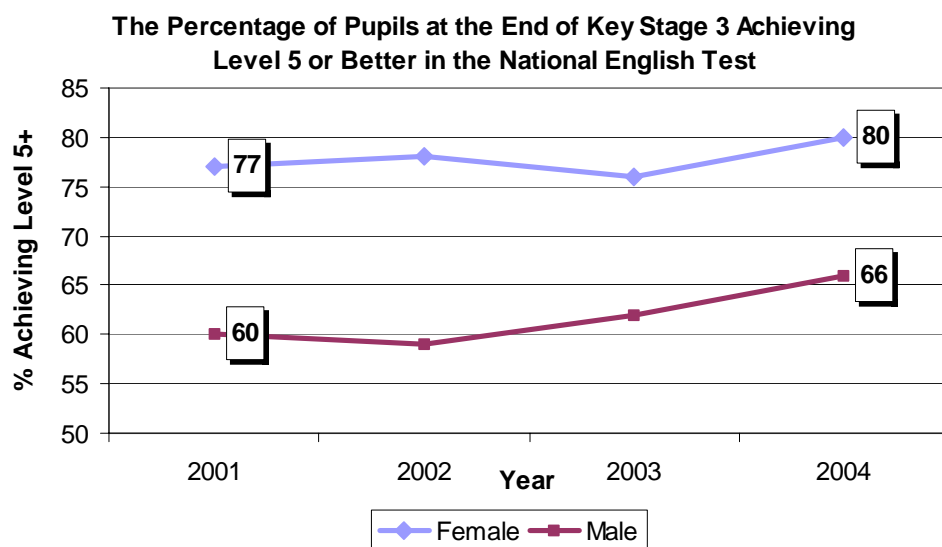
In 2004 there were 16 secondary schools, 20 % of the total, where 5% or more of students did not obtain at least 1 A*-G grade at GCSE, or equivalent. In Essex 504 students out of nearly 15,900, 3.2% of the age group, did not achieve at least 1 A* to G grade at GCSE.

It is possible nationally to compare pupils' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4. The average progress has been given a score of 1,000. In 2004, 27 or 34% of secondary schools in Essex had a score of below 990.

B. Reduce the differences between boys' and girls' attainment.

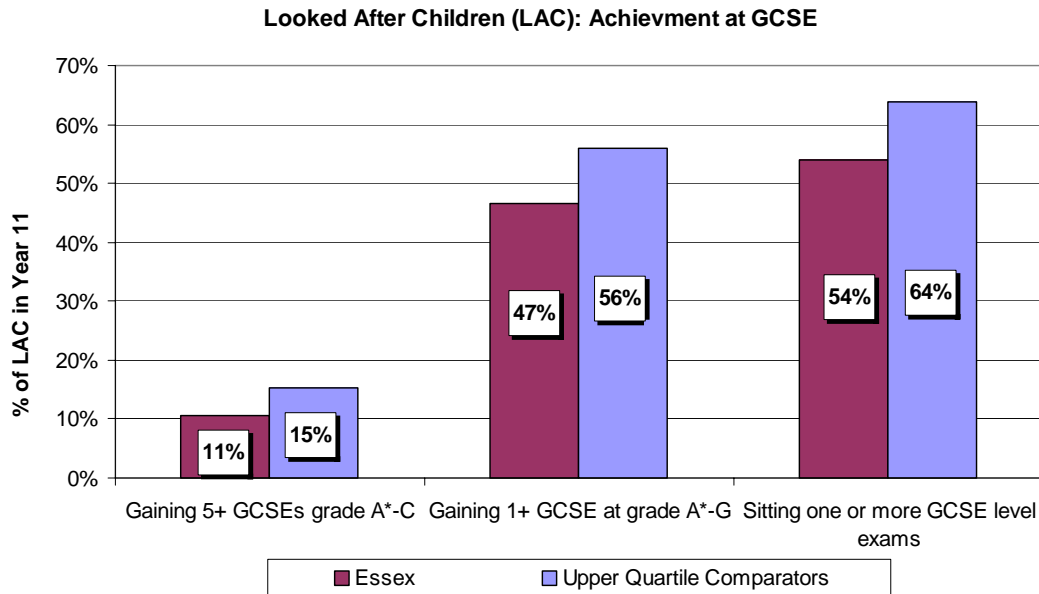
The gap between the attainment of boys compared with that of girls has widened as measured by national curriculum tests, particularly in English, and GCSE examinations.





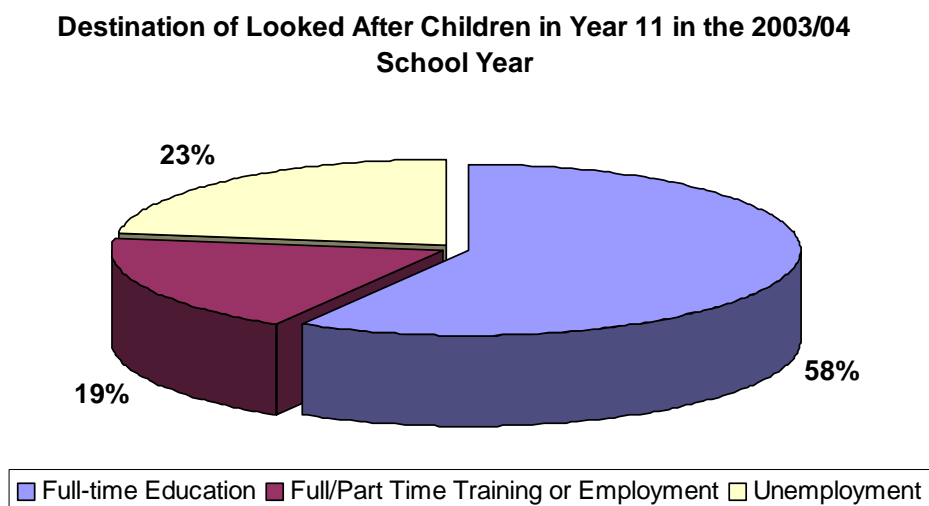
C. Raise educational achievements of children who have been looked after for at least 12 months

Looked after children in Essex achieve educational outcomes better than the national average. We want to do better still. The chart below shows the performance of Essex on three key indicators relative to the best performing county councils. We aspire to be in this group.



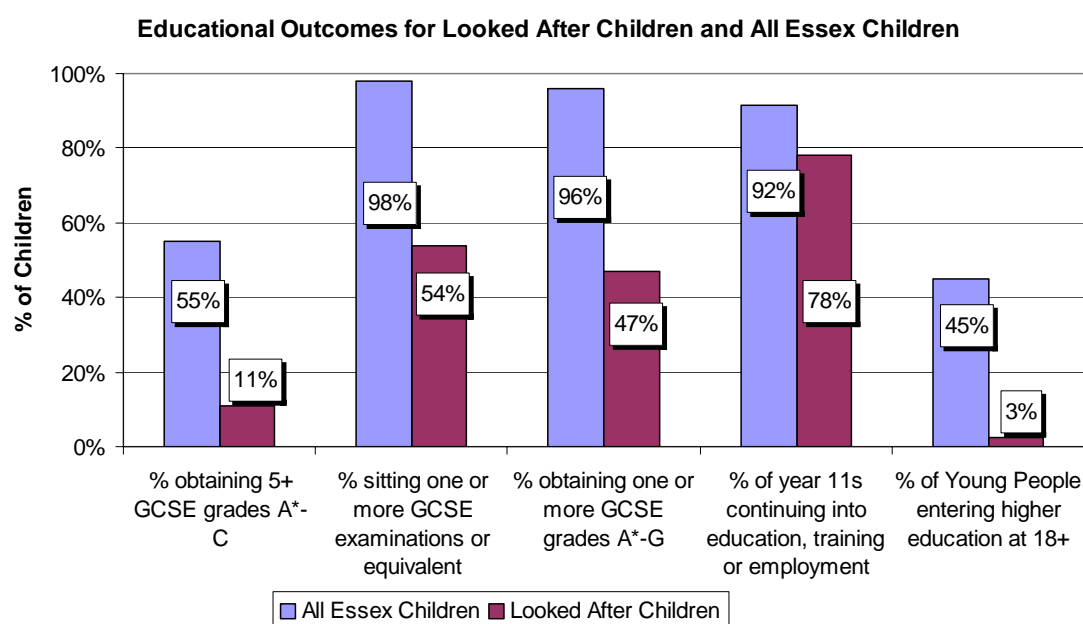
We recognise the challenges in the education of our looked after children that go beyond achievement. Encouraging participation in education is also important. Absence rates of looked after children are significantly higher than among all Essex children with 16.7% missing at least 15 days of schooling and 12.3% missing 25 days.

At the same time as raising achievement and improving participation we want to improve the transitions post-16 of young people who are looked after (see chart below). While 77% of young people looked after continue in education, employment or training, the corresponding figures for all Essex young people is 92%.



We are committed to reducing the differences in achievement between our looked after children and Essex children in general. The chart below shows

that the difference in achievement levels is too great. We aim to reduce this while supporting achievement in both groups.



D. Meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in mainstream schools and make specialist provision for pupils with significant need.

Recent inspections have indicated that the strategy for the provision we make for children with special educational needs is good. We want to build on and continue to develop the wide variety of provision for children and young people with special educational needs. The following table provides details for the 2004-05 school year; we are committed to meeting the needs of all these children in each of their settings.

Groups of pupils	Number of pupils	% of total pupils in Essex schools
Mainstream pupils on School Action/School Action Plus	26,737	13.27
Mainstream pupils with statements of special educational needs	2,832	1.4
Pupils in mainstream units	320	0.2
Pupils in Essex special schools	1,783	0.9
Pupils in other local authority special schools	160	0.1
Pupils in independent schools	184	0.1
Total	32,016	15.83

Good performance in the 'enjoying and achieving' outcome

Our performance is already good in:

A. Early years education

Our early years provision meets the needs of children and their families with all 3 year olds having access to good quality free early years education places in the voluntary, private or maintained sectors.

B. Sixth form education

There have been annual increases between 2001 and 2004 in the average points scores of students entered for GCE A and AS Levels and the Vocational Certificate in Education.

Making a positive contribution

In making a positive contribution, we will focus our efforts on helping young people to develop positive relationships by:

A. Helping young people 14-17 to avoid persistent/entrenched harmful behaviour including offending and to raise their aspirations

Approximately 250 young people aged 14-17 are responsible for 80% of the offences committed by young people; young people under 19 years commit approximately 33% of all crime.

B. Promoting access to positive leisure, cultural, recreational and community activities

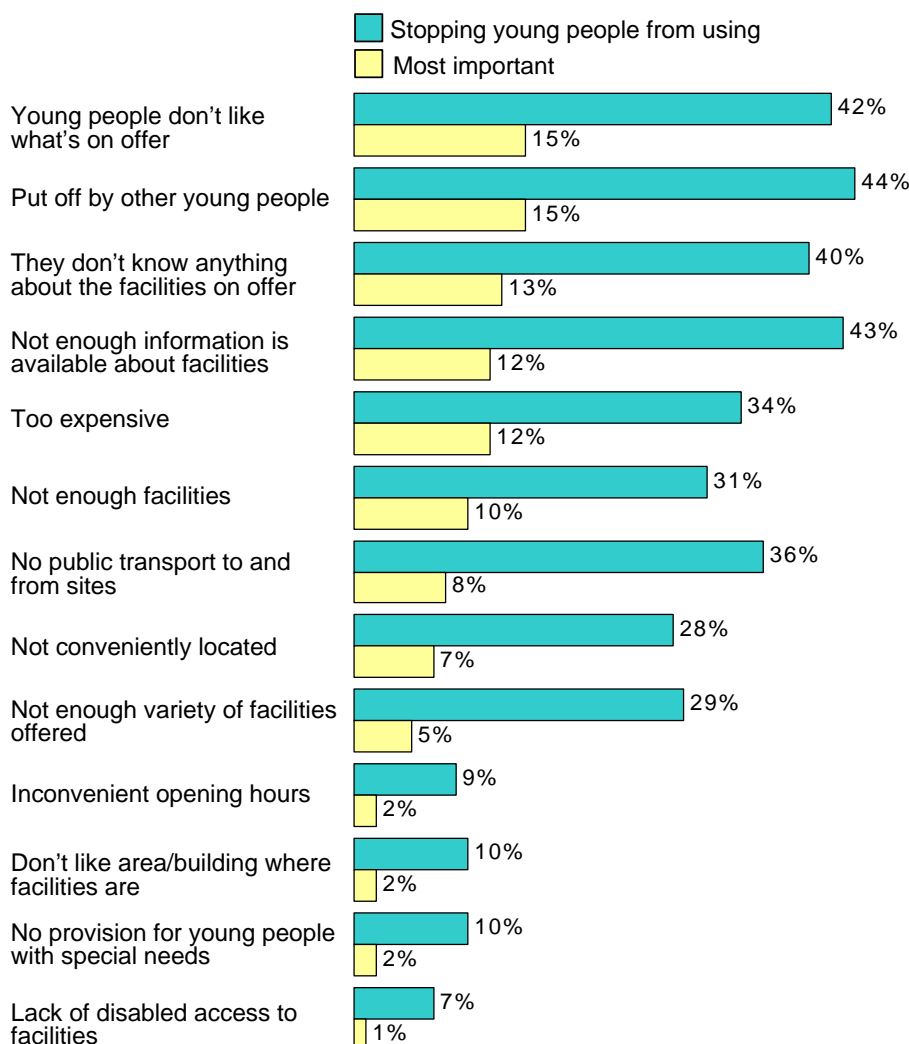
Facilities for young people were highlighted as a key local concern in local MORI research. The 2003 Citizens' Panel suggested that the most significant barriers to young people using current facilities are:

- Being put off by other young people
- A lack of awareness of the facilities
- A lack of public transport to and from facilities

Full results from this poll are shown below.

Facilities for young people

- Q *What, if anything, do you think is stopping young people from using current facilities in Essex?*
- Q *And which of these do you think is the most important reason why young people do not use the facilities provided for them?*



Base: 12 districts (667)

Source: MORI

Other results from this same research suggest that of a range of potential facilities for young people, live music venues/studios would be the most popular - four in five (81%) thought young people would use this type of resource. Over three quarters of respondents (76%) also think that young people would be likely to use cyber-cafes. The popularity of cyber-cafes increases among those from less affluent households, who are less likely to have a computer at home.

A dedicated evening bus service to transport young people to and from facilities is also popular (selected by 76%), particularly Chelmsford residents (84%) and those working full time (82%). This is also the most popular option

among younger panel members, with nine in ten (88%) 16-24 year olds saying they think it would be likely that young people would use the service.

In the 2002 UK Youth Parliament Essex Survey, the cost, frequency and timing of public transport was identified as one of the top issues by young people with regard to enabling them to access a wider choice of further education, employment and leisure opportunities.

In 2004 a further Mori Citizens' Poll in Essex recorded that 'Teenagers hanging around on the streets' was seen as a problem by 46% of respondents; perhaps this was an indication that insufficient facilities or opportunities were available for recreation.

Good performance in the 'making a positive contribution' outcome

Our performance is already good in the following areas:

A. Decisions on the provision of services are influenced by children and young people

Children and young people have opportunities to contribute to decision making and matters which affect them, including:

- a) 79 members of the Young Essex Assembly
- b) *It's My Life* Forum for looked after children and children in need
- c) *Lively Trainers* project for trainers aged 14+ to deliver training on participation, active listening and service user experiences
- d) a communication strategy for children and young people with disabilities
- e) development of the Youth Service
- f) the Pupil Voice Project gathering pupils' perceptions on a range of topics.
- g) an action research team supported by Anglia Polytechnic University enquiring into the non-use of services for children, young people and their families
- h) contributing to the Sure Start Local Programmes
- i) preparing a report, *Not Just Ticking The Box*, recommending a participation plan for children and young people

B. Families are able to make decisions through Family Group Conferencing

Nearly 330 referrals, involving some 530 children, are made each year to the Family Group Conferencing Service. Family group conferences and associated activities support children and young people and their families through restorative justice and other direct contact with families. Outcomes for young people have included increased self-esteem and taking responsibility for their actions.

Achieving Economic Well Being

The barriers to young people achieving economic success are not as great in Essex than they are at national level. Of those young people leaving compulsory education in the next 5 years less than 9% live in households claiming income and employment related benefits – a lower proportion than seen regionally or nationally. Essex itself contains no large centres of deprivation with fewer than 5% of its population living in seriously deprived areas. Young people in Essex thus generally avoid the barriers to success associated with inter-generational deprivation effects, i.e. difficulty in accessing education, adequate housing and transport.

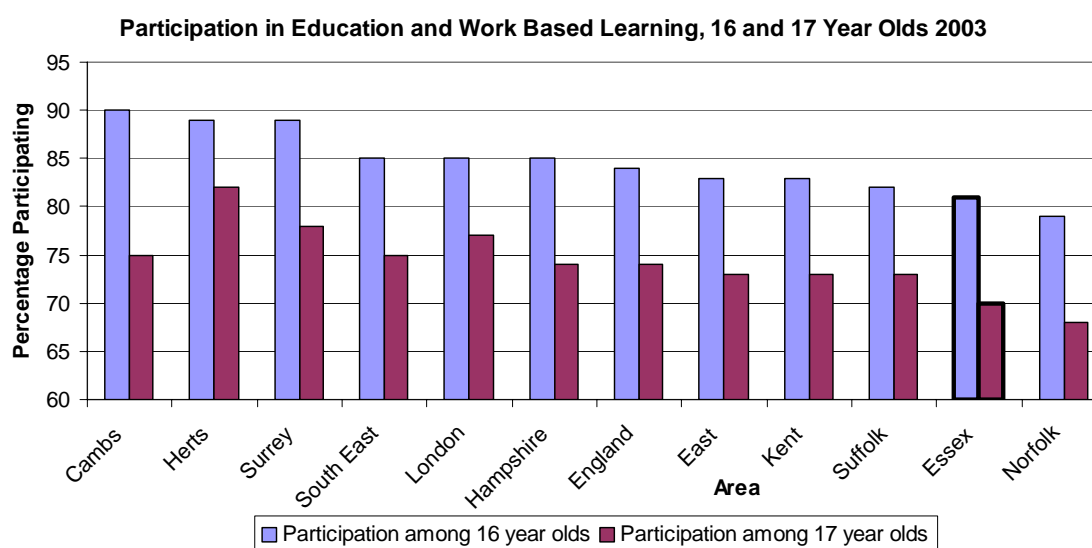
Although this suggests a positive picture we are not content. We remain committed to assisting those in most need in order that they get off to a good start in early adulthood. We want to concentrate our efforts on helping our young people to achieve economic well-being by:

A. Increasing the percentage of young people aged 16-19 participating in education, employment or training

Levels of participation in education and work based learning among 16 and 17 year olds are lower in Essex than in England, the Eastern Region and in most large authorities in the East and South East Regions.

There are currently about 20 secondary schools, one quarter of the total, that contribute about half of those Year 11 students not continuing into education, employment and structured training with which we intend to work to improve these rates. The total Year 11 cohort in these schools is approximately 4,430 students, about 28% of students of the year group.

On page 12 reference was made to increasing the number of 16-18 year olds who were looked after in education, employment and training; we also want to increase the proportion of 16-18 year olds with special educational needs in education, employment and training.



B. Increasing the training of young people in employment.

Data from the Labour Force Survey suggests that younger workers in Essex are less likely to receive training in employment than across the region and nation as a whole (see chart below). Essex, together with Southend and Thurrock will be receiving specific funding from central government to fund a Learning Agreement pilot, aimed at about 2,000 16 and 17 year olds who are in work but not receiving accredited training. The funding will be used to support training for qualifications, and will test the impact of subsidies for employers who allow their workers time off for training.



C. Increasing the percentage of young people leaving care who are shown to be in accommodation that meets their particular needs

Currently 55% of these young people have suitable accommodation; we wish to raise this percentage significantly.

Good performance in the 'achieving economic well-being' outcome

Our performance is already good in the following area:

Provision for sixth form students

All schools with a sixth form have been judged to be 'very good' or 'good' by Ofsted inspectors

Support for parents

Research evidence indicates that positive parental involvement is crucial to the development of children. This has been a key feature of our development of integrated services for children and young people for which we have been awarded Beacon Status in 2005. However, we recognise that in order to

meet the priorities we have listed above, further support for parents and carers will be required; therefore we want to:

- A. Build on parenting and family support, especially in the first two years of a child's life**
- B Build on tailored support for parents at the key points of transition in the development of children and young people**

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