

Essex Early Years and Childcare Charter 2026

Information on The Charter and what
this means for you and your child.



Why are we introducing a charter?

The aim of the Charter is to support the new early years and childcare strategy which sets out how we will help every child get the best start in life. We are introducing a charter to create a visible sign of how this will work in Essex.

What is the Charter?

The Charter is a set of minimum principles that early years and childcare providers and partners commit to. The principles are based around best practice and values to support families and giving children the best start in life.

Benefits to children and families

- **Confidence** that providers have a membership badge showing their commitment to work to the shared principles
- **Reassurance** that as a partner, providers will support families to give all children the best start in life
- **Awareness** of shared principles and values and what these mean for you



What are the principles?

There are 4 shared principles with outcomes underneath each one.

Principle 1

We commit to having high aspirations for each unique child

Outcomes:

- Listening to and encouraging children's views and reflecting on and interpreting children's actions to support their progress and development
- Seeking to understand children's perspectives, support participation, and their individual needs
- Supporting children as they move through early years and into their next stage of learning and school
- Ensuring that our workforce understand the needs of Early Years children, ensuring they receive the right help at the right time
- Provide an environment where all children are supported with care and kindness
- Looking for ways in which we can support Early Years children to understand the impact they have on their environment.



Principle 2

We commit to respecting Parents, Carers and Families as our partners

Outcomes:

- Valuing and actively listening to families to support the learning and experiences of their children
- Ensuring our information is easy to find and easy to understand. It will open doors to services
- Ensuring consistent signposting for families, with support tailored to their needs
- Providing support for children and parents who have additional needs or if they become vulnerable, and communicating this support clearly
- Aiming to offer flexible services which support and help parents as they work and study.



Principle 3

We commit to contributing towards the early years system

Outcomes:

- Helping families, and us as practitioners, to provide and/or find the information and support when they need it, whilst ensuring information provided is consistent and accessible when it is needed
- Making sure that our information, guidance, and support does not conflict with other support that is provided to parents and carers
- Promoting an environment that focuses on compassion and kindness, hope, connection and belonging (Trauma Perspective Practice Principles)
- Communicating and working together collaboratively, valuing the expertise and knowledge of everyone within the system, including families
- Looking for ways in which we can reduce our carbon footprint and encourage and contribute towards the environment



Principle 4

We commit to working collaboratively with our partners and providers

Outcomes:

- Working alongside agencies and organisations that support children and families within Early Years, focusing on safeguarding and ensuring the right help is received at the right time
- Ensuring staff have up to date training and skills to ensure that all children will receive the best early years and childcare experience
- Supporting staff to provide a safe environment which promotes a sense of belonging
- Enabling staff to be more knowledgeable and skilled to effectively support children and families
- Having a fair recruitment practice that will not exclude but will welcome and support a diverse workforce
- Looking after staff health and wellbeing
- Sharing knowledge and information in an effective and timely manner.



Who is the charter for?

The Charter is for all those working in the early years system; early years and childcare providers, Schools, The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service, Essex County Council and organisations/professionals working with children aged pre-birth to 19 (25 for children with special educational needs and disability) and their families.

How does it work?

We want the Charter to be a visible sign of how we work in Essex. We are inviting all early years and childcare providers and partners to sign up to the charter and become a member. By signing up to the charter, providers and partners will commit to shared principles and work with local partners to demonstrate commitment and share best practice.

We will choose focus areas under each principle throughout our membership to improve our offer to you and will keep you updated on this work throughout 2026. Why not ask us about the areas we are currently focussing on, and we can update you on our work so far. Providers who sign up to become a charter member will display a charter membership badge.



If you have any questions about how your provider meets the criteria to be deemed a Charter member, please contact your provider directly in the first instance so they can discuss this together with you. If this does not resolve the issue please contact EarlyYearsCharter@essex.gov.uk

This information is issued by:
Early Years and Childcare

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