



**Year 2 Interim Report
January 2026**

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Essex Caring Communities Commission Interim Report January 2026

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The Essex Caring Communities Commission is an independent 2-year Commission that commenced its work in May 2024 to respond to rising and unsustainable pressures across health and social care in Essex. Its core purpose is to design and recommend radical, preventative, community-focused solutions to improve wellbeing and reduce long-term demand on services. In Year 1 the Commission brought together eleven independent Commissioners who gathered primary and secondary evidence from sectors including the NHS, charities, universities, political groups, and think tanks. The Commission engaged with national and local experts in their fields including services users.

[The Essex Caring Communities Commission report](#), identified twenty-three actions focussed on delivering radical change that would shift Essex toward a preventative state, and strengthen community connections to improve health, wellbeing, and the sustainability of public services. The report was well received by our Essex system leaders and stakeholders, all of whom contributed to the Commission, and further, National experts in the field of health and social care and Members of Parliament where the report was celebrated at an event in July 2025. This interim report sets out how the Commission is working and progress made against the twenty-three actions and what the next steps will be.

Year 2 – Reforming the Commission

- **A Stewardship Approach**

With the introduction of devolution and the transition to a Greater Essex Combined Authority and Unitary Councils, the Commission has maintained delivery focus by reforming its membership into an Essex Leaders Group. The group is formed of senior leaders from health and social care, District/Councils, the voluntary and community sector, and the police, and maintains cross party-political representation. The role of the leader's group has been to:

- Be custodians of the Commission and preserve the integrity of the intentions of it.
- Maintain momentum and create urgency and buy-in
- Galvanise system response to deliver the Actions.
- Use span of influence to capitalise on this opportunity to generate culture and behavioural change.

By the end of year two of the Commission, the aim is to have a clear and deliverable action plan, with Action Stewards driving and supporting the activity required to achieve those actions. The stewardship approach is a deliberate recognition that no single organisation or individual can 'own' the solutions. Instead, it is designed to foster the collective leadership, shared problem-solving and joint accountability needed to make progress. This collaborative way of working will be especially critical as the system navigates significant change, including the impacts of Local Government Reorganisation, where strong, trust-based partnerships will be essential to maintaining momentum and delivering meaningful cultural change.

Essex Caring Communities Commission Interim Report January 2026

3. Socialising the twenty-three actions

Since July 2025 there has been a range of engagement with partnerships, people, organisations, and different sector leaders, primarily through meetings and workshops. In total, over 350 people have engaged with the actions to develop them further so that they can be delivered in meaningful way. This has meant thinking strategically about what fits with the future intentions for local government in Essex, central government policy, and strategies and further, work that is already happening in Essex. The actions have been categorised as follows:

Actions that align to the in-coming Combined Authority.

- Greater Essex Local Transport Plan
- Wellbeing Transport Fund
- Specialist Housing
- Office of Prevention

Actions that enable new cultures and behaviours.

- Bold Commissioners Group
- Essex Residents Assembly
- Social Connections Programme

Actions that must be driven by community and directly support stakeholders.

- Civil Society programme
- Celebration Festival
- Volunteering Olympics
- Challenge £2 billion

Actions that complement current delivery and/or support national policy and reform.

- Health at Home Programme
- Multi-agency Triaging Hub
- Reception Ready Task Forces
- Public Sector Assets Network
- Youth Guarantee
- Public Services Experience programme
- Apprenticeships for Care Leavers
- Essex Retirement Service
- Decade of Opportunity
- 50+ Workforce employment
- Essex Employers Care Partnership

System engagement commenced in September 2025 with 257 attendances at 15 Bite Size Sessions focussed on the actions, this included young people from the Young Essex Assembly, colleagues from district, borough and city councils, health, education, social care, and representatives from the voluntary and community sector. These discussions have been instrumental to refining the actions into meaningful high-level plans that complement rather

Essex Caring Communities Commission Interim Report January 2026

than complicate anything relative that might already be being delivered. There continues to be extensive engagement where we are consolidating people's views, ideas, and concerns. There has been much learning about the conditions needed to be in place that will enable the change we want to see.

4. Listening, Learning, Adapting, Shaping

We have been mindful that the many of the actions are linked to existing work or historic efforts; whilst some are different, they are inextricably linked; and for others they will be reliant on, or influenced by, changing and emerging policy and strategy. Part of the engagement has been researching and listening to what is developing locally and nationally to ensure that we make the most of the opportunities the Caring Communities 23 Actions offer.

The consistent willingness to engage with the work of the Commission and the enthusiasm for the actions is certainly promising but the challenge of what lays ahead in terms of delivering tangible change and impact must not be underestimated. There are some key matters that must be acknowledged, understood, and supported:

- Significant mindset shifts needed to deliver the work require significant investment of time.
- Engaging community stakeholders is challenging because they are challenged in terms of time, capacity, and finance.
- We need to be patient and enable people to see themselves and their relevance in the actions and assure people that uncertainty should be embraced.
- Securing action stewards and the right people to coalesce around any given action requires reciprocal generosity.
- We are operating in shifting landscapes and the work of the Commission but be anchored in the right place to ensure the work maintains momentum.

5. Next Steps

Partners across the Essex system will continue to be supported to engage with emerging developments and to shape the actions collectively. May 2026, we will mark the conclusion of the two-year Caring Communities Commission by publishing a deliverable Action Plan. This will include a clear roadmap to sustain momentum and visibility during a period of momentous change, ensuring that impact and evaluation are planned for and that learning is shared and actively informs the foundations of the future of local government.

Councillor Beverely Egan,
Chair of the Essex Caring Communities Commission.