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**Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Scrutiny Committee, held in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 12 January 2017**

**Present:**

County Councillors:

I Grundy (Chairman)

S Barker

J Chandler

M Danvers

A Goggin

T Higgins

R Howard

M McEwen

C Sargeant

Non-Elected Voting Members

Richard Carson

County Councillors in attendance:

Cllr K Bobbin

The following officers were present in support for all or part of the meeting:

Robert Fox, Scrutiny Officer

Alex Polak, Scrutiny Manager

Jennifer Reid, Committee Officer

**1 Apologies and Substitution Notices**

Apologies were received from the following Councillors:

A Wood

C Guglielmi

A Erskine

**2 Minutes of meeting held on 10 November 2016**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2016 were agreed as a correct record subject to amendments to item 6 and were signed by the Chairman.

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Action

1. To review recording and officer notes regarding Item 6 Essex Youth Service Scrutiny Report 2016 to ensure comments regarding the Prince's Trust included in minutes. Jennifer Reid/Robert Fox

## Note of Secretary

\* minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2016 have been amended to reflect comments regarding the Princes Trust and Plan B programme.

**3 Questions from the Public**

There were no questions from members of the public.

**4 Essex Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report 2015–2016**

Members received PAF/01/17, the annual report of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board 2015-16 presented by Paul Secker, Director for Safeguarding. The Chairman welcomed Phil Picton, Independent Chair of the Essex Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Boards, to the meeting.

Mr Picton confirmed he had formally been appointed as Independent Chair of both the Essex Safeguarding Children and Safeguarding Adults Boards in September 2016 following a handover period commencing in July.

In introducing the report the Director for Safeguarding provided information regarding the background of the board and how it had worked with partners and other local authorities since it was set in 2006. The initial concept of child protection had been expanded and the Board looked at promotion of welfare of children as well as protection from abuse. This should mean children are not just safe but feel safe. A handout was provided for Members detailing key functions and structure of the board. The importance was stressed of collaborative working for effective safeguarding.

The Director for Safeguarding highlighted some of the key achievements over 2015-16 from the annual report:

- The Chair of the Board at the time of the report was confident that agencies continued to prioritise safeguarding in the difficult financial climate.
- Governance review and review of sub-committees
- Increased focus on children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and children who go missing
- Good outcomes from the Schools Safeguarding audit with good

- participation from children and young people.
- A range of new processes and practices were put in place to ensure an effective and functioning board including the undertaking of a section 11 audit, completion of the SET procedures and a revision of the serious case review toolkit.

The Director for Safeguarding felt that 2016 had been a transitional year with the restructure of the board, appointment of the new Chair and the publication of the Wood Report. There were still some issues with a number of sub-committees being disproportionately chaired by ECC officers rather than from other agencies, however generally processes felt improved.

Key areas where progress had been made were:

- Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) has been a key national priority. Systems and processes for working with other agencies for example the police and third sector were much improved. There had been recent trials in Southend and Chelmsford of adults involved in CSE. However, while progress was good it was recognised that there were still further improvements which could be made.
- 1000 children a month are affected by domestic abuse. The Working Together arrangements managed by the Strategic Domestic Abuse Board are stronger and focus is on recognising children who are most at risk and where intervention is required.
- An estimated 10% of children have a diagnosable mental health issue which translates to approximately 25-30,000 children across Essex. A new Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health service (EWMHS) has been set up that while having some positives, there are also some concerns about long waiting times.
- Work has been completed around the Prevent Agenda and processes to deal with radicalisation.
- There have been three serious case reviews in the preceding 2 years regarding children less than 13 week of age which have raised questions regarding pre-birth practice. All the children suffered serious or life changing injuries. All three children have now been adopted and are doing well and lessons have been learned. Pre-birth practice is now much stronger and better integrated.
- There is an excellent specialist response team for unexplained child deaths based in Epping but covering the whole county. Suicide prevention work has been done and is continuing.
- The involvement team has worked with children and young people around a range of issues and their views are reflected in the work of the Board.
- There have been two specific safety campaigns around the risk of injuries to children of falling furniture and swimming pools in gardens.
- Procedures for young people entering psychiatric units have been revised.
- Development of evaluation of processes and services through children and young people.
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The Director for Safeguarding recognised that continuous improvement would

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always be required in these areas along with consolidation of some of the changes made. He highlighted some key areas for further development:

- Gangs, youth violence and youth crime following an increase in activity moving from London and northern counties particularly around drug trafficking.
- Further reduction in waiting times for EWMHS.
- Online bullying and exploitation
- Self harming

The Director commented that he felt the quality of service was currently good, although due to the nature of the service there was a need for constant evaluation and identification of gaps. It was important to gain evidence of success and continue with wide community engagement. In working with partners there was a need to improve agency understanding of thresholds, increase challenge in an acceptable way and to support partners rather than criticise.

The Director referred to the Wood report and the government response to it which had been published in 2016. The conclusion drawn by the report was that safeguarding children boards and multi-agency safeguarding arrangements were not working well enough and that there was a wide range of boards and committees with an overlap of responsibilities which also impacted resources. There was a lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities of safeguarding boards and that very often the effectiveness of boards depended on the skills of the Chair. The recommendation of the report was to recast the legislation and reform the model of safeguarding boards and serious case reviews. Responsibility and authority should go to chief officers within health, police and local authorities to ensure collaboration on new safeguarding arrangements. Government response to the response has not yet been clarified and it is not known what will go into the Children and Social Work Bill, however it is felt that the response will not be very prescriptive and is likely to allow local flexibility. Therefore it will be business as usual for the Board over the next 12 months. Time will be spent looking at what multi-agency safeguarding arrangements should look like over the next five years and looking at what makes a difference to the children in Essex.

The Chair of ECSB supported the Director's comments and, having chaired three other children's safeguarding boards across the country, he agreed with the conclusions of the Wood report and the recommendation of a less prescriptive approach.

Members commented on the length of the report and lack of data included. The Director of Safeguarding confirmed that the content of the report was proscribed by OFSTED and that it was hoped that this would change with new arrangements proposed by the Wood report.

In response to Members' questions, the Director of Safeguarding and Chair of the

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Board provided the following information:

- The previous Chair of the ECSB and the Cabinet Member for Adults and Childrens had visited the Cookham Wood Young Offenders institute in Kent following concerns raised regarding the safety of young people from Essex who had been placed there. The centre does not come under the scope of ECSB but concerns were raised to the local children's safeguarding board.
- Procedures are generally reviewed every three years. The SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) procedures were reviewed in 2015 and therefore would be reviewed again in 2018.
- PREVENT training had been provided to Councillors in districts but Members felt that County Councillors should also have this opportunity. Cllr Teresa Higgins agreed to take this to the Member Development Steering Group.
- Independent foster care associations are regulated and required to have their own safeguarding training programs. Checks are made that this is in place as part of the commissioning process.
- Schools play an important part in safeguarding children and there have been massive improvements in Essex schools. Education is well represented on the ECSB however it should be noted the lessening of influence of the local authority now more schools are becoming academies.
- Although the Director for Safeguarding sits on the Diocese of Chelmsford Board Child Protection Group, there is a lack of representation of diverse religions.
- Areas for safety campaigns focussed on areas where there were high concern and had been child deaths. Concerns raised by Members regarding injuries caused by home trampolines would be taken back to the Child Death Review Board.
- Bullying and in particular cyber bullying continued to be an issue however there was an improvement in schools talking about the issue and work in schools in supported by Education departments. It was recognised that the increase in cyber bullying had led to more covert and less physical bullying as well as occurring outside of school through technology. Members commented on the role of parents in monitoring social media accounts and preventing younger children having accounts. The involvement team work directly with young people to help form strategies.
- There are now approximately 110-120 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in Essex and this number is expected to increase to around 200 as a result of the government National Transfer Scheme. There is a specialist team based in West Essex. Particular issues with this group include difficulties finding placements due to vulnerability of the young people and young people going missing. There are significant resources invested as part of the care system.
- Essex has a low rate of child suicide compared to nationally and in particular Thurrock where there has been a high rate, although this has risen in the last 18 months. Multi-agency response groups are set up within 2 weeks of an occurrence. Suicide prevention work is being undertaken and has shown that typically there are low indicators of risk.

More work is being done around the link between suicides and self-harm. Public Health are leading on a suicide prevention strategy to include children and young people. The importance of multi-agency response to avoid the impact of copycat behaviour was recognised.

- Flexibility in new arrangements is key as different authorities require different approaches for a number of reasons including size.
- Incidence of genital mutilation (GM) is low. The percentage of people from an ethnic minority, particularly in communities where GM is prevalent, is low in Essex but this is increasing and there are also other specific issues such as radicalisation and forced marriages. Stay Safe groups look at these issues and engage with faith groups and communities.

Further discussion was held around Essex County Council's role as the lead in the ECSB partnership and the largest contributor of resource through funding and specialist posts. The ESCB sets its own budget and is currently equivalent to £1.30 per child across Essex. The budget is likely to be reviewed next year. In response to speculation regarding the availability of extra funding from central government, the Chair of ESCB and Director of Safeguarding commented on key priorities this could be used for which included mental health both for children and for adults due to the likelihood of harm to children coming from adults with mental health and substance abuse issues and focus on issues relating to gangs and gang activity. The importance of social workers as the best way of monitoring and improving what was happening in families was recognised and funds could be used to lower caseloads for social workers to support this.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Safeguarding and the Chair of ECSB and commented on the value of including future sessions around the Wood report and other issues in the Scrutiny Committee work programme.

### Actions

1. Safeguarding/PREVENT training for County Councillors to be requested through Member Development Steering Board **Councillor Theresa Higgins**
2. Contact details for Diocese of Chelmsford Child Protection Group to be provided to the Scrutiny Officer in relation to vacancy on Committee. **Paul Secker**
3. Future scrutiny work with regard to the Wood Review and key safeguarding challenges to be considered. **Councillor Ian Grundy/Robert Fox**

## **5 Essex Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report 2015-16**

Members received PAF/02/17, the annual report of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB) 2015-16 presented by Heather Williams, Head of Adult

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### Safeguarding.

In introducing the report, the Head of Adult Safeguarding provided a brief overview of the service and a handout was provided for Members detailing key functions, duties and structure of the board including required partners. She explained that within adult safeguarding, a balance was required between the duty to protect from harm or abuse, and empowerment and an individual's right to choice and control. For the first time in 2015-16 ESAB is statutorily required to publish its annual report following the Care Act 2014.

The Head of Adult Safeguarding gave her view on the challenges that Essex faces. The size of the authority and complexity of arrangements can result in a lack of communication. Safeguarding Adult Reviews have shown that often there has not been enough information sharing. The ESAB is in a good place to address this by promoting communication across partner agencies. There is an issue with recruitment and retention of effective and experienced staff across adult social care, care homes and hospitals which can affect the effective implementation of policies and procedures. There are budget pressures however high quality work can be achieved by focussing on the core business and what we can do effectively.

The Head of Adult Safeguarding summarised the key messages from the report:

- A Local government Peer review at the end of 2015, found the board was care act compliant, had good strategies and was working towards having the right arrangements in place.
- There is an improvement plan in place for the Board which encompasses recommendations for adult safeguarding across Essex working towards a cultural change to an outcome based approach.
- Focus on performance and audit through the development of data to identify key safeguarding issues and to hold the board and partners to account.
- A designated officer for Safeguarding Adult Reviews has been appointed to ensure a higher focus and sharing of learning from the reviews.
- Partnership engagement was improved through a number of different actions: A forum for care providers to share concerns and issues to be fed through to the Board; The creation of the Safeguarding Adults Leads Network with safeguarding leads from across Essex, Southend and Thurrock and a wide range of agencies including private care; The City, District and Borough Council group which has allowed housing concerns to be put to the Board.
- The annual conference focussed on Hidden Harm and feedback showed that attendees felt their awareness of a number of issues had been raised.
- There has been a review of existing policies to ensure they are all effective and compliant with the Care Act 2014. New policies have also been written including the Hoarding protocol which was led by Essex Fire Service.
- The website has been updated and now includes pages covering Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty (DOLS)
- Updated and reviewed the Southend, Essex and Thurrock training

program.

- PREVENT sits under adults with Essex required to chair the PREVENT multi-agency groups and panels. There is also a sub-group for children. Both report to Safer Essex and work to engage local communities.

At this point Robert Fox, Scrutiny Officer left the meeting and Alex Polak, Scrutiny Manager joined the meeting.

The Head of Adult Safeguarding gave more detail about the areas for development identified within the report.

- Development days have taken place to support the review of the strategic priorities.
- Continuing with Making Safeguarding Personal (MSP) and increasing engagement with customers, communities and service users. Healthwatch have been commissioned to work on this area and a proposal is likely to go to the next Board.
- The review of the self-assessment process developed a performance dashboard and work is continuing to ensure consistent and quality data across organisations to enable future comparison to identify themes and patterns.
- Increasing scrutiny and challenge of partners. This is already taking place and includes challenging ECC on quality of care in residential homes and challenge and support to Essex Police resulting in a pilot of social workers forming part of a multi-agency triage team to share knowledge and lead to better working relationships and reduce inappropriate referrals. There has been challenge to the NHS regarding Avoidable Death Investigations and the robustness of inquiries.
- The peer review recommendations included increased engagement with staff which lead to the Professionals Forum being created, initially for social workers but this has now been expanded to include other agencies.

The Chair of ESAB clarified that the Board has no powers under the Care Act and is not operational. The purpose of the Board is to co-ordinate and scrutinise partners and powers to intervene lie with individual partners.

In response to Members' questions, officers clarified the following points from the report:

- Under Deprivation of Liberty, all three criteria must be met to be considered as such.
- Braintree District Council have been involved with the City, District and Borough Councils Group and any omission from tables in the report was in error. The Chair of the ESAB commented on the good level of commitment from this tier of local government in Essex and the importance of this group.
- Comments regarding the clarity of graphs would be taken into account for future reports.



- A Governance relationship protocol is being produced which will clarify role of the ESAB and ESCB.

Safeguarding boards have no responsibility for NEET (not in Education, Employment or Training) the inclusion of this in the report was for the purpose of context.

Further discussion was held around the transitional age group of 18-25 yr olds particularly those at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Care-leavers. Responsibility to provide support for care-leavers has been extended to age 21 and in some cases 25, but there is an acknowledgement that for young people where support has not been in a care setting there is a gap. Under the Care Act 2014, adult safeguarding covers those over 18 who have care and support needs so there may be vulnerable young people who have had involvement from Children's services but do not meet those criteria. Where there are concerns referrals can be made by Children's Services for assessment or later referral from GP or Police. More work could be done to work closer together and there are adult safeguarding officers on the CSE sub-committee to aid links. There have been advantages to having a joint Independent Chair of both the ESAB and ESCB in improving transitions.

In response to concerns raised by Members regarding scams and online shopping relating to hoarding, the Head of Adult safeguarding acknowledged these issues and agreed that these should be considered for inclusion in training or guidance notes for practitioners but commented that addressing these issues can prove challenging where a person has mental capacity unless there are serious risks to the individual or others.

The Chairman thanked the head of Adult safeguarding and the Chair of the ESAB and ESCB for their contribution.

### Actions

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1. To consider information regarding cold calling, scams, and the relationship between online shopping and hoarding for inclusion in guidance notes for practitioners. **Heather Williams**

## **6 Scrutiny recommendations tracker and work programme**

Members received PAF/03/17 providing an outline of the work programme.

The Scrutiny Manager confirmed that the next meeting of the Committee in March would be the final meeting of the Committee before the elections and the agenda items for discussion would be Educational Attainment, Social Impact

Bonds and the report of the Young Carers Task and Finish Group following a final session on 19 January 2016.

The Scrutiny Manager reminded Members of the session following this meeting to review the work of the Committee over the last four years. The Chair of the ESAB and ESCB expressed an interest in discussing scrutiny practice with officers to share his experience

Councillor Maddox, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adults and Children, has been working on a process for visits for residential care homes which will be introduced later this year but requested volunteers for visits to be completed before May 2017. Members that were willing to volunteer should liaise directly with Cllr Maddox for further information.

#### Actions

1. \_To liaise outside of the Committee meeting to discuss scrutiny practice to inform the current scrutiny review. **Phil Picton/Alex Polak**

## **7 Date of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting was confirmed for Thursday 9 March 2017 at 10.30am.

**Chairman**