



**E S S E X**  
**Safeguarding**  
**Children**  
**B O A R D**

**Annual Report**  
**2012/13**

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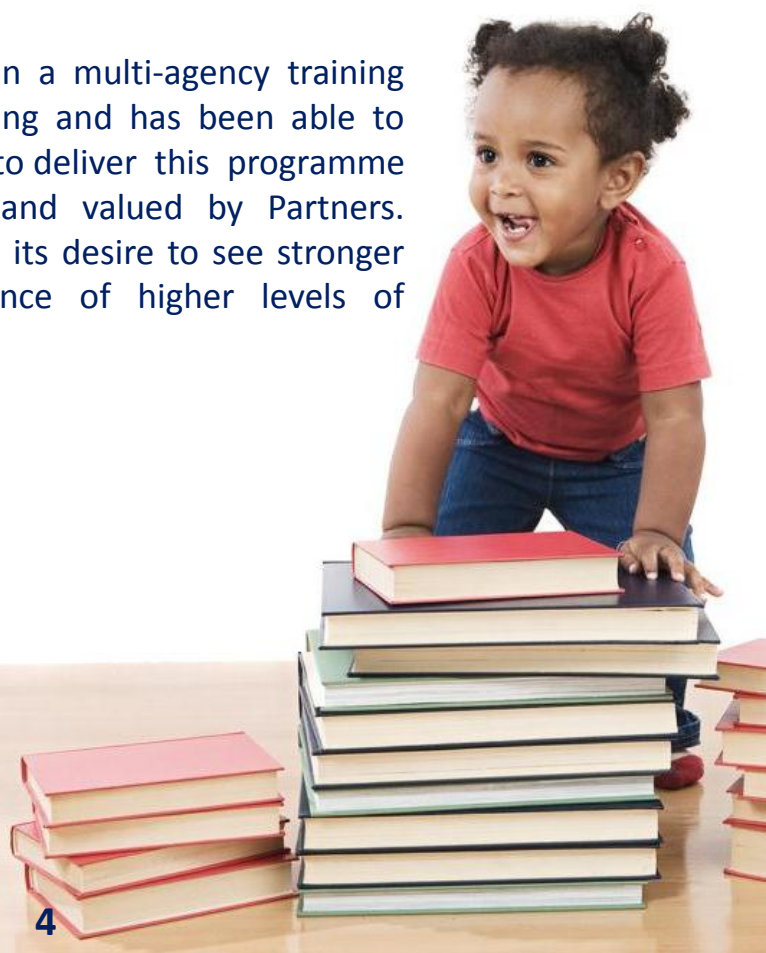
# Introduction

I am pleased to be able to introduce this Annual Report of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board covering the period 2012-2013. The report sets out headlines of the Board's activity over the past year along with some reflections on the progress made.

Following the major review of Governance, this year has seen significant consolidation of the Board's operating structures and a deepening of the Partnership approach required to deliver more effective safeguards to children and young people in Essex. I am pleased therefore to be able to report on a number of specific improvements which impact on service delivery and young people in particular.

Of note the Board has improved its challenge to performance management and has a better grip on the quality of practice with improved data and challenging outcomes on audits especially in relation to workforce management, training and safeguarding capacity in schools. However the Board recognises that a still broader perspective with particular regard to Health Services is necessary and this will continue to be a priority in the coming year. The Board will also continue its collaboration with the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board to deliver more effective audit of practice and case review.

The Board continues to commission a multi-agency training programme focussed on safeguarding and has been able to maintain the resource commitment to deliver this programme of activity which is appreciated and valued by Partners. Nevertheless the Board is urgent in its desire to see stronger evaluation of training and evidence of higher levels of compliance in the coming year.



A particular success this year has been the progress made in communications, delivering a complete remodelling of the Board website. We have listened to the views of young people who often prefer to communicate through social networking and now have a twitter account which has some 400 followers. We have also recognised the need to communicate more effectively with practitioners and those who work within services and have a series of information bulletins which have been regarded as informative and helpful. The Board is also committed to a series of campaigns, and looking for more innovative means to convey messages, has sought the collaboration of the Essex Football Association to promote awareness of domestic abuse and child sexual exploitation throughout the 2013/14 football season. The coming year will also see the introduction of practitioner forums, facilitated through the locality Stay Safe Groups and which will enable a much more direct relationship between the Board and front line practitioners.

Recognising the high level of national and regional concern about the risk represented through the sexual exploitation of young people the Board has also taken a major initiative, working with all Partners to ensure agencies are better sighted on signals to risk, and are confident about their response. Much of this work has been carried out in collaboration with the Boards in Southend and Thurrock.

Whilst much progress has been made in strengthening safeguarding arrangements in Essex more needs to be done and is reflected in the Board's Business Plan for the coming year.

Meantime I am grateful to all of those agencies who continue to support the Board's work and to our frontline practitioners from Health, Police, Local Authorities, Schools, Probation, Voluntary Sector and a host of other agencies who continue to work hard to help ensure children and young people in the county are safe.

**Simon N Hart**

Independent Chair

Essex Safeguarding Children Board



## Statutory Role of the ESCB

The LSCB has a range of roles and statutory functions including developing local safeguarding policy and procedures and scrutinising local arrangements.

The LSCB is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how relevant organisations in each local area co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what partner agencies do.

The Children Act 2004 required each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) for their area and specified the organisations and individuals (other than the local authority) that should be represented on LSCBs.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) has a statutory duty to publish an Annual Report on the effectiveness of child safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Essex. The report is submitted each year to the Chief Executive of Essex County Council, Leader of the Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

In addition to our statutory duty ESCB is keen to actively use the annual report as one means of promoting safeguarding and increasing awareness with all partner agencies and with the wider public of Essex.

### The Annual Report

- Includes a description of the activities of the ESCB in 2012/13
- Sets out the main areas of activity and progress made
- Sets out the safeguarding priorities for 2013/14
- An assessment and analysis of current safeguarding arrangements across Essex – both our current strengths and areas for development.

# The concept of 'Safeguarding Children'

It was during the period of 2004/5 that the government introduced the concept of 'safeguarding children'. This was seen as a shift away from the rather narrower concept of child protection, which was seen as being reactive and focussing on those specific children/young people who had experienced (suffered) or were likely to suffer significant harm.

'Safeguarding' is a much broader concept based around preventing children/young people from being harmed and focusing upon promoting the child/young person's welfare in every way.

Safeguarding includes 'protecting children/young people from abuse or neglect', but it also focuses on doing everything we can to ensure that children and young people are healthy, are developing appropriately, have safe environments in which they are brought up, are well cared for both in and out of home, and are able to maximise opportunities in their life.

## **'Safeguarding Children/Young People' has many strands, including:**

- Ensuring that there are safe recruitment processes in place whenever staff/volunteers are being recruited to work with children/young people
- Systems for dealing with allegations against professionals, carers and volunteers
- Learning and development programmes for all staff working with children and families
- Effective systems for multi-agency integrated working and appropriate information sharing
- Ensuring that all agencies are clearly focussed on the needs and well-being of the child/young person

The breadth of safeguarding is reflected in the range of activities in which children and young people need to not only be safe and well cared for, but to feel safe and well cared for. These include being safe on the way to and from school, at school, at their sports clubs, at other leisure activities and on the streets. It includes concerns around bullying, internet and mobile phone safety, gangs, youth crime. It includes children/young people who experience domestic abuse within their family, or those who are living in families where there is substance misuse or mental health issues.

Safeguarding children/young people includes the safety and well-being of those who are sexually active, those who are at risk of exploitation, at risk of unplanned teenage pregnancy, at risk of obesity, and those at risk of accidents both within and outside of the home.

Child Protection is part of safeguarding and promoting welfare. It refers to activity undertaken to protect specific children identified as either suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm as a result of abuse or neglect.

Whilst it is essential that all agencies and individuals recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility it is equally important that agencies and individuals recognise the responsibility to work collaboratively with each other.

It is only multi-agency working which effectively safeguards children.

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## Essex

Essex is one of the larger local authority areas with a total population of 1,393,600 at the time of the 2011 census. This includes 328,200 children aged 0-19.

The East of England is the second fastest growing region with Essex seeing the highest population change of all counties in the East and predicted to absorb some 324,000 additional residents by 2031, more than three times the population of Harlow.

The majority of the increase is attributable to people moving from London Boroughs.

The ESCB will closely monitor population changes and will work with colleagues across the Children's Partnership & Health and Wellbeing Board to ensure that safeguarding priorities retain strategic importance, especially at a time when public services are under particular financial pressure.

By and large Essex provides for a safe and healthy place for children to grow up, employment is relatively high, health good and mortality low. However Tendring, Basildon, Harlow and Colchester have indicators of deprivation with Jaywick, in Tendring, having been identified as the most deprived ward in England based on the government's indices of multiple deprivation, 2011.



As at September 2012 just under 4,800 children had been assessed as being a Child in Need, a third of whom have a disability. These children are over-represented in Tendring, Harlow, Basildon and Colchester. In addition 1,374 children were in Care and 571 children were subject to child protection plans. 11,000 young people under the age of 19 were classified as carers.

We know that outcomes for young carers are not as good as for their peers and will consider the implications of this over the forthcoming year via the Business Plan.

One in ten children aged 5-16 have a clinically diagnosed mental health disorder with Uttlesford having the lowest prevalence and Basildon the highest.

Although educational performance has improved overall in relation to achievement at GCSE level Essex children still suffer from poor achievement in schools with about 50% of 16 year olds leaving school without 5 or more GCSEs. We also have lower rates than the national or regional averages for children leaving school with 5 or more GCSEs grades A\*- C.

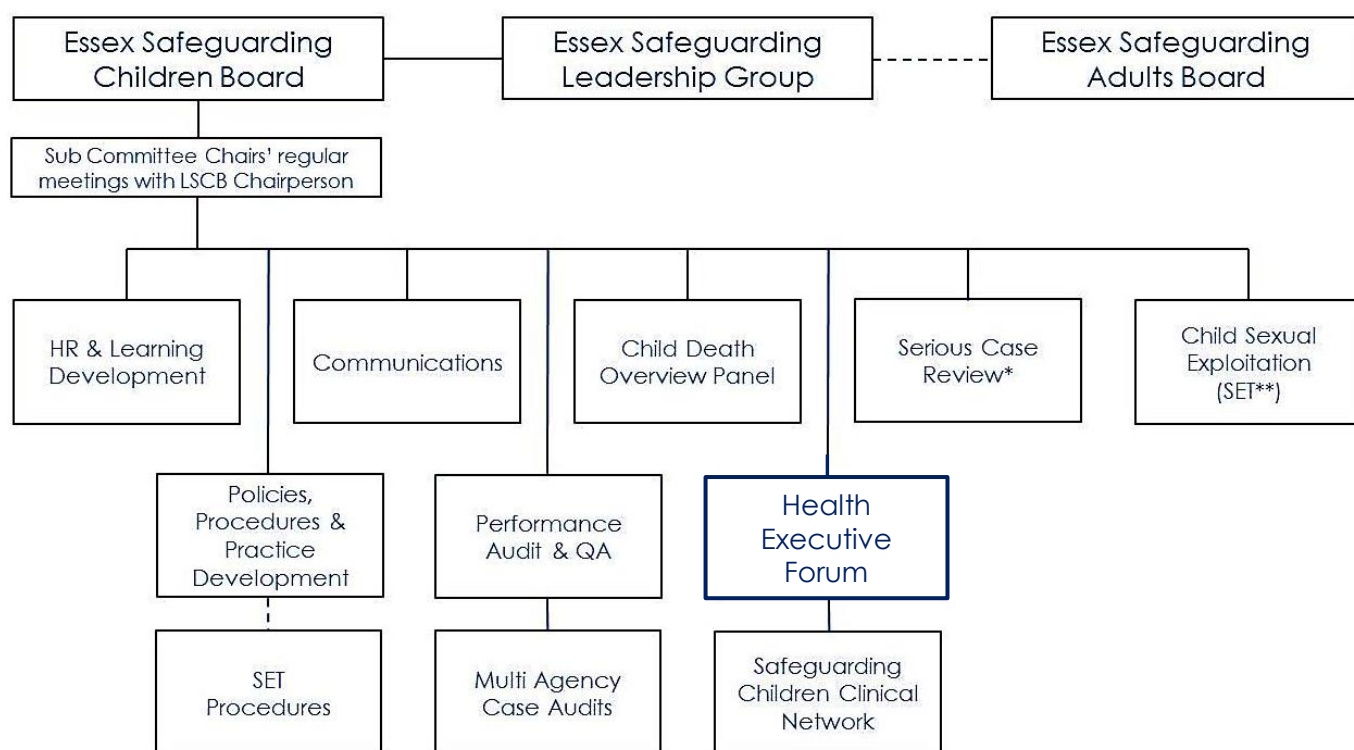
Although Essex is a good place for many it is a large and varied county with some areas of significant need. Whilst outcomes for children will vary according to their individual circumstances, the challenge for the ESCB is to ensure a focus is maintained on the needs of each and every child & ensuring that partner agencies provide the best service possible for those children most in need.



# The Essex Safeguarding Children Board

In 2011 the ESCB revised its Governance arrangements to include Chief Officer (or equivalent) representation on the Board and a new range of sub-committees to support the Board's priorities. In consequence, the year saw an increased commitment from partner agencies and a greater throughput of work. A further review of Governance is anticipated in 2013 to take account of the revisions to Working Together (2013) and ensure alignment to the Board's developing priorities.

## Structure Chart June 2013



\*This is a standing sub committee to ensure the ESCB is best prepared to respond to referrals under Chapter 4 of Working Together 2013, provide advice to the ESCB Chairperson on whether the criteria for conducting a Serious Case Review have been met, and to oversee and quality assure all Serious Case Reviews undertaken by the ESCB. It is distinct from a Serious Case Review Panel which is commissioned by the Serious Case Review Sub Committee to manage the process when a decision has been made to undertake a Serious Case Review.

\*\*This is a targeted sub-committee provisionally in place for one year, December 2012 – December 2013.



## How the ESCB links across Essex

Following the Governance review the Board now has a clear position within the Essex Strategic Partnership with clear links to Health and Wellbeing Board, Children's Partnership and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. This reflects the importance and priority placed on safeguarding children and young people in Essex and allows the Independent Chair influence at a strategic level. This has been especially helpful in raising the profile of partners' joint work on Child Sexual Exploitation, Information Sharing and compliance with safe commissioning processes. The Board also welcome the current "Pioneer" bid to align Health and Social Care in the county.

The Independent Chair of ESCB, Simon Hart, is also the Chair of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board, fulfilling a particular objective in Essex to help ensure cohesion in the arrangements for safeguarding both vulnerable adults and young people.

Simon Hart has regular scheduled meetings with all key agency leads.

Each of the four quadrants in Essex has a Stay Safe Group consisting of operational and strategic managers from core partner agencies. These groups focus on local safeguarding practice and multi-agency issues with a particular emphasis on local trends and performance.

During the course of the year the Board recognised the potential to align the Stay Safe groups more formally to the ESCB, with the intention of developing a stronger locality focus on quality and standards.

Together with the Adult Board ESCB hosts a meeting of the Designated Safeguarding leads from the Borough, District and City Councils, and this group identifies and agrees a specific safeguarding work plan. Examples over the year have included the wider responsibilities of the safeguarding role, child sexual exploitation and licensing.



## ESCB Priorities Progress

**The progress on the priorities identified for 2012/13 is set in the following pages:**

Arising from the Governance Review the Board has set out an ambitious and specific work plan designed to ensure increased scrutiny over safeguarding arrangements within and between agencies/organisations. These were incorporated into the Board's formal Business Plan which has been subject to close scrutiny throughout the year to ensure progress is maintained.

The amount of work undertaken has meant that this has proved to be a challenging process and the following sections of the report give illustrations of progress made and those areas where more attention is required.

### **Ensure learning and improvement in practice around key issues such as Child Sexual Exploitation and missing children:**

An additional work stream was commissioned during the year to consider how the ESCB should address the growing national and local concerns about child sexual exploitation.

Initially a "Task and Finish" group was established, Chaired by a Detective Superintendent from Essex Police and this recommended to the December ESCB that the approach should be a common one across the three LSCBs of Southend, Essex and Thurrock. Subsequently a Southend, Essex and Thurrock strategic group has been formed.



It was also agreed that Child Sexual Exploitation Champions would be established as a reference point in each agency to provide knowledge, expertise and advice. Child Sexual Exploitation awareness training was commissioned and rolled out via four, quadrant-based, conferences with some 350 staff attending from a variety of agencies. These events included presentations by national Child Sexual Exploitation specialists Just Whistle and the Essex Police Online Investigation Team. This was complemented by table-based work on how a Child Sexual Exploitation strategy could be implemented across Essex with a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of the current position.

An individual report was written for each area and shared with the Stay Safe groups, who will each work on one of the recommendations in the coming year, the results of each piece of work will be then shared across the county, other actions from the events will then be taken forward by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Sexual Exploitation Strategic Group.

Initial work on developing Child Sexual Exploitation pathways across Essex, a risk assessment tool and an intelligence gathering method has led into the current year and the agreement of a Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child Sexual Exploitation action plan with accelerated progress planned over the next reporting period.

During the year the Board received a report on Missing Children which outlined both current practices and specific areas for further development primarily between Essex Social Care and Essex Police to provide improved support systems for these children. This is being closely monitored by the Board.

**[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)**

further information on child sexual exploitation  
including help and advice for parents and  
professionals



## **Develop and manage an effective multi-agency performance framework, maintaining a comprehensive audit and Quality Assurance programme**

Developing an effective performance framework is a major task for the Board starting from a low base. However the Board clearly recognises the need to ensure a broad view of quality and performance and the challenges involved in securing the right information and data. The Board is grateful for the assistance offered through the Eastern Region Sector Improvement Project in helping to develop a performance framework for LSCBs and will continue to give priority to this work. The focus this year has been on developing a multi-agency performance dashboard, at the close of the year indicators had been agreed between Health and Social Care with Police indicators to be added. Further work will continue on this accelerated by the appointment of a Performance Analyst to the Support Team to strengthen the analytical capacity available. The ESCB receive quarterly reports from the Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance sub-committee with child protection trends and statistics as a standing agenda item. These reports have highlighted areas of potential risk and enabled the Board to commission specific 'deep dive' reviews. In recent meetings the Board has examined the significant dip in the number of children subject to child protection plans from 2010 to date. The Board were concerned about the previously high numbers attributed in part to inadequate and rather cautious assessments and were interested in the work that Schools Children & Families were doing to manage risk more effectively. The Board has been reassured that more effective assessment and first-line management is in place delivering more effective outcomes for young people.

The Board also commissioned further work in relation to:

- Looking more closely at the child protection figures in one geographical quadrant
- A 'deep dive' into Section 47 assessments.
- The appropriateness of Section 47 referrals and whether agencies have a common threshold
- Missing children and young people
- Volume of referrals to multi-agency allocation groups (MAAGs)



The Board has identified the need to ensure a clear understanding of the number and nature of child protection plans. Detailed reports have been received at all full Board meetings and this has allowed the Board to develop more rigorous lines of enquiry resulting in the Board requiring more information about practice in one of the quadrants and calling for improvements in the consistency of social work activity to ensure that parents are fully aware of the conferencing process and its implications. Information provided has included child protection plans including the duration, length, category and age of children broken down by quadrant. Service user feedback, including that of children and young people is scrutinised. Having established this interest within the Board it is proposed that in future, the data will be included in a Members Bulletin with exceptions being reported to the Board through Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance Sub Committee.

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## **S11 Audits**

Historically the Board has relied upon a manual system to conduct section 11 Audits. Whilst this has involved some quite robust reporting arrangements to the Board, the system has not covered a sufficient breadth of agencies and has been both cumbersome and time consuming. During the year we began the procurement of an electronic section 11 reporting tool, and expect to award the tender in the third quarter of 2013 in preparation for full roll-out in 2014. In the meantime an Excel version will be circulated to all statutory partners for completion in the reporting year 2013/14.

Within the year the Board undertook baseline audits across partner agencies on Safer Recruitment and Supervision policies. The results from the initial surveys in August and September 2012 did not provide the Board with assurance. Some of the policies presented were insufficiently rigorous with regard to safeguarding and not all agencies participated. The results were analysed and presented to the ESCB in December who requested that repeat audits were undertaken; these were done in February and March 2013 with a full day for Health partners in April. The Board was pleased to note a significant improvement in both sets of policies and will move to publishing Safer Recruitment and Supervision standards for statutory partners to measure themselves against.

An audit on safeguarding in schools was commissioned in 2012 and again the Board were not assured by the results.

The Board requested that urgent further work on this was undertaken to be followed by a repeat audit. This work will take place over the next reporting period and will be formally reported to the Board in the autumn of 2013.

The Board is aware that there is some auditing activity which takes place within statutory partner agencies that is not reported. We will now collate these audits to add to the body of safeguarding information held by the Board to give a clearer indication of the effectiveness of safeguarding across Essex with multi-agency auditing contributing to the whole picture.

Undertaking multi-agency case audits is one of the key ways that a Safeguarding Children Board can determine how effective safeguarding is at practice level. Over the year the ESCB undertook a total of 13 individual case audits with a relevant theme being chosen, these have included children-missing and children at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation. Although we have undertaken fewer audits than we would have liked half a day was spent on each case with all agencies who had input into the case represented. A considerable body of learning has been identified with this being fed back to local staff through the Stay Safe groups.

Whilst some good progress has been made in developing the Board performance framework significant further work needs to be done in relation to the range of data required. This has been a particular challenge in regard to a complex network of Health Services and the Board is grateful for the allocation of additional resources made available to accelerate this work alongside the support of the Health and Wellbeing Board in recognising the priority.

We are confident that the coming year will see further improvement with a focus on:

- The multi-agency performance dashboard
- An increase in, and better collation of, auditing activity providing the Board with a greater understanding of the quality of practice
- Improved analysis through the Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance sub-committee allowing highlight exception reporting to the Board.



# The case of child JC

The case of child JC below was audited by a multi-agency audit team in March 2013. In this instance good practice was identified demonstrating just how effective multi-agency working can be.

JC, aged 10 had **witnessed serious domestic abuse** over several years from two of his mother's partners.

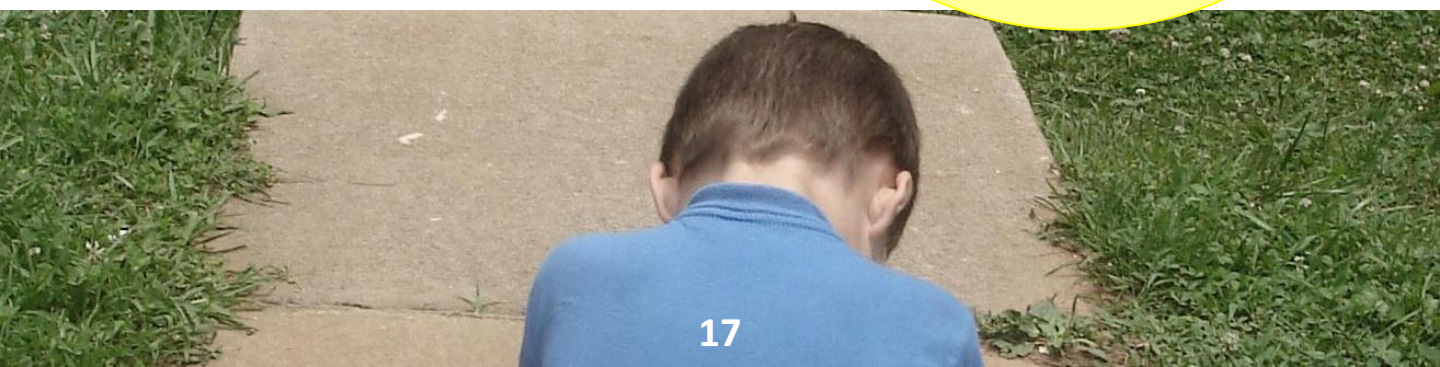
The audit established that **agencies had worked well together** to protect JC and he is now considered to be **safe** with his grandparents, he is having carefully managed contact with his mother.

Several positive factors were identified including **good information sharing** between the agencies, consistent workers and regular structured partnership meetings.

Initially the lead role was taken by Social Care but once JC was with grandparents and **the risk to JC had reduced** the organising role was taken by the district council housing officer who coordinated meetings and liaised with MARAC.

## **Worried about a child?**

If you are concerned that a child or young person is being harmed or neglected or is at risk of this you should contact  
Essex Social Care on  
**0845 603 7627**



## **Support a competent and skilled workforce with a comprehensive audit of Chapter 4 responsibilities and the development of a multi-agency training programme**

A full and comprehensive learning and practice development strategy was endorsed by the Board in June 2012 and delivery was maintained throughout the year with a variety of validated training courses being attended by some two and a half thousand practitioners and managers from across Essex.

Between February and March 2013 each partner agency undertook a comprehensive audit of their training responsibilities under Chapter 4 of (the previous) Working Together, the results of this were reported to the June meeting of the ESCB and will be detailed in the next reporting period together with the results of action plan endorsed by the Board. It was also confirmed that this audit will be an annual requirement for statutory partners.

Over the year the Board has continued to refine a model to measure the impact of training in collaboration with ECC Early Years and Childcare Service and the Integrated Working Team.

The Board has recognised the importance of assessing the impact of training and not just the fact that the person had attended, or undertaken, a course. Where attendees receive certificates for attendance at training events these are given out four weeks after the event and only after the attendee has completed a short on-line survey to demonstrate the impact of training. Where training is delivered by external providers the number completing the on-line survey is fewer and our challenge is to increase the number of people who complete the survey so that we can measure the impact of all training.

In addition to Child Sexual Exploitation awareness training referred to earlier the following major multi-agency training courses have been delivered:

- Strength's Based approach to Child Protection Conferences
- Core Group training
- Designated Person training

Other courses offered include Assessing Risk to Children and Young People where there is family substance misuse, Risk Taking Behaviour and, with the Adult Board, Domestic Abuse training.

**Find all our training courses on our website**  
**[www.escb.co.uk/training](http://www.escb.co.uk/training)**

A development for 2013/14 is that the Board has agreed to merge the previous Training and Workforce Development sub-committee with the HR sub-committee to create a new HR, Learning and Development sub-committee. This is in recognition that both have completed their urgent work with baseline auditing having taken place and there has been delivery of a number of sound, evaluated training courses with accelerated progress in priority areas. The next step is to ensure that learning and development is properly embedded into the supervision and appraisal process and that it takes account of the requirements set out in Working Together (2013).

### **Feedback from those attending included:**

‘Very informative & interesting, I have gained a much better understanding of Child Sexual Exploitation & grooming as well as ideas how to raise awareness amongst the young people I am involved with’  
*CSE Workshop*

‘The trainer kept it interesting & engaging all day, which is often difficult!’  
*Designated Person Course*

‘I’ve gained more confidence in this difficult aspect of decision making’  
*Designated Person Course*

‘Excellent course especially the Police presentation, I will use this info to cascade to my colleagues’  
*CSE Workshop*



## **Continue to develop the approach to reviewing practice in relation to findings from Serious Case Reviews (locally and nationally)**

### **Learning the lessons nationally from Serious Case Reviews:**

Over the last few years various national studies have been completed of Serious Case Reviews that have been undertaken across the country. The key messages that consistently emerge from these Serious Case Review studies include:

- The importance of family histories/chronologies being taken into consideration
- An understanding of child protection indicators and risk factors by staff across multi-agency services
- Inadequate sharing of information between agencies
- Flawed assessment processes and decision-making/assessment of risk
- The rule of 'optimism' and 'wishful thinking' amongst professionals
- Inadequate information about significant men within the family
- The importance of working in partnership with families, including birth fathers
- An understanding and analysis of relevant cultural issues pertaining to the family
- The focus needing to always be on the child
- Addressing and resolving professional differences of view
- It is everyone's responsibility across the multi-agency network to work together to safeguard children
- That an understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities within multi-agency work is crucial

The ESCB has been undertaking a process of reviewing our processes for considering Serious Case Reviews. There has been general agreement that there continues to be significant value in undertaking Serious Case Reviews, although there needs to be flexibility in the method and approach of undertaking Serious Case Reviews.

**It is agreed that better learning takes place when the approach to the Serious Case Review is:**

**Child centred** – a review which focuses on the child, what was the experience of the child, and how was this understood or considered by all those involved with the child.

**Collaborative** – a review which involves staff at all relevant levels of the organisation. A review which involves family members in ways that are age appropriate and meaningful, and offers appropriate feedback and support.

**Respectful** – a process which ensures appropriate support for staff whose practice is scrutinised. A process which ensures privacy and confidentiality for families and siblings.

**Systemic** – a review which considers the underlying causes that explain why events happened as they did, and focuses on organisational and systems issues.

**Proportionate** – that the review methodology is tailored to the incident of concern.

No Serious Case Reviews have been commissioned this year, though one has been completed, adopted and will be published during the next reporting period. This case emphasised the importance of obtaining a clear multi-agency response to domestic abuse and the recommendation from the Board was that the learning be used to inform the Community Budgets approach that is being developed in Essex. The Independent Chair has used his strategic influence in discussion with the Essex Chief Executive to drive forward the learning from this case to directly inform improved multi-agency practice in the future.

Over the year the sub-committee signed-off a number of Serious Case Review recommendations including guidance for the discharge of young people leaving psychiatric in-patient care and the provision of “keep-safe” information for young people on the ESCB website. In addition ESCB were satisfied with the Sufficiency Strategy published by Essex County Council setting out the provision for children and young people and that notification of placements to areas outside Essex was improved and these recommendations were subsequently closed.

Recommendations relating to Domestic Abuse processes across Essex will need accelerated attention in the next reporting period.

The Board recognises the importance of other forms of review when the criteria for a Serious Case Review has not been met, but there are still lessons to be learned in relation to multi-agency safeguarding practice from those sad cases where a child has been seriously injured or harmed. With this in mind the Serious Case Review sub-committee recommended that ESCB should adopt an alternative methodology for use when a case fell short of the full criteria for a Serious Case Review. Consequently the ESCB has agreed a Multi-Agency Facilitated Case Review methodology (MAFCR).

The aim is to obtain the learning from a case quickly in one or more focused meetings with those practitioners directly involved in the case and their immediate managers. This is being trialled on appropriate cases and the ESCB will consider both the model and the learning from these cases later in the year. Although the development of the model has been influenced by systems methodology as promoted by Professor Eileen Munro in her review, “A Child Centred System”, the intention is that the review methodology should be flexible to allow for the circumstances of each individual case.

In addition a further case of concern was subject to a very thorough multi-agency audit with learning gained and fed back to the Serious Case Review sub-committee.

## **Continued multi-agency co-operation is needed to provide a robust and proportionate response to Domestic Abuse and to develop a local domestic abuse strategy:**

The Board is all too aware of the serious impact of domestic abuse upon children and young people.

The recommendations from the Serious Case Review, to be published in the next reporting period, provided the Board with an opportunity to agree a series of actions to improve the multi-agency work in respect of domestic abuse in Essex, this includes collaborative sharing of information and significantly improved practice cooperation between the agencies. To assure the effectiveness of this approach the Independent Chair has engaged the support of the Essex Chief Executive and other senior leaders to ensure that the change process is accelerated.

The Board has agreed that improved information sharing is a priority for 2013/14 and is pleased to acknowledge the strong messages about this in Working Together (2013) in particular, “Fears about sharing information cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the need to promote the welfare and protect the safety of children” (Para 24). The Board has actively supported, and contributed to, a number of inter-agency meetings to move this forward and is pleased to see significant progress in an emerging multi-agency approach to sharing information about domestic abuse, particularly between Essex Police and Social Care. The Board will monitor this closely over the next reporting period and will encourage other agencies to join in with the potential to extend to other aspects of child safeguarding.

**[www.thehideout.org.uk](http://www.thehideout.org.uk)**

helps children and young people  
understand domestic abuse and  
how to take positive action

**National Domestic  
Violence Helpline  
0808 2000 247**

## **Review the arrangements for the operation of the child death overview panel**

Whenever a child dies in Essex their death is reviewed to see whether learning can come from this, the most tragic of circumstances. The Essex Safeguarding Children Board undertakes this on behalf of the Southend and Thurrock Boards.

The Southend, Essex & Thurrock arrangements for carrying out Child Death Reviews have been in place since 2008 and whilst processes and protocols have been reviewed during this period, it was felt that a review of the entire delivery mechanisms should be conducted, to include business process re-engineering of the end-to-end process. At the end of the reporting period this was nearing completion and improvements to the process have since been implemented.

Between April 2010 and March 2013 eighteen child deaths reviewed by Essex Child Death Review Panels were classified as Sudden Unexpected Deaths. In sixteen of these cases the child was under 16 months old. A Southend, Essex & Thurrock wide safe sleeping campaign is being planned for launch in late 2013 to raise awareness of the main risk factors associated with Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, such as unsafe sleeping positions, unsafe sleeping environments and smoking.

Further work is needed to ensure that the rapid response that is carried out immediately after a child death is fully effective, that it routinely involves both Health and the Police and that it is undertaken with the immediacy required. At the time of writing this part of the service is subject to tender and the Board will need to be assured in the next reporting period that it is effective.

### **An example of a case reviewed is provided below:**

A 13 month old infant who had no significant medical history was found in the cot by the mother. The child was wrapped in two layers by an adult king size 4.5 tog duvet folded once over in the cot, which was cluttered and contained several soft toys, a folded blanket and 2 small pillows. Although this sad incident could not be directly linked to over-wrapping it is thought that may have been a factor in the death.

The ESCB will be using examples such as this to promote our forthcoming safe-sleeping campaign.

**Advice on  
safer sleep can be found at  
[www.lullabytrust.org.uk](http://www.lullabytrust.org.uk)**

## Summary of Child Death Review Activity

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 - 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013**

The table below sets out the data available (including Southend and Thurrock)  
N.B. Review findings specify deaths reviewed at panel meetings rather than death notifications – findings may not be presented against the year in which the death occurred.

Child Death Review Activity	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Child death notifications received	120	112	109
Notifications for non-Essex resident child deaths	5	1	1
Rapid responses	35	18	32
Child Death Review Findings	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
Cases adopted as an Serious Case Review	0	2	0
Deaths due to external causes	7	6	5
Deaths classified as having modifiable factors	29	21	24
Deaths classified as not preventable	95	64	61

### Human Resources sub- committee

The Human Resources sub-committee began the year with the priority to, “Ensure that supervision and recruitment of permanent and interim staff is safe and reaches agreed common standards across the agencies”. The results of these audits have been reported to the Board and agreement made that the Board would move to publishing standards for partners to assess themselves against.

The ESCB has a developing relationship with the HR leads from the District, Borough and City councils in the county and held a very productive meeting in March to look at the challenges and risks they face, particularly in respect of safer recruitment and also their responsibilities in respect of the venues commonly used for child sexual exploitation and the work that can be undertaken in the coming year to address these.



## Good Practice Example

The below extract highlights one of our partner agency's good practice in relation to the safeguarding arrangements they have in place and update regularly

### **"Chelmsford City Council**

*Chelmsford City Council is committed to promoting the welfare and protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is seen as everyone's responsibility (staff, Councillors, volunteers, contractors, etc.) and we have clear procedures in place to govern reporting and referring any concerns, incidents or allegations. We also have robust training arrangements that are matched to roles and responsibilities.*

*We have:*

- *A comprehensive safeguarding policy*
- *There are a number of specific safeguarding roles within the Council, each with specific responsibilities*
- *Detailed procedures for reporting concerns*
- *All of Chelmsford City Council's employees are required to familiarise themselves with the combined safeguarding policy and reporting procedures."*

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**Develop a comprehensive communications strategy with careful use of social media, upgrade of website and improved communication with partners and practitioners:**

It is recognised that the publicity of and general awareness raising of safeguarding issues continues as a key role for the ESCB.

As part of the Essex Improvement Plan there has been a requirement to significantly improve communications with both practitioners and those people who use services. This has included the need to ensure awareness of young people's needs and wishes. Evidence will feature in future audit reports to the Board though meanwhile the Board has attached significant priority to improving its own communications where good progress has been made.

Throughout the year the ESCB developed its communications with the assistance of designated capacity within the support team. The aim is to reposition the ESCB as the “multi-agency window into safeguarding”.

A new website was launched on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Safer Internet Day), the site had been developed following full consultation with partners including young people and contains helpful information for young people, their carers and professionals. It is updated, at least, weekly and has received positive feedback. Further developments are planned and we intend that the site should be a comprehensive resource hub for young people, parents, carers and professionals.

[www.escb.co.uk](http://www.escb.co.uk)

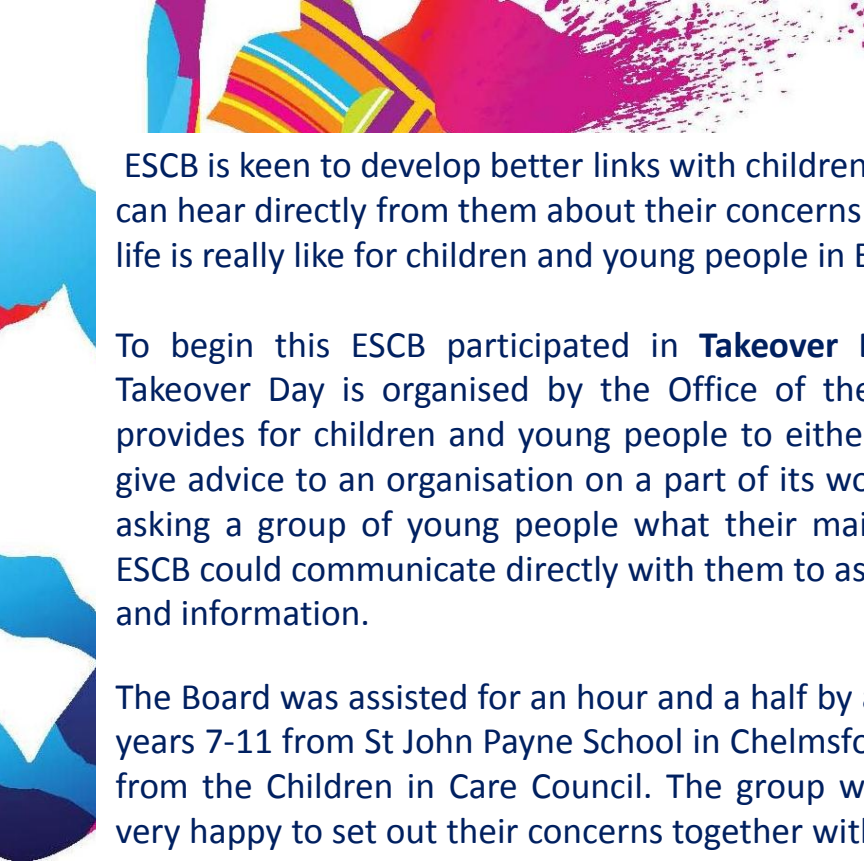
A Bulletin is now issued regularly to 1400, mainly front-line professionals, and links to articles on the website or other news from partner agencies. A schools bulletin was also issued solely for education highlighting changes and developments relevant to them.

We launched a Twitter account so that we could link directly and in real time with those who have a professional interest in safeguarding and members of the public. The ESCB twitter page, **@EssexSafeguards**, has at the time of writing well in excess of 400 “followers” some of whom are parents and young people as well as professionals and partner agencies. This allows direct communication between the ESCB and those responsible for looking after children and young people. An early example of the effectiveness of this approach is that Billericay parents **@BPFParents** re-tweeted advice from the ESCB about the effective use of sun cream to better protect children. Many further example of “re-tweeting” followed, notably with regard to advice and information on e-safety demonstrating that ESCB has a wide reach with regard to social media.

As part of the Board’s communications strategy we have been keen to explore innovative ways to communicate with young people, parents and carers. The Board recognises that young people in particular will be influenced by messages from many different sources and is delighted that with the considerable help of a Lay Member has been able to agree the launch of a major campaign aimed to increase awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation/Domestic Abuse and which will be launched through all Essex football clubs during the 2013/14 season. With the help of ECFA we anticipate that this campaign will reach some 30,000 young people and 60,000 parents and carers.

**Follow the ESCB on Twitter @EssexSafeguards**



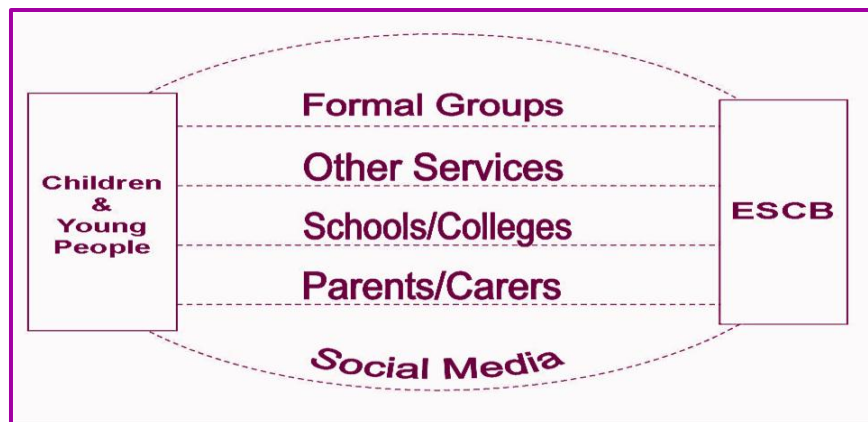


ESCB is keen to develop better links with children and young people so that we can hear directly from them about their concerns and gain an impression of what life is really like for children and young people in Essex.

To begin this ESCB participated in **Takeover Day** on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2012. Takeover Day is organised by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and provides for children and young people to either take over an adult's job or to give advice to an organisation on a part of its work. We took the opportunity of asking a group of young people what their main concerns were and how the ESCB could communicate directly with them to assist with the provision of advice and information.

The Board was assisted for an hour and a half by a group of nine young people in years 7-11 from St John Payne School in Chelmsford. There were also two people from the Children in Care Council. The group were bright, articulate and were very happy to set out their concerns together with a range of solutions.

The session began by looking at the existing forms of communication between the Board and young people, reproduced in the diagram below:



There are several ways that the ESCB currently links with children and young people, it already has Twitter, with an increasing number of young followers. Some parents and carers are aware of the ESCB and may look for information on the web site. Schools and colleges have direct links and will see the ESCB bulletin and/or hear of the ESCB from their representatives. Children and young people may also have connections through health services, criminal justice agencies etc. Finally there are formal groups of young people, the Youth Assembly and the Children in Care Council who have direct links through the Involvement Team.

The session included a discussion of what concerns the young people have, three emerged as the top issues:

- 1** Subtle and pervasive forms of bullying that may not be recognised or acknowledged by others as “bullying”. Examples given were being “un-friended” on Facebook by more than one person at a time suggesting a “campaign”, name calling in the context of “jokes” and social isolation.
- 2** “News-hype” leading to risk aversion. This followed the recent high profile press stories and a feeling that everywhere, everything, everyone is dangerous.
- 3** Social Media. As one young person put it “everything about me is out there”. There was an acknowledgement that social media is here to stay, it can be good, it can be addictive, it can be dangerous, the issue is how to manage it.

The discussion led to how communication could be developed to directly assist children and young people. Everything that follows was suggested, albeit with a realisation that some ideas were more likely to be taken forward than others. A Facebook page, further developments of Twitter, Bebo, Skype, TV adverts, stories in “soaps” (Waterloo Road), Podcasts, YouTube videos, a Youth Correspondent system in schools, use of the education Virtual Learning Environment, a comment/concern box in each school, children/young people representatives on the ESCB, individual school newsletters, peer run workshops on specific issues, connection to school councils, posters (e.g. You’re not DIFFERENT you’re UNIQUE!).

The ideas that were immediately attractive were:

A Facebook page, this would not be set up as a group but would allow the ESCB to post information in collaboration with identified young people. An example mentioned was a guide to internet safety.

A Youth Correspondent system whereby identified young people in schools could pass back information to their peers from the ESCB.

A comment/concerns box in schools to feedback thoughts about safety to ESCB. Further exploration of the Virtual Learning Environment in each school.

A poster competition.

The promise was that the young people who had contributed to the session would see, and have an opportunity to comment on the write-up from the session and it was shared with them. The Communications sub-committee then considered the ideas and prioritised those that could be taken forward into 2013/14.

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) has some great advice for children and parents on cyberbullying as well as keeping safe online.

# What does effective multi-agency safeguarding practice look like?

## The components of effective multi-agency safeguarding practice include:

- An understanding of risk factors when working with children and families and the ability to recognise such factors
- A recognition of the importance of family histories
- Appropriate sharing of information between agencies
- An understanding of each others respective roles and responsibilities
- The capacity of agencies to work together in an integrated way towards agreed outcomes; this includes appropriate inter-agency communication
- Comprehensive and thorough assessments of families and the risks to children/young people
- Following through of agreed decisions and recommendations (whether Child Protection Plan, Child In Need plan etc.).
- The appropriate use of the 'step up' and 'step down' processes by all agencies
- The focus needing to always be on the child
- The importance of working in partnership with families, including birth fathers
- The importance of not taking an 'over optimistic' view of a family's functioning
- Confidence in relation to using the 'resolving professional differences protocol'
- Reflective analysis and supervision

## The ESCBs current view of safeguarding across Essex is based on information from a wide range of sources and agencies. These include:

- Discussions at the ESCB and its sub-groups
- Reports from the Stay-Safe groups
- Multi-agency audits and other monitoring processes
- Inspections
- Case Reviews
- The Multi-Agency Performance Framework
- Previous Section 11 Audit Processes





It is our intention in future to base the analysis and assessment of safeguarding practice across the multi-agency partnership on evidence based auditing processes, safeguarding data collection and reviewing processes.

It is clear that there are high levels of commitment and compliance in respect of safeguarding roles and responsibilities from partner agencies of the ESCB. Partner agencies are well aware of the breadth of the safeguarding agenda and indeed the balance to be struck between focussing on those children/young people considered to be most at risk of harm and thus needing protection with the broader safeguarding responsibilities to all children and young people.

The Current ESCB view is that there are clear and definite strengths in relation to areas of our safeguarding practice. There are examples of good multi-agency collaboration and of multi-agency working. For example multi-agency auditing and the rapidly developing work on child sexual exploitation.

Safeguarding arrangements in Essex are considered to be 'adequate', with some arrangements and practice being good.

This assessment and analysis is based on the fact that there are still areas where practice is rather inconsistent, and where the levels of safeguarding knowledge, experience and practice is quite variable.

### **The essence of safeguarding is:**

- The strength and quality of multi-agency working
- The quality of information sharing and integrated working between agencies
- An understanding of respective roles and responsibilities between partners
- A shared understanding and agreement about thresholds
- Meaningful engagement with children, young people and their families
- The capacity to listen and respond to young people
- Ability to resolve professional differences
- An awareness of other agencies' organisational pressures

Some further work is required and planned in relation to these areas to achieve the consistency and quality of practice across the county that we are striving for.

# Priority Areas for ESCB for 2013/14

**The Essex Safeguarding Children Board has identified the following areas of priority for 2013/14:**



- Continued and enhanced focus on consultation with and involvement of young people and their families in relation to safeguarding practice
- A focus on the quality and safety of our safeguarding practice
  - Achieved by increasing the number of multi-agency audits
  - Themed audits
  - Case Reviews
  - Workforce Development and Training
- Effective information sharing protocol and processes
- An agreed understanding and scrutiny of thresholds, safeguards and early help
- Development of an electronic S11 audit tool.

**In addition to these priority areas, we are looking at how we can improve the overall quality of our safeguarding. Our 2013/14 practice priorities around this are:**

- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Bullying in and out of schools (including online/mobile phone bullying and exploitation)
- Young people self-harming
- Consultation with children/young people around all these areas to understand their perspective

# Appendix 1: Board Attendance

There were 5 meetings held from June 2012 – March 2013, one of which was a Special meeting to adopt a Serious Case Review.

Attendance at meetings was as follows:

## Full Members

\* - meeting that was missed was additional Special meeting

	Meetings Attended	Apologies Received	Percentage Attendance
Health	5		100%
Schools Children & Families	5		100%
Adult Health & Community Wellbeing	0	1 (20%)	0%
Youth Offending Service	4	1 (20%)	80%
Essex Police	5		100%
Probation	4	1 (20%)	80%
Schools	3	1 (20%)	60%
District Councils	1	4 (80%)	20%
Military Corrective Training Centre	3	2 (40%)	60%
Voluntary/Community Sector *	4		80%
Lay Members	5		100%
Legal Adviser	5		100%
Lead Member (Observer)	3	1 (20%)	60%

## Associate Members

As stated in governance document Associate Members do not have to attend every meeting

	Meetings Attended	Apologies Received	Percentage Attendance
Local Medical Council	0		0%
NSPCC	3		60%
Essex Fire & Rescue Service	2	1 (20%)	40%
Drug & Alcohol Service	2	3 (60%)	40%



## Appendix 2: ESCB Budget

	Received		Actual
SCF	£133,885	Staffing & Admin	£221,110
Health	£66,426	Independent Chair	£18,000
Police	£66,426	Meeting Expenses	£3,867
Probation	£10,164	Development of ESCB Members	£378
District Councils	£13,310	Communications	£680
CAFCASS	£550	Training	£29,568
Total Contributions	£290,761	Serious Case Reviews	£30,845
Training Income	£39,199	Policy & Procedure	
Training Income (SCF)	£2,000	Performance & Audit	
Contributions to CSE Training (West & North East Stay Safe Groups)	£2,300		
Contribution to CDR costs 11/12 (Thurrock & Southend)	£7,126	SCF Funded Training places	£835
Contribution to CDR costs 12/13 (Thurrock)	£9,157	Lay Member expenses	£333
Total Income	£350,543	Total Expenditure	£305,616
CWDC - Munro Training Grant	£90,000	CWDC - Munro Funded Training	£3,481
		Amount to ECC General Reserves	£89,622
		Overheads for Support Team	£35,190
		Underspend 2012/13	£6,634
Totals	£440,543		£440,543
		Amount held in reserves as at 31/03/13	£118,982

# **This information is issued by the Essex Safeguarding Children Board**

**You can contact us in the following ways:**

## **By Email**

[escb@essex.gov.uk](mailto:escb@essex.gov.uk)

## **Visit our website**

[www.escb.co.uk](http://www.escb.co.uk)

## **By telephone**

01245 435167

## **By Fax**

01245 434715

## **By Post**

C228 County Hall,  
Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 1JZ

## **Follow us on Twitter**

[@EssexSafeguards](https://twitter.com/EssexSafeguards)



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