

		AGENDA ITEM 6
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Committee:	Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	29 September 2011	
<u>Children's Services – A wider vision for children and families</u>		
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Children's Services – A wider vision for children and families

Report by: Cllr Sarah Candy, Cabinet Member for Children's Services

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1 Purpose of Report and Decision Areas

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the wider vision in Children's Services that will drive and underpin our efforts in partnership to develop, deliver and sustain good and then excellent multi-agency services for children, young people and their families in Essex.

Essex County Council has a leadership role for communities in Essex, building capacity, encouraging and harnessing innovation, supporting community created solutions and providing an environment where new ideas and approaches can flourish. It has a specific and statutory leadership role in relation to children, young people and families that includes, alongside our partners, keeping children safe, providing opportunities for achievement and ensuring that families get the help they need, as early as possible and within the communities where they live.

As described in the earlier paper on improvements in children's social care, Essex is at a pivotal stage in its improvement journey, building and consolidating the quality of practice that will sustain improvements into the longer term and equipping the workforce with the right mix of skills and resilience to meet the challenges of working with the most complex families.

Recent results from both inspection and peer evaluation have acknowledged that we have fixed parts of the inadequate Schools, Children and Families system, but that there is still much work for the council and its partners to do to design and build sustainable strategies and systems that are child and family centric and outcome focussed, enabling the delivery of services to children, young people and families that keep them safe and improve their health and wellbeing. This we described as 'phase two' of the improvement journey.

The delivery of our vision to support the family as the foundation for strong and healthy communities has a wider significance and interdependence across all areas within SCF,

adult services, the wider council and our external partners. Of key importance is the implementation of the new Schools and Education strategy that will see the Local Authority strengthen its ability to influence and support schools to raise standards and results and the development of a strategy to define future models of delivery for services for children with special and additional educational needs. Of equal importance is the Community Budgeting Pilot 'ESSEX FAMILY' that seeks to shift the mainstream system to deliver more effective early help to families, develop the infrastructure to support innovation and deliver responsive and cost-effective democratic public services in the future.

Early on in the programme of legislative reform undertaken by the Coalition Government was the rescinding of much of the legislative framework underpinning Children's Trusts, by:

- Removing the duty on schools to co-operate through Children's Trusts in the Education Bill;
- Removing the requirement on local authorities to set up Children's Trust Boards and the requirement on those Boards to prepare and publish a joint Children and Young People's Plan;
- Revoking the regulations underpinning the Children and Young People's Plan and withdrawing the statutory guidance on Children's Trusts.

The Government were clear that this unravelling of past legislation should not be taken as an indication that partnership is no longer a priority and that it continues to support effective local joint working. The intentions of these reforms are merely to free local partnerships to address issues with their own innovative solutions.

In Essex we have taken this opportunity to review and rationalise our approach to partnership and have agreed leaner and less bureaucratic governance that deploys joint working more tactically and is driven by local need. This is described in Appendix 5.

This paper also sets out the shared strategies, principles, priorities and plans, the underpinning governance and approach that will support the realisation of our vision as a series of appendices.

1.1 Decision area

For the Cabinet to be advised and recognise the proposed wider partnership vision for SCF and support the direction of travel set out in this paper.

2 A Vision for Children and Families

Our vision is that all children, young people and their families will be encouraged and supported to reach their full potential. We have the highest aspirations for children,

ensuring that they grow up safe and healthy, supported by a range of educational and social opportunities that maximise their skills, employment opportunities and general life chances.

Families are the foundation upon which strong and healthy communities are built, and we will continue to support the family as the main contributor to a child's safety, health and wellbeing, putting families and children at the centre of communities. We will act as leaders and agents of change, innovators and enablers of improved outcomes, collaborating with families to find their own solutions.

Where families experience difficulties, we will ensure they get the help they need at the earliest possible opportunity, engaging with other agencies and organisations to commission and secure this help locally. We will support families to gain access to the information and support they need to avoid minor difficulties escalating to become more major challenges and we operate in a way that promotes family resilience.

Our belief is that the wellbeing of children and young people is best achieved by living with their own families. Where this is not possible we will strive to provide support in a strong alternative family setting. Where children or young people require care and protection we will ensure it is provided to a consistently high standard so that those who do come into public care will have their life chances enhanced by the experience.

Our vision is to raise the aspirations and improve the life chances of every child and young person, protecting vulnerable groups and promoting their employability and skills. Choice for all children, young people and families will remain at the heart of the Council's approach. This will mean all parents have good options in choosing schooling for their children and that all children are educated in a well resourced and well run school.

We will with our key partners develop and strengthen our safeguarding services striving to ensure that children and young people are protected from abuse and neglect, reducing and where possible eradicating risks to children. We believe that this will be achieved most effectively by working alongside families building on their strengths and enabling them to make the changes that are required. Where children are suffering significant harm and the required change cannot be made we will act decisively in order to protect them.

Getting the best for families will mean doing the right things well, being outcome focused and family orientated and putting the needs and aspirations of children, young people and their families first. We will listen to the children and young people we work with, ensuring they are engaged and consulted in everything we do and, wherever it is possible, act on what they say. We will clearly demonstrate where the views of children and young people have directly influenced the quality, development and delivery of what we do.

We will adopt a whole system approach to the way we do things, working in partnership with others to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, reduce barriers to services and

exploit the value of integrated strategies, systems and services. We will strengthen our commitment to collaborate with others to be local and national champions of families, children and young people.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Principles

Appendix 2: A Family Wellbeing Model for Essex

Appendix 3: Strategies and Plans

Appendix 4: Partnership Work and Priorities

Appendix 5: Governance Arrangements

Appendix 1: Principles

The Schools, Children and Families strategy for the delivery of excellent services will need to be developed at reduced cost overall, building on the following principles:

- Ensuring the safety of children and young people
- Targeting our resources to those with the greatest need and where we can have greatest impact
- Ensuring that 'think family' principles are adopted across children and, adult services and the wider council and partnerships
- Focusing sharply to narrow the gap in education and wellbeing outcomes
- Radically improving school outcomes overall
- Equipping parents and carers to be resilient and appropriately manage difficulties that arise
- Up-skilling the universal workforce to identify and address emotional difficulties early and to build family resilience
- Maintaining children and young people at home and in their local community as we know that, in most cases, removing them will dramatically decrease their chances of reaching their true potential
- Aligning resources with partners to secure efficient and effective services

Appendix 2: A Family Wellbeing Model for Essex

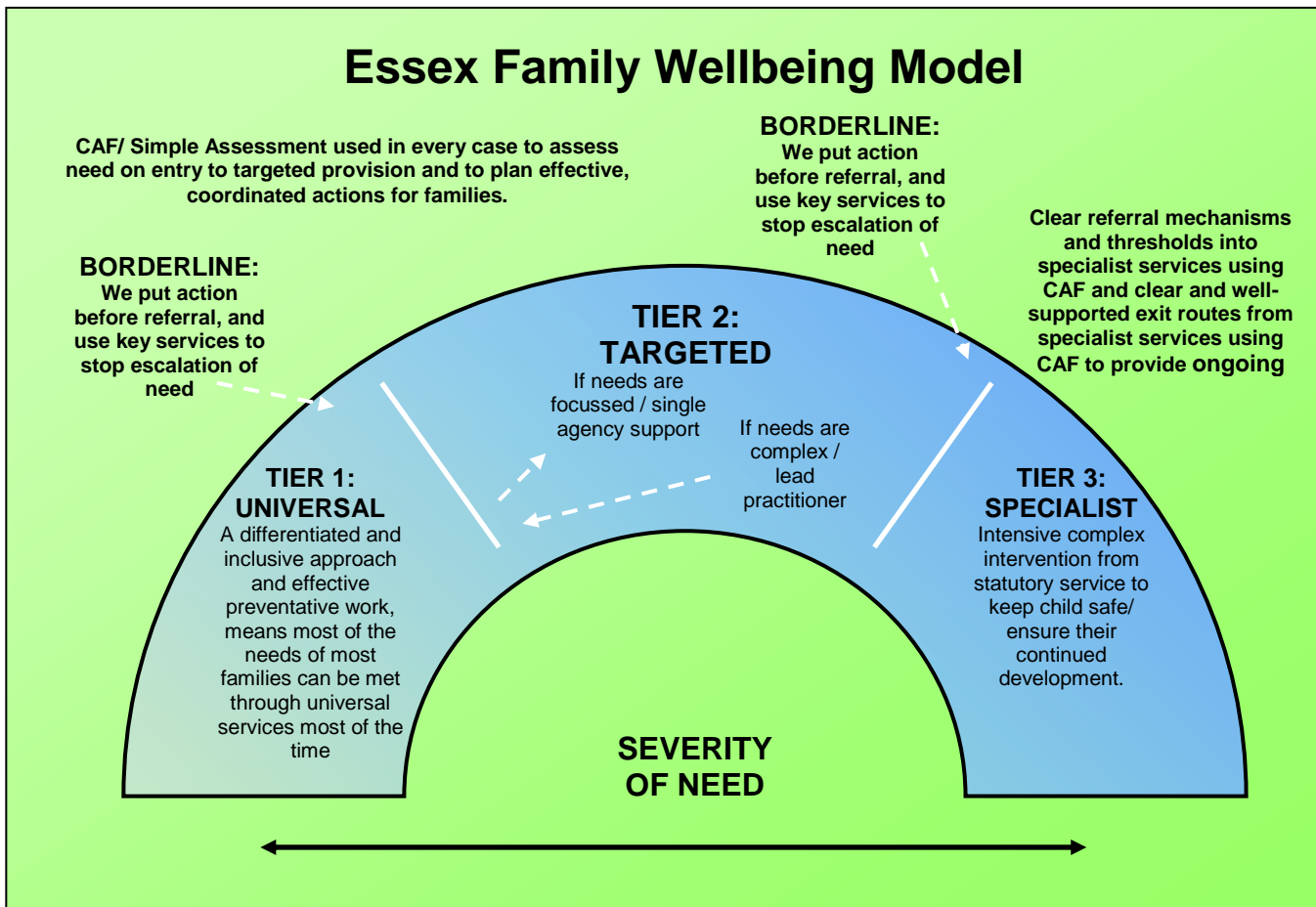
In response to the Munro Review and associated recent reports and research on prevention and early help we will be developing our children's partnership plan around a partnership family 'wellbeing' model that recognises the need for prevention and early help to improve outcomes and safeguard children and young people.

The Family and Wellbeing Model in Essex will be for everyone who works with children, young people and families to help this wider workforce to provide the most effective support for children and families.

Its purpose will be to enable and support children, young people and families to achieve their full potential by setting out in one place a shared approach to delivering services for families across every level of need. This will include health, early years, education, youth, social care, youth justice, probation and police and allied services such as housing and other services impacting on the child, young person, parent or carer and wider family.

The Family and Wellbeing Model will support our vision for families as the foundation and centre for strong and healthy communities and as the main contributor to a child's and young persons safety, education, health and wellbeing. A Munro planning group has been set up and part of its role will be to support the development of the Essex Family Wellbeing model.

Figure 1: Essex Family and Wellbeing Model



Appendix 3: Strategies and Plans

Children Looked After Strategy and Placement Plan

Our Children Looked After Strategy has been drafted and our Placement Plan supports the strategy. The strategy and plan reflect our belief that most children are best supported to live at home or within family based placements. They seek, amongst other things, to increase access to local family placements and reduce the use of residential provision; whilst freeing up resources to remodel services towards prevention and early help. The investment required for the development of services to support children living at home will in part be realised by the savings achieved by reducing the numbers of Children Looked After and by improving the commissioning of Children Looked After services.

We will need to ensure that our commitment to invest in preventative and early help services to reduce the amount of referrals to social care and numbers of children Looked After are closely monitored and marshalled as without this investment sustainability of the placement plan will be at risk. We are considering an 'invest to save' bid and also the use of a Social Impact Bond.

Schools Education Strategy

The policies of the Coalition Government are driving a 'power shift' away from central government prescription towards a greater level of local and community determination. The Schools' White Paper, *The Importance of Teaching*, published in November 2011, and the subsequent Education Bill set out the legislative framework for the future role of local authorities. The Green Paper, *Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Educational Needs and Disability*, published in March 2011, reinforces the key message and affirms the future role of the local authority and its partners as strategic commissioners and the champions for vulnerable children, young people and their families. The challenge for ECC is to promote high standards, greater consistency and equality of opportunity for all Essex County Council's students, with a much smaller retained staff and a significantly lower budget.

To enable the development of the new Schools Education Strategy that keeps Essex at the forefront of the change, ECC engaged in a wide-ranging consultation to develop a strategy, system and proposed range of School Improvement Service options for the delivery of high quality education. This research and analysis included engaging schools, head teacher representatives, governors, Diocesan Boards and sponsors, School Improvement staff, the voluntary sector and other providers through meetings, interviews, workshops, conferences and surveys. Using this information a new service has been designed in order to realise our strategic aims, this has been agreed by the Outcomes Board.

A strategic Education board is being developed, led by the Cabinet member for Education; this will drive the implementation of the new Schools, Education Strategy.

Schools and Education Strategy – Special Educational Needs and Additional Educational Needs

We are embarking on a nine month period of research, analysis and design to define future models of delivery for services for children with special and additional educational needs. It will run alongside a Cabinet member-led strategy development process with service stakeholders.

This will deliver an options appraisal which will be presented to the Outcomes Board in a final business case in May 2012 examining future models of delivery for SEN and AEN services in the current environment of reducing budgets, continuing statutory obligations and increasing demand. Emerging from the options appraisal will be a new proposed design for each of the services within scope. There is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' solution for services, although building strategic coherence between areas will be important. This project is linked to the final business case for the Schools and Education Strategy (School Improvement) which was approved in June 2011 and will run concurrently with the review of Commissioned and Traded Services which was approved in July 2011.

Employment and Skills

Our vision is to equip young people and adults with World class skills that enable them to fulfil their potential, meet the needs of employers and help to create a sustainable economy in Essex.

The UK is currently attempting to come out of recession and in Essex unemployment figures have risen significantly. Around 90,000 Essex residents are claiming key out of work benefits, 1 in 8 adults (119,700) in Essex have no qualifications at all and 1 in 3 adults are not qualified to level 2, the generally agreed minimum that people will need to secure many jobs of the future. Youth unemployment is an ongoing concern, with levels of NEET (ages 16-18) reaching a peak of 3,482 in October 2010, an increase of 400 on the corresponding 2009 figure. 18,722 young people aged 16-24 are currently on benefits or economically inactive. Approximately 1 in 5 of these lives in Basildon.

The current economic climate and the particular circumstances in Essex both challenge and make our work to support this vision an imperative. Our response will be driven by employment opportunities and the needs of the economy. It will be built upon robust industry intelligence that we will develop in collaboration with business and its representative bodies, sector skills councils, industry training boards, Job Centre Plus, and a variety of other partners.

We will produce an annually revised statement forecasting the skills needed within Essex to support its economic growth over the coming years and that will enable our residents to access the jobs market beyond our county boundaries. This will be used to inform and support schools and training providers across the county, to help shape local

careers advice and influence training provision, and by the Skills Funding Agency to monitor how training providers are responding to the needs of the economy.

Our focus will principally be on the two areas of the economy offering most employment growth, as identified by a significant body of industry intelligence and substantiated by Job Centre Plus, and a range of measures to contain and reduce youth unemployment. Accepting that people will change jobs many times in their careers, and that many of the roles needed in the future do not yet exist (e.g., due to the rapid changes in technology), our efforts will aim to provide people with both the generic and technical skills needed for sustained employment in the future. Our focus on STEM related industries will also support our long term ambitions for the Essex economy.

Our economic focus will, therefore, be on:

- **STEM related industries**, most notably Engineering and the Energy sector (which itself is forecast to be creating an additional 80,000 - 100,000 new jobs within the UK over the next decade, many on our doorstep), which share a common need for technician, craft and design skills, and
- **Health & Social Care** (which is estimated to need 104,000 additional workers in the East of England by 2014) to support an increasingly ageing population.

Within each of these we will help facilitate, whether through sponsorship, collaboration, or pump priming, a portfolio of activity that:

- increases opportunities for young people
- contributes towards RPA targets
- supports the unemployed into work
- supports key industry sectors, and that
- encourages participation and employment of underrepresented groups.

We will facilitate a new 3 year £1.8m Essex Apprenticeship Industry Programme that will support 475 much needed Apprenticeship opportunities for young people in Engineering, Engineering Construction and Energy related frameworks.

We will invest a further £150k to pilot a new work experience programme, working with social enterprises across Essex to engage with harder to reach/disadvantaged groups of young people and support them into work, apprenticeships or back into education.

Appendix 4: Partnership Work

A Partnership Commissioning Strategy has been developed creating a set of shared priorities and agreed actions aligned to the resources and structures required to achieve them. Going forward we will be developing our children's plan around a partnership family and wellbeing model that recognises the need for prevention and early help to improve education, health and social outcomes for children and young people. The plan will be developed using a 'think family approach' that recognises integrated strategies, systems and processes as key enablers for efficient and effective child and family centred, outcome focused service delivery. This will build on the learning from the ESSEX FAMILY work.

Priorities and Objectives

The priorities within the Children's Joint Commissioning Strategy are designed to align with the corporate priorities of Essex County Council, the strategic priorities of key agencies and those of the emerging GP Networks. A close alignment of priorities will achieve a radical efficiency that whilst addressing priorities also has a wider social, economic and environmental impact and achieves the maximum benefit from all public expenditure.

Vulnerable Children

Priorities:

- Strengthening the services and processes that keep children and young people safe from neglect and abuse.
- Improving children's emotional health and wellbeing.
- Ensuring effective support for parents and carers.
- Improving the life chances of Children Looked After, young carers and all other children and families at risk of poor outcomes.

Education

Priorities:

- Improve the performance of children and young people most at risk of underachievement.
- Improve the performance of schools which are below the floor targets.
- Identify schools and academies who will work with the Authority to raise standards at underachieving schools.

Putting the Customer First

Priority:

- Providing children, young people and families with opportunities to contribute meaningfully and be involved in the development and delivery of services in their local communities.

Strategic Commissioning

Integrated Pathways – we have been developing this approach alongside adult services and partner agencies.

The development of integrated pathways enables a whole system view to be taken, starting from the individual, child, young person, adult or family and detached from what has been or is delivered and commissioned now and by whom. The pathways provide a clear view of all of the elements that come together to deliver services for children, families and communities in Essex.

The strengthening of the wider universal workforce's skills, confidence and understanding of assessment, referral and access routes to services and specialist pathways and the need to hold and support people within universal services wherever possible is supported by a pathway approach.

The -9 months -5 years integrated pathway is vital in the review and redesign of interventions for children and families, the re-specification and re-commissioning of children's centres from April 2012 and influence on the commissioning of community health services, maternity and health visiting services.

The pathways promote an understanding of both the differences and relationship between children's and adult services supporting the development of whole family / community approach and smarter (all age) commissioning.

Needs Analysis

The vision is to use an increasingly sophisticated and accurate picture of the risks and vulnerabilities of children, young people and families, at individual, local area and pan-Essex levels and at all of levels of need, to enable the joint commission of a number of evidence-based interventions to deliver services that prevent escalation to specialist, high-cost services. We are working with strategic services and Public Health to specify our future requirements and agree how we will work together effectively.

Children and Families Involvement

Our Children and Families Involvement team are developing a comprehensive involvement strategy; children and families are regularly involved in all aspects of the commissioning process, including the design, specification and procurement of services. The team have also set up a Children in Care Council. The team work closely with Strategic Services to ensure the engagement of children and families in all of ECC's work.

Resource Envelope

The Resource Envelope was initially developed using the children's mapping tool headings (previously the child health mapping tool) as a starting point and adding additional categories of service areas to record all Local Authority and Primary Care Trusts' Resources. Local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Boards are now working with District and Borough Council's, the Police and other organisations and agencies involved in our joint working arrangements to further populate the Resource Envelope. This provides a transparent record of how much resource is being spent on particular priority areas and can be used to begin to consider where we need to bend resources to better meet needs and priorities.

Evidence Base

We are working with strategic services and the New Ways of Working Customer project to develop a dynamic system that enables commissioners and practitioners to access up to date reliable information on the strategies, systems and services that will have the greatest impact on delivering on our priorities.

Information, Advice, Advocacy

We are working with the New Ways Of Working Customer project to establish the systems and processes that need to be developed to provide children, young people and families with information, advice and advocacy.

Supply Chain

We are working with the ECVYS/Family Network and twelve CVS's to develop an engagement strategy with the voluntary and community sector. Currently these organisations are represented on all the Local Commissioning and Delivery Boards and Children's Partnership Board and Executive and they have developed a communications system to advise the voluntary and community sectors of our commissioning plans and opportunities to be part of the development of these. We need to do more to strengthen our capacity building in the market and our ability to involve potential providers in conversations about future service needs related to the mix and tapestry of services we will require moving forward.

Balanced Impact Assessment

Over the past decade an over reliance on quantitative measures in the form of various NI frameworks has resulted in our assessment of impact generally giving an account of inputs and outputs rather than genuine outcomes. Often the results we have called outcomes have been measures of quantity and timeliness without a true indication of the impact to the child, young person or family, their own perception of this impact or the actual quality of services.

It is an expressed intention of the Coalition Government's to radically reduce the burden of reporting to a large indicator framework and it has talked of being in favour of more locally determined measures of impact and improved wellbeing.

Qualitative measures have often been seen as the poor cousins of harder edge quantitative indicators and approaches to collecting and collating this data have lacked a real connection with key measures of service impact.

Work has been undertaken by partners in Essex to develop a local framework that aligns the gathering of both quantitative and qualitative data including performance against indicators but also measures of distance travelled and direct feedback from users aligned to services and key transition points identified by them.

This outcomes framework will fill the gap left by the dissolution of the Every Child Matters Outcomes Framework for children and families and is designed to align with the Adult Services, Public Health and NHS Outcomes Frameworks. The Health and Wellbeing Board are keen that Children's Services develop an outcomes framework.

A parallel strand of work has focussed on specific groups of vulnerable young people with the development by the Involvement Team of a framework to measure the social impact of services as perceived and experienced by children and young people in Essex. This social impact research pilot would enable children and young people Looked After or Leaving Care to consider their experience of the care system and evaluate services supporting key transitions which may affect their outcomes. The intention is that the outcomes from the research would contribute to Essex's developing Balanced Impact Assessment and a triangulation of children and young people's views and experiences, with performance measures and results, and broader community based impact measures. It is considered that this approach could provide added depth and dimension to existing data. This approach has been piloted with children and young people in care and plans are in place to work with other identified groups of vulnerable young people.

Current Commissioning Activity

- Re-commissioning of children's centres linked to the workforce development plans for health visitors and focus on the hard to reach.
- Professional Fostering Scheme
- Increasing numbers of In house Foster Carers
- Short Breaks, capital investment to increase access and support services for Children with Disabilities
- Developing more longer term residential placements for Children with Disabilities in Essex using existing under utilised respite resources linked to local special schools
- Developing Leverton Secure/ House into a resource that will bring in an increased income into Essex as well as provide a quality service to Essex young people

- Local Early Intervention services (CAMHs, Parenting & Family Support, NEET)
- Dynamic purchasing type system to drive up quality and drive down costs of Independent Fostering and Residential placements
- Development of a robust parental contribution policy
- Transport policy changes to decrease the budget required and promote independence
- Closure of in house residential homes
- Development of a Social Impact Bond to provide services to children and young people on the edge of care
- Development of a youth strategy

Appendix 5: Governance Arrangements

In the autumn of 2010, new children's joint working arrangements were agreed to replace our Children's Trust arrangements responding to the policy direction of the Coalition Government. Joint working is now delivered more tactically where it can increase quality and efficiency and with leaner formal board structures that bring fewer key players together. We have stripped out a number of county level groups and have devolved more authority and accountability to local areas.

The elements of the governance structure are:

Health and Wellbeing Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board is being developed with the primary aim of improving the health of people in Essex, particularly those facing disadvantage and the worst health outcomes. This is a partnership board, Chaired by the Leader of the Council and will look more holistically at health issues including whole life pathways and more family friendly and focussed interventions.

The Children's Partnership (Strategic Joint Commissioning Group) chaired by the Lead Member for Vulnerable Children will be primarily accountable to the Health and Wellbeing Board. As the Health and Wellbeing board develops there will be an opportunity to review and agree the role of the Children's Partnership and its current arrangements.

Children's Partnership Board

The Children's Partnership draws together the analysis of need, shared resources, strategic service development and joint commissioning priorities and sets the framework for joint working across the wider children's services. The board agrees and monitors a set of results and impact measures to be collectively driven within the joint working arrangements.

A key relationship is between the Children's Partnership Board and the PCT Boards and, over time, working with emerging GP networks agreeing joint commissioning strategies, initially aligned budgets and in the future piloting pooled budgets in selected areas.

Executive

The Children's Partnership Board is supported by an Executive whose role is to support the development of the Joint Commissioning Strategy and ensure that the priorities and plans of the board are delivered. The Executive also undertakes the reporting arrangements of the Children's Partnership Board.

Essex Safeguarding Children Board

The relationship between the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the Child's Partnership Board is central and crucial to ensuring the delivery of our joint priorities around safeguarding.

There is currently a review of the LSCB, and following this review there may be changes needed to the relationship between the LSCB and Children's Partnership.

Infrastructure Group

The role of the Infrastructure Group is to ensure that the arrangements are supported by a good quality needs analysis, robust performance management, Outcomes framework and quality assurance processes and strategic communications.

Joint Child Health and Wellbeing Commissioning Hub

We have established a County Council Children's Services and PCT Joint Commissioning Hub (JCH). The hub consists of PCT, Public Health and LA children's commissioners. The hub brings together commissioning strategies and plans to develop and deliver systems and services related to common priorities for health and the LA in respect of children, young people and families. It seeks to align funding streams and commissioning processes to improve efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. e.g. Early years and health visiting services, Children's Equipment and Therapies.

The hub will be developing an 'offer' to GP networks for the joint commissioning of services, through the Health and Well Being Board.

Child Protection

The Child Protection Group was set up following the last inspection when it was evident that though there were examples of joint working in relation to child protection this work was not captured anywhere, it specifically addresses child protection in the multi-agency context. It may be following the review of the LSCB arrangements that this group is no longer needed.

Children Looked After

The Children Looked After Group oversees and specifically drives the closing of the gap in attainment and life chances between children who are Looked After and their peers. This group was set up following the last inspection when it was evident that though there were examples of joint working in relation to Children Looked After this work was not captured anywhere. It may be following review of the corporate parenting group and the possibility that this will become multi-agency this group will no longer be needed.

One Workforce Group

The group has responsibility for ensuring the review and development of an Integrated Workforce Strategy and that a consistent and robust model of safeguarding training is developed and implemented. The group ensures that joint systems and processes such as the Common Assessment Framework and the Lead Professional role are embedded and supported by appropriate training.

Local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Boards

The key responsibilities of the Local Children's Commissioning and Delivery Boards are:

- To promote and deliver the local vision for children and young people in line with the commissioning plans and strategy of the Children's Partnership Board.
- To ensure the local delivery of the commissioning plans and strategies of the Children's Partnership Group.
- To lead the work on local aligning, pooling and sharing of resources to ensure effective and joint commissioning.
- To ensure the effective and coordinated allocation of resources and agency activities locally to meet the needs of children, young people and families, including overseeing the operation and impact of Multi-Agency Allocation Groups (MAAGs)
- To performance manage and oversee local activity to deliver improved impacts and results for children, young people and families.
- To ensure effective safeguarding of local children and young people, reporting to the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

See figure 2 and 3 for Governance Structure of Children's Partnership

Figure 2: Children's Partnership Governance Structure

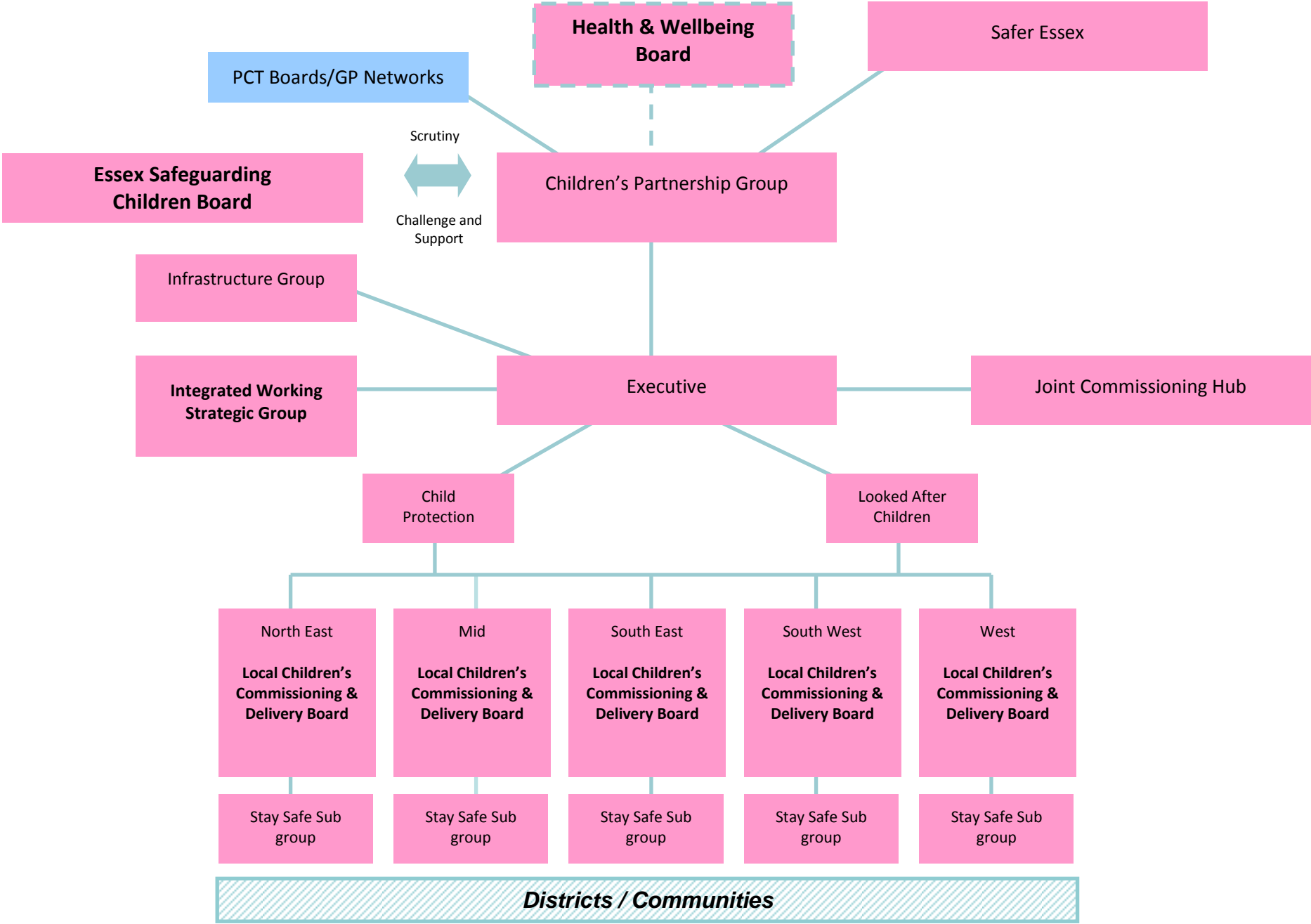


Figure 3: Putting the Health and Wellbeing Board and Commissioning in context:

