

Members' Suite

PO Box 11,
County Hall,
Chelmsford CM1 1LX
Email: cllr.malcolm.maddocks@essex.gov.uk



26 February 2018

BY EMAIL

Phil Picton
Independent Chairman
Essex Safeguarding Children Board

Dear Phil,

**PEOPLE AND FAMILIES POLICY AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (PAF)
REVIEW OF THE WORK OF THE ESSEX SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD
(ESCB)**

Thank you for attending the meeting of the PAF on 8 February when you, Paul Secker and Clare Livens updated the committee on the work of the ESCB and its future priorities. We spent longer on the item than we had originally anticipated which reflects the heightened interest members had in the issues and the informative discussion with you all.

You will recall that during that discussion the following was agreed:

- (i) That reference to capitalising on and exploiting the range and depth of experience of being the second largest board in the country should not be stated as a principle but rather more as an aspiration in your Business Plan;
- (ii) That we would schedule and align future updates more closely with the publication of your annual report thereby meaning that we will schedule another update from you all in September or October this year and relevant officers will liaise on this to confirm exact timing. Each year thereafter we would expect similar timing for updates.

As you may be aware, after lunch on the 8th February we spoke to a couple of representatives from the voluntary sector to seek their views on safeguarding children in Essex and the discussion raised a number of issues. In general they viewed that the system structure provided clear levels of support and referrals worked well when professionals were adequately trained to field those situations.

However, communications probably remained the biggest issue with the voluntary sector 'left in the dark' after making a referral, getting no acknowledgement or indication as to whether the person was getting support or not. We realise that there may be patient confidentiality issues in disclosing support and treatment here but wonder whether a more general approach could be taken to at least encourage agencies to acknowledge referrals and that if a referral does not make the necessary threshold for further support that the voluntary sector referrer is made aware so that they could consider if they can provide any support.

Whilst social care was considered very responsive to serious risk cases it was felt that there was a substantial void between the service for those serious risk people and the majority of people needing lower level support work which often then fell onto schools. Another major concern was the failure to support families who choose not to engage with the process which we understand some can do if a specific risk threshold is not met. Consequently, combined with the discussions in the morning members were concerned about children 'dropping through the gaps' and have asked what else can be done operationally other than just 'increasing focus' on it.

It was also highlighted to the Committee that the voluntary sector was not represented on the ESCB. We appreciate that the Board is already the second largest in the country but was this considered not necessary or is this an oversight? The Committee would appreciate a clearer understanding of the determinants of membership of the ESCB – clearly some mandatory representatives may be defined by statute but presumably some may be more discretionary?

Whilst not yet formal recommendations, we would appreciate your initial comments on the above in writing by the end of March 2018 and no doubt we can then discuss further at our next 'catch-up' meeting (to be scheduled) and/or when you revisit the committee in September/October.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Regards

PP 
Councillor Malcolm Maddocks,
Chairman,
People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

A.P. KUCKES
SENIOR DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER

c.c. Paul Secker, Director, Safeguarding & Quality Assurance (C&F)
Alison Cutler, ESCB Business & Performance Manager