

## **Children and Young People PSC meeting 7 March 2013 CYP/06/13**

### **FAMILIES SAFEGUARDING SUB-COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13**

The Families Safeguarding Sub-Committee was established in February 2012 under the following Terms of Reference, agreed at its inaugural meeting:

1. To exercise the powers of the Children and Young People's (CYP) and Community and Older People's (COP) Policy & Scrutiny Committee (P & SC) in holding the following to local democratic account in respect of any safeguarding matter, affecting children, adults, communities, older people and families:
  - Executive Member for Children's Services
  - Executive Member for Adults Services
  - Executive Director of Schools, Children and Families
  - Executive Director of Adult Services
  - Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)
  - Essex Safeguarding Adults Board
  - Essex Health & Wellbeing Board
2. Seeking to advance interaction between the two areas, to achieve better efficiency, especially with regard to transitions.
3. To call any individuals or organisations as witnesses that the Sub-Committee deems relevant to its activities.
4. To receive reports and monitor the Corporate Scorecard insofar as it relates to safeguarding and to make recommendations for consideration by the two Policy & Scrutiny Committees.
5. The Sub-Committee is empowered to fill any vacancies in its membership, or co-opt appropriate people as members or advisers, subject to ratification by the next meetings of the CYP and COP P & SCs.

The Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of both the CYP and COP P & SCs and, therefore, is accountable to the two P & SCs; and these two P & SCs will take up any recommendations made by the Sub-Committee. Membership is shown in Appendix 1.

One of the first tasks established by the Sub-Committee was to develop a Tracker document which identifies issues to be resolved in relation to safeguarding issues under both children's and adult services. The issues highlighted are given a RAG status and are followed through until progress is such that a 'Green' status can be presented with confidence. The Tracker has enabled the Sub-Committee to hold both services areas to account, and where necessary seek witnesses to attend the Sub-Committee to provide evidence of improvement.

The annual plans of both ESCB and the Adult Safeguarding Unit have been presented to and scrutinised by the Sub-Committee, and quarterly updates on the Action Plans of both have been reviewed throughout the year. Quarterly performance updates from children's social care have been reviewed and Members receive the quadrant reports on a monthly basis for the quadrant which they represent.

Consideration of a Serious Case Review led Members to the conclusion that there was, perhaps, a tendency for those children placed outside the County to be forgotten. Also whilst it was agreed that most of the faults uncovered by the case in question were covered by the Ofsted Inspection Arrangements for Children in Care there was a concern with regard to how frequent inspections were undertaken. As a result of this the Sub-Committee tasked the Chairman to correspond with the Cabinet Member for Children's Services as it was agreed there was a need for Members to be able to visit Children in Care in appropriate circumstances; at the same time it was agreed that the Sub-Committee should lobby the Cabinet Member so that they could have access to case files. The Sub-Committee will continue to lobby for both requests.

Key issues and the Essex response to the Rochdale case were considered by the Sub-Committee, due to a young person from Essex being a victim of sexual exploitation having been placed in solo care Rochdale. The Sub-Committee heard that Essex County Council would undertake its own review regarding its care for the young person which would be extended to include the commissioning of residential placements outside the County, children missing from care procedures and Essex's responsibility to other young people placed by other Local Authorities within Essex. All of which have implications in-line with the letter from the Sub-Committee to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services. Essex County Council want to ensure that the shortfalls in the Rochdale case would not be repeated in Essex and each quadrant needs to have regular meetings to share information in relation to young people who may be at risk of exploitation.

The Sub-Committee has considered the updated Essex approach to dealing with Domestic Violence, which, it is anticipated will be funded through Whole Place Community Budgets. The backlog of DV1 forms being processed by Essex Police has given rise to the establishment of a domestic violence review by the Essex County Council Policy and Strategy Team. The Sub-Committee heard that there are in excess of 30,000 domestic violence incidents each year recorded in Essex, and 23,000 of these have children involved; all of these are referred to Social Care. Essex Police do a good job of getting data, but of necessity rely on officers with generalist skills, rather than those trained in safeguarding. One-quarter of the total victims are male, but the true figure may be greater as males are much less likely to contact the Police.

Kent County Council has established a Central Referral Unit, which brings together all agencies. Essex is seeking something similar to this, a multi-agency hub, where victims would have access to a trained professional and which would serve as a contact for front line workers. There were some sensibilities which would have to be addressed

and dealt with, but these should not prove impossible. It was suggested that Sub-Committee Members should visit the Kent CRU, to see it in action.

Following the report to the Sub-Committee both the CYP and COP P & SCs have received updates on the Domestic Violence Strategy and heard the particular aims of the Strategy as developing a Perpetrator Strategy - although there are 2,300 trials, only 100 convicted perpetrators go on programmes to address their abusive behaviour. Essex would like to have 640 places on these courses; Accommodation - this is one of the three most important issues to victims (along with what will happen to the children and money). This requires input at a district level; more services to victims of abuse, to help them break the pattern of returning to abusive relationships; and greater overall awareness, leading to earlier intervention (research suggests that many victims take five years of abuse before they contact the Police).

Following moderate concerns raised by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in relation to Safeguarding at Basildon and Thurrock University Hospital the Sub-Committee invited the Chief Executive and the Director of Nursing, who has responsibility for Safeguarding to attend the Sub-Committee in December. Unfortunately, the Chief Executive became unavailable on the day, however the Director of Nursing was able to speak to the Sub-Committee about the hospital's Action Plan which targets training, awareness and escalation. Unannounced observational visits are now made, to monitor compliance. The Sub-Committee has been invited to undertake a visit to the Trust. The Sub-Committee is committed to look at Safeguarding issues within all other Essex acute hospitals.

At a non-quorate meeting of the Sub-Committee in January 2013 consideration was given to the work undertaken by it over the last year (Appendix 2). Two versions of the Tracker document (the first, February 2012 and the second, January 2013) were considered and the number of issues on the document has dramatically decreased, thus showing that the Sub-Committee's monitoring of these issues to achieve improvement and efficiency has been successful. Ongoing monitoring of Corporate Scorecards and Action Plans has also had a positive effect, as has bringing together officers from Adult and Children's Services at individual meetings. The Sub-Committee also considered the direction it should take in the forthcoming year, subject to the Scrutiny Review.

County Councillors are welcome to receive copies of the minutes of these private meetings on request.

**FAMILIES SAFEGUARDING SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

Cllr R Madden (Chairman)

Cllr S Hillier (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr J Baugh

Cllr A Brown

Cllr T Higgins

Cllr J Reeves (resigned, 18 October 2012)

Cllr C Riley

Cllr T Sargent

Cllr T Chapman (*ex officio*)

Cllr W Dick (*ex officio*)

**FAMILIES SAFEGUARDING SUB-COMMITTEE WORKLOAD SINCE INCEPTION**

**2012-13**

16 February: Terms of Reference

15 March: Tracker, ESCB, Adult Safeguarding Annual Report and Action Plan

19 April: Ofsted Inspection Arrangements for Children in Care, Quarterly Performance Update (Children's Social Care), SCR Rebecca Watkins, Tracker

24 May: ESCB Report (Simon Hart), Tracker

19 July: Rochdale Case, Adult Safeguarding issues, Meeting with Team Leaders, Performance Update (Children's Social Care)

20 September: Domestic Violence Strategy for Essex, Performance Update (Children's Social Care), ESCB Annual Report, Tracker, Joint Inspections of Children's Services, Corporate Parenting Panel update, National reports involving Safeguarding issues

18 October: Safeguarding Essex: SAFE Project, ESCB Update, Member Visits to Children's Residential Homes (letter from the Cabinet Member), Tracker

20 December: Basildon & Thurrock University Hospital CQC Report on Safeguarding, Performance Update (Children's Social Care), Tracker

31 January: Non-quorate Workshop meeting