

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT COUNTY HALL, CHELMSFORD, ON THURSDAY
13 MAY 2010**

Membership

Councillors

* J Aldridge (Chairman)	S Mayzes
J Baugh	* D Morris
* A Brown	* R Pearson
L Dangerfield	* C Riley (Vice-Chairman)
* Mrs J Deakin	* T Sargent
* Mrs M Hutchon (Vice Chairman)	* M Skeels
* Mrs E M Hart	* J Young

Non-Elected Voting Members

* Mr R Carson	Reverend P Trathern
* Mr O Richards	Vacancy

Named Substitute Elected Members

L Barton	R Callender
* K Twitchen	
(* present)	

The following Councillors were also present: Councillors J Knapman and Dr A Naylor.

The following officers were present in support throughout the meeting:

Vivien Door	Committee Officer
Graham Redgwell	Governance Officer
Matthew Waldie	Committee Officer

The meeting opened at 10.00 am.

33. Membership of the Committee

The membership of the Committee was noted by the Committee. As agreed at the full Council meeting on 11 May 2010 the following Members were appointed to serve on this Committee:

Elected Members

J Aldridge (Chairman)	S Mayzes
J Baugh	D Morris
A Brown	R Pearson
L Dangerfield	C Riley (Vice-Chairman)
J Deakin	T Sargent
Mrs M Hutchon (Vice-Chairman)	J Skeels
Mrs E M Hart	J Young

Non-Elected Voting Members

Mr R Carson	Mr. O Richards
Reverend P Trathern	

Named Substitute Elected Members

L Barton

R Callender

K Twitchen

Councillor John Aldridge was appointed Chairman and Councillors Mrs Margaret Hutchon and Colin Riley were appointed as Vice Chairmen of the Committee at Full Council meeting on 11 May 2010.

34. Apologies

The Committee Officer reported the receipt of the following apologies:

Apologies	Substitutes
Cllr L Dangerfield	Cllr J Knapman

35. Declarations of Interest

The following standing declarations of interest were recorded:

Cllr C Riley	Personal interest as Member of the North East Fostering Panel; as Member of the provisional Children's Trust Board; as Member of the Children's Centre Partnership Board, (Strategic Group) and Vice Chairmanship of The Corporate Parenting Panel.
Cllr D Morris	Personal interest as Member of the Adoption and Foster Panel.

36. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Children and Young People Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 4 March 2010 and the notes from the private Committee meeting held on 1 April 2010 were approved as correct records.

37. Matters Arising

The Chairman and the Committee formally thanked Councillor Twitchen for her excellent work over the previous two years as Chairman of this Committee.

Minute 16, Young People Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), Essex Apprenticeships. The Chairman informed the Committee that an email had been sent today giving details of the visit to Prospects College, (Thames Gateway) on Monday 17 May 2010. He hoped that as many members as possible would participate in these visits.

Councillor Riley informed the Committee that a Member development session on Corporate Parenting and Safeguarding would take place at 2.00 pm today in Committee Room 1. Both Councillor Riley and the Chairman encouraged Members to attend this important development event.

38. Safeguarding Children

Introduction

The Committee received evidence in regard to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Safeguarding Report agreed by the Committee in September 2009. The following persons attended as witnesses:

- Cllr Candy, Lead Member for Children's Services;
- Malcolm Newsam, Interim Executive Director for Schools, Children and Families;
- Nicky Pace, Director, Vulnerable Children & Young People;
- Paul Fallon, Chairman of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board;
- Nicola Park, Administrator of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

The Chairman informed the Committee that papers CYP/13/10 and CYP/15/10 originally attributed to Councillor Candy on the Agenda had been provided by Nicky Pace. Councillor Candy would be providing an oral response. Malcolm Newsam provided report CYP/16/10. Paul Fallon and Nicola Park provided report CYP/12/10. An extract from the Safeguarding Report, showing the findings and recommendations, was provided as report CYP/17/10.

The Chairman invited Councillor Candy, Malcolm Newsam and Nicky Pace to update the Committee on the Recommendations owned by Essex County Council and Paul Fallon and Nicola Park on the Recommendations owned by the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

Councillor Candy reminded the Committee that Malcolm Newsam had been appointed on a short term interim contract. Recruitment for a permanent post would be advertised next week, with interviews taking place in the Summer.

Specific Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The CYP P&SC should continue to fulfil its role of 'critical friend' by monitoring the implementation of the SCF business plan at three monthly intervals, focussing on specific issues identified in the director's report.

Owner: Chairman of CYP P&SC

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: March 2011

Recommendation 2

The Chairman of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) would be asked to present an annual report on the Board's activities and a copy of its business plan between February and May each year.

Owner: Chairman of the ESCB

Implementation Review Date: February 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

The Annual Report and Business Plan would be produced by ESCB in September 2010.

Recommendation 3

In order to provide continuity, the Cabinet Member may wish to consider

appointing the Chairman of the ESCB on a three-year contract.

Owner: Chairman of the ESCB

Implementation Review Date:

January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Paul Fallon's contract had been increased from 30 days per year to 45 days per year to reflect the additional workload.

Recommendation 4

It was recommended that the Chairman of the ESCB and the Cabinet Member for Childrens Services review the induction process for new members who join the Board.

Owners: Cabinet Member and Chairman of the ESCB

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that statutory training was in place for members of the Local Safeguarding Children Board from June 2010. This training was available for all partners and would be ongoing to take account of any new legislation. Induction training for any new members of this Board would also take place. There was a small cost for the induction training but there was significant cost for the training for all members of this Board.

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that all members of ESCB were provided with job descriptions and briefing documents on how to disseminate information from the ESCB.

Recommendation 5

The Chairman of the ESCB should consider how to encourage continuity of attendance and processes for reporting back to all organisations, particularly to district/borough councils and their elected members.

Owner: ESCB Chairman

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

The Lead Member for Children's Services would attend be entitled to these Board meetings as a "participatory observer". Having an independent Chairman for this Board had helped to refocus the ESCB. Attendance at these meetings was now good.

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that, as Essex was a large County with over 600 schools, 12 District Councils and 19 Health Trusts amongst its partners, it had brought challenges for the ESCB to disseminate information effectively. Originally Board Members would disseminate the information through their own structures. There was currently a revised membership of the ESCB being produced and should be finalised in summer 2010. A letter would be sent by the Chairman of the ESCB to senior officers in all member agencies outlining the key decisions and action to be taken by all agencies. As Members were concerned regarding not receiving information from ESCB, Paul Fallon would now send a letter to this Committee after each meeting, (via the Committee Officer). This

system would start from the next ESCB meeting on 15 June 2010 and would be available two weeks after the meeting.

Recommendation 6

The CYP P&SC Committee should commission a periodic sampling of how issues discussed at the ESCB were disseminated between and within partner organisations.

Owners: Chairman CYP P&SC

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Recommendation 7

The Committee would support an investigation by the Cabinet Member into the best ways of involving representatives of the voluntary sector within the ESCB's activities.

Owner: Cabinet Member

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that the membership review would look at ways to include voluntary sector representatives and improve communication with the voluntary sector.

Malcolm Newsam would provide the Committee of a "map" of the different Boards: ESCB, Local Safeguarding Children Board, Children's Trust Board and the Local Children's Trust Board and how the work /information flowed between them. Paul Fallon, the Independent Chairman of the ESCB, attends the Children's Trust Board, along with Councillor Candy and Malcolm Newsam. Malcolm suggested that this structure could be scrutinised in 6 to 9 months if the Committee wished.

Although Members were concerned regarding the democratic accountability of various boards and where this Scrutiny Committee fitted into the structure. The Chairman informed them that this Committee could scrutinise the Local Safeguarding Board and the Children's Trust Board should it wish.

Recommendation 8

The Executive Director of SCF may wish to promulgate the approach undertaken by the Salvation Army in providing training on child protection issues throughout the voluntary sector, and for this to be used as a benchmark.

Owner: Executive Director of SCF

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

The ESCB training was available for designated persons in all organisations, with responsibility for training being transferred to the Children's Trust. E-learning for safeguarding training was also being considered.

Recommendation 9

The Committee would welcome consideration by the Cabinet Member of ways of sharing lessons with all organisations who deal with children and young people.

Owner: Cabinet Member

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

The Children's Trust Board was being used to disseminate information.

Recommendation 10

It was recommended that the ESCB Chairman initiates a review of the way in which lessons from Serious Case Reviews were embedded into and through partner organisations.

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that each Serious Case Review results in a confidential report which every agency has contributed to in an open and frank way. This Review enables all agencies to learn from the death or serious abuse of a child. The full Review Report is not published but an Executive Summary is published on the ESCB website.

The recent Serious Case Reviews have provided clarity by only highlighting the key recommendations in the report. An Individual Management Review and an Action Plan takes place after a child's death or serious abuse.

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that, as part of the original Essex Improvement Notice, the ESCB had been reviewed by Ofsted, which had been critical of the management of the Serious Case Reviews. Paul Fallon informed the Committee that it was his decision which cases could be reviewed under the Serious Case Review and he was given one month to make the decision. It was his view that all agencies were open and frank regarding what went wrong in each case, as they wished to improve the services for children and families. On average cases cost approximately £57,000 to conduct. In Summer 2009, when the external consultants were conducting their review of ESCB, the consultants deemed there to be 13 Serious Case Reviews at various stages of completion. This included Serious Case Reviews that had been completed but still had outstanding recommendations. There are currently two Serious Case Reviews, both these reviews should be completed by September 2010. Paul Fallon informed the Committee that the ESCB was normally given six months to complete a Serious Case Review, but in practice most cases were complex and therefore took longer. Any extension of this time had to be agreed by the Government. Each Serious Case Review was also scored by Ofsted.

Members were concerned regarding the ESCB reporting to Members on Serious Case Reviews, as Members were sometimes contacted by parents and relatives, when children had died or received serious abuse. Parents and relatives were unaware of how to contact the ESCB. Members were also very concerned that they did not currently receive information regarding Serious Case Reviews. Paul Fallon gave assured the Committee that the Committee would in future receive these cases.

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that it was every person's duty to contact the Local Authority or ESCB if they were worried about a child's welfare.

Recommendation 11

The Chairman of the ESCB may wish to review with the Head of Legal Services the resources required to provide more effective support for the ESCB, including any audit and post Laming requirements.

Owner: Chairman of the ESCB

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Approval had been given to appoint extra support staff to the team.

Recommendation 12

The CYP P&SC should monitor vacancy levels within social workers posts and the success of recruitment & retention initiatives on an ongoing basis

Owner: Chairman CYP P&SC

Implementation Review Date: January 2010

Impact Review Date: May 2011

Malcolm Newsam updated the Committee regarding the progress made since this scrutiny took place. Previously the Service had 1,850 unallocated cases, with no information on the vulnerability of the children. The Service was unable to manage due to the high work load for Social Workers. The Service had focused on reducing the number of these unallocated cases. In December 2009 1,548 unallocated cases out of the 1,850 had been unallocated for more than four weeks. By 22 April 2010 the Service had reduced the unallocated cases to 431 with only 80 unallocated for more than one month. These unallocated cases were reported weekly to the Cabinet Member, rather than monthly as in line with Government guidelines. On 12 May there were 300 unallocated cases with only 48 of these cases unallocated for more than four weeks. The Service worked very hard to reduce the incomplete assessments by 31 March to ensure that these were not carried over into the current year. Social Workers worked many evenings and weekends to complete this work. This had been a massive work load which had been sustained month on month.

Malcolm Newsam informed the Committee that this huge undertaking to reduce this work load had been achieved by using existing staff, filling vacancies and using agency staff. Social Workers have produced Initial Assessments and Core Assessments within the statutory time frame, 10 days for the Initial Assessment and 35 working days for the Core Assessment. Throughout 2010/11 the Social Worker staffing levels would be reduced to a normal FTE allocation for the Service to ensure that the work load levels were sustained at a manageable level. The monthly DCSF target for 2010/11 was to produce 250 Core Assessments and to complete 82% on time. In March the Service completed 400 Core Assessments on time by working extra hours. There was now a new discipline in the Service to complete Core Assessments within the 35 days limit.

The Service originally had 1,850 unallocated cases as they did not have enough Social Workers and therefore struggled to cope with the work load. The statistical neighbour average of referrals last year was 1,250 to 1,300. Essex received 1,600 referrals. Each Social Worker was providing 2 assessments per week. In March 2010 1,066 Core Assessments were undertaken with 400 completed on time. At the peak in November 2009 there were 1,734 Initial Assessments out of timescale, by the end of March 2010 they had been reduced

to 463. The impact of working on the unallocated cases had increased it to 1,066. Core Assessments which had been reduced to 210 in March 2010.

The DCSF and Government Office East (GO East) have commented on this vast improvement in that the Service was now much safer for children in Essex. Managers and teams have been set targets for 2010/11 and confidence had grown that these targets were sustainable. Members were informed that quality had not been focused on whilst the Service was clearing up the backlog but quality was now part of the 2010/11 targets for managers and teams. All staff in the service had gone the extra mile by working long hours to clear up the backlog of unallocated cases.

Malcolm Newsam informed the Committee that he had spent a lot of time visiting staff on the front line. He found that staff were overwhelmed and often demoralised when coping with the very heavy work loads. Staff morale was more positive now; some teams were now fully staffed but there were still some areas which were not fully staffed in challenging areas of Essex. There were a high number of temporary agency staff which would be reduced over the coming year.

Councillor Candy responded to a question from a Member asking if sufficient progress was being made. She informed the Committee that, since the Laming Report, the Government expect the Director of the Service to report to the Lead Member on a monthly basis on the unallocated cases. Currently the Director reports on a weekly basis on these unallocated cases to the Lead Member. When cases were unallocated the Director assured the Committee that these children were in a managed situation and that senior staff know information about every child.

The Chairman and Members thanked the Service and wished to pass on the Committee's thanks for this enormous turnaround in dealing the unallocated cases and completing Initial and Core Assessments within the timescales. The Committee value and appreciate the huge commitment and determination that all staff have given to safeguard Essex children.

Councillor Candy informed the Committee that she had sent a letter to staff in March regarding this tremendous work.

Recommendation 13

The CYP P&SC should review the success of the SCF Directorate's revised foster carers recruitment campaign in September 2010

Owner: Chairman CYP P&SC

Implementation Review Date: May 2010

Impact Review Date: September 2010

Systems have been put in place to improve recruitment and new foster care households have been approved.

General Questions

A Member asked how long CRB checks take. Malcolm Newsam informed the Committee that Criminal Records Bureau checks the background of the individual. If the individual had not changed their name or moved around the UK

then this could be completed within 4 to 5 weeks. If however, the individual had changed their name several times and had moved around the UK and or lived abroad these checks would take considerably longer. Essex were looking into a new on line system, subject to Member approval. This new system would provide information on the simpler CRB checks within 3 to 4 days. This would help improve the delay in filling vacancies.

The Committee **Agreed:**

- i) that the Chairman write a letter congratulating all staff on their hard work to reduce the unallocated cases and provide both Initial and Core Assessments to clear the backlog by 31 March 2010;
- ii) that Paul Fallon, Chairman of ESCB, would now send a letter to this Committee after each Board meeting highlighting issues.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Candy, Malcolm Newsam, Nicky Pace, Paul Fallon and Nicola Park for their attendance.

39. Presentation on Safeguarding Sub Group and Draft Scoping Document

The Committee received a presentation, from David Moses, Head of Member Support and Governance, regarding further scrutiny of Safeguarding Children and looking at a proposal for an in depth scrutiny review. The Committee also considered the Safeguarding Sub Group Scoping Document, CYP/SCR/023, introduced by Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer.

David Moses informed the Committee that an in depth review undertaken by Hertfordshire had received input from an IDEA Advisor. Members, on this review, had worked in pairs looking at and visiting different strands of work, taking evidence for the final report. This scrutiny had culminated in an interagency workshop to agree the key recommendations which went into the report.

The following Members agreed to form the Membership of this Safeguarding Sub-Group:

- Councillor J Aldridge – ex officio;
- Mr R Carson;
- Councillor A Brown;
- Councillor M Hutchon;
- Councillor C Riley;
- Councillor T Sargent ,(Chairman).

The Safeguarding Sub-Group agreed to meet on the rise of the Committee meeting to discuss the way forward. The Scoping Document will be revised to include issues raised during its initial discussion.

The Chairman thanked David Moses for his presentation.

Committee Officer Note: The Safeguarding Sub-Group agreed to meet on Thursday 3 June 2010 at 10.00 in Committee Room 1. This will replace the full Committee meeting scheduled for that day.

40. Towards Excellence

The Committee formally received the Towards Excellence report, CYP/11/10, from David Moses, Head of Member Support and Governance, previously presented at the private meeting in April.

41. Essex Youth Scrutiny Committee (EYSC) Anti-Bullying Report

The Committee received the EYSC report, CYP/14/10, from David Moses, Head of Member Support and Governance, and an oral update on recent developments.

David Moses informed the Committee that the EYSC was due to meet for the final time at the end of June, when it would receive the formal response to its recommendations. Proposals to form a new EYSC would be taken to the next Scrutiny Board meeting in June. The Youth Workers and Youth Consultant had worked with Diane Le Count, the Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator, to provide a DVD and teacher's pack which would be sent to every secondary school. It was planned to nominate the two Youth Workers for the You Make A Difference Award. The DVD would be shown at a future Committee meeting.

Richard Carson agreed to become a champion for the EYSC work and act as a Link Member between the EYSC and this Committee.

42. Forward Look

The Committee agreed items to be included on the Forward Look, in light of discussion today. In particular, the Committee **Agreed** the following:

- i) Educational attainment of Children who are looked after should be the next priority area to be scrutinised;
- ii) Safeguarding Sub-Group should be added to list of work to be undertaken;
- iii) Corporate Parenting Panel would be a standing item on this Committee's Agenda and would include updates on Adoption and Fostering issues.

Graham Redgwell would circulate an updated Forward Look to Members by the end of May.

43. Dates of Future Meetings

The Committee confirmed the dates of future meetings and noted that they may comprise:

- Meetings in private
- Meetings in public
- Working groups
- Sub-Committee meetings
- Outside visits

Thursday 3 June 2010 – Safeguarding Sub-Group meeting

Thursday 1 July 2010 – Full Committee Meeting

Thursday 2 September 2010

Thursday 7 October 2010

Thursday 4 November 2010

Thursday 2 December 2010

Thursday 6 January 2011

Thursday 3 February 2011

Thursday 3 March 2011

Thursday 7 April 2011

Thursday 12 May 2011

The meeting closed at 12.40 pm.

Chairman