

AGENDA ITEM 4**CYP/17/09****Committee: Children and Young People Policy & Scrutiny Committee****Date: 3 September 2009**

SAFEGUARDING OF CHILDREN**Enquiries to: Graham Redgwell, Governance Officer**

Position at September 2009**INTRODUCTION**

Following the publication during 2008 of the findings of the Annual Performance Assessment (APA) of the County Council by Ofsted, it was clear that the Council had not been regarded as performing particularly well. It scored very poorly in respect of the services it and partner agencies provided for safeguarding the safety and well being of children.

The Committee decided to undertake a detailed scrutiny of the findings of the APA. It drew up a scoping document to underpin and guide its scrutiny and this is set out below (due to the number of witnesses involved several sessions were required for that purpose and the programme had to be changed to reflect this):-

Committee	Children & Young People's Policy Scrutiny Committee	
Topic	Annual Performance Assessment Letter	Ref: CYP-SCR-012
Objective	To scrutinise the APA letter and identify whether the SCF Business Improvement Action Plan adequately addresses the issues raised during the inspection; and in particular those relating to 'safeguarding'	
Reasons for undertaking review	This is an annual action by the Committee to help it prioritise its Forward Look.	
Method <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Initial briefing to define scope	Select Committee style hearings at the Committee's March,	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Task & Finish Group</i> • <i>Commission</i> • <i>Full Committee</i> 	April & May 2009 meetings.
Membership <i>Only complete if Task and Finish Group or Commission</i>	N/A
Issues to be addressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas of weakness identified by the letter • SCF Business Improvement Action Plan • Essex Safeguarding Children Board's (ESCB) Action Plan • Partnership working
Sources of Evidence and witnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • APA Letter • CSF and ESCB Action Plans • 2008 JAR Self-assessment document • Executive Members and Executive Director • Representatives of the ESCB and Children's & Young People's Strategic Partnership CYPSP
Work Programme	<p>March 2009</p> <p>0930 - 1120 Pre-meeting with independent social care adviser</p> <p>1130 - 1200 Executive Director SCF</p> <p>1200 - 1230 Chairman of ESCB</p> <p>1230 - 1300 Identification of issues to be raised with partner organizations & other witnesses</p> <p>April 2009</p> <p>Evidence session with witnesses from partner organizations and others identified by the Committee.</p> <p>May 2009</p> <p>Discussion of issues with Executive Members and Executive Director.</p>
Indicators of	The Committee will have identified recommendations for

Success	improvement and/or identified areas for further scrutiny.		
Meeting the CfPS Objectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Critical Friend Challenge to Executive</i> • <i>Reflect Public voice and concerns</i> • <i>Own the scrutiny process</i> • <i>Impact on service delivery</i> 	In undertaking this work the Committee will meet each of these objectives by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting as a critical friend to the Executive Members • Scrutinising issues which are of high public concern • The Committee identifying issues it wishes to lead on • Recommendations arising from this review should help drive the improvement plans of all agencies involved in provision of services to children & young people 		
Diversity and Equality <i>Diversity and Equality issues are to be considered and addressed.</i>	The review will cover services provided to some of the County's most vulnerable residents.		
Date agreed by Committee	February 2009.		
Future Action			
Governance Officer	David Moses & Graham Redgwell	Committee Officer	Vivien Door
Service Lead Officer(s)	Graham Tombs, Executive Director: Schools, Children and Families Services Nicky Pace, Director, Vulnerable Children & Young People		

The subsequent report by the Joint Area Review inspection team (undertaken in September 2008 but not available until after the meeting in March 2009) reiterated a number of comments made in the APA report, particularly in regard to safeguarding, and the Committee added this document to the reports which it would scrutinise.

PROCESS ADOPTED

So far, the Committee has held four witness sessions.

That in March 2009 concentrated on speaking to the senior management of the Schools, Children and Families Directorate and going through the APA letter in detail, to prioritise what issues the Committee needed to concentrate on.

In April the Committee spoke with the Cabinet Members about how they proposed to respond to the concerns expressed; with the chairman and administrator of the Safeguarding Board about its role and the nature of its work; and with senior staff about the eligibility criteria used by social work staff.

In May it spoke to representatives from a number of agencies serving on the Safeguarding Board.

In July it spoke to representatives from two other agencies serving on the Safeguarding Board and to a major voluntary organisation not involved with the Board's work.

Summaries from the minutes of all of these meetings are set out below:-

MARCH 2009 DISCUSSION

The Committee considered, in particular, the Areas of Weakness Identified by the APA Letter. Nicky Pace, Director, Vulnerable Children & Young People, Children and Families, was in attendance for this item. The Committee noted that a number of positive comments had also been made and should not be overlooked.

The Committee noted that the self assessment evidence which resulted in the APA letter dated from 2007. Although this was a useful document the evidence had been overtaken by events in some circumstances.

The APA letter dealt with the following topics:-

Overall Effectiveness of Children's Services	Grade 2
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The Joint Area Review focused on five areas, and inspected all partners involved with the services.

- Safeguarding.
- Looked After Children.
- Children with Complex Needs.
- CAMHS.
- Services for 14 to 19 year olds.

Being Healthy	Grade 2
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- a. **Waiting times for CAMHS follow-up Treatment were too long**

The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee had a Task and Finish Group looking into the CAMHS provision. The Task and Finish Group would produce an interim report before the election and then would continue this work after June 2009.

b. There were gaps in service for children with complex needs in the transition to adulthood

The Chairman and Councillor Dick, Chairman of the Community Wellbeing & Older People Policy and Scrutiny Committee, had met to discuss this issue. It was apparent that different services and/or partners class young people as adults at different ages, varying from 16 to 25. In some cases the transition to adult services works well but it was not consistent. The decision was taken that there needed to be a Transition Board at Cabinet level. Cabinet Members have set up the Transition Board to provide a better process for Young People moving from Children's to Adult Services. It has been agreed that some future joint scrutiny work between the two PSCs on specific aspects of Transitions will be undertaken.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- Young People transferring from Children's to Adult services could block beds/accommodation which could mean that younger children were unable to come into the service.
- That there was a large difference between the needs of children and adolescents.

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that there was targeted work in place for vulnerable Young People.

c. Whilst Progress had been made, the percentage of schools achieving Healthy School status was still below the average for similar councils

Councillor Durcan was chairing a Task and Finish Group on Healthy Schools.

The Committee **Agreed** that

- I) Councillors Martin and Finch be asked to provide an update report on the Transition Board in September 2009 and then will be asked to be witnesses at the Committee in March 2010.
- II) The Healthy Schools Task and Finish Group will report back to the Committee before June.

Staying Safe	Grade 1
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a. The threshold for referral to children and young people's services was not understood and acted on consistently

The Chairman reminded the Committee that this point had also been raised in the last APA letter and officers had been questioned about it previously.

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that training in the localities was in place and that the point related to the referral system not being understood and acted upon. There was an issue with some agencies who would like the threshold to be lower. Further training in schools needed to take place. The Directorate had been reiterating the threshold through the CYPSP Board and the Safeguarding Board and training had taken place across the county. The Directorate was changing procedures so that one team would handle all referrals. This would provide consistency across Essex.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- Members were concerned that the assessment could only be as good as the initial report. Nicky Pace informed the Committee that this report would only be one part of the assessment: the team would speak to all parties before forming their judgment.
- That it seemed there were a significant number of frontline staff who did not agree with the threshold and exaggerate the case, as they want Social Workers involved with all cases.
- Resources were limited, and Social Workers work on more complex cases and therefore cannot work with the lower end cases.
- Members were concerned that only eight Local Authorities in the Country had this low grade for safeguarding. Members were informed that the JAR would clarify this point.
- Members requested up to date information as they were concerned that they were working on information that was a year old.

b. Recruitment and vetting of staff working with children were not sufficiently robust

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that in March 2008 service areas had different databases and that some groups had not had up to date CRB checks. All staff now had up to date and compliant CRBs.

c. Insufficient priority was given to bringing about improvements by learning from complaints about service and serious case reviews

The problems in this area needed to be explored further. In Leaving and After Care the learning process was felt to be quite good.

d. The target for reducing the number of young people who were victims of crime had not been met

Nicky Pace informed the Committee that this point was due to the lack of staff at the time of the self assessment, as Victim Support Workers were working at 50 per cent capacity. The vacancies have now been filled and the service had improved significantly.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- Young People up to 16 were well looked after but after this age they could become homeless. There was a comprehensive Leaving and After Care service for 16 - 25 years old which was noted in the JAR as good.
- Not all Looked After Children leave care at 16, as some leave at 18.
- The Directorate had bid for a pilot scheme for continuing care for 18 – 25 years olds but was not successful.
- The Directorate works with Districts and Borough Councils to provide homeless young people with accommodation as there was considerable pressure to provide accommodation for homeless Young People from 17 – 25.
- The Directorate contacts and supports Young People at university who want to return in the holidays to Essex with a variety of schemes;
- Foster Carers were unable to foster Young People over the age of 18. The Directorate was working to support Foster Carers who want to continue to care for these Young People over the age of 18.

The Committee **agreed** that Safeguarding would be investigated as the major issue at the April 2009 meeting.

Enjoying and Achieving	Grade 2
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The Committee noted the strengths and the good work.

- Outcomes in the Early Years and Foundation Stage were below the averages nationally and for similar councils**
- There were still too many schools below the GCSE floor target**
- Attendance in secondary schools was not improving fast enough and the rate of absence for looked after children was high**

Councillor Riley (as Chairman of the Corporate Parenting Panel) informed the Committee that now the Virtual School was in place the absence rates of Looked After Children should improve. Attendance for most children was distinguished by authorised or unauthorised absence by the school. For Looked After Children however, the data was recorded as absent and was not distinguished between authorised and unauthorised.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- That the statistics had now reduced from 17% to 14.5% absence for Looked After Children.
- That every half day absent was counted towards the 25 days absence for Looked After Children.

d. The proportion of fixed term exclusions in primary schools was higher than that in similar councils

During the meeting the following points were made:

- That schools have to provide cover for pupils on the 6th day of exclusion.
- Members were concerned about primary school pupils being excluded and left on their own by working parents.
- Support was required at an early stage to prevent exclusions.
- A reciprocal agreement scheme between local primary schools was set up but was impracticable, as primary schools have little space or staff to separate their own children with behavioural problems.
- The Directorate supports schools and challenges poor practice.
- That, if required, evidence could be taken by representatives from ASHE, to enable the Committee to influence schools.

e. There was a rising trend in the issuing of new statements against falling trend nationally and in similar councils. Referrals to the special educational needs and Disability Rights Tribunal were twice the national average

The Committee **Agreed** that

- i) Attendance for Looked After Children would be left in the care of the Corporate Parenting Panel, who would report to this Committee in September 2009.
- ii) That items a, b, d and e above be looked at in relation to the JAR and monitor other Local Authorities benchmarking if required.

Making a Positive Contribution	Grade 3
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The Committee noted the strengths and the good work and felt that under this heading these outweighed the concerns expressed.

a. The percentage rate of re-offending had risen faster than in similar councils

b. The proportion of new offenders had fallen much more sharply than in similar councils or nationally

During the meeting the following point was made:

- That more information was required on both a and b above, for example, geographically and type of offence.

The Committee **Agreed** that it would wait for the JAR report and then the whole Committee would look at baseline data, geographical and offence patterns and then call witnesses from Youth Services.

Achieving Economic Well Being	Grade 2
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The Committee noted the strengths and the good work, but also the long list of weaknesses.

- a. Participation in post-16 work-based learning had fallen over the last three years and remains below the national average**
- b. Whilst the percentage for teenage parents in education had nearly doubled, it was still below the averages nationally and for similar councils**
- c. Over a third of young offenders who were above school age were not in employment, education and training**
- d. Employers were not sufficiently engaged in the 14-19 strategy and not all head teachers were aware of 14-19 developments**
- e. The council does not routinely make use of data on ethnicity to inform 14-19 planning**
- f. The proportion of looked after children with a personal education plan was improving but still low**

During the meeting the following points were made:

- The above points needed to be looked at together as a single package.
- Members were concerned that the above points concerned children and young people who were marginalised and their needs not being catered for sufficiently.
- Members were informed that the proportion of looked after children with a personal education plan was improving but still fluctuates, as these were renewed and updated annually. It was one of the Virtual Head Teacher's objectives to ensure that all Looked After Children have an up to date plan.
- The numbers involved could not be ascertained by these comments.

Members **agreed** that:

- i) points a, c and d could be linked to the downturn and may appear in the JAR.
- ii) Point c required updated clearer statistics to aid Members.
- iii) Point e may be in the JAR.
- iv) Point f would be followed up by the Corporate Parenting Panel.

Capacity to Improve, Including the Management of Children's Services	Grade 2
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The Committee noted the strengths and the good work by staff and middle managers.

- a. **There was insufficient monitoring by the Local Children Safeguarding Board to ensure best safeguarding practice across the council**

Members noted that this point would be looked at in detail at the next meeting.

- b. **The delivery of frontline services with continuity and consistency**

Members noted that this point was linked to the threshold points above.

Members **agreed** that the Chairman of the Local Safeguarding Board would attend the April meeting as a witness.

General Points

Members were concerned that some points had appeared in the APA letter the previous year. It was **agreed** that this Committee could play a very important role as a critical friend for officers completing the APA Self Assessment Process. Nicky Pace would inform the Committee of the timescales on the next assessment. The following Members agreed to be part of the sub group to assist in the preparation of the assessment: - Councillors Twitchen, Pearson, Riley, Turrell and Durcan and Mr Richards and Mrs Sadowsky.

APRIL 2009 DISCUSSION

Councillor Peter Martin, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Children's Services, Councillor Simon Walsh, Cabinet Member for Families and Nicky Pace, Director, Vulnerable Children & Young People were in attendance.

Statement by Cabinet Member

Councillor Martin then made a statement on the following lines: He informed the Committee that, despite the challenges, his aspiration was that the service would become 'outstanding' by 2012. Both the APA and the JAR report concluded that

services for safeguarding were inadequate. These judgements applied to all partners involved in delivering services to children in Essex. He informed the Committee that he recognised that this was unacceptable.

The Cabinet Members for Schools Children and Families have since late 2007 identified and addressed weaknesses by setting up two improvement boards; an officer board chaired by Joanna Killian and a Member/officer board chaired by Lord Hanningfield. These boards remained in place until summer 2008 and led to four main outcomes:

- Strengthen the management team.
- Development of new threshold criteria.
- £50m of new investment for SCF over four years with a particular focus on early intervention and prevention and on safeguarding children with a further £40m redirected via efficiencies and grants so that it contributes to service delivery in these areas.
- Strengthen the role of members with a three-way Cabinet member split of SCF in late Summer 2008 as it was recognised that the service was too big for one member and that individual focus and scrutiny was required in each area. The three Cabinet Members were supported by four deputies.

Both the APA and JAR reports identified a number of weaknesses in safeguarding, including unacceptably high social work case loads, inconsistent implementation of agreed service thresholds and insufficiently robust recruitment systems. Councillor Martin informed the Committee that all of these weaknesses were being addressed prior to and during the JAR inspections. The JAR inspection highlighted several strengths, for example, good safeguarding training; support and guidance to schools; an effective strategic response leading to a reduction in bullying; and good work to tackle anti-social behaviour and reduce re-offending. He highlighted paragraphs 28 and 78 of the JAR report which recognise that the Council had good capacity to improve and had already made good progress at identifying and addressing weaknesses. There were both separate weekly and fortnightly meetings for officers and Members and a joint Member and officer meeting to ensure that improvements took place.

In other areas of the JAR report outcomes for children were judged adequate or good, including a level 3 'good' for outcomes for children with learning difficulties and / or disabilities.

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) had issued an Improvement Notice which sets out the areas where the County Council and partners were expected to make progress by March 2010. These steps have been agreed jointly between the DCSF, the Government Office of the East of England and Essex County Council. A similar notice had gone to other authorities judged 'inadequate.' Councillor Martin stressed that the level of intervention from DCSF was light touch, with the emphasis on monitoring rather

than direct intervention. An Improvement Board was being set up to oversee the improvement programme, which would be chaired by the Director of Learning at Go-east and would include a representative from DCSF, as well as the Audit Commission. Councillor Martin, Joanna Killian (Chief Executive) and Graham Tombs (Executive Director: Schools, Children and Families Services) and the independent chair of the ESCB would be Members on this Board. The DCSF required monthly progress updates. The County Council would provide the secretariat to the Board.

The Committee had a copy of the high level SCF Business Improvement Action Plan but the full plan was more detailed. Some of the actions in this plan were due to be delivered by September 2008, whilst the JAR inspection took place. This Action Plan was a working document.

Key elements of the SCF Improvement Plan include:

- Ensuring robust action planning to address practice deficits in children's social care.
- Reducing social worker case loads.
- Updating procedures and policies manual and ensuring policies and practice guidance were in place.
- Having in place effective social care audit /monitoring.

All case files of children on the Child Protection Plan have been audited by an external agency. We also have independent consultants reviewing our practices and procedures.

This Business Improvement Action Plan requires action by all partners; the expectation was that the partners would commit to this Plan to ensure delivery. The Directorate was currently in consultation with its partners to develop a new Children and Young People's Plan for 2009 - 11.

Councillor Martin highlighted the impact of the recent Baby P tragedy in Haringey, which came to media attention in November 2008; the tragedy had had three main impacts in Essex:

- A rise in referrals and an increased cost pressure on Looked After Children Services (i.e. Cabinet approved in January 2009 an additional £8.9 million to fund costs pressures in SCF of which £4.3 million of the pressure related to the costs of Looked After Children due to an increased number of placements being made with external agencies). The additional funding package in July 2008 was therefore timely but it was important that we continue with measures to contain cost pressures. This highlights the importance of the current campaign to recruit an additional 100 foster carers in Essex.
- Media coverage of this case had had an adverse impact on the morale of existing social workers and had created a more difficult climate in which to

attract new people in to social work as a career. The improvement Action Plan includes recruitment of 90 social workers to help reduce case loads and add capacity. The Directorate was currently undertaking a concerted recruitment drive for experienced social workers in Australia, New Zealand, Ireland and the United States. The preference was for Essex social workers but we have to recognise the reality that there was a shortage of social workers across the UK.

- Lord Laming reviewed the implementation and impact of the 2004 Children Act since the Baby P tragedy. Lord Laming's report and 58 recommendations were published on 12 March 2009 and were accepted by Government. Some recommendations have been implemented by Essex, for example, the need to have an independent chair of the local safeguarding children board and many of the other recommendations were currently being implemented. All the recommendations from the Laming report would be incorporated into the Action Plan.

Discussion by the Committee

During the meeting the following points were made:

- The Committee would like an update on the Foster Care recruitment campaign.
- That the process to become a Foster Carer could take a considerable time, and would it be possible to streamline this to quicken the process?
- The Directorate was producing a recruitment DVD for Foster Carers and would provide full information on children and young people's needs so that prospective Foster Carers could make an informed decision.
- When Social Workers from abroad were recruited there would be a buddy system in place which includes support outside work and over weekends.
- That the Directorate was working with children and young people to include their views in the consultation process.
- Members asked for a copy of the full detailed Business Improvement Plan, to enable them to make considered judgements. It was acknowledged that the Business Improvement Plan was a working document and would therefore continue to evolve.
 - Members were concerned that Safeguarding Children processes were weak and that improvements had not been in place earlier.
 - Members asked if the Directorate had links with Animal Welfare Societies as people who were cruel to children were also cruel to animals and this linked information may help to spot children at possible risk.
 - The amount of work involved in setting up TASCCs may have diverted attention from Safeguarding Children.
 - Members were concerned regarding the transformation of services and how this would affect the Schools, Children and Families Service but

were informed that there should be no detrimental changes to service delivery.

- How were the recently agreed Laming recommendations to be implemented in Essex?

Members **agreed** that they should receive the full detailed SCF Business Improvement Plan for the next meeting.

The Chairman reminded Members that the Council collectively is a Corporate Parent. The Committee accepted this role but not all Members felt that they were able to influence Corporate Parenting Policy.

The Role of the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB)

Paul Fallon, Chairman of the Safeguarding Board and Nicola Park, ESCB Business Performance Manager, Essex Safeguarding Children Board & Essex Vulnerable Adults Protection Committee gave evidence to the Committee. Nicky Pace was also in attendance.

Paul Fallon informed the Committee that he was contracted to work 30 days per year as Chairman and had been in post since December 2008. He was appointed as an independent Chairman due to his previous work in Local Government and in particular in Children's Services. The Safeguarding Children's Board scrutinises and holds the Schools, Children and Families Service and its partners working in Child Protection and Safeguarding to account. It meets quarterly. The Safeguarding Children's Board operates independently from the Directorate. Its support staff were situated in the Legal and Registration Service. The Board had statutory responsibilities as a critical friend to add value for the children in Essex by working with all agencies involved with Children. There were six full time staff supporting the Board. The Board was comprised of statutory Members as set out by the Government.

The Laming Report had just been published and the Board would need to look at how to implement its recommendations. Essex was large and diverse, with partners having different boundaries.

The Board uses procedure guidance and had an Action Plan with six key questions:

- Is the children's workforce fit for purpose?
 - Safe recruitment
 - Supervision/appraisal
 - The 6 core competencies
 - CP Training
 - Complaints/allegations

- Is safeguarding really everyone's business?
 - Community awareness
 - Confidence
 - Do we know what to do if we think a child is being abused?
- Do the right children have protection plans and are they being fully implemented in a timely way?
 - Performance management system/PIs
 - Audits
- Are we sure that no two children will die as a result of the same system failure/s?
 - SCRs
- Are we doing all we can to reduce the risk of avoidable child deaths?
 - Child death review panels
- Are we satisfied with the quality of care for any child not living with its parent, a close relative of someone else with PR?
 - Private fostering
 - Runaways

There were four key areas of concern regarding the ESCB identified in the JAR and APA reports.

- The Board had taken an insufficiently strong lead in driving the safeguarding agenda and had lacked focus on Social Care. The Chairman of the Board was determined that the focus of the Board should be on the deficits of the Child Protection, specifically in Children's Social Care which would be reflected in the Board's new Business Plan. Paul Fallon would like to update the Committee on its progress at the appropriate time.
- Unacceptably long delays in undertaking and completing Serious Case Reviews and in implementing the Action Plans. Every time a child dies a Serious Case Review Sub-Group was convened to see what lessons could be learnt from each case. The findings were submitted to Ofsted who assess each case; this could take time. Due to the large number of Serious Case Reviews taking place (seven at one point) the Board had difficulty monitoring the implementation of the actions from these cases. The backlog of reviews had now been cleared. Currently there were two Serious Case Reviews outstanding. An improved monitoring system had now been implemented and extra support staff has been recruited.
- Lack of sufficient oversight of recruitment practices, and recruitment and vetting of staff working with children were not sufficiently robust. A new sub

group had been set up with the first meeting taking place in May 2009 to develop safer recruitment standards and monitor policies and procedures.

- Lack of identification of areas of concern and lack of follow up regarding audits of agency safeguarding responsibilities. Most Board Members were bound by section 11 of the Children Act 2004. The Board asked all its Members to complete section 11 audits to ensure that all partners were complying with their statutory requirements. The Board now had a system for section 11 auditing which encourages agencies to take responsibility for reviewing their own performance and reports to the Board on a frequent basis.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- That, whilst Ofsted was looking at the Serious Case Review Action Plan, each agency was implementing the findings in the Action Plan.
- Each Local Authority with responsibility for children was required to have a Safeguarding Children's Board, but currently these Boards were not accountable to any other body.
- The independent Chairman of the Safeguarding Children's Board was appointed by a multi-agency group, and the ESCB would decide if the Chairman's contract was renewed.
- That Young People who were homeless were potentially to be housed by District and Borough Councils.
- Members were concerned regarding the transparency of the Board as the meetings were not publicised and minutes not published. The Chairman of the Board would investigate having the Board's meetings mainly in public with a private part if required.
- Members were concerned that only 1 in 9 children who were identified as causing concern were referred by GPs and teachers.
- The ESCB would like all agencies to refer all children causing concern before they become very serious, but understands the resources thresholds;
- Training for agencies was good but there may be more training required;
- A Member was concerned that the Armed Forces representative on the Board was not the appropriate person;
- Fostering Services have a good relationship with Dr Barnardos, although Barnardos does not have a place on the ESCB;
- The Chairman and the Vice Chairmen would like to attend an ESCB meeting. Nicola Park will arrange with Members.

The Committee **agreed** that Paul Fallon be invited back in 12 months time for a progress report.

Referral Thresholds

Nicky Pace, Director for Vulnerable Children attended for this item.

A multi agency group was set up to establish the criteria for Referral Thresholds. The guidance on Referral Thresholds was agreed by all agencies working with children. Training had been rolled out across the county for all agencies. There would be a single point of entry to the service to ensure that all referrals were treated fairly and appropriately.

The windscreen was explained (which illustrates the four levels of vulnerability and need shown as a continuum). Child Protection was Tier 3, high intervention work, it was hoped that the child would be reassessed as the case continues and that the intervention was reduced as the child's needs were lessened and so the case moves down the windscreen. Looked After Children receive services from all four levels. Professional work also took place across all four levels.

During the meeting the following points were made:

- That the professional who referred the child takes ownership of the case whilst involving other professionals/agencies. If the case was given to a Social Worker then the Social Worker takes ownership of the case.
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) should only need to be filled out once, if completed correctly.
- That CAMHS initial assessments seem to take a long time.
- Members were concerned that the TASCs seemed to have 50% vacancies. Members were informed that a review of TASCs was currently being undertaken to look at capacity, function and resources.
- The single point of entry would not be held by TASCs but would be in Social Care.
- If a referral was urgent it by-passes the system without a CAF which then had to be filled in within five days.
 - The CAF form was a national format, which could be accessed by all agencies, although some agencies do not always want to share information.
 - The single point of entry would inform appropriate agencies about the CAF on individual cases.
 - The Chairman felt it was important that staff understood that, if they make a wrong judgement call, as long as the correct process had been adhered to, then Members would support them.
 - An audit on 96 cases would take place at Easter, to check the referral threshold system.
 - Members asked if they could track a couple of cases, (with full anonymity, to both protect the child and family) and also to have a true picture of the complexities of any individual case. These two cases would periodically be presented at Committee for an update on their progress.

MAY 2009 DISCUSSION

This meeting was a witness session only. The Committee had agreed in advance that all witnesses be asked a range of set questions and then some questions specific to their role.

General issues for all Witnesses

- How are you appointed to the ESCB?
- What is your remit from the appointing body?
- How connected is your agency to the ESCB?
- How do you report back?
- How much support do you get when you report back?
- Are you authorised to act on their behalf (for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?
- What is your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?
- What is the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

Specific Issues

- Has your agency any concerns?
- Have you any good practice you would like to share?
- Is there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

The answers given are set out below:-

David Barrs, Head teacher, Anglo-European School, representing Secondary Schools

How would you define effective partnership working?

Partnership worked well when all partners worked as equals on the ESCB, although the partnership was not working as there was no balance between all partners. There were little resources for support. All partners applied a professional standard to their duty of care, although they were doing a difficult job but with inadequate resources.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

The Association of Secondary Head teacher's in Essex (ASHE), made the appointment. Head teachers Conferences took place bi-annually where Head teachers were appointed to various Boards. David had been on the ESCB since November 2008.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

As a representative for Secondary Head teachers, David either consulted all Secondary Head teachers through ASHE, at the conferences or by the email network. He requested views and feedback on his attendance at this Committee. The feedback given on ESCB by Secondary Head teachers was that Essex was

a diverse authority, with some good practice. Schools wanted to work closely with partners to provide a balance but the resources and support had been lacking. The JAR report was accurate from schools' point of view, but Head teachers and staff wanted to see the situation improved.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Schools were very connected through their day-to-day work on the front line and therefore were closely connected to the ESCB. David empathised with colleagues from other agencies.

How do you report back?

Through ASHE, either at the conferences or by the email network, which included every Secondary Head teacher.

How much support do you get when you report back?

David's judgement was trusted by other Head teachers, who would approach him if they had issues, but Head teachers were dealing with safeguarding children issues on a day-to-day basis.

Real commitment from the partners of the ESCB would be good, as sometimes they react negatively to schools or Head teachers. Head teachers also want to obtain advice from other agencies that have specific knowledge in their duty of care. Every Head teacher relied on their staff, who were crucial in the day-to-day work. School staff could pick up that a child was vulnerable but only have so many resources. Children were very often more vulnerable out of school hours. Sometimes when the school's Child Protection Officer asked for advice it could take between 24 and 48 hours for a response. This was due to a lack of resources in other agencies to provide a response. This then brought cynicism towards Social Workers. Due to the JAR report he was more aware of the problem of recruitment of Social Workers.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

David was authorised to act on behalf of ASHE but would always take advice before making decisions.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

Safeguarding of children was intrinsic to everything we do. In "Every Child Matters", Head teachers and schools have a duty of care.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

Head teachers worked closely with Schools, Children and Families Directorate, for example, admissions and special educational needs. Head teachers were semi-autonomous but worked closely with the Local Authority.

How do you feel that the ESCB was working?

The ESCB seemed to be working better now that the Independent Chairman was in place; anecdotal evidence showed that there had been a great improvement. The Serious Case Reviews were criticised by Ofsted. The Independent Chairman had taken action to improve the Serious Case Reviews. It was a steep learning curve when David joined ESCB and an induction programme would have been helpful. The Serious Case Reviews were now receiving more positive feedback from Ofsted.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented?

The voluntary sector was not represented on the ESCB, for example, Scouts/Guides and sports clubs all work with vulnerable children but were not represented on the Board.

How does Safeguarding Children structure differ from Europe?

The level of Safeguarding of Children in Britain was far higher standard than in France and Germany. Pupils from the Anglo-European School study in Germany for two months on a school exchange. The families taking part were in fact short term private fostering for these pupils, both in Britain and in Germany. In Britain families taking part were subjected to checks including any siblings over the age of 16. There were no CRB checks for families in Germany. He had devised a self assessment form for German families for them to declare that they have no convictions and would be fit to care for children and have a safe environment.

There is difficulty when working cross the Essex border with children attending Anglo-European School from outside of Essex. David had good working relationships with the private fostering team in Essex but every time a non Essex child attended a school exchange he had to start over again. He would like to see the relevant agencies doing more cross border work.

Had your agency any concerns?

CRB checks should be streamlined so that individuals could have one CRB checks for different organisations, although David was happy that the CRB checking system was in place.

It was critical to stop children falling through the net. Essex was now working in the right direction.

Could Schools learn from the Serious Case Reviews?

These reviews were extremely lengthy and detailed documents. If a school had fallen short then he would discuss it with colleagues.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

The work with the Private Fostering Team was good practice. This team and the school work together effectively.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

There was constant change of procedures and staff which made it difficult to establish links. Schools' concerns were not always perceived as urgent. The school does not always receive feedback from other agencies on particular children.

All agencies need to get together on the ESCB to know each other better, which will bring better understanding of each agency's standpoint and will help Safeguarding. David welcomed the Independent Chairman of ESCB and agreed that all partners should be perceived as equal. Schools were in a unique front line position so when they ask for help with a child they should receive advice quickly.

Coleen Corkhill, Head teacher, Boreham Primary School, representing Primary Schools**How would you define effective partnership working?**

Working with providers and stakeholders with responsibility for the greater good and to take on the Board's point of view. When Coleen was new to the ESCB it took some time to take in all the information and understand the roles of the other agencies.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

Appointed to the Board by Essex Primary Head teachers Association (EPHA). The safeguarding of children was essential on a day-to-day basis in Primary Schools.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

The remit was to represent Primary Head teachers.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Coleen attended as many meetings as possible.

How do you report back?

Through EPHA's conferences bi-annually and the EPHA email network. Head teachers use these conferences to explore ideas and to set and review procedures. There is a consultancy process through EPHA for all Head teachers' views.

How much support do you get when you report back?

EPHA had been very supportive of the Serious Case Reviews Panels and the backlogs. EPHA had provided a second Head teacher for the second Serious Case Review Panel.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Coleen was not authorised to act on behalf of EPHA but reported back to EPHA and then to the ESCB.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

Safeguarding was an essential role in the day-to-day business in schools. It was in "Every Child Matters".

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

It was extremely pro-active; every school had a Safeguarding Officer with training for the Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher and staff. When advice was required it was always given immediately and schools have clear access to advice. There was always access to professionals.

Were Independent Private Schools included in EPHA?

No - state schools only.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented?

Parents and School Governors were not represented on the ESCB.

How do the ESCB consult on Serious Case Reviews?

There was a set procedure to consult on Safeguarding Children. Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council were included in consultations. Currently the procedures were being redrafted to give them more clarity.

Have you had any problem accessing Mental Health provision?

The TASC teams, although under resourced, were very pro-active within those limited resources. CYPSPs and TASCs will organise mental health provision for children if the school pushes for it.

Do you feel that schools have access to training on Safeguarding?

Yes - there was always training on Safeguarding. It was possible to request specific training for a group of schools with a Local Delivery Group. There were no concerns regarding training.

Were there mechanisms in place regarding communicating immediate information?

Yes. There was a well managed process between the Local Delivery Groups and the ESCB.

Had your agency any concerns?

How schools report incidents. They have different formats for this and EPHA was trying to produce one format for reporting Safeguarding incidents to provide consistency.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

All Head teachers were well supported and work from an A4 Top Tip sheet on how to access the appropriate professional support.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

Children need emotional security before they could thrive and very young children need additional support to achieve this.

Lorry Greenall, Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children, Colchester Primary Care Trust (PCT)

How would you define effective partnership working?

The right people in the partnership working to a common aim and achieving that aim. All agencies were struggling in ESCB but working together to achieve the aims, although they were not there yet.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

Elected to the ESCB by the Designated Nurses, as the designated Nurse on ESCB for all the Essex PCTs.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

The remit of a Designated Nurse was to provide professional expert non medical information on health.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Lorry described the route that Designated Nurses and others in the PCTs were connected by the various mechanism of communication. Designated Nurses were linked to both the Essex wide Safeguarding Children Work Stream (whose representatives include Senior Commissioners, Senior Providers and LOG chairs) and other ECSB work streams, including Locality Safeguarding Forums. Each provider in North East Essex group had a Child Protection Group. Lorry did not have enough information to be certain that the providers in the other PCTs have Child Protection Groups but could confirm that all PCTs have a system to filter the information from LOG to the practitioner). The information was fed into all the PCTs. The Head of the Service was responsible for disseminating information to front line staff, this is a two way process with information flowing in both directions.

How do you report back?

Most issues raised within the PCT groupings were resolved and were therefore not required to be raised at the ESCB. The Designated Nurses met regularly and

ESCB issues were a standing item on each agenda. There was also an email network for Designated Nurses

How long have you been on the ESCB?

Approximately two and a half years (since its conception).

How much support do you get when you report back?

Designated Nurses were supportive and felt able to challenge decisions and resolve problems using best practice.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Lorry had the authority to speak on behalf of Designated Nurses and across the PCTs. South East Essex PCT was given information but was separate as it had its own LSCB.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

It was intrinsic to the Child Protection process and was clear within policies and procedures and within training and safe recruitment.

The ESCB had implemented a really good audit tool for Section 11 for most of the partners/agencies, although Education was not covered by Section 11. The audit tool was being used along side the PCTs governance structure to ensure that Section 11 was now intrinsic in all policies and procedures. This happened in Mid and North East Essex PCT but there was no information as to whether this happened in the other PCTs.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

The interaction between PCTs and Schools, Children and Families Directorate happened at different levels all the time from the ESCB to the front line workers. Discussion took place at the ESCB through to various multi agency panels which provided advice and discussion.

Had the ESCB looked at the difficulties of children and young people accessing Mental Health provision?

ESCB and its predecessor had struggled with the Mental Health issue. It had also been an issue in Serious Case Reviews that there needed to be more access to Mental Health Services and was included in a two part recommendation.

- That the services commissioned by PCTs should be reported back to the ESCB;
- That Mental Health Services be required to produce a process when a child does not meet their threshold for Tier 3 services. This was a work in progress. CAMHS had been asked to ensure that it had procedures in place for children who did not meet Tier 3 threshold but do require Tier 1

or 2 services. These procedures must be audited to ensure that children did not slip through the gap. The ESCB had requested that these processes were in place by May 2009.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented?

Voluntary organisations would be good but communication throughout the voluntary sector may be difficult. The ESCB officers currently liaised with the voluntary sector. It would also be good to have Young People and parents on the ESCB. Lorry welcomed Ed Balls (Minister for Department for Children, Schools and Families) suggestion to this effect.

Does your agency support safe recruitment from abroad?

CRB checks were part of the Health Service recruitment. When recruiting from abroad reference checking included criminal checking but no system was full proof. CRB checks and other checks were only good when someone had been previously charged with an offence. The NHS encouraged staff to raise concerns about other members of staff regarding child protection issues in accordance with SET procedures.

What training takes place for ESCB members in the new and old system?

The training was similar. The ESCB had training days but had difficulty obtaining trainers with their other commitments. This was being followed up by the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the ESCB.

Had your agency any concerns?

Every child had a right to be protected from harm and not to be hurt or to die.

There was a huge difficulty with Social Care staffing where Social Workers had too many cases, with many having far in excess of the recommended 16 -18. Good partnership working could only take place when there were enough staff in place. To make true partnership work there needed to be enough time to get to know one another and for trust to develop.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

Applaud the partnership working with ESCB with Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Council, which was trying to eliminate boundaries.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

That the ESCB support staff work extremely hard but more funding was required for an audit officer. These officers were very supportive and help to ensure the agencies work together. Thanks also to Essex County Council for supporting the Board.

Charmaine Dean, Head of Public Protection and Healthy Living, Braintree District Council

Charmaine was unable to attend this meeting but had provided written evidence.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

Charmaine was appointed alongside two other Managers by the Essex Chief Executives to represent all the District Councils in Essex. The three had attended the Board meetings on a rota basis.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

To represent the District Councils on this key statutory organisation through which decisions were made about the way in which agencies should work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Well connected through the role of the Board, CYPSP and Locality Managers.

How do you report back?

To the Chief Executive of Braintree District Council and the Chair of Braintree Children and Young People Service.

How much support do you get when you report back?

Full support from the Chief Executive and the Chair of CYPSP.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Charmaine's role was to represent and act on behalf of the District Councils in Essex.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

To ensure the Council could evidence its statutory duty to improve the outcomes and welfare of all children and young people under "“Every Child Matters”" and the Children's Act 2004. This was delivered through partnership with the statutory and voluntary providers across the district through a range of forums, including the Children and Young Peoples' Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). Braintree District Children's Centre Partnership and the Locality Children's Services Teams.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

Very good – through the role on the Board, CYPSP and working with schools and Locality Managers. In addition, the Children and Young Peoples' Manager in Braintree DC was also the Chair of the Braintree CYPSP.

Had your agency any concerns?

Yes – Serious lack of Social Workers in Essex and especially in the Braintree District.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

Good partnership training.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

Nothing to report.

The Committee was concerned regarding the three District and Borough Council members attending the ESCB on a rota basis, as they were concerned about the continuity of information. They were also concern regarding the three District and Borough Council members of the ESCB linking in to all the 12 District and Borough Councils in Essex

Sian Brand, Children's Services Commissioner, NHS Mid Essex**How would you define effective partnership working?**

Would prefer that all partners came to the table with a blank paper rather than one or two organisations producing a paper for other agencies to buy into. This would enable all partners to be equal rather than pushing forward one organisations procedure.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

Sian was appointed to ESCB to represent three PCTs for the North of Essex and Stewart McArthur represents the PCTs for the South of Essex. Sian represents North East, West and Mid PCTs.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

To provide non clinical medical commissioning advice.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Mid Essex PCT was very connected to the ESCB but aware about how connected North East and West PCTs feel.

How do you report back?

In Mid Essex reporting back was through the Designated Nurse, who was also on the Board, through the integrated clinical governance meetings. Contact outside these meetings was via email. North East and West PCT had contact via email and commissioners meetings. The feedback was that this was successful. Safeguarding children was intrinsic to all the work in the PCTs.

How much support do you get when you report back?

Sian received great support from both top management and colleagues. They had a close informal network where both planned and ad hoc meetings with the Corporate Director would take place.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Sian had authority to act in principle, but if finance was required or a change in resources then Sian would need authority from all three PCTs as these were still independent organisations.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

It was intrinsic to the organisation and was found throughout the PCT's work, completely matching with inter agency working.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

Through attendance at the ESCB and by being fully committed to the process. The JAR and the Laming Report have brought an increase in the work load. PCTs had a wide perspective engagement with Essex and wanted to have a better relationship with all agencies.

Since the JAR had there been any learning from the Serious Case Reviews?

The Serious Case Reviews often suggested blanket training for all staff as the recommendation instead of specific training for individuals/teams. In a large organisation such as health trusts this took a lot of time and resources and was not easy to implement in a timely manner.

Had your agency any concerns?

Working in partnership, all at the same baseline and all agencies equal. With the size and diversity of Essex there was a need to ensure that everyone was engaged and committed and that there were no gaps.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

Since the JAR outcomes which showed that the ESCB could do more, the Board had taken this very seriously. The ESCB was working hard to achieve the outcomes for children. The work for the ESCB had increased and the administration staff had worked to reduce the backlog of Serious Case Reviews without extra resources. This had doubled their workload. The ESCB had increased the number of Serious Case Review Panels to two and was considering having a third to reduce this backlog.

The work with Southend and Thurrock with reviews across Essex. Work at the local level with Safeguarding and the CYPSPs.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

Currently the child death Reviews work took place for the 0-2 age range, the planned service development was to increase this work to the 0 – 18 age range, which will increase the work load further.

Stewart McArthur, Head of Commissioning, Children, Young People & Maternity Services, NHS South West Essex

The Committee suggested to Stewart McArthur that, as he was aware of Sian answers to its questions, he should just comment on anything extra that he felt the Committee should know.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

The ESCB still had work to do before the partnership had a common understanding of all agencies and a trust and openness with each other.

How does the transformation agenda impact on your work?

The TASCs team were an internal Essex County Council team. There was a missed opportunity to co-locate multi agency staff into this team to provide true multi agency working and understand each others roles for the protection of children.

How would you define effective partnership working and were there any barriers to this in Essex?

The right representatives and at the right level, able to make decisions, need to be on the ESCB. Currently the right representatives were not on this Board, but it was probably due to the size. The Serious Case Reviews showed that there was a breakdown in primary care with GPs. GPs should be on the ESCB. Each agency should delegate authority to its representatives so that they could make decisions in the partnership. South West Essex PCT had delegated authority to Stewart but he also represented South East Essex PCT but did not have authority to act for them.

The ESCB was reactive but it was now challenging individual agencies where it was not working well. The Board needed to challenge poor performance.

What would your wish be to make improvements?

Serious Case Reviews were high level work and the recommendations should have common themes:

- Communications;
- Information sharing; and
- Best practice issues.

These should all be embedded within the front line of all the agencies, which was a huge challenge across Essex but it would make the difference for staff to be trained and be empowered to make decisions.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

Emotional well being for children with the CAMHS Business Case (BCFBI). This was a triage tool, from Sweden, which would be a single point of entry and assessment and would be a significant change to Essex.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

There should be opportunities to work together to get it right. ESCB should be revisited to ensure it moves forward and changes its function.

Laurence Doe, Assistant Director, NSPCC**How were you appointed to the ESCB?**

Laurence was a Member of the NSPCC Board. NSPCC only have six workers in total who cover Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Southend. Laurence represented Safeguarding Boards across these counties and therefore had a different perspective.

With your unique position on several Safeguarding Boards how does Essex compare?

Essex now had an Independent Chairman. Norfolk, Suffolk and Southend had had this type of Chairman for a while. Good Independent Chairmen drive the agenda forward. All Safeguarding Boards struggle from time to time but Essex had particular problems, but now had a clear time frame. Safer recruitment of staff was on the agenda and was fine. More resources were being put into the Serious Case Reviews due to the JAR and the Ofsted report.

Why did Essex get it so wrong?

Essex differs from Norfolk and Suffolk as these Counties were very rural. Essex was large and had recruitment retention issues. Partnership needed to be open, with an honest and not a blame culture, but also address the issues. This was now developing in Essex. The other counties addressed these issues earlier and multi-agency problem was solved. Essex had now bought into the safer recruitment. There was a more positive willingness in Essex to move forward. The JAR report had helped Essex move forward to more joint working.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented, for example Voluntary Groups?

No do not think that there was any group missing from the Board.

The Chairman invited Nicola Park to expand on this question. Nicola indicated that voluntary groups were not represented on the ESCB although the ESCB administrative staff were in communication with these groups.

Was the Communication strategy strong enough beneath the ESCB?

The size of the Board was right. Representatives on the Board feed information both to the Board and back to their agency, cascading information to other Boards.

The ESCB had a large remit and, in light of the Baby P case, had more work. If a child died in a road accident should this be part of the ESCB remit or should it concentrate on Child Protection issues? The ESCB needed to have a clearer focus and may need to concentrate on particular issues.

Had your agency any concerns?

The information problem needed to be worked on.

Have you any good practice you would like to share?

The Independent Chairman was crucial to improvement in the ESCB. Representatives of the ESCB needed to be able to share confidential information and it should be mandatory to share information and to be able to make decisions.

Was there anything you would like to tell the Committee?

That the NSPCC did not receive funding for attending Safeguarding Boards but just wanted to influence and advise.

Chris Wainman, Director of Community Services, Brentwood Borough Council

How would you define effective partnership working?

Working together to provide skills and resources for a better outcome of Children and Young People. The ESCB provided constructive discussion about issues and or Serious Case Reviews from a different agency point of view.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

Appointed by the Chief Executives of District Councils. There were three District and Borough Council representatives on the Board representing the 12 District and Borough Councils. The three representatives had different backgrounds, such as leisure, housing and community safety, which meant that they could bring three different perspectives to the Board. The three representatives attended the Board meetings on a rota basis.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

To provide the District perspective.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Similar circumstances to those described by Charmaine Dean.

How do you report back?

Report back through the Chief Executives who meet regularly and the information was cascaded through these meetings. On specific issues, for example a housing issue, the Chief Executives will inform the housing groups and recommend that protocols were improved.

How much support do you get when you report back?

Supported by Chief Executives, there was a fast turn around as they met regularly.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Any issues affecting more than Chris's own Council would be shared with fellow Directors of Community Services (or equivalent).

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

Children and Young People's welfare under "Every Child Matters".

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

The interaction was at different levels through the local CYPSPs. Each of these work in a different way. The Brentwood CYPCP was part of the Local Strategic Partnership Group, which was a multi-agency group. The TASCC teams were at the softer prevention end of the Child Protection and Districts and Boroughs access this service, in particular, the Leisure Teams.

What progress had the ESCB made?

The Board had evolved through constructive criticism. There was a lot of statistical information with relevant officers presenting this information. This information could be summarised more for the Board. The Independent Chairman was good and was a welcome change.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented, for example Voluntary Groups?

If other agencies feel excluded from the ESCB then they could be on the Board but there was a route for voluntary sector to receive information through communication by the administration staff.

Had your agency any concerns?

There have been difficult recruitment issues which the JAR picked up on. Districts and Borough Councils supported the action that Essex County Council had taken with this.

The Chairman asked David Moses, Head of Member Support and Governance, to summarise the Witness Session. It was **Agreed** that the following issues had been identified from the evidence given by the witnesses

- a) There was a need to improve the induction process for new members joining the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.
- b) Concerns had been raised about the level of resources and lack of Social Workers, although the difficulties with recruitment were also acknowledged.
- c) Views had been expressed that whilst all parties should be equal, starting with a blank sheet of paper when defining solutions, there was a perception that this was not always the case.
- d) The appointment of an independent Chairman and the current direction of travel of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board were welcomed.
- e) Further consideration should be given to the membership of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board; particularly whether it should include a parent representative, the voluntary sector and children/young people.
- f) There were concerns about the limited links with schools operating within the private sector.
- g) Whilst there were improvements in the arrangements for Serious Case Reviews there was still a need to embed learning from these into and through all organisations.
- h) The level of support given by ESCB officers was greatly appreciated but there were concerns about their capacity to deal with increased workloads, particularly post-Laming.

The following additional points were also made:

- That the Serious Case Reviews seem to be reactive rather than proactive and the recommendations do not seem to be influencing best practice delivery;
- That the ESCB should be able to hold individual partners and Essex County Council to account;
- That Councillor Martin (lead Cabinet Member) was now invited to the ESCB as an observer;
- Members felt that they were still not clear on lines of accountability for the ESCB and may write to Paul Fallon, Independent Chairman of the ESCB for more information; and
- That part of the Government's response to the latest Laming Report (issued that day prior to the meeting) had been to add two Independent Community Members to the ESCB in order to strengthen the community focus.

JULY 2009 DISCUSSION

Prior to the witness session commencing, the following points were made:

- Some families with young children in Canvey Island live in caravans and this accommodation was suggested to be substandard property for the winter months; and
- Members asked for a glossary of terms.

The Committee **Agreed** that:

- i) The South Area Forum should look into the health and well being issues in relation to young children living in caravans in the winter months in Canvey Island and report back to this Committee:
- ii) The Committee Officer would provide a glossary list (circulated in early August – Governance Officer).

Tanya Gillet, Head of Youth Offending Service

Youth Offending was a statutory Service working within a statutory partnership framework. The multi agency partnership with the safeguarding role included Social Care, Education, Probation, Police and NHS. The service's duty was to support Young Offenders and to enable these young people to access to the appropriate services. Part of the Youth Offending Team's work was to provide public protection and link closely with Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and the Probation Service.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

As the Youth Service Offending Service was a statutory duty, Tanya was appointed to this Board.

What was your remit from the appointing body?

The remit was within the Working Together 2006 statutory guidelines and to ensure that these were met adequately.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

It had been a challenge to be effective as there had been historical tensions. Housing had been a key issue in some child protection issues.

How do you report back?

Tanya reported to the Youth Offending Service Management Board, whose Chairman is the Director of Schools, Children and Families. Tanya's line manager was situated in Social Care so there was a dual reporting mechanism.

How much support do you get when you report back?

Tanya was supported and could raise any issues.

Were you authorised to act on their behalf, for example, all PCTs, Schools etc)?

Tanya was authorised to act on behalf of Youth Offending and was accountable to the Management Board.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

The Service's role was to ensure that Young People were safeguarded and received adequate assessment for their needs by working with the multi agencies by providing access to external services. There was an issue with a lack of accommodation to suit teenagers' needs.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

The Youth Offending Service worked closely with the Directorate and external agencies, police, probation and NHS. The service worked hard to prevent the young people who offend from moving into the adult Probation Services by preventative work.

How do you feel that the ESCB was working?

The Board was improving towards becoming effective although there was acknowledgement that the Board needed to change.

Was there any agency not represented on the ESCB that you feel should be represented?

No.

Had your agency any concerns?

The Youth Justice Board was separate from the Serious Case Reviews and had a wider remit, looking not just at deaths but at near misses and young people who had committed a serious offence. The media reported deaths of children and young people but a large number of young people self harm, which goes unreported.

Due to the nature of the work, the clientele could be unpopular due to their offending behaviour, but other services needed to be aware that these young people are also vulnerable. Young people needed to be given access to education, training and accommodation.

What was the access to Mental Health Services for Young People with undiagnosed issues?

The Youth Offending Service has its own Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Nationally there was a specific shortage of Forensic Mental Health Professionals who helped young people working with the Criminal Justice Service. There was a system in place for young people and adults to protect the individuals and the community. The young people were frequently chaotic and missed appointments and misused drugs and alcohol so the Youth Offending Team worked with young people from 4.00 pm each day.

Do you have sufficient resources?

No, Youth Offending resources were not adequate. In the past large case loads had been the key issue. The Youth Offending Service concentrated by pushing target measures through, and therefore did not manage to get under the assessment to produce a thorough work plan.

How do the young people you work with fair with education and training?

Young people self select to either take up education and / or training. This brought problems if they had Mental Health or emotional need as sometimes their families lacked education. Early intervention would be very useful.

Some Young People were not in schools and have between one and five hours education per week. There needed to be more flexibility in the support service for these young people to meet their needs as some young people were disruptive. These young people then impact on other young people.

Mary Archer, Chief Officer, Probation Service

The Committee received DVD evidence from Mary Archer, Head of Probation, who had been interviewed on the Committee's behalf by David Moses.

How were you appointed to the ESCB?

The Probation Service was required to be a member of the ESCB. There was one probation service in Essex County, covering Essex County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Thurrock Unitary Council and therefore three Safeguarding Children's Boards. One of her Directors covered the unitary Boards whilst Mary sat on the ESCB.

How connected was your agency to the ESCB?

Well connected. Her other Directors were involved in subgroups, staff development training and standing members of the Serious Case Reviews. Essex Probation was committed to ensuring there was a link to work with children's services as their work involved a responsibility to protect children and to contribute to their welfare.

The Probation Service brought to the Board the work with offenders and she took back to probation staff the links to the children's agencies. Offenders were also sometimes parents so there can be a clear crossover.

How do you report back?

The information was disseminated throughout the Probation Service at all levels and staff reminded about the welfare of the child and the need to always be mindful of this.

Attendance at Meetings?

Mary had attended all meetings this year. Last year there was a clash of meetings so she was unable to attend all the ESCB meetings. Her Director would attend the meetings if she was unable to attend.

What was your agency's role under Section 11 of the Children Act 2004?

It was clearly laid out that the Probation Service role was the assessment and management of adult offenders and to protect the public. In carrying out their work they contribute to the protection of children and to their welfare. The

Service worked with staff in the Youth Justice Team with young offenders and provided a service to child victims of serious offences. The Probation Service ensured that other agencies working with children had an understanding of the work of the Probation Service. The Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were good in Essex and this service linked well with other agencies. It was important that all Probation staff knew about the risks, not just the high risk offenders but also low level risks.

What was the interaction of your agency with Essex County Council, Schools, Children and Families Directorate?

Mary personally had limited contact but one of her Directors for partnership worked with all agencies.

How do you feel that the ESCB was working?

The Board was developing. The Independent Chair had improved it. Monitoring and challenging delivery of actions would be a key part of ongoing development and effectiveness.

One wish to improve the ESCB?

All agencies should be open and transparent with information with each other. Partnerships worked well when all agencies shared information and understood each others roles and could then utilise the different agencies. The Board was improving and needed to avoid duplication but processes were in place to consider this.

Liz Hall and Michelle Leader, Salvation Army

The Chairman advised Liz and Michelle that they had been invited to the Committee as the voluntary sector was not represented on the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board and it would be useful to have their perspective on Safeguarding Children.

The Salvation Army worked with children from 0 to 18 years old. Liz worked with the 0 – 12 age group also supporting others that work with them and Michelle worked with the 12 – 18 age groups in the same way. The Salvation Army provided pastoral care with social activities and teaching. Mrs Beverley Egan was the representative for vulnerable adults. There was recognition that 16 to 18 year olds required a different approach in terms of child protection and Michelle had been able to input into this. There were 38 Salvation Army Churches in the Eastern Region who supported Kids Clubs, Parent and Toddler groups, preschool groups, youth clubs, rainbows, brownies and guides, musical events and workshops. The scout movement and the preschools were separate in terms of child protection reporting procedures. Other volunteers/agencies used the churches for social events and licensed activities, which required reference to the child protection policy.

The Salvation Army supported the volunteers to work with children and vulnerable adults and these volunteers were trained to deal with issues of child protection. There was a duty of care to children and young people. All volunteers and staff received a CRB check which was renewed every three years. The Salvation Army had a six month induction, which included the application, interviews and CRB checks. All staff and volunteers were empowered to report any disclosures or unusual behaviour and were aware of the procedure to report any issues. There were designated Child Protection Officers and there were posters in the buildings informing the children and young people and adults that the Salvation Army was a child-aware environment and that staff and volunteers care. There were mentoring sessions to raise any issues with designated people.

The Salvation Army was aware that the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board existed but did not interact with it. The Salvation Army encouraged local centres to have links with local schools as appropriate. Beverley Egan had strong links with the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board and also the Schools, Children and Families Directorate.

If a member of staff or a volunteer was worried about a child or a vulnerable adult then they would inform the designated named person for child protection, who then notified Social Care and, if appropriate, would contact the police. The Salvation Army may only see the child once or twice a week at the most, and frequently less often. Staff and volunteers were trained to look for more than one sign if they suspected child abuse and have learnt that if a child disclosed information then the child would not be lying but that the issues would have built up over a period of time.

If a child was suspected of self harming then the family would be involved and a member of staff or volunteer would encourage the child/young person to speak to his/her family and would go with the child to speak to the family if required and would attend appointments with the child, if appropriate. The Salvation Army informed other agencies who then become the lead agency for this child's welfare.

The Salvation Army would like volunteer groups to be part of the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board. This would help to encourage child protection issues be taken more seriously in the voluntary sector. It would also give the Board a more holistic view in working with the third sector.

The Salvation Army also trained its entire congregation in child protection issues. The congregation, staff and volunteers watched a training DVD for an hour and a half on policy and procedures. There was a separate residential policy and risk assessments took place before any residential event. All Churches and centres received a child audit annually - this was a self assessment with 12 units to complete.

The Salvation Army in the UK was working towards ensuring that all its settings and centres provided and shared good practice.

During the discussion the following points were made:

- Members applauded this good practice and felt that it should be shared with other voluntary organisations and should be used as a benchmark;
- Members informed the representatives from the Salvation Army about Contact Point. The Salvation Army would be interested in information. Mainly information was gained locally on individual cases but this did not happen regularly.

The Committee **Agreed** that:

- i) A report with recommendations would be produced for the next meeting.
 - ii) Peter Martin, Cabinet Member and Graham Tombs, Director of Schools, Children and Families, would be invited to the next meeting;
 - iii) The Governance Officer should make enquiries on how far the introduction of Contact Point had progressed (details circulated in letter to Members in July – Governance Officer).
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