
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 9.30am on Thursday, 14 September 2023 in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Chelmsford.

Present:

County Councillors:

Cllr Ray Gooding (Chairman)
Cllr Marie Goldman
Cllr Ian Grundy
Cllr Carlo Guglielmi (Vice Chairman)
Cllr Eddie Johnson
Cllr Daniel Land
Cllr Sue Lissimore
Cllr June Lumley
Cllr Peter May (Vice Chairman)
Cllr A McGurran
Cllr A McQuiggan
Cllr Ross Playle
Cllr Michael Skeels
Cllr Wendy Stamp
Cllr Mike Steel

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Gemma Bint, Democratic Services Officer were also present throughout the meeting.

1 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report on Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted.

Apologies for absence had been received from Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex.

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 June 2023 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Notes of private briefings held on 28 June 2023 and 13 July 2023 also were noted.

3. Questions from the public

There were none.

4. Essex Safeguarding Adults Board – Annual Report 2022-23

The Committee considered report PAF/13/23. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Deborah Stuart-Angus, Independent Chair ESAB

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- Elaine Oxley, Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance ASC
 - Lisa Nobes, Suffolk and North-East Essex Integrated Care Partnership NHS
 - Michael Pannell, Detective Inspector Essex Police
 - Alison Smith, Chief Inspector Essex Police
 - Michala Jury, ESAB Safeguarding Board Manager

As part of introducing the draft annual report for consideration, the Independent Chairman outlined key recent achievements which included:

- Increased collaboration with certain partners and partnership structures this year- for example, the Suicide Prevention Board,
- Introduction of a Coroner's protocol,
- Facilitated increased input from Healthwatch Essex (HWE) to help raise the voice of those trying to access and use safeguarding services. HWE now presented to the Board on a quarterly basis.
- Commenced development of Board Risks Register.

During the subsequent discussion, the following was highlighted, raised and/or noted:

- (i) The ESAB budget remained at £255,248. The Board had not requested an uplift of partner contributions. However, with the projection of increasing referrals the Board would soon need to look for an uplift to ensure sustainability. There was a small amount of income from penalty fines for non-attendance at training courses.
- (ii) ESAB consulted each of the partners before setting priorities which allowed more dovetailing of partner strategy and approaches. However, it was possible that there could be some differentiation in measuring priorities. The key aim for ESAB was to seek assurance and accountability.
- (iii) ESAB were looking to develop a more holistic safeguarding picture across Essex and provide a fuller picture of the lived experience of adults. This would support future strategic priorities.
- (iv) On average there were about 50 adult referrals every day in Essex which represented a 20% increase on the previous year. Most cases related to people being abused in their own home which was reflected in data across the country. The Independent Chairman stated that she had seen increases in neglect and self-neglect since starting her chairmanship in 2015. Part of the new strategy for ESAB would be more community/outward facing as a result.
- (v) Essex was a large county which might at least partly explain why it seemed to receive the most referrals nationwide. Safeguarding partners had worked hard to raise awareness which might also be a contributory factor. Essex was seeing a steady increase in the number of referrals

each year as were other local authorities. The conversion rate of referrals was approximately 25%.

- (vi) It was stressed that ESAB was not an inspection authority. However, the Care Quality Commission were a member of the ESAB.
- (vii) The Essex Partnership University Trust was now expected to attend every ESAB board meeting to update on patient safety and how changes to practice were being implemented and how quality of care was being assessed and measured.
- (viii) The Police had specific teams to work with mental health partners. Attendance at reported mental health incidents would depend on individual circumstances.
- (ix) Members queried the extent of safeguarding partners knowing about placements in refugee holding centres and getting access to those centres, particularly for those with more complex needs. Reference was made to Terminous House in Harlow which, in some ways, could be viewed also as a place of risk. It was highlighted that safeguarding policies also needed to be in place in these centres.
- (x) There was increasing closer engagement with children's services as it was recognised that there were so many crossover issues as someone transitioned to adult.
- (xi) The community and voluntary sector had quickly become the eyes and ears for reporting during the pandemic and this had continued. and this had led to more safeguarding training for those groups.
- (xii) Consideration was being given to develop the outcomes of every SAR into a training module to help embed learning.
- (xiii) Work was underway within the Eastern region to align more closely the process of recording safeguarding referrals.
- (xiv) The backlog for Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards assessments (DOLs) remained around 3200. The level of backlogs compared similarly to other local authorities of similar size and better than some regional partners. Essex was seeing more referrals each year, at least partly attributable to people living longer with more complex needs. In addition, DOLs certification only lasted a year and often needed to be reassessed and renewed. A prioritisation process was in place. There was an increased pool of in-house staff and a large pool of external assessors to help keep pace with increased demand.

Conclusion:

It was agreed that the following would be considered further and/or provided to the Committee:

- (i) To include more prominent reference to the financial challenges being faced by the Board in the finalised annual report and the development of risk register work.
- (ii) The Essex Covid-19 Care Home Report which had been endorsed by ESAB to be presented to the Committee.
- (iii) More information on safeguarding referrals received from asylum and refugee holding centres.
- (iv) The passing reference to the recent Dispatches television programme in the draft annual report be expanded to include more background and context.

The Health Policy and Scrutiny Committee had been briefed on the ongoing Independent review of Essex Partnership University Trust (arising from historical operations as the North Essex Partnership Foundation Trust). A further private briefing for scrutiny members could be considered.

Contributors were thanked for their attendance and left the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 11.25 and reconvened at 11.35am.

5. Adult Social Care Priority area of focus: Safeguarding Adults

The Committee considered report PAF/14/23. The following attended the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

- Cllr Jaymey McIvor, Deputy Cabinet Member, Health, Adult Social Care and ICS Integration
 - Alison Ansell, Director of Adult Social Care
 - Peter Fairley, Director Strategy Policy and Integration
 - Clare Hardy, Head of Strategy and Innovation
 - Elaine Oxley, Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance ASC
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- (i) The new CQC Assurance framework was outlined together with the five key performance themes that had been identified by ECC for further improvement. The first of these was in relation to adult safeguarding.
 - (ii) The safeguarding operating framework was outlined, including triage and response, work with partners and increasing focus on making safeguarding personal. There was also a centralised organisational safeguards team carrying out Section 42 enquiries for cases where the setting was in hospital or Care Home - in other settings it would be social workers and other staff doing the enquiry. The Practice Governance Board would consider learnings and changes necessary.
 - (iii) An increasing number of safeguarding concerns were being received with a 9% increase on the previous year. Essex was above the national average of concerns per 100,000 population.
 - (iv) Safeguarding had a statutory definition and threshold to meet met for ongoing formal safeguarding support. If it had not, then a decision could

still be made to offer some other safeguarding support (this could be obtained from the community and voluntary sector or by the County Council or other partners in a different way). If the threshold had been met for formal safeguarding support, then there would be an assessment as to whether it was high, medium or low risk which would then determine how quickly support would be put in place.

- (v) There was currently a backlog of 1,600 concerns which were in the triage process. A pilot launched in June 2023 was looking to enable earlier triage by placing people with some safeguarding skills at the 'front door'. There was a challenge in recruiting the number of staff needed for this. However, the exercise had already reduced the number of concerns that would have ordinarily gone into the Safeguarding Team and the expectation was that this would continue but there would be an increase in the conversion rate into formal investigations.
- (vi) The community and voluntary sector were commissioned for some safeguarding related work but not statutory safeguarding enquiries. The sector could be involved as part of individual protection plans and in advocacy. As community and voluntary organisations were not registered care providers (and subject to regulatory inspections) the oversight through good contract management was paramount. These organisations tended often to be the 'eyes and ears' in any case.
- (vii) There was reference to recent media coverage on a Chief Constable announcement about his Police force no longer responding to mental health related calls. It was stressed that there were often other reasons why police would still attend such an incident anyway as presentations may be expressed differently and there could, for example, be danger to the person or others. It was suggested that there was increasing police awareness of individual vulnerability and increased recognition of the County Council's and other partner roles in relation to safeguarding.
- (viii) The proportion of outcomes where safeguarding risk had been reduced or removed would not be a consistent figure as it would be impacted by external factors, the capacity of the person concerned, and sometimes adults would choose to remain in a risky environment and then instead the support offer was working with them to manage the risk.
- (ix) As a separate assurance process, feedback was also sought from people who had gone through a safeguarding enquiry.
- (x) There was difficulty in comparing safeguarding performance with other local authorities. There was no consistent national approach although there were attempts to compare to regional and statistical neighbours.
- (xi) ECC was part of a regional network which was sharing how councils were preparing for future CQC inspections and sharing broader knowledge and learning. Three key areas for CQC readiness had been identified by the County Council – further increasing safeguarding

training, implementing a new safeguarding triage pilot (see bullet point V) and exploring the possibility of a safeguarding portal.

Conclusion

It was agreed that the following would be considered further and/or provided to the Committee:

- (i) Whether fast-track health and care training being developed at Essex University could be extended and applied to safeguarding training.
- (ii) If some further narrative to explain the proportion of outcomes where safeguarding risk had been reduced or removed (bullet point VIII above) could be included for future reports.
- (iii) to provide further narrative in future reports on the statistics being presented more generally to give further context, refer to any relevant changes in process and/or recording that might be causing statistical change and indicate if trends were positive or negative.

6 Performance Monitoring falling within Committee's remit, as reported to the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/15/23 comprising the latest performance update for the *Everyone's Essex – Our Plan for Levelling Up the County: 2021-2025* strategy which are considered quarterly by the Corporate Policy and Scrutiny Committee. It was **agreed** that more information should be sought on the recent unsuccessful bids for funding two Special schools and any impact of that on the provision for SEN pupils in Essex.

7 Work Programme

The Committee considered and discussed report PAF/15/23 comprising the work programme for the committee. A broader education update would be arranged to cover a number of issues and it was **agreed** that that update should include reference to the capital programme as it related to education provision.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to be held on Monday 9 October 2023.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1pm.

Chairman