
Minutes of the meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.30am in Committee Room 1 County Hall, Chelmsford, CM1 1QH on Thursday, 11 October 2018

Present:

County Councillors:

J Chandler (Vice Chairman and in the Chair)
J Deakin
B Egan
C Guigleml (substitute)
J Lumley
P May
M McEwan
M Platt (substitute)
R Pratt
P Reid
C Souter

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer was also present.

Councillor Chandler, Vice Chairman, took the chair in the absence of Councillor Maddocks. The meeting was advised that Full Council has approved a change to committee membership – namely that Councillor Pratt had replaced Councillor Wood as a member of the Committee with immediate effect.

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 Councillors Baker, Butland (for whom Councillor Guigleml substituted), Durham (for whom Councillor Platt substituted), Henry and Maddocks and R Carsen, Educational co-optee.

No declarations of interest were made:

2 Minutes

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 13 September 2018 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

Matter arising: A draft Bill in Parliament would require 'upper tier' local authorities to assess the educational development of those children receiving their education via Home Schooling and provide appropriate guidance and advice. Home schooling and alternative educational provision was on the work programme for ESCB.

3. Questions from the Public

There were no questions from the public

4. ***Essex Safeguarding Adults Board - update***

Introduction

The Committee considered report (PAF/21/18) outlining the priorities and work of the Essex Safeguarding Adults Board (ESAB). The update included a summary of Care Act responsibilities, links to operational safeguarding, Board plans and priorities for 2018/19 and some examples of work undertaken since the last update.

The following were in attendance to introduce the update:

*Phil Picton, Independent Chairman, Essex Safeguarding Children Board.
Paul Bedwell, Essex Safeguarding Adults Board - Manager
Fiona Davis, Director, Safeguarding and Assurance (ASC)*

Overview

The ESAB had a non-operational and independent role to encourage the co-ordination of adult safeguarding activity and practice and evaluate the work of partner agencies tasked with safeguarding. There was also a role to facilitate the provision of multi-agency safeguarding training. ESAB met quarterly supplemented by further sub-group meetings around the county. A lot of safeguarding board work took place outside of the formal board meetings.

Differences between the ESAB and the Essex Safeguarding Children Board were highlighted – namely that it operated under a different legal framework and that ESAB's focus was on safeguarding people with care and support needs rather than trying to safeguard the whole adult population. It remained a complex and challenging area of work as there was generally not the same level of surveillance of vulnerable adults outside of the family environment that there would be for children and therefore safeguarding issues could be harder for agencies to pick up.

In addition, potentially there was a wider spectrum of possible abuse of adults with some aspects of abuse and neglect more likely with adults rather than children such as self-neglect and financial abuse.

Performance

ESABs Assurance processes would include corroborating evidence with that from other sources and also give partner agencies in the meeting room the opportunity to directly challenge what was being said. Mr Picton suggested that a positive trend seemed to be that senior managers in provider organisations were now more operationally focussed in provider organisations than they used to be.

Performance reports to ESAB had identified that only approximately 30% of safeguarding concerns that were being sent through to Adult Social Care were becoming formal safeguarding enquiries. Essex had a slightly lower proportion than compared nationally and some further work was being undertaken to check any specific reasons for that.

Partnership working

Recent legislative changes had required partner agencies to provide more places of safety. Whilst Essex had a complicated and sometimes fragmented structure, partners had worked together well in finding additional sites and now it was rare for someone to be detained in police cells for mental health reasons.

Training

Generally safeguarding training was delivered by different professionals from multiple partner agencies so as to also benefit from cross-partner learning. ESAB also communicated to partner agencies what they expected to see as part of safeguarding training programme.

Members highlighted the significant resource load placed on partner agencies when there were local Domestic Abuse Reviews. The Home Office had been interested in some of the local innovative working to define and grade cases under certain tiers.

Homelessness

The January meeting of ESAB would be focussing on homelessness. There now seemed to be an issue about re-homing people coming out of prison and how agencies were working together on that. The Board had not received the level of assurance it wanted on that so far although district and borough councils were all looking at this to identify better links and learning.

Essex specific themes and issues

Nearly 50% of safeguarding concerns came from the provider market and it was important to minimise this risk through the work of the Quality Teams at the County Council and the Care Quality Commission.

It was not felt that Essex necessarily had any uniqueness to the types of cases it had but the complexity and size of Essex often made change slow to implement and partnership working more challenging. Proximity to London also did make the county potentially more vulnerable to organised criminal gangs finding vulnerable people to exploit.

Mr Picton indicated that he would like to see more multi agency auditing to help identify future work themes for the Board.

Conclusion

It was noted that the timing of the annual review of the work of the ESAB was now aligned with the publication of the ESAB Annual Report in late summer.

Further to discussions at the March meeting of the Committee, Mr Picton would provide a further update on the consideration of the Board and partner agencies to improve feedback to those making referrals. **Action:**

Thereafter the witnesses were thanked for their attendance and they left the meeting.

Note: The Committee discussed follow-up actions to this item when discussing the work programme (below).

5. Work Programme

The committee considered and noted report PAF/22/18. In discussing follow-up work for the previous agenda item it was agreed to list the following as issues to be further considered:

- (i) Healthwatch Essex update on work being done to support the Safeguarding Boards.
- (ii) Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health in his role as member of ESAB and partner agency.
- (iii) Homelessness - looking at supported care for young people who have found themselves homeless.
- (iv) The support for looked-after children being into schools.
- (v) Home to school transport - for special needs and changes impacting on them and whether the service was fit for purpose.
- (vi) Gang culture.
- (vii) Joint session with HOSC to look at autism diagnosis and referral waiting times.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Committee activity day was Thursday 8 November 2018 which may be held in public, be a private session, briefing or site visit – to be confirmed nearer the time.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.56 am.

Chairman