



Essex County Council

## People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>10:30</b>	<b>Thursday, 08 October 2020</b>	<b>Online Meeting</b>
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The meeting will be open to the public via telephone or online. Details about this are on the next page. Please do not attend County Hall as no one connected with this meeting will be present.

**For information about the meeting please ask for:**

Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Telephone:** 033301 34574

**Email:** democratic.services@essex.gov.uk

### Essex County Council and Committees Information

All Council and Committee Meetings are held in public unless the business is exempt in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act 1972.

In accordance with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020, this meeting will be held via online video conferencing.

Members of the public will be able to view and listen to any items on the agenda unless the Committee has resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting as a result of the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

#### How to take part in/watch the meeting:

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#### Members of the public:

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Please note that an audio recording may be made of the meeting – at the start of the meeting the Chairman will confirm if all or part of the meeting is being recorded.

		<b>Pages</b>
<b>**</b>	<b>Private Pre-Meeting for PAF Members Only</b> Please note that Members are requested to join via Zoom at 9.30am for a pre-meeting.	
<b>1</b>	<b>Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest</b>	<b>5 - 5</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes PAF 17 September 2020</b> To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 17 September 2020.	<b>6 - 11</b>

**3 Questions from the Public**

A period of up to 15 minutes will be allowed for members of the public to ask questions or make representations on any item on the agenda for this meeting. No statement or question shall be longer than three minutes and speakers will be timed.

If you would like to ask a question at the meeting, please email [democratic.services@essex.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@essex.gov.uk) before 12 Noon the day before the meeting (Wednesday 7 October).

**4 Education Portfolio: follow-up actions and update 12 - 35**

**5 Children's Safeguarding Update 36 - 89**

**6 Work Programme 90 - 93**

**7 Date of Next Meeting**

To note that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 12 November 2020. This may be a private committee session, meeting in public, briefing etc. - format and timing to be confirmed nearer the time.

**8 Urgent Business**

To consider any matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered in public by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**Exempt Items**

(During consideration of these items the meeting is not likely to be open to the press and public)

The following items of business have not been published on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. Members are asked to consider whether or not the press and public should be excluded during the consideration of these items. If so it will be necessary for the meeting to pass a formal resolution:

**That the press and public are excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972, the specific paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A engaged being set out in the report or appendix relating to that item of business.**

**9**

**Urgent Exempt Business**

To consider in private any other matter which in the opinion of the Chairman should be considered by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) as a matter of urgency.

**Committee:** People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee

**Enquiries to:** Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer

**Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

**Recommendations:**

To note

1. Membership as shown below
2. Apologies and substitutions
3. Declarations of interest to be made by Members in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct

**Membership**

(Quorum: 4)

Councillor J Chandler	Chairman
Councillor J Baker	Vice-Chairman
Councillor J Deakin	
Councillor B Egan	Vice-Chairman
Councillor M Durham	
Councillor C Guglielmi	
Councillor M Hardware	
Councillor J Lumley	
Councillor P May	
Councillor R Pratt	
Councillor P Reid	
Councillor C Souter	
Councillor M Steptoe	
Councillor L Wagland	

Refreshed nominations are being sought for educational representatives to be co-opted to serve on the Committee as independent non-voting members. These co-opted members may advise and vote on all matters relating to children's services in schools.

Two places are available for church Diocesan representatives. Two further places are available for parent governors at maintained schools in Essex (one primary and one secondary school). An election is being organised for later this month to determine the representative for primary school parent governors as more than one nomination was received.

It is expected that representatives will have been identified in time for them to be in place at the October meeting of the Committee.

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**Minutes of the virtual meeting of the People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee, held at 10.30am by video conference on Thursday, 17 September 2020**

**Present:**

*County Councillors:*

J Chandler (Chairman)  
J Baker (Vice Chairman)  
J Deakin  
M Durham  
B Egan (Vice Chairman)  
C Guglielmi  
J Lumley  
P May  
P Reid  
C Souter  
M Steptoe  
L Wagland

Sharon Westfield de Cortez from Healthwatch Essex, Emma Tombs, Democratic Services Manager, and Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer, were also present throughout.

**1. Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest**

The report on updated Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received and noted. Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Hardware and Pratt.

No declarations of interest were made.

**Minutes**

The draft minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2020 were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**3. Questions from the public**

There were no questions from the public. The Chairman agreed that representatives from the Essex Young Assembly would be invited to participate at an appropriate point in the discussion for the following agenda item on drug gangs, knife crime and County Lines.

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**4. Task and Finish Group Report - Drug Gangs, Knife Crime and County Lines**

The Committee considered report PAF/17/20 comprising the final report of the Task and Finish Group established in response to the Full Council request for this Committee to look at the multi-agency response to the issue of drug gangs, knife crime and County lines in Essex.

The following joined the meeting to respond to the conclusions and recommendations in the report:

County Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member – Education and Skills;

County Councillor Louise McKinlay, Cabinet Member – Children and Families;

County Councillor Dick Madden, Cabinet Member, Performance, Business Planning and Partnerships;

Michael O'Brien, Head of Specialist Education Services, Essex County Council.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Guglielmi, as Lead Member of the Task and Finish Group, introduced the item. The conclusions of the review commented on partnership working, leadership, funding, the role of education and raising awareness, and communication and transparency. As a result, the Task and Finish Group had made eight recommendations

In turn, Cabinet Members were given the opportunity to give an initial response to each recommendation. During that discussion the following was acknowledged, highlighted, suggested and/or agreed:

- (i) The County Lines business model was dynamic and fast changing and agency resources to challenge it were limited;
- (ii) There was significant emphasis on joint partnership working within the local Violence and Vulnerability Framework requiring individual agencies to be transparent and report back on those activities on which they led and/or for which they were responsible. It was important that duplication of work between partners be minimised;
- (iii) The governance structure and leadership of different work strands should be regularly reviewed to ensure the most diverse and effective leadership;
- (iv) The Task and Finish Group had struggled to adequately obtain all the information it needed in a timely manner so as to robustly challenge the accountability on how partnership funding was being used. There was also some uncertainty on the structure of

funding from the two unitary councils in Essex. However, it was stressed that the overriding principle was to buy into the project with less emphasis on actual boundaries and being prescriptive.

- (v) An overall Violence and Vulnerability Unit communications strategy had been agreed in July which had acknowledged that sometimes messaging might need to vary where geographical differences in challenges being faced had been identified across the county. It was suggested that further review of the strategy should be in 3-6 months to gauge the impact of the current strategy.
- (vi) It was important that there were interventions to discourage school exclusions and ensure there was adequate support for schools to facilitate young people quickly returning to school after a period of exclusion. The decision to exclude a pupil sat with the Head Teacher and the County Council believed that there should be more pre-conditions required to be met before that happened;
- (vii) There was less influence over academies than maintained schools;
- (viii) More work may be needed to further heighten awareness of youth services on offer.
- (ix) Members were encouraged that there was a review of youth service outreach work and it could start at an earlier age in future compared to the present;

At this point, the Chairman invited representatives from the Young Essex Assembly to participate in the discussion. The following specifically contributed to the discussion:

Satine Dawes, Member of Essex Young Assembly.  
Ms Hatch, Teacher, Gilberd School.

and advised that through the Essex Young Assembly they had also been looking at issues around drug gangs and County Lines and confirmed that it was perceived to be a significant issue in schools. It was suggested that schools were not getting all the support they needed and that the pandemic had also made access to those services more difficult. It was stressed that raising awareness of both the early warning signs of involvement in drug gangs, together with the availability of support services, needed to further improve.

#### Conclusion:

The Chairman thanked the Task and Finish Group members for their time and commitment in undertaking the review.



It was agreed that:

- (x) The Task and Finish Group report, conclusions and recommendations, be endorsed;
- (xi) The report should be distributed to Essex MPS, Essex Borough, City and District Councils (including the two unitaries);
- (xii) Councillor Guglielmi would seek further clarifications on source and use of partnership funding at a meeting to be held with the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner;
- (xiii) Responsibility and owner for each recommendation was as follows (subject to any further clarification from Cabinet Members);

Recommendation 1 – Councillors Gooding and McKinlay.

Recommendation 2 – Councillor Gooding.

Recommendation 3 – to be referred to the Health Overview and Policy Committee.

Recommendations 4, 5, 6 and 7 – Councillor Madden.

Recommendation 8 – Councillor McKinlay

- (xiv) The Committee be updated on progress in approximately 3-4 months;
- (xv) Email contact details of the YEA participant in the discussion would be provided to Cllr Guglielmi so that they could be kept informed of progress.
- (xvi) A copy of the finalised Healthwatch Essex report looking at child exploitation would be circulated in due course.

Thereafter the meeting briefly adjourned and then resumed at 12.15.

## **5. Essex County Council – Adult Social Care response to the pandemic**

The Committee considered report PAF/18/20 updating members on adult social care issues arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the County Council's responses to the challenges being faced.

The following people from Essex County Council joined the meeting to introduce the item and respond to questions:

Cllr John Spence, Cabinet Member Health and Adult Social Care.

Moira McGraph, Director, Commissioning, Adult Social Care.

Steve Ede, Head of Procurement.

Jo Rogers, Commissioning Manager

Nick Presmeg, Executive Director, Adult Social Care

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

- (i) Research was underway looking at people's experiences of the pandemic and their future choices and aspirations;
- (ii) Whilst it had been a challenging time, there had been positives such as greater creativity and flexibility (particularly around Day Opportunities), further embracing technology and closer working with District Councils and the NHS;
- (iii) Increasingly technological solutions would need to be used to facilitate more electronic-based home care systems in future;
- (iv) Demand for reablement and domiciliary care was expected to significantly increase. Occupancy rates and levels of demand for residential care had dropped significantly and were not, at the moment, expected to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels;
- (v) The current average occupancy rate for the approximate 400 registered care homes in Essex was 81% (compared to just over 90% before the pandemic) but the pandemic had not hit all residential homes equally and some had seen a more dramatic reduction in their occupancy rate. Demand year-on-year had been reducing but the pandemic had accelerated the trend;
- (vi) There were significant cost pressures for providers and the County Council was expecting to work with a smaller number of providers in future. Rural areas provided a further challenge as they tended to be less sustainable areas to serve for providers;
- (vii) There was now over-supply of care home capacity in some areas and further work was needed to align retaining high quality and specialist provision with the expected levels of future demand. Essex County Council needed to provide support to the wider market during this transitional process but realistically it was thought that there needed to be a reduction of approximately 1000 beds which could lead to the closure of 20-30 care homes;
- (viii) Notwithstanding the above, longer term population demographics projected that the number of people over 80 and 90 would significantly increase. However, it could be expected that, as a result of the pandemic, a higher proportion of those would choose to stay in their own home with enhanced support. In addition, future demand for residential and nursing care was likely to be significantly driven by the rates of dementia in future;

- (ix) There was now weekly monitoring of all care homes in Essex, looking at vacancy levels, financial risks and other factors and proactively looking at emerging issues. Two care homes in Essex had closed since the start of the pandemic - one due to it already having poor occupancy rates which had then been exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic and another care home was in the process of closing for a rebuild.

Conclusion:

The Chairman advised that some issues raised during the discussion would be further explored as part of a Task and Finish Group review of domiciliary care that was about to start. The Committee would give further consideration on how it would want to be further updated on other issues.

The witnesses were thanked for their attendance by the Chairman and then left the meeting.

[Before leaving and with the Chairman's consent, Councillor Spence raised and updated the Committee on an unrelated issue which is recorded under Urgent Business.]

**6. Work Programme**

The Committee considered and noted report PAF/19/20 comprising the current work programme for the Committee.

**7. Urgent Business**

With the Chairman's consent, Councillor Spence responded to recent media coverage on suicide rates. Whilst increasing numbers of mental health cases were expected as a result of the lockdown, he had been in contact with the local Coroners' Office and reported that there was currently no evidence of an increasing number of suicides in Essex nor any identifiable trend to suggest an increasing number of suspected suicides.

**8. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled to be held on Thursday 8 October 2020.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 12.55 pm.

**Chairman**

<b>Report title:</b> Education portfolio: follow-up actions and update	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 8 October 2020	<b>For:</b> To consider this report and identify any follow-up actions
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

## 1. Introduction

It was agreed that further updates should be provided on four education issues as a result of Committee discussions on 16 January 2020, 14 May 2020 and 23 July 2020 respectively as outlined in Background below.

## 2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider the updates in Appendices 1-4 attached and identify any further follow-up actions.

## 3. Background

- (a) On 16 January 2020 the Committee discussed early interventions in the Early Years' sector and an extract minute of that discussion is reproduced below recording the request for a draft of the Early Year's Strategy to be presented to this Committee (which is attached as **Appendix 1**).

### Minute 5(ii) - Expectations of interventions by the Early Years' Sector

Clare Kershaw gave an oral update on interventions by the Early Years' sector. There was work underway looking at establishing a new school readiness strategy. This strategy would include looking at the support for initial transition into a child's first school and the processes in place for communications and language development testing at the end of reception year. Development of the strategy also needed to align with other workstreams being led by Councillor Mckinlay (Cabinet Member for Children and Families) on deprivation, disadvantaged, and those just about managing, and also the interface with the children's wellbeing service delivered by Virgin care and Barnardo's. The strategy would also look at further improving the targeting of resource.

**Conclusion:** Agreed that the draft Early Years Strategy would be

## Education portfolio: follow-up actions and update

presented to the Committee ahead of launch.

- (b) On 16 January 2020 the Committee also discussed work underway to further improve the linkages of wellbeing programmes operating in schools and an extract minute of that discussion is reproduced below recording the request for a further update on wellbeing programmes and personal resilience to be presented to this Committee (which is attached as **Appendix 2**).

### Minute 5(ii) Wellbeing programmes in schools and personal resilience

Clare Kershaw provided an oral update on work underway to further improve the linkages of wellbeing programmes operating in schools with the provider of emotional wellbeing and mental health services for children and young people in Essex and the promotion of personal resilience.

- The intention was to focus further on more early intervention and prevention prior to the thresholds for the current commissioned service with the North East London Foundation Trust and to look at underlying reasons for bad or disruptive behaviour;
- There was an ambition for every school to be trained in trauma prevention practice. The practice was more than just a workforce development programme and sought to change the values and ethos in a school;
- Mapping of secondary support available had highlighted that there were around 300 support networks in Essex that can build upon and complement ECCs commissioned emotional wellbeing and mental health services. ECC were looking at developing a portal for this information as part of highlighting the suite of services available;
- In terms of personal resilience, ECC was looking at greater consistency in use of language and descriptions being used.

### *Conclusion*

#### **Agreed:**

- (i) A copy of the Trauma Perceptive Practice to be circulated to members;
  - (ii) Officers to revisit to see how Trauma Perceptive Practice will be monitored on an ongoing basis;
  - (iii) A further update on wellbeing programmes and personal resilience to be given later in the year;
- (c) On 14 May 2020 during discussion of the Annual Report on Educational Attainment in Essex Schools dated 20 April 2020 it was agreed that an

## Education portfolio: follow-up actions and update

update on the Disadvantaged Pupils Pilot would be scheduled into the Committee's work programme (and this is attached as **Appendix 3**).

- (d) On 23 July 2020, during discussion under agenda item 5 (Essex County Council - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Structure Update), it was **agreed** that a monthly analysis on attendance at school during the lock-down, and planned recovery actions, should be provided at a meeting of the Committee in Autumn and this is attached as **Appendix 4**.

### 4. Update and Next Steps

The updates are attached as listed in 5. below. Next steps are as stated in Action Required.

### 5 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Early Years Strategy update.

Appendix 2 - Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service and Trauma Perceptive Practice update.

Appendix 3 - Disadvantaged Strategy update.

Appendix 4 - Experience of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities families during lockdown

# Update and launch a new Early Years and Childcare Strategy from April 2021

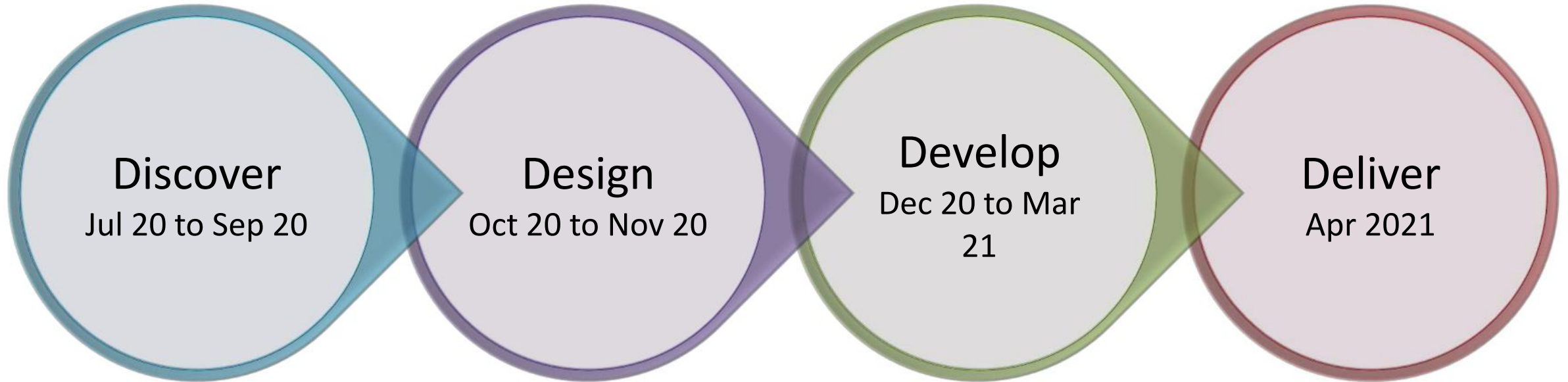
- The previous Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2015–2018 set out the specific commissioning and operational approach that delivered the strategic direction for the Authority.
- This created the conditions to give all children the best possible opportunity to succeed; to thrive in school and be able to make a positive contribution throughout their lives.
- An ECC cross function project team have convened to review this strategy, understand the current landscape to produce and implement a new Early Years and Childcare strategy from April 2021

# The Project Team Outputs are: -

1. **To produce a new Early Years and Childcare Strategy. Including:**
  - A definition of School Readiness
  - Maintaining a good level of development and improving outcomes for those not able to achieve a good level of development
  - A clear focus to connect the full early years system effectively
  - A 5year business plan that clearly aligns to the overarching Education Strategy
2. **To implement a set of minimum expectations for the childcare sector to address quality**
  - The 'Essex Early Years Charter'
3. **A redesigned Early Years and Childcare service, with:**
  - A clear vision, purpose and direction
  - Fit for purpose roles and responsibilities
4. **Assess the proposal for ECC to enter the Early Years and Childcare market**
5. **Workforce** – how we drive forward the wider early years and childcare workforce changes needed.



# Proposed Timeline and Key Deliverables



- Local Authority Insight
- Wider engagement with key partners
- Further engagement with Schools, Settings and the Internal Workforce
- Parental Engagement

- Future Vision
- Draft Early Years and Childcare Strategy
- Alignment to Education Strategy
- Draft Comms Strategy
- Develop success measures
- Pilot new ideas

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- Share Strategy with Stakeholders incl. Schools, Settings and Children's Partnership to create buy in
- Develop Strategy following feedback from Stakeholders
- Finalise solutions and different ways of working
- Implementation Plan
- Communications Plan
- Project Governance

- Go Live - Launch strategy (alongside issuing the Essex free early education entitlement funding contract)
- Measure success - ongoing

# To launch a new Early Years and Childcare Strategy, which focuses on the following 5 aims:-



1. INCREASING THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO MAKE EXPECTED OR BETTER THAN EXPECTED PROGRESS FROM THEIR STARTING POINTS IN THE EARLY YEARS.



2. SUPPORTING EVERY CHILD TO BE THE BEST THEY CAN BE



3. DEVELOPING THE EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE TO PROVIDE THE EXPERTISE AND KNOWLEDGE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



4. ENSURING SUFFICIENT CHILDCARE PLACES TO SUPPORT EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE FOR WORKING PARENTS, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ANY IMPACT FROM COVID-19



5. AN EFFECTIVE, CONNECTED WHOLE EARLY YEARS SYSTEM THAT HAS A CLEAR VISION, PURPOSE AND DIRECTION

## Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health

### The Ambition for Trauma Perceptive Practice (TPP); Our aspirations for the future

It is believed that TPP is very much a step forward; a more holistic and humanistic framework to support all children and young people. It is a journey and an evolution to create educational settings that enable children and young people to become emotionally resilient.

#### What difference is TPP going to make?

Short term:

- Educators in schools and settings will become trauma and development informed, in order to increase their understanding and enhance their skills to be able to effectively support children and young people. Providing a safe, consistent and sensitive environment will assist all children and young people.
- Educators in schools and settings will understand and be able to reframe 'behaviour' in order to support the underlying emotional wellbeing and mental health needs which require support.
- Educators will understand the importance of relationships and connectedness to support wellbeing.
- Schools and settings will become safe places for all children, including for those who have experienced adversity and trauma.
- Policies and practices within schools and settings will reflect the values of TPP.

Medium term:

- Educators will feel more equipped to support children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Children and young people will be supported to develop their capacity to form secure relationships, experience and regulate their emotions, explore and learn.
- With schools and settings using this compassionate humanistic approach, there is an aim for exclusions to be reduced.
- Increased inclusion in schools/settings for those children and young people who experience social, emotional and mental health needs.
- Children and young people achieve better outcomes in life; both academically and in relation to their social, emotional wellbeing and mental health development.
- Children and young people will be able to understand what wellbeing and mental health is and how to develop/build upon the skills that will enable them to look after their own long-term.

Long term:

- Children and young people will develop the resilience to manage the setbacks and adversity that can happen in life.
- Children and young people will be more likely to remain in education for longer.

#### What difference is TPP going to make to aspects of the Essex data?

it is through doing all of the above that TPP will play a key role and be part of the solution to reduce

- permanent exclusions
- fixed term exclusions
- the need for an escalation to a Statutory EHC Plan
- the need for special school placements for social, emotional and mental health needs

- the need for out of authority spending on special school placements for social, emotional and mental health needs

## **Our plans for making the difference**

Short term (up to 2 years):

- TPP programme and materials piloted and finalised.
- TPP Pilots completed, as part of the 'Embrace' project, evaluated by Essex University.
- Identified SEND Quadrant Team members trained to deliver TPP.
- Every quadrant has a TPP Coordinator and Lead Trainer.
- Essex Trauma Perceptive Practice is hosted on Hive Learning (cloud-based platform), which will host all training materials and resources for TPP and enable the growing TPP community to connect with one another.
- Annual refresher for trainers.
- Initial phases of TPP delivery planned and implemented for schools and settings (including special schools) in each quadrant.
- Collaborate with quadrant teams and commissioned services (Virgin Care, Barnardo's etc) to support CPD for Early Years settings.
- Engage and promote TPP with partner agencies including social care, health and voluntary sector.
- Collaborate with the Essex Healthy Schools programme to enable authentication and quality mark for best practice schools.
- Identify and map complimentary training to provide additional intervention/training which enhances TPP.
- Collect baseline/end data for schools participating in TPP to demonstrate impact.

## **Current**

Including the pilots, we now have 131 schools/settings on the journey: South: 30, NE: 48, West: 30, Mid: 23.

We have had 107 schools/settings and trusts express their interest (bearing in mind some of these are trusts of 20+ schools so the actual number is much bigger) with more being added every day.

We have trained 55 LA trainers within the Quadrant teams and 22 within the community eg. healthy schools practitioners. We have trained 25 school/settings trainers

Essex Healthy Schools Award has now integrated TPP into their programme. It is the emotional component of the award.

## **Let's Talk Recovery & Returning to School (Part 1) –our education response to the COVID-19 Pandemic from the perspective of Trauma Perceptive Practice**

We produced two themed recorded video training sessions for schools and settings in July 2020. The first theme was Looking after the Staff- 'putting the oxygen mask on first', the second was the Wellbeing and Mental Health of the Children and Young people. These video sessions were supplemented with resources and further information on how to seek support.

The first one has been viewed nearly 1500 times and the second on 2000 times.

### **Training objectives and outcomes**

The core training objectives identified for education staff are to:

- Increase knowledge of the potential mental health and wellbeing impact of Covid-19 on staff, children and young people, and parents and carers
- Build understanding of evidence-based and straightforward responses and resources to support recovery.

## **Let's Talk Recovery & Return (Part 2) incorporating DfE Wellbeing for Education Return**

Our approach to the Wellbeing for Education Return seeks to better equip schools and colleges to promote children and young people's wellbeing, resilience, and recovery in response to Covid-19. As well as strengthening and building wellbeing and resilience, this aims to prevent the onset of mental health problems and ensure those with pre-existing or emerging difficulties access the right support.

Overview:

- All school/setting staff will have access to 7 themed webinars relating to Essex's Let's Talk Recovery and Return (Part 2) by the 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020
- The 7 webinars combine the DfE 'Wellbeing for Education Return' content with the existing content from the 'Essex Let's Talk Recovery and Returning to Education Settings (Part 1)' released in July 2020.

### **Webinar Themes:**

- Bereavement & other loss
- Long term whole school approach
- Neuroscience of the stress response
- Anxiety & low mood
- Psychologically informed first aid
- 5 Rs
- Accessing local support

### **Training objectives and outcomes**

The core training objectives identified for education staff are to:

- Develop knowledge to introduce school and college staff to evidence-based and straightforward resources and structures for dissemination to children and young people and parents and carers.
- Raise awareness of specialist and wider support services (statutory and independent) and when and how education professionals might signpost or refer children and young people, staff and/or parents and carers to them.

Each of the 7 webinars will be designed to provide further information and enhance previous advice and guidance – they will be structured into sessions lasting no more than 30 minutes

In conjunction with this we will host a series of questions and answers (Q&A) sessions hosted by a panel of multiagency professionals with relevant expertise

- Each school will be able to nominate one lead person to attend a Q&A session
- Each Q&A session will host up to 30 people per session.
- Each session will be 90 minutes long, spread out to offer a range of morning, afternoon and twilights sessions.

### Disadvantaged Strategy

#### Essex context:

In Essex the performance of disadvantaged pupils is lower when compared to their more fortunate peers. Approximately half of Early Years' disadvantaged pupils achieve a Good Level of Development in the past three years. The gap increases over time so that by the age of 16, it has almost doubled from pupils' original starting points at the age of 5. On average 20% of disadvantaged pupils have SEND. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are White British boys is higher in Essex than nationally. Attainment and progress of this pupil group, at both KS2 and KS4, is among the lowest of any gender/ethnic group mix but make up the largest group in size.

The absence rate among disadvantaged pupils is around twice that of non-disadvantaged pupils with the exclusion rate being around four times as high. There is a geographical diversity across the county with over a third of pupils in the Tendring and Basildon districts living in the most 20% of deprived areas in the country.

The proportion of pupils eligible for the Pupil Premium is not always an accurate representation of disadvantage in the community. Conversely, immediate perceptions of the local community may not be representative of the levels of disadvantage at the school. Levels may fluctuate as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects.

#### **Purpose of this strategy – Maximising the attainment of disadvantaged pupils in Essex**

- Building on national expertise and best practice to develop a sustainable approach to tackling educational disadvantage
- Consistency of knowledge and expertise within LA team – a consistent language, high quality challenge and support to schools and settings
- Better educational experiences and improved long-term outcomes for disadvantaged pupils
- To begin exploration of the links between disadvantage and SEND and the use of school resources to support the most vulnerable
- Develop partnership working to use the expertise within the specialist sector (enhanced provisions and special schools) as well as best practice within the mainstream sector
- To develop skills within the early years sector to ensure early identification and support
- To keep schools and settings up to date with relevant information and guidance on pupil premium

**Intended impact:**

- ▶ To improve confidence in schools to meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils
- ▶ To deliver high quality support and challenge for schools and settings in removing barriers to achievement at a strategic level
- ▶ To accelerate progress for disadvantaged pupils (inc. PPG pupils), improve readiness to learn, develop personal and cultural capital and develop self-efficacy.

**Impact measures:**

- ▶ Intended impact in 12 months (Autumn 21): (1) secure schools/settings understanding of the needs of their specific cohort, development plans identify a clear drive to improve outcomes for this cohort. (2) Schools/settings and partnerships can articulate their plan, the intended provision, impact and how evaluation and monitoring will occur. (3) Best practice is shared as a regular agenda item within partnerships. (4) SEP's are secure in their understanding of how to support schools/settings with best practice in raising outcomes for disadvantaged pupils using a suite of tools. (5) Development of early years specific tools where necessary.
- ▶ Intended impact in 24 months (Autumn 22): (1) Schools and settings data identifies improved outcomes overall with an identified improvement in outcomes for their disadvantaged cohort. (2) schools/settings knowledge is embedded and widely shared with a continual cycles of monitoring and evaluation (3) An annual cycle of support for new and existing school/setting staff is in place to embed best practice and learn from each other.
- ▶ Embed a vulnerable learners element within the overall education strategy, bringing together work on disadvantaged, LAC, lowest 20%, life without labels and SEND.

**Progress to date and any impact:**

- Improved knowledge of SEPs
- Improved confidence of SEPs to have conversations with schools and settings regarding disadvantaged outcomes and provision
- Development of disadvantaged clinics
- Increase in conversations regarding disadvantaged learners raising the profile within the directorate
- Engagement with pilot schools that had their review
- Development of the draft strategy
- Analysis of data to more fully understand the Essex context
- Marc Rowlands training and support drawing on national best practice
- Links made with EEF to support with training and funding in Tendring
- Development of pilot package of support in Tendring inc. Inclusion Framework and TPP– HEP and CCA to be approached



## **Our findings from the pilot school visits:**

We have worked with our pilot schools to help develop our strategy for disadvantaged pupils in Essex. Global events have made this work more important than ever. Each school's strategy should focus on the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on *learning* and focus relentlessly on addressing this. Ensuring a common understanding of the strategy across the school community is key to success.

Schools should develop a long-term approach, focussed on the needs of their pupils. It should include a clear evaluation framework and progression model. It is important to clarify the ultimate goal within the approach, and to be clear about whether short, medium and long term improvements are being made that work to achieve that goal.

Our work has highlighted four core elements to focus on, mirroring national research. The interrelated elements are:

- Relationships
- Meta-cognition and self-regulated learning
- Social and emotional / mental health
- Language development / comprehension

The bedrock on which all other elements need to be established is relationships. We are particularly mindful of how schools should maintain and develop relationships as the foundation for learning. We need to carefully consider the process of transition for our disadvantaged pupils and they develop new relationships. Inclusivity and effective communication with pupils and families is paramount to success.

Our plan also focuses on the establishment of evidence based practice for meta-cognition and self-regulated learning, SEMH, language development and comprehension. Activity should be driven by robust assessment of need, not labels or assumptions. Where learning focuses on these elements, alongside the development of knowledge, we see good outcomes for all, irrespective of background.

Our plan looks to develop a model of shared understanding, where a culture is developed that embodies the view that education has a powerful role to play in the improvement of life chances, irrespective of socio-economic background. It should be developed by the whole school community to adopt an evidence informed strategy that focusses on the issues that matter. It prioritises accountability to pupils and families first. Success is measured by its impact on pupils, not on institutions. Together, it is possible to develop a culture of purpose, positivity and regular reflection that leads to positive change for all. We know this from the work in our schools.

**Next steps:**

Launch of the strategy Jan 21 through partnerships

Development of disadvantaged champions at SLT level within schools, support from Marc to develop practise, through partnerships

Start of Tending specific package of support – likely to be HEP (Harwich Education Partnership) and CCA

Session with governors – Oct 20

Evaluation of strategy from a Early Years perspective

Training of IP's and EP's so that our work is embedded across the quadrants with all roles that work with our vulnerable learners

Autumn 2021 and Autumn 2022 conference for schools and settings to refresh learning and continue to embed best practise based on current national research

## PART ONE

### Background

Schools were closed to the majority of pupils from March 2020 to reduce the spread of the virus. Parents were asked to keep their children at home, wherever possible, and asked schools to remain open only for those children who absolutely needed to attend.

Schools, and all childcare providers, continued to provide care for a limited number of children - children who were considered vulnerable, or whose parents were critical to the COVID-19 response, so that they could continue to work where alternative childcare arrangements cannot be made.

Vulnerable children included those who had a social worker and those with an Education, Health and Care plan. Children with a social worker include children in need, children who have a child protection plan and those who are Looked After by the local authority.

### Attendance (March – September 2020)

Average monthly analysis on attendance at school during Covid-19 lockdown

- March, April and May – critical worker children and vulnerable children only
- June and July – critical worker children, vulnerable children and certain year groups

Month	Average number of pupils attending schools for the month	% of school population attending schools	Average number of pupils with an EHCP attending schools for the month
March	3627	1.6%	197
April	2199	1%	126
May	3101	1.4%	185
June	23,339	10%	1139
July	28,611	13%	1407
September	145,491	89.5%	Not recorded separately.

### Changes to the Law

From May 1<sup>st</sup> 2020 some aspects of the law on Education, Health and Care (EHC) assessments and plans changed temporarily to give local authorities, commissioning health bodies and other bodies who contribute to the EHC process more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by COVID-19. The new legislation came into place on May 1st 2020 and affected two aspects of the law:

1. Usually there is an 'absolute duty' on Local Authorities and Health Commissioning Groups to provide what is written in an EHC plan. This duty on local authorities or commissioning health

bodies to secure [or arrange] the provision was temporarily replaced by a duty to use 'reasonable endeavours' to do so. This modification was renewed monthly and ended at the end of July 2020.

2. The second change was to timescales in processes such as EHC Needs Assessments and EHC plans. Where it was not reasonably practicable to meet a time limit for a reason relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19, the local authority or other body to whom that deadline applies had to complete the process in line with the requirement specified in the 2020 Regulations (such as 'as soon as is reasonably practicable thereafter'). The timescale amendments were in place until 25 September 2020

The full guidance can be found here.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changes-to-the-law-on-education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-due-to-coronavirus/education-health-and-care-needs-assessments-and-plans-guidance-on-temporary-legislative-changes-relating-to-coronavirus-covid-19>

### Implications for Local Authorities

In practice this meant that LAs and health bodies, working with Early Years settings, schools and colleges had to consider for each child and young person with an EHC plan what was reasonable and possible to provide during the notice period. For some, this meant that the provision specified in their EHC plan could continue to be delivered. For others, this resulted in a child or young person's provision being different to that which was set out in their EHC plan, for some, or all, of the time that the notice was in force.

### Essex Approach to support all children and young people

From the start of lockdown, communication with children and families was prioritised. All education settings were expected to:

- Complete a **Risk Assessment** for all children with additional needs to determine the safest place for that child or young person. This considered all elements of vulnerability and disadvantage alongside the individual health needs of the child or young person. This risk assessment was continually reviewed at each stage of lockdown as more children and young people were encouraged to return to school.
- Put into place '**Keeping in Touch**' or 'Welfare Checks'.
- Introduce arrangements for learning to continue at home, with personalised learning and support for children and young people with additional needs.

Family experience of each of these elements were gathered through a survey. Their responses and experiences are included in this report (PART 2)

### Essex Approach for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans

For children with Education, Health and Care Plans additional steps were required to ensure we continued to meet their needs as specified in their plans. The guidance emphasised the need for coproduction and for involving every family and young person in decision making about their

support. We recognised that the decision making process and the plan for each child would be different depending on the current needs of the child or young person, the provision that was in their plan and the specific local circumstance.

Essex produced a Six Step plan to support the LA SEND teams, schools, colleges and Early Years settings to work together to carry out this duty of 'Reasonable Endeavours' with every young person and family. All LA SEND teams received online training using Microsoft TEAMS. Every Early Years setting, school and college was allocated a key LA contact who provided support at every stage of the plan. We are also offered a daily Helpline or Question and Answer session in the early stages to make sure any queries or questions could be answered.

Essex LA wrote to families explaining the changes to the Law, what this meant for their child and what they could expect to happen. This information was shared with families, education settings, on the Local Offer, through the Essex Family Forum and through all Parent Support Groups on their social media channels and platforms.

## PART TWO: Family Experience

There were two surveys to capture the experiences of parents:

- The survey for parents of children in mainstream settings ran from 01/06/2020 to 25/07/2020. 183 parents of children with Education, Health and Care Plans completed the survey. These parents represented approximately 90 schools, colleges or Early Years settings across Essex.
- The survey for parents of children in special school settings ran from 15/06/2020 to 25/07/2020. 170 parents and carers responded. These parents represented 8 of the special schools in Essex (Castledon School and College, Cedar Hall, Harlow Fields School and College, Market Field School, Pioneer, Ramsden Hall, The Endeavour Co-operative Academy, Wells Park)

## Co-production

A key theme throughout the process was co-production. We asked parents how involved they have been in decision making about their child's support during the pandemic. Over 90% of respondents agreed that they have been involved in decision making (strongly agree or agree).

I feel that I was involved in decisions about my child's support during this time.

Mainstream Responses	Total	Percent
Strongly agree	112	61.20%
Agree	54	29.51%
Disagree	11	6.01%
Strongly disagree	6	3.28%

Special School responses	Total (170)	Percent
Yes, I feel fully involved in decision making at this time	108	63.5%
Yes, I feel involved in decision making at this time	45	26.4%

No, I do not feel involved in decision making at this time	17	10.0%
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- “The school was supportive and pro-active in meeting our child's needs and taking on board my own requests as a parent” (*St Thomas Mores*)
- “I felt this was important for my child as I like to be involved as to what help and support my child gets within her school setting” (*Richard de Clare School*)
- “I feel that I have been allowed to voice what I feel is best for my child and supported in a way that I have been able to achieve this.” (*Messing-cum-Inworth*)
- No decision has been made about my child unless I have been involved. (*Market Field*)
- The school have included me at every stage regarding my son. I have even had an annual review of his progress - we are in constant contact. (*Ramsden Hall*)
- We are involved in all decisions made about our son. (*Pioneer*)

### Family Experience of Risk Assessment

Did you discuss where you think the best place is for child at the moment- at home or at school? This might have been called a ‘risk assessment’.

Mainstream Responses	Total (183)	Percent
Yes	168	91.80%
No	15	8.20%

Special School Responses	Total (170)	Percent
Yes	143	83.22%
No	27	16.78%
Not Answered	0	0%

How satisfied are you with the decision about the best place for your child? (Mainstream responses)

Mainstream Responses	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	129	70.49%
Satisfied	44	24.04%
Not satisfied	9	4.92%
Not satisfied at all	1	0.55%
Not Answered	0	0%

95% of parents in mainstream schools were satisfied about the decisions made during risk assessments:

- “School have been so accommodating, open to making the right choices with us” (*Chelmsford County High School for Girls*)
- “Everything has been put into place to allow our son to be in the best place to suit him and his needs.” (*Holy Trinity Primary Halstead*)
- “Collaborative working and feel school have best interests of my child in mind.” (*Mildmay Infants School*)

- “SENCO, Headteacher and temporary teacher for child have been incredibly supportive with decisions about our daughter, we have had several Informative meetings and our opinions have completely been taken on board.” (*Buttsbury Junior*)
- “Conversations with all involved including our son we can come to the best conclusion for him” (*USP College*)

How satisfied are you with the decision about the best place for your child? (Special School Responses)

Special School Responses	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	113	66.5%
Satisfied	35	20.6%
Not satisfied	9	5.3%
Not satisfied at all	8	4.7%
Not applicable	5	2.9%

86% of parents in special schools were satisfied about the decisions made during risk assessments:

- The decision was reached after discussing many aspects of my son's welfare. (*Harlow Fields*)
- I was listened to and respected with the decision I made, with full information and openness from the school. (*Market Field*)
- The school are so supportive and put my child's needs first, the school and I agreed together. (*The Endeavour*)
- Harlow Fields have been very supportive and discussed any concerns I had. I feel they have my child's welfare as their priority. (*Harlow Fields*)
- The teacher listens to us and we listen to her and I feel we make the best decisions possible for my child's safety and well-being. (*Pioneer*)

Where families were dissatisfied, they cited

- It has been made extremely difficult to return to school. I don't think there has been any understanding of our circumstances.
- I requested a place as a key worker but this was discouraged.
- I have been left to look after my child with no help from the school as a single parent I was told there was no place for my child at school as these were reserved for children of key workers only.
- I would like my child to be in school, but she has not yet been offered anything. I was told she might get some school offered by the end of June, but this was not definite, and the school staff advised me not to send her to school as the provision on offer would not be suitable for her needs. I am very unhappy about this as my child needs to be in school.
- I appreciate it's difficult to respond to ever shifting official advice, union pressure, etc. and get kids back to school. However, the overall impression is that the decision was made from the start that home was the best place for all the children. This might be the case for some with particular health needs but assumptions have been made rather than proper, individualised assessments done. Our child is not learning or being challenged in the same way as they are at school, they are losing social skills by not interacting with others at all and becoming hyper anxious and unpredictably behaved as a result. We are expected by our employers to work at home regardless of whether we have a child with disabilities to look after. Whilst this isn't the fault of the school and they have difficult decisions to make, the impression is that we have rather been left to get on with it with minimal support. And when this is added to the removal of

all other sources of respite and support: grandparents, clubs etc. it contributes to making the situation almost unbearable at times.

#### Family Experience of 'Keeping in touch' or 'Welfare Calls' (Special School survey only)

Have you had (or are you having) conversations with someone from your child's school to keep in touch?

Option	Total (170)	Percent
Yes	168	98.8%
No	2	1.2%

How satisfied are you with these 'keeping in touch' conversations?

Option	Total (170)	Percent
Very satisfied	112	65.9%
Satisfied	41	24.1%
Not satisfied	8	4.7%
Not satisfied at all	7	4.1%
Not applicable	2	1.2%

- I felt the level communication was just right, open door if we were having any difficulties but also if things were going well left us to it. Like I said just right. (*Cedar Hall*)
- Always asks how we are doing, if there is anything they can do further to help. Always on the end of the phone if we need anything. (*Harlow Fields*)
- I have had weekly phone calls from the school to check how we are and if we need anything. Have been able to email or call anytime if I have needed anything. We also stay in touch via Tapestry. Have felt very supported during this difficult time. (*Pioneer*)
- I can honestly say the school have been faultless in their support and have been in regular weekly contact both on a health and welfare and educational basis. (*Ramsden Hall*)
- The school as a whole, but especially my child's teacher has been incredible and very understanding of the demands of being at home. Nothing has been too much trouble and they are always there to discuss concerns. (*Market Field*)
- I know that if I need to speak anyone within the school, I can just pick up the phone and I will get support, advice, reassurance and kindness. To have these "keeping in touch" conversations is reassuring because I know personally that the support is still there. (*Harlow Fields*)
- My daughter and I have received a level of support online and via telephone that has been consistent, beyond any expectations and holistically supportive. My daughter's needs are far more than just academic and I continue to be struck by just how lucky she is - she's really cared for by this amazing team. (*The Endeavour*)

Where families were dissatisfied, they cited

- The conversations were good when they happened but it would have been useful if they had come at the start of lock down rather than halfway through.
- Conversations are very brief and do not really offer me anything useful.
- Didn't hear from anyone for weeks, then the phone calls I did receive were not very useful.



## Family Experience of 'Reasonable Endeavours'

Have you had a conversation with someone from your child's early years setting, school or college about what support can be offered at the moment – that is reasonable and possible? This might have been called a 'Reasonable Endeavours' conversation.

Mainstream Responses	Total (183)	Percent
Yes	179	97.81%
No	4	2.19%

Special School Responses	Total (170)	Percent
Yes	143	84.1%
No	27	15.9%

How satisfied are you with the conversation? (Mainstream only)

Mainstream Responses	Total	Percent
Very satisfied	131	71.58%
Satisfied	37	20.22%
Not satisfied	9	4.92%
Not satisfied at all	3	1.64%
Not applicable	3	1.64%

- "Very clear & informative conversation - my points were addressed & listened to. We had a good conversation & covered all areas." (*Birchanger Primary School*)
- "We discussed all available options, and all our questions and queries were answered. The school have been incredibly helpful and supportive during this pandemic." (*Holy Trinity Primary, Halstead*)
- "All parts of his plan were discussed and agreed as to how his targets could still be met during Covid. Plans were in place from the first week of lockdown to support him, even while at home." (*Lawford Mead Primary*)
- "My son is 22yrs with SEN. He has had exceptional support during this lockdown period, with a minimum of twice weekly contact, key activities and learning through email correspondence. To and fro of pictorial evidence and the availability of the staff for him to contact them freely by text message should he need assistance has been brilliant. This has been a great source of reassurance to me as a parent." (*USP/SEEVIC college Benfleet*)
- "The staff are extremely helpful, regularly contacting us and ensuring that my son has telephone conversations with members of staff that he particularly responds to. There has also been the opportunity to talk to staff and other parents online. I am also regularly kept in contact by email. Communication is particularly good." (*Harlow College*)
- "He has been given the most support he has ever received in all his educational life. We have felt that they actually care about him personally, he's not just any student, he's someone that matters, and they want to help him achieve his potential but most importantly they want him to feel safe and happy. Personally, I have felt extremely supported by the team, and been reassured that I am doing a good job with my son." (*Braintree College*)

- “Knowing that the school were continuing support my child's needs during a difficult time was reassuring and it then helped me to support my child at home”. (*King Harold Academy*)

How satisfied are you with the RE plan to support your child? (Mainstream Responses)

<b>I am satisfied with the plan that we made to support my child</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Strongly agree	94	51.37%
Agree	72	39.34%
Disagree	6	3.28%
Strongly disagree	7	3.83%
Not applicable	4	2.19%

Over 90% of families in mainstream schools were satisfied/very satisfied with the temporary reasonable endeavours plan.

- “All her needs were met in this plan... and very helpful ways forward to help her to learn and to make it fun.” (*South Benfleet Primary*)
- “The temporary plan looked at all aspect of my son’s needs. The school ensured that all his needs are been met and he can safely be managed in the school setting, with minimal disruption to him and also keeps him fully informed and involved in the process.” (*Lawford Mead Primary*)
- “Becket Keys and us as a family have set out the best possible plan for learning at home and we are more than happy with the plan set out” (*Becket Keys*).
- The plan that was set out for my child, including both my thoughts and feelings and ideas along with the school input and the educational team support. The plan met all my child's needs and offered the correct support during the current crisis. (*Woodham Ley*)

How satisfied are you with the RE plan to support your child? (Special School Responses)

<b>Special School responses</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very satisfied	101	59.4%
Satisfied	42	24.7%
Not satisfied	13	7.6%
Not satisfied at all	8	4.7%
Not applicable	5	2.9%
Not Answered	1	0.7%

Over 84% of families with children in special schools were satisfied/very satisfied with the temporary reasonable endeavours plan:

- We completed this over the phone and it took about 40 mins. Both the teacher and I contributed and I was very pleased with the outcome. (*Pioneer*)
- I have been asked all the right questions to see if support was needed in ways that maybe I hadn’t thought of - I feel that school were supporting me to make sure I was ok to and able to do my best for my young adult. (*Harlow Fields*)
- The adjustments work well and we both inputted and I was allowed to be fully engaged (*Pioneer*)

#### Where families were dissatisfied, they cited

- “Trying to understand all the information.”
- “My young person was in a complete meltdown when the call occurred. I couldn't concentrate on what was being said, and although my husband was trying to calm our child, I really wasn't taking in any of the information. What I should have done is suggested either I or the school call back later.”
- “I felt the school has to be "pushed" to provide opportunity and strategy for my son.”
- “I feel the options are limited and they were as proactive about the "what" as I feel they could be.”
- “Child is not having an education as not in a school and unable to have home tutoring -library is unavailable as of lockdown. Request for more testing work to be given has taken the whole of lockdown to finally be sent out.”
- “I do not have a clue on how to deliver the specialised learning plans for my child. I am overwhelmed and confused, as I really have no idea how to achieve the targets set with resources sent home, without a basic training or supervision.”
- “I have discussed concerns about behaviour previously but there was no support offered around this. This is also the reason why I requested a place at school during lockdown as it was increasingly difficult to manage at home.”
- “The school offered online resources and activities however I am a single parent of 3 children and have been working full time and have not been in a position to provide one to one support.”

#### Next Steps: Planned recovery actions

- All schools, colleges and early years settings were supported by the LA Education directorate to undertake a thorough risk assessment process to inform their approach to safely re-open fully.
- ‘Back to School with Confidence’ social media campaign – resources launched as part of the councils Every Family Matters campaign.
- School Effectiveness Team will undertake their usual visits with schools virtually to support and influence schools around safety, rebuilding, re-engagement and resilience
- SEND services will continue to support schools to develop their whole school approach to inclusion and accurate assessment of needs, taking into account the impact of Covid-19
- To further support the wellbeing of children, young people and school staff, the SEMH team have developed the Recovery and Return to Educational Settings package of support which has been very well received to date.
- The [Essex Local Offer website](#) created a Coronavirus section for parents and carers of children with SEND to provide information for families including transitioning into schools, wellbeing and mental health as well as helplines and advice

<b>Report title:</b> Children's Safeguarding Update	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 8 October 2020	<b>For:</b> To consider this report and identify and follow-up actions
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

### 1. Introduction

The Committee has agreed to review the work of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board on an annual basis and last did this in September 2019. This is the latest update.

### 2. Action required

The Committee is asked to consider:

- (i) The level of assurance it has from the new local governance arrangements for children's safeguarding resulting from the new statutory guidance.
- (ii) The level of assurance it has from the work undertaken by the Board in the past year and its future priorities and objectives for children's safeguarding in Essex.
- (iii) Issues arising from the focussed operational update from Paul Secker and any further work to be scoped

### 3. Background

The Committee has previously agreed to review the work of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) on an annual basis and last did this in September 2019. The minutes of that discussion can be accessed using this link - [PAF minutes - 12 September 2019](#)

An overview briefing paper is attached as **Appendix 1** with the full ESCB Annual Report 2018-19 attached as **Appendix 2**.

New statutory guidance has removed the statutory framework for local safeguarding children boards. The guidance stipulates three statutory local partners (Upper Tier Council, Police and Health) who should determine the

## Children's Safeguarding Update

local governance structure in future for safeguarding children. **Appendix 3** gives an overview of the Essex Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. To support discussion on the new governance arrangements, representatives from the NHS and the Police will also be in attendance.

**Appendix 4** is a briefing paper from Paul Secker, Director, Safeguarding & Quality Assurance (Children and Families) which comments on the critical issues for the Essex Children and Families Service in supporting children, young people and families throughout the period from March 2020 /the lockdown due to Covid 19. The second part of the briefing paper gives the background to the significant changes in respect of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements across Essex introduced in September 2019, and describes the Essex position in September 2020, one year on.

### 4. Update and Next Steps

The final report is attached as an Appendix. Next steps are as outlined under Section 2 - Action Required.

The following have been specifically invited to attend to support the discussion:

David Archibald	-	Independent Chair Facilitator.
Paul Secker	-	Director, Safeguarding & Quality Assurance (Children and Families).
Alison Cutler	–	Essex Safeguarding Children Board Business and Performance Manager.
Kevin Baldwin	-	Assistant Chief Constable, Essex Police.
Lisa Nobes	-	NHS representative

### 5 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 - ESCB Briefing Pack for Scrutiny (October 2020)

Appendix 2 - ESCB Annual Report 2019-2020

Appendix 3 - Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2020-21

Appendix 4 – Briefing paper from Paul Secker - Director, Safeguarding & Quality Assurance (Children and Families)

# **ESCB Briefing Pack for Scrutiny**

**October 2020**



**E S S E X**  
**Safeguarding**  
**Children**  
**B O A R D**

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Appendix B – Essex Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (Please see attached document)	

## **ESCB Annual Report 2019-20 Summary**

The Annual Report covers the main areas of work carried out for the period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020. The full report can be found on the [ESCB website](#) and also attached in Appendix one.

### **ESCB Strategic Priorities – what we did in 2019-20**

Priorities are agreed by the Board based on key areas of work arising from local practice, case reviews, and national priorities.

Some of the areas of work covered under each priority included:

#### **Strategic Priority 1: The Local Safeguarding Context**

##### **SET Child Protection Procedures**

Two updates were made to the SET Child Protection Procedures, the first in May 2019 to ensure compliance with Working Together 2018 and then the second in October to reflect the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

##### **Parents, Did You Know? Child Exploitation Awareness Campaign**

Events were held for parents and carers in the Summer and Autumn of 2019.

A mixture of talks and information stalls were located in Chelmsford, Basildon, Colchester, Clacton and Harlow to provide advice and guidance to the public.

91% of attendees to all talks said they were 'very useful' (highest category).  
73% of attendees said they would take back information to talk directly to a child or young person

These campaigns will be repeated in 2020.

#### **Strategic Priority 2: Early Help and Early Intervention**

##### **ESCB Learning and Development Offer**

ESCB was one of four pilot areas who worked with the national Children's Society and public health on a nationally funded project to raise awareness on children who have an alcohol dependent parent. ESCB organised four awareness sessions for 195 delegates across Essex.

ESCB worked with Essex County Council Commissioning to support the roll out of the Department of Work and Pensions funded reducing parental conflict training programme.



## **Strategic Priority 3: Emotional Health and Wellbeing**

Suicide prevention workshops have been delivered across the adult and children workforce. Further courses were cancelled due to COVID-19 and they have been re-scheduled for next year.

## **Strategic Priority 4: Strong Leadership and Strong Partnership**

### **COVID response**

The statutory partners have been meeting across SET during the COVID crisis to share information and take action on emerging issues – this has ensured a joined up and coordinated approach.

A [dedicated webpage on the ESCB website](#) was also created to provide members of the public and those working with children and families of useful information.

### **Serious Case Reviews**

This year there is a transition period from Serious Case Reviews to Child Safeguarding Practice reviews.

One Serious Case Review was published this year – Baby M and the learning from this case has been shared with agencies during the course of the review. ESCB is also working with the Stay Safe groups and the wider partnership to evaluate the effectiveness of Early help and the Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex document.

### **Southend Essex and Thurrock Child Death Overview Panel (SET CDOP)**

The new arrangements for the Southend, Essex & Thurrock Child Death Review process were put in place on 1st October 2019.

At this point the Child Death Overview Process function moved from the ESCB across to Health (CCGs) and the Local Authorities (Public Health) across Southend Essex and Thurrock and will continue to share emerging safeguarding themes and any issues of concern to the Board.

### **Regional and national work**

The ESCB Business Manager is the chair of the Eastern Region Business Managers Group, enabling Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships to strengthen multi-agency working to develop regional solutions to issues of concern, such as the emotional and mental health of young people.

The ESCB Business Manager is also an advisory member of The National Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) – this association is the professional network for safeguarding partnerships.

### **Future issues**

The main challenge for the ESCB moving forward will be embedding these arrangements and, and in doing so maintain a particular focus on ensuring that:

- the voice of the child is at the heart of everything we do
- there is effective independent scrutiny of our new safeguarding arrangements
- safeguarding partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of the work of the ESCB.

## Moving to new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

The [Children and Social Work Act](#) received Royal Assent in May 2017. It removed the statutory framework for Local Safeguarding Children Boards, replacing it with new requirements for specific partners to establish multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASAs). Supporting regulations and [Working Together 2018 statutory guidance](#) were published in June 2018 and Essex moved to its new arrangements on 29 September 2019.

There are many agencies in Essex supporting children and young people, and it is very important that they all work together as a partnership to ensure they are keeping children safe.

The way these agencies work together to keep children safe is set out in government guidance Working Together 2018.

In Essex there are seven organisations who are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police
- Five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the county of Essex

These are known as the Statutory Partners and they have identified relevant agencies which are legally required to cooperate with local safeguarding arrangements

These partnership arrangements are referred to as the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Plan sets out the detail of how the ESCB operates.

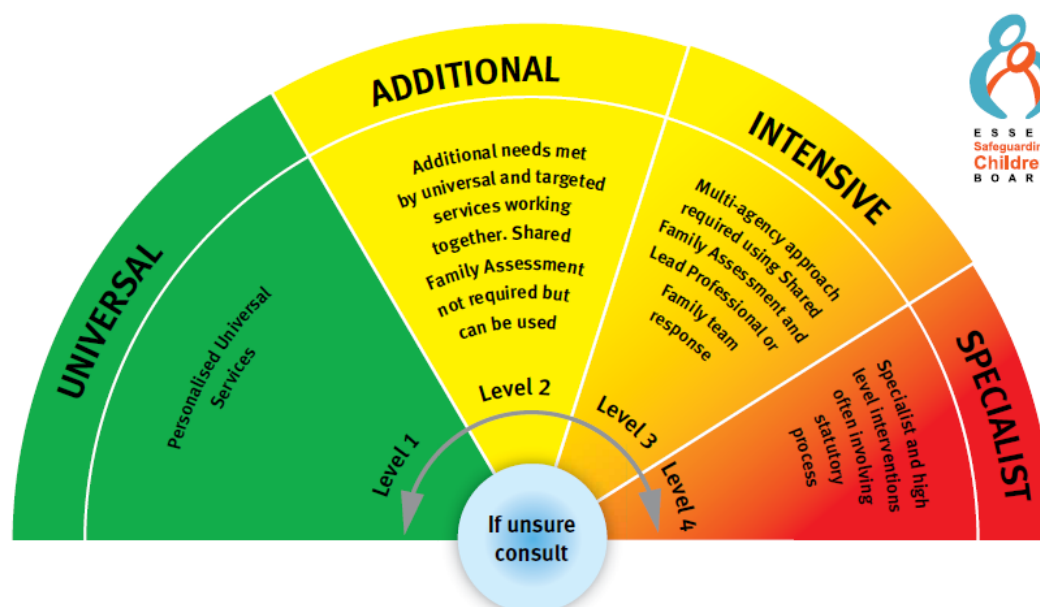
At the heart of the arrangements is a commitment from all agencies to work together to keep children safe and to continuously improve and learn how to best do this.

## Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex

The [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#) is an Essex Safeguarding Children Board document that is agreed by all Board partners. All key agencies contribute to the content, it has been in its current format since 2013 following a review of assessment, referral and access to services that commenced in January 2012. It also incorporates the learning from the work of the Essex Family prototypes between 2011 and 2013.

**The Effective Support Windscreen-** The conceptual model and windscreen is a way of developing a shared understanding and explaining the Essex approach across all our services and partnerships, ensuring a consistent approach is applied by all practitioners and managers. The model illustrates how we will respond to the requirements of children and families across four levels of need (**Universal, Additional, Intensive and Specialist**).

[Request Support via the Essex Effective Support Portal.](#)



*All partners working with children, young people and their families will offer support as soon as we are aware of any additional needs. We will always seek to work together to provide support to children, young people and their families at the lowest level possible in accordance with their needs.*

# ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020

*ESSEX SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD*



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## Introduction

This is the annual report of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) from April 2019 to March 2020 and covers the period of transition between LSCBs being abolished and replaced with new local [multi-agency safeguarding arrangements](#), of which a plan was published in June 2019 prior to implementation on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the work of the ESCB from 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. As a consequence of responding to this crisis services, resources, functions, plans and programmes have been re-prioritised as our partners have responded to a rapidly changing and fluid situation that has included the regular provision of new guidance and legislation. Staff and volunteers have been doing an incredible job in very difficult circumstances, working tirelessly through complex and challenging situations. In doing so they have created new ways of working and gone above and beyond to ensure vital services keep running and that children and their families receive the help and support they need.

### **The Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB)**

Prior to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 the Board had a range of statutory roles which included reviewing all local child deaths, undertaking Serious Case Reviews, developing child protection procedures and scrutinising and challenging local safeguarding practice.

Section 14 of the Children Act 2004 set out the objectives for the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) as:

- coordinating what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in the area and;
- ensuring the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for these purposes.

Although the ESCB has retained its identity it changed its governance arrangements on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2019 in order to comply with the Children and Social Work Act and the revised [Working Together to Safeguard Children government guidance published in 2018](#). The Act removed the Local Safeguarding Children Board statutory framework, replacing it with new requirements for three specific named partners to establish ways of working to safeguard children.

Careful planning and extensive consultation took place to develop and implement the new arrangements which focus on making a difference to front line practice to safeguard children, and build on what we know works well. This new partnership is firmly built on strong collaborative working relationships and shared belief and aspirations for children and young people in Essex, ensuring they are at the heart of everything we do.

This collaborative approach extends to working closely with Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Partnerships as well as others across the Eastern region and nationally.

In Essex, there are seven organisations who now are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police
- Five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the county of Essex

These are known as the Statutory Partners and they have identified relevant agencies which are legally required to cooperate with [local safeguarding arrangements](#).



## Essex overview – local context

Essex is a very varied county, comprising both rural and urban areas, and a long coastline. The towns of Basildon and Harlow contrast with rural villages and coastal towns. Essex has both areas of great affluence and great deprivation and has pockets of high social and economic need even within otherwise thriving localities.

The population of Essex currently stands at 1.47 million, with 311,000 children and young people under the age of 18. In Essex, 90.8% of residents are from a White British background, while 9.2% have a Black or Minority ethnicity (lower than the overall England BME population of 19.5%). Just over half of all Essex residents are female (51.1%) while a slightly higher proportion of those aged under 18 are male (51.3%). (Essex population and demographics current population and gender from the 2017 ONS Mid-Year Estimate, ethnicity from the 2011 census).

The total number of schools in Essex is **555** according to Ofsted download as per 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019 and the total number of Early Years provision in Essex is **1862**, this is as per the latest sufficiency report and includes all funded and non-funded, childminders and breakfast clubs, after school clubs and holiday clubs.

In terms of the voluntary sector, Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) current figures show their membership reaches over 240,000 children and young people in Essex.

### How safe are children in Essex?

The vast majority of the 311,000 children in Essex led healthy, safe lives in 2019-20, but a small minority faced challenges in their life and family circumstances which puts their wellbeing and safety at considerable risk. For example:

- 8661 children were referred to Children's Services during the year because someone had a concern about a risk of abuse or neglect. Police (25%) and health services (15%) were most notable in making these contacts. 80% of

those cases (6,959) were felt to need a Child and Family Assessment by Children's Services.

- Children are at risk of exploitation and harm when they go missing from home. Across the year, 1227 children were reported missing, with 7% of them identified as at risk of sexual exploitation. 206 were recorded as missing from care.
- Work with young people by the Essex County Council involvement team highlighted some of the reasons for children and young people going missing as including<sup>1</sup>:
  - wanting to get out of the house or away from home; young people describe many difficult relationships and wanting to get away from arguments,
  - being unhappy at or having difficulties in school
  - having low emotional health; these young people describe having suicidal thoughts and thoughts of self-harm.
  - feeling bored and wanting to be on their own.
- National estimates show 1 in every 5 children is exposed to domestic abuse by the age of 18. Within Essex, police officers recorded over 26,000 domestic abuse offences in the year, many will have involved children as witnesses or in the household at the time of violence.

These risks are considered by the ESCB during the work carried out over the year and also in cooperation with other Boards as appropriate. Such risks are discussed regularly in the relevant Sub-Committees and action is taken as required.

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<sup>1</sup> The first 3 bullet points are provisional figures for 2019/20

## **Executive and Sub-Committees**

The Board meets quarterly in the form of an Executive at which key agencies are represented. These include:

- NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG)
- Police
- Local Authority
- Education
- National Probation Service
- Community Rehabilitation Company
- District, City and Borough Councils
- Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service
- North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- Office of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner
- Voluntary and Community Sector

The vision of the Essex Safeguarding Children Board is that multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements in Essex are of the highest quality, with the child at their heart; and that practice continuously improves and evolves across all agencies to reflect changing needs and circumstances.

This vision is underpinned in part by the work carried out by the Sub-Committees of the ESCB, which are:

- Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee (from September 2019 Serious Case Reviews became Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and the Sub-Committee was renamed accordingly)
- Learning and Development (joint with Adults Board)
- Performance, Audit and Quality Assurance
- Child Exploitation and Missing

The structure of the Board including its Sub-Committees can be found on the [ESCB website](#).

### **ESCB Stay Safe Groups**

Stay Safe Groups play a vital role and sit across each of the four quadrants in Essex. They are made up of a wide range of designated and named professionals or managers with safeguarding responsibilities including 0-19 services, schools, acute, community and primary care providers, local council representatives, voluntary sector and police.

The Stay Safe Groups co-ordinate and lead the local safeguarding agenda focusing on improving local outcomes and highlighting emerging issues and risks so that they can be appropriately addressed at operational level. They also act as learning hubs to ensure effective sharing of learning and practice and a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children.

The three statutory partners – Health (CCGs), Essex Police and Essex County Council have nominated chairs and vice chairs for each of the Stay Safe Groups to commence in September 2020 so that each partner has a key role in driving forward the work of these groups.



## ESCB Strategic Priorities – what we did in 2019-20

The ESCB Business Plan focused on four key strategic priorities during 2019 – 20:

- The Local Safeguarding Context - The ESCB and partner agencies prioritise improvement in areas and on issues of greatest risk and concern to safeguarding
- Early Help and Early Intervention
- Emotional Health and Wellbeing
- Strong Leadership and Strong Partnership

The business plans for [2017-19](#) and [2019-20](#) can be found on the ESCB website and the issues discussed at the Executive over the year can be found in the [Key Messages section](#) of the website.

These priorities were agreed by the ESCB based on key areas of work arising from feedback regarding local practice, learning from case reviews, and national priorities. Subsequently a lot of hard work has been done over the year at all levels by partner agencies, the local Stay Safe Groups and the ESCB Sub-Committees and achieved within a standstill budget. The details of the budget can be found in Appendix A.

The following section outlines the progress that has been made across these strategic priorities over the year.

## Strategic Priority 1: The Local Safeguarding Context

The ESCB worked on a number of areas under this priority in 2019-20.

These included:

- Updating the Southend Essex and Thurrock (SET) Child Protection Procedures
- Working with other Boards on issues affecting families that had arisen from reviews carried out by the ESCB, Essex Safeguarding Adult Board (ESAB) and Southend Essex & Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SET DAB).
- Child exploitation
- The Office of the Fire, Police and Crime Commissioner Violence and Vulnerability Unit funded local conferences to be held across Southend, Essex and Thurrock. ESCB worked with Southend and Thurrock to have an agreed core programme and then each of the local Stay Safe Groups developed a local section to each of the conferences. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19 the conferences had to be postponed but these are planned to run in 2020/21.

### SET Child Protection Procedures

The ESCB works in collaboration with Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnerships to produce and update the SET Child Protection procedures to comply with legislative and statutory guidance, as well as key learning from local and national case reviews as required.

The SET Procedures Working Group has continued to work effectively to ensure the child protection procedures are kept up to date. This year the ESCB worked in partnership with Southend and Thurrock to produce two updates to the SET Child Protection Procedures, the first in May 2019 to ensure compliance with Working Together 2018 and then the second in October to reflect the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that came into effect at the end of September 2019.

## **Working with other Boards to identify cross-cutting issues**

Building on the events last year, ESCB worked with the Essex Safeguarding Adult Board and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board to deliver four very successful 'Learning from multi-agency reviews into practice' events in Autumn 2019.

245 delegates attended the four events from a range of agencies across the children and adult workforce. In response to feedback from last year, two published Domestic Homicide Reviews were used as case studies with minor changes; one was a Southend case and the other from Kent. The learning outcomes from the events were;

- Influence practice especially in improving risk assessment
- Share where positive change has been made and what best practice looks like
- Have an opportunity to share and discuss ideas
- Offer practical tips
- Encourage a holistic 'think family' approach.

The feedback from these events was once again very positive, delegates valued the use of real case studies and having the opportunity to work with people from a range of organisations.

## **Child Exploitation**

The Child Exploitation and Missing Sub-Committee worked on a number of areas in 2019 – 20 and these will continue into 2020 – 2021. Unfortunately, some of this work has paused due to services needing to respond to the primary needs created by COVID-19. There has also been a change in staffing with the new Child Exploitation Project Manager coming into post in late February 2020.

The work of the Sub-Committee has covered:

**Transitions to adulthood for vulnerable and exploited young people** - The Children's Society continue to provide their CARE (Children At Risk of Exploitation)

services for young people up to 24 years old. They have been working with the Essex Safeguarding Adult Board to promote their service to ensure those in transition to adulthood have access to key exploitation services. They have also been providing training for staff working with young people over 18 years old. Links have begun to be established with further education providers to raise awareness of exploitation amongst students and staff in colleges, and this work will continue with safeguarding forums being planned.

**Peer on peer abuse** - We are seeking to develop a clearer understanding of the impact of peer on peer abuse on the health and wellbeing of young people and to formulate a multi-agency plan to address harmful or abusive behaviours and have set up a working group, which will also seek to gain the views of young people. The Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) were unable to gain the views from young people about peer on peer abuse for their planned youth voices project. This was because coronavirus social distancing measures meant contact with young people was digital and this was not a suitable forum for exploring this sensitive topic with young people. However, they undertook an alternative digital youth voices project around how young people were feeling during COVID-19.

**Developing standards in relation to alternative education provision, reduced and part-time timetables for vulnerable pupils** - The Education Access Service have shared progress on developing standards in relation to alternative education provision and reduced timetables with the Sub-Committee. The Education Access Service is in the process of reviewing their data collection to ensure they are effectively capturing and analysing themes across Essex in relation to exclusion rates and reduced timetables.

**Our response to contextual risks into business as usual** - The Essex Child Exploitation Arrangements document has been updated and disseminated across the partnership. Also, the Children & Families Hub have updated their Pathway Guidance which includes risk indicators and thresholds for child exploitation and missing young people. These documents provide clarity on the pathways for safeguarding young people at risk of exploitation. The Violence & Vulnerability Unit



facilitated a conference on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020 for partners to focus on child exploitation. Plans had been made to deliver Violence and Vulnerability as a themed Stay Safe Conference across the four quadrants in partnership with Southend and Thurrock to support our response to the broader issues around exploitation. As a result of COVID-19 these will now take place in Spring 2021.

**Missing and Child Exploitation Meetings (MACE)** - Missing and Child Exploitation (MACE) meetings provide a mechanism in Essex to review multi-agency plans implemented for exploited children or those identified as being at high risk of exploitation, as well as supporting the local understanding of patterns/trends and hotspots. The arrangements for MACE 1 meetings were reviewed and agreements made for partners to commit to continue with these forums. Some amendments were made to the processes to enable more effective discussions about risk, disruption strategies and safeguarding plans for young people. In addition, the CE Project Manager reached out to magistrates in 2019 to develop their awareness of child exploitation.

**Parents, Did You Know? Campaign** - Events were held for parents and carers in the Summer and Autumn of 2019. These events focused on developing awareness of exploitation across the community and particularly with parents and young people. A mixture of talks and stalls were located in Chelmsford, Basildon, Colchester, Clacton and Harlow to provide advice and guidance to the public. 91% of attendees to all talks said they were 'very useful' (highest category). 94% of attendees said they would take back to other people information from the talk. 73% of attendees said they would take back information to talk directly to a child or young person about. 94% of attendees said they would like other similar events.

**Child Sexual Exploitation Champions Role** - We consulted with CSE Champions across Southend, Essex and Thurrock, to gain their views and the benefits of their experiences of being a Champion in their organisation. Champions were supportive of retaining this role, but felt it should have a broader exploitation focus. The updated role profile for the exploitation champions will be rolled out in Autumn 2020.

## Strategic Priority 2: Early Help and Early Intervention

The ESCB continues to highlight the importance of early intervention and early help across agencies, including raising awareness of the Effective Support for Children & Families thresholds document.

Under this priority the focus in 2019 - 20 has been on supporting staff with their learning and development needs and the ongoing work of the Stay Safe Groups to support early intervention.

### ESCB Learning and Development Offer

Over the last year ESCB has worked with a number of partners to support national learning and development programmes. ESCB was one of four pilot areas who worked with the national Children's Society and public health on a nationally funded project to raise awareness on children who have an alcohol dependent parent. ESCB organised four awareness sessions for 195 delegates across Essex. The Children's Society have also developed a [website](#) which has a range of information and resources. The project will now produce an online learning course, Essex will be part of the testing group for this new resource.

ESCB worked with Essex County Council Commissioning to support the roll out of the Department of Work and Pensions funded reducing parental conflict training programme, the programme comprises of four modules and a train the trainer module. A total of 185 people completed the four modules and the train the trainer course.

ESCB received funding through the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for training on trauma informed practice (courses were due to commence April 2020 but have been further delayed due to COVID-19) ESCB has commissioned a provider to deliver a basic awareness course, an advanced option and training for managers.

ESCB has offered 66 face to face courses to 1532 delegates over the last year, a further 10 courses had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

### Strategic Priority 3: Emotional Health and Wellbeing

This continues to be an important area of work for the ESCB. The focus has been on broadening awareness of how to support positive mental health and well-being amongst those working with children, young people and their families.

Two suicide prevention workshops have been delivered to 55 delegates on behalf of ESCB across the adult and children workforce, Two further courses were cancelled due to COVID-19 and they have been re-scheduled for next year.

*‘Brilliant training-I felt deskilled before but now I feel empowered to help’ (Education, 2019)*

*‘I have to support clients having thoughts of suicide regularly. This course exceeded my expectations. It has confirmed what I do is right but also I have gained additional skills and techniques’ (Community/voluntary organisation, Dec 2019)*

*‘Great training, honest and open. We have used the resources provided numerous times already.’ (Education, January 2020)*

*‘Increased my confidence and understanding in this area’ (Education, January 2020)*



## Strategic Priority 4: Strong Leadership and Strong Partnership

In addition to preparing for the new multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (mentioned previously in this report), other key activities focussed on the Board's statutory duties around Serious Case Reviews and other types of reviews, as well as continuing to promote key messages around safeguarding and supporting other Boards.

### Serious Case Reviews (SCR)

Under [Working Together 2018](#), Serious Case Reviews (SCRs) have been replaced by Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews if commissioned after September 2019 – those commissioned before this date will need to be completed as SCRs.

The guidance and criteria for carrying out reviews has also changed and this is now included on the [ESCB website](#).

#### The purpose of each review is to:

- Identify improvements to be made to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Seek to prevent or reduce the risk of recurrence of similar incidents.
- Establish whether there are lessons to be learned from the case about the way in which local professionals and organisations work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Identify clearly what those lessons are, how they will be acted upon, and what is expected to change as a result; and
- As a consequence, to improve inter-agency working and better safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews are learning exercises and not investigations to find out who is to blame for things going wrong, with the overall purpose being that of improving practice.

This year there is a transition period to these Child Safeguarding Practice reviews and the ESCB is in the process of completing new guidance for these reviews. The process for these is dependent on the case and its complexity. One Serious Case Review was published this year – [Baby M](#) and the learning from this case has been shared with agencies during the course of the review. ESCB is working with the Stay Safe groups and the wider partnership to evaluate the effectiveness of early help and the Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex document.

Following a recommendation in SCR Baby M, published November 2019 ESCB will undertake a survey with partners in Summer 2020 and the findings from the survey will feed into the work of the Stay Safe Groups from the Autumn 2020.

With all reviews, the focus is on learning and we carry out various activities to ensure learning is shared across all agencies during the course of the review as well as after its publication. This includes workshops, briefings, learning events and including key themes arising from the review in practice guidance as required.

### **Southend Essex and Thurrock Child Death Overview Panel (SET CDOP)**

The new arrangements for the Southend, Essex & Thurrock Child Death Review process were put in place on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2019 to meet the changes outlined in the Child Death Review Statutory Guidance published in October 2018. At this point the Child Death Overview Process function moved from the ESCB across to Health (CCGs) and the Local Authorities (Public Health) across Southend Essex and Thurrock and will continue to share emerging safeguarding themes and any issues of concern to the Board.

The purpose of the Child Death Overview Panel is to review all child deaths across Southend Essex and Thurrock.

In addition to this work, the panel also continues to raise awareness of child safety issues across Essex in order to try and prevent child deaths.

## **Communication activities to raise awareness of safeguarding**

The ESCB continues to run regular child safety campaigns throughout the year including Safer Sleep, Accidents around the Home and Water Safety, signposting people to the ESCB website and national resources.

Bulletins continue to be sent regularly and have proven successful particularly in gaining applications for training courses. The March 2020 bulletin saw four of the new Trauma training courses fully booked within 48 hours. The January 2020 training bulletin was so well read all 10 of the top webpages were Learning & Development pages.

Communications were sent in October 2019 about Working with Children of Alcohol Dependent Parents Training and the Revised SET Procedures and both pages featured in the top three most viewed pages with website hits higher than average months, again demonstrating effectiveness of communications.

The Parent's Did You Know Campaign, was promoted widely over social media and in bulletins throughout May and June 2019. This promotion also launched the events which ran during the Autumn of 2019. Both periods May-June 2019 and Sept-Nov 2019 saw very good levels of engagement across social media and the website.

## **Regional and national work**

The ESCB also assists in supporting other safeguarding boards/partnerships and the ESCB Business Manager is the chair of the Eastern Region Business Managers Group, enabling Local Safeguarding Children Boards to strengthen multi-agency working to develop regional solutions to issues of concern, such as the emotional and mental health of young people. She is also an advisory member of The National Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP) – this association is the professional network for safeguarding partnerships. It acts as a support network running safeguarding webinars, sharing research and best practice and lobbies government on safeguarding issues.



## Future issues

The main challenge for the ESCB moving forward will be embedding the new arrangements and, in doing so maintain a particular focus on ensuring that:

- the voice of the child is at the heart of everything we do
- there is effective independent scrutiny of our new safeguarding arrangements
- safeguarding partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of the work of the ESCB.



## Appendix A - Finance

### How much did ESCB's work cost in 2019-20?

The Board's work is funded by partner contributions and a small training income. In 2019-20 contributions totalled £407,597. The work was achieved within that budget. The contributing agencies were:

<b>Contributing Partner</b>	<b>£</b>
CAFCASS	550
City, District and Borough Councils (1,210 each)	14,520
Community Rehabilitation Company	5,082
Essex County Council	252,178
Essex Police and Crime Commissioner	66,426
National Probation Service	2,415
NHS Basildon & Brentwood CCG	12,555
NHS Castle Point & Rochford CCG	7,705
NHS Mid Essex CCG	16,142
NHS North East Essex CCG	17,337
NHS West Essex CCG	12,687



# **Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements 2020-21**



## **Foreword**

The ESCB Statutory Partners would like to thank its partners for the speed at which they have refocused their efforts during the Coronavirus crisis. All staff and volunteers are doing an incredible job in very difficult circumstances, working tirelessly through complex and challenging situations.

In doing so they have created new ways of working and gone above and beyond to ensure vital services keep running and that children and their families receive the help and support they need.

As a consequence of responding to this crisis services, resources, functions, plans and programmes have been re- and de-prioritised as our partners have responded to a rapidly changing and fluid situation that has included the regular provision of new guidance and legislation.

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## 1. Introduction

There are many agencies in Essex supporting children and young people, and it is very important that they all work together as a partnership to ensure they are keeping children safe.

The way these agencies work together to keep children safe is set out in government guidance Working Together 2018.

In Essex there are seven organisations who are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police
- Five of the seven Clinical Commissioning Groups covering the county of Essex

These are known as the Statutory Partners and they have identified relevant agencies which are legally required to cooperate with local safeguarding arrangements (listed in the Appendix).

These partnership arrangements are referred to as the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and this Plan sets out the detail of how the ESCB operates.

At the heart of the arrangements is a commitment from all agencies to work together to keep children safe and to continuously improve and learn how to best do this.



## Background

Essex has a complex set of partnership arrangements to support a population of 1.47 million, of which 311 thousand are children and young people under the age of 18. It has one of the largest local authorities in the UK, plus twelve district and borough councils and 5 Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) across 3 sustainability and transformation partnerships, two of which overlap with other counties.

In addition, within the geographical county of Essex there are two unitary authorities (Southend and Thurrock).



## 2. Child safeguarding arrangements in Essex

The ESCB operates in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' and covers the same geographical area of Essex, as defined by the local authority boundaries.

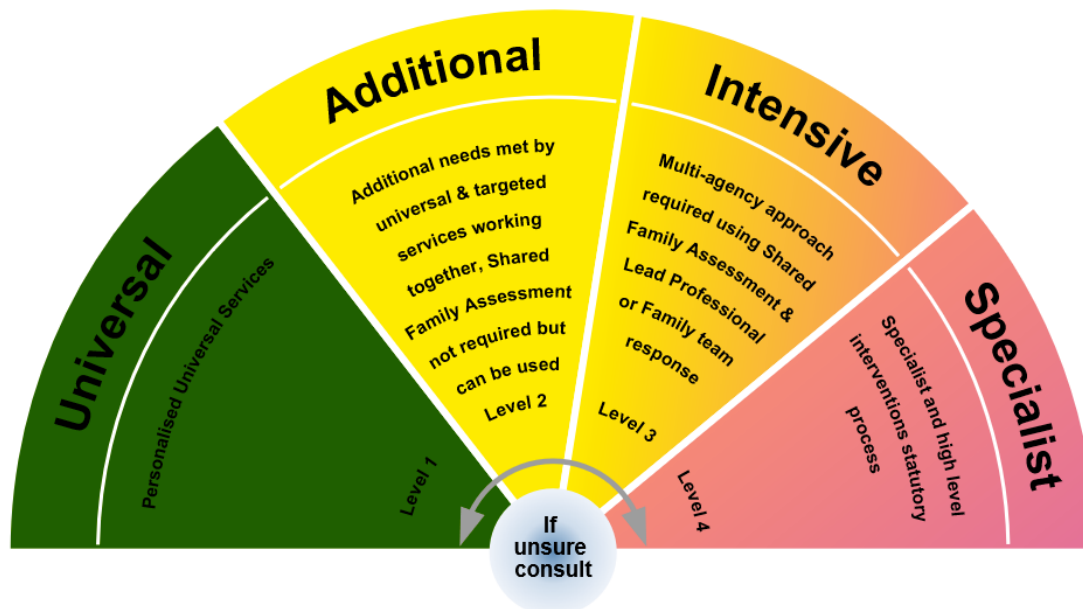
The safeguarding partners and relevant agencies included in these arrangements will fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children from Essex who live or are placed outside of our local authority area.

**The seven local safeguarding partners jointly leading the Partnership Arrangements are:**

- Essex County Council: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the Director of Children's Services
- Essex Police: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing
- Five Clinical Commissioning Groups: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the three Directors of Nursing covering the local sustainability and transformation partnerships across Mid and South, North East and West Essex.

### Thresholds and levels of need

The Board oversees the multi-agency safeguarding of children with a range of levels of need, as shown by our local threshold document [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#).



(The Essex Effective Support Windscreen)

This forms an integral part of Essex's approach to supporting children, ensuring the right support is provided by the right agency, based on the child's level of need. The approach also promotes earlier support for families to address issues before they escalate to crisis point and ensure that children are kept safe from harm.

### **3. Essex vision and values**

#### **Vision**

The ESCB's vision is that multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements in Essex are of the highest quality, with the child at their heart; and that practice continuously improves and evolves across all agencies to reflect changing needs and circumstances

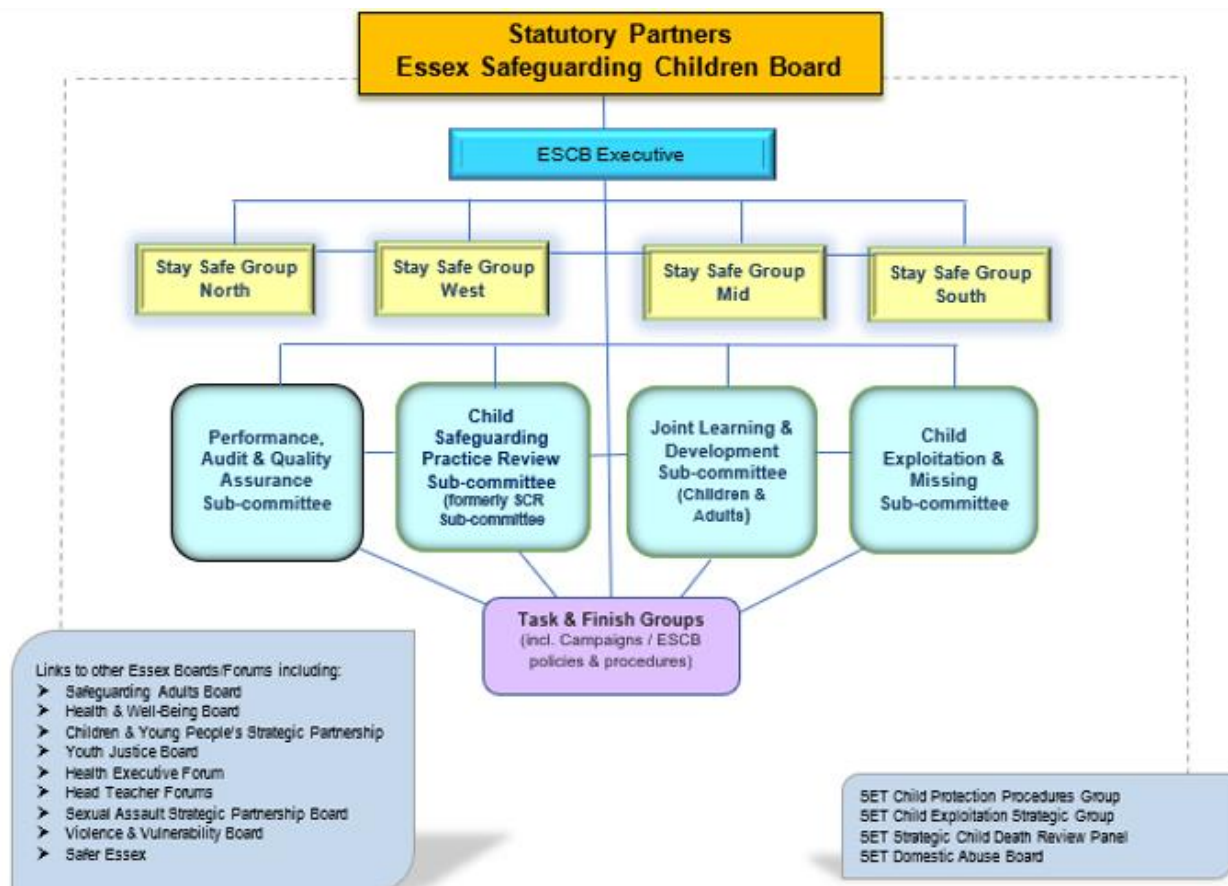
#### **Values**

Safeguarding partners in Essex are committed to delivering their vision according to a set of agreed values and principles, and these govern the work of the whole partnership:

- The child is at the heart of everything we do
- Sharing information between partners, and operating with trust and openness
- Continuous learning and the flexibility to evolve the partnership
- Ensuring everyone has a voice, including children and families
- Partners taking ownership and responsibility
- Strong communication and engagement within partners, with clear roles and responsibilities
- Excellent integration between adults and children's safeguarding
- Ensuring a balance of respect for individual organisations and appropriate challenge
- Ensuring alignment, connection and learning across the partners - a golden thread from the Strategic Board, through the sub-committees to the front line
- Ensuring involvement and focus on front line practitioners
- Keeping a preventative mind-set and adopting a 'Think Family' approach
- Joint priority setting across partner agencies

## 4. Structure of the ESCB

There are a number of sub-committees reporting to the ESCB that are strongly focussed on improving practice and ensuring an emphasis on learning, enabling a feedback loop across partner agencies and the front line.



### Statutory Partners

The Statutory Partners (the decision makers) elected for the ESCB Executive Board to be chaired by an Independent Chair Facilitator and appointed David Archibald in 2019. Whilst his role does not hold any statutory responsibilities he provides a strong independent voice, ensuring that the ESCB operates effectively in promoting the safeguarding, wellbeing and interests of children and young people in Essex.

The Vice Chair role is covered by the Statutory Partner for health. In addition, each of the Statutory Partners lead on specific priority work areas and have the option of rotating annually (refer to Appendix).

The Statutory Partners supported by the Independent Chair Facilitator meet regularly in advance of each ESCB Executive Board meeting to assure themselves that the work of the



partnership is heading in the right direction and agree the draft agenda of the next Executive Board meeting.

## **Executive Board**

The Executive Board is chaired by the Independent Chair Facilitator and membership includes the Statutory Partners along with representatives from Education, Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS), District, City & Borough Councils, Office of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner, National Probation Service, Community Rehabilitation Company. It meets 4 times a year with meetings themed around ESCB business plan priorities, national safeguarding priorities and areas identified through data and performance, to provide a learning model that is focussed on outcomes.

- **Stay Safe Groups** x 4 across Mid, South, West and North quadrants (chaired by various representatives from across the partnership).  
Coordinates and leads the local safeguarding agenda focusing on improving local outcomes and highlighting emerging issues and risks so that they can be appropriately addressed at operational level. They also act as learning hubs to ensure effective sharing of learning and practice and a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children. They provide quarterly updates to the ESCB Executive via a combined report.
- **Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance sub-committee**  
Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of what is done by the ESCB partners (including findings from multi-agency case audits) to inform the Board of relevant trends any risk to performance, who can then in turn agree appropriate strategies and actions on ways to improve.
- **Child Safeguarding Practice Review sub-committee.**  
Oversees and monitors the review of serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to Essex with a focus on identifying learning to help organisations to change, and become environments in which both the systems and practice can be safely challenged and improved
- **Child Exploitation & Missing sub-committee**  
Delivers the SET Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy in Essex by, coordinating partnership work, sharing learning and evaluating the impact of the work carried out by the partnership and individual agencies.
- **Joint Learning and Development sub-committee (Children & Adults)**  
Identifies multi-agency safeguarding learning needs that require addressing to ensure partner agencies develop their workforces to a high-quality standard and are keeping children / adults safe.
- **Task and Finish Groups** e.g. Communications/campaigns (Children & Adults), ESCB policies and procedures.

## **Assembly Meetings** (paused during Covid-19 crisis)

In order to ensure coordination with other partnership arrangements in Essex, there will be an Assembly twice a year with representatives from other Partnership Boards/Forums with a safeguarding remit for vulnerable children and adults that operate across the county:

This includes:

- Essex Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership
- SET Strategic Domestic Abuse Board
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Essex Adults Safeguarding Board
- Youth Justice Board
- City, District & Borough Safeguarding Group
- Health Executive Forum
- Head Teacher Forums

These links promote effective communication and engagement and ensure not only that "safeguarding is everybody's business" but also synergy of work programmes.

## **5. Relevant agencies involved**

The strength of local partnership working is dependent on safeguarding partners working collaboratively together with relevant agencies, whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In addition to the three main statutory safeguarding partners, a number of other relevant agencies are also required to work with the ESCB. Specific relevant agencies have a representative member of the ESCB Executive Board. In addition, some of these members may sit on ESCB sub-committees, the Assembly or be part of Stay Safe Groups.

**Schools** – with 555 settings, Essex schools are vital safeguarding partners. Schools are engaged as part of the ESCB Executive and sub-committees to ensure joint working to safeguard children within a multi-agency shared approach. Schools have Headteacher representatives from, Primary, Special Education and Secondary education. In addition, the Essex CC Director for Education sits on the ESB Executive Board. Other members (including those from colleges) may sit on ESCB sub-committees, the ESCB Assembly or be part of Stay Safe Groups

**Early Years Settings** – with approximately 1862 settings in Essex which includes Ofsted registered settings, private and voluntary sector providers, childminders breakfast and after school clubs, this is a large but important sector. Settings are engaged through the Stay Safe Groups to ensure effective sharing of learning and practice and a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children.

**Probation** – both the National Probation Service and the Community Rehabilitation Company are key partners and designated as relevant agencies and contributing to the ESCB Executive Board, sub-committees and Assembly.

**District councils** – Essex as a two-tier authority, has 12 city, district and borough councils who are crucial for delivery of services to families with the county and have specific responsibilities for Community Safety. Each is designated as a Relevant Agency of ESCB. The Chelmsford City Council Chief Executive sits on the ESCB Executive Board as their representative. Other members are part of the Stay Safe Groups and may sit on ESCB sub-committees or the Assembly.

**CAFCASS** – are a partner and invited to attend the Assembly and provide an annual update to the ESCB Executive Board.

### **NHS Trusts and Providers**

Key partners contribute to the ESCB Executive Board, sub-committees and Assembly.

**Other providers of commissioned services to Essex County Council Children, Families & Education and Clinical Commissioning Groups** - representatives from these services are invited to contribute via Stay Safe Groups or the Assembly where relevant.

**Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex** – is a key partner as the lead agency for coordinating community safety across Essex and a senior OPFC representative contributes to the Board through the ESCB Executive Board and Assembly.

**Voluntary and Faith Groups sector** –are involved with the partnership arrangements and a senior representative is invited to the ESCB Executive Board. In addition, there is voluntary sector representation on the local Stay Safe Groups.

### **Joint work across Southend, Essex and Thurrock:**

Whilst Southend, Essex and Thurrock (referred to as SET) each maintain its own independent multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, they have strong collaborative working arrangements, supporting those areas of safeguarding that can be tackled most effectively and have the greatest impact on practice and services for children across the SET area.

They also have areas of cooperation for business planning when developing their individual plans and prioritise which are the key areas of a focus for the planning period.

### SET Groups (identified as good practice):

- SET Strategic Child Death Overview Panel
- SET Child Protection Procedures Working Group
- SET Child Exploitation Strategic Group
- SET Domestic Abuse Board

## 6. Local safeguarding practice reviews and embedding learning

The responsibility for how the system learns lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and at a local level with the safeguarding partners via the ESCB Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-committee.

The three safeguarding partners have made arrangements to:

- identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area
- ratify the decision making of the ESCB Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-committee
- commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken

There is an ongoing commitment to continuous learning and improvement leading to enhanced practice, improved outcomes and experiences. Safeguarding partners continue to take account of the findings from all local and national reviews with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally. This includes the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We look at using different methods including appreciative enquiry to undertake and learn from these reviews of practice. Findings from the local reviews undertaken in Essex are shared with relevant parties locally through the Stay Safe Groups and there is regular monitoring to ascertain progress on the implementation of recommended improvements.

The Stay Safe Groups are frontline learning hubs which aim to improve local safeguarding practice and are linked via two-way feedback loop between front line practitioners and the ESCB Executive Board, ensuring learning on priority local issues is shared and acted on at all levels in a timely way.

## 7. Multi-agency training

Essex partners commission multi-agency training and learning activities based on a robust annual needs analysis and agreed via the Safeguarding Boards' (joint adults and children) Learning and Development Sub-committee.

This needs analysis is informed by the Board priorities and takes into account practice issues arising from local safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency case audits, inspections, local and national priorities, section 11 audits, feedback from training activities and emerging issues.

The method of delivery of multi-agency training is based on what is most appropriate and effective and includes e-learning, face to face training, conferences, case studies and action learning activities via the local Stay Safe Groups. The ESCB will continue to be creative and innovative in developing learning interventions, working with partner agencies and other Boards to promote a holistic 'Think Family' approach.

This is evaluated in a variety of ways as set out in the ESCB monitoring and evaluation toolkit <http://www.escb.co.uk/learning-development/monitoring-and-evaluation-toolkit/> and includes feedback from practitioners, practice audits, supervision and examples of practice changes as set out in individual action plans, as well as learning and development audits.

Impact of learning is monitored under the wider performance framework of the ESCB and the findings reported back to the ESCB Executive annually.

## 8. Independent scrutiny arrangements

Ultimately we believe that children and young people are our independent scrutiny and the ESCB has a reinvigorated scrutiny plan to ensure that we bring together the wealth of valuable information from various young people's groups in Essex to help raise new and important questions to enable the ESCB to understand what we are doing well and what we need to do better through the lens of young people.

This forms part of our multi systems approach to the independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of our local safeguarding arrangements and comprises a number of functions which also includes scrutiny through learning from:

- parent's views involved in Child Protection Conferences
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Multi Agency Case Audits
- Inspections and Peer Learning Reviews across the statutory agencies
- a stocktake of what we know already and what agencies' independent Inspections have already told us
- Peer reviews (for example across the ESCB Stay Safe Groups as well as external MASA peer reviews with comparable counterparts in the Eastern region).

These functions aim to:

- Consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners;
- Ensure the Statutory Partners are providing strong leadership
- Provide reports to the Statutory Partners on relevant areas of safeguarding;
- Review the ESCB Annual Report before publication;
- Promote an effective strategic safeguarding challenge and reflection to drive continuous improvement

## 9. Voice of children and families

The voice of the child is at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Involving children and families is essential to safeguarding in Essex both in contributing to delivering the ESCB's vision and in helping to scrutinise and review the partnership arrangements themselves.

The ESCB aims to make use of the many existing arrangements in place across Essex to regularly involve children and families in its work and hear their voices. These include:

- Multi-agency case audits
- Schools councils, youth groups, support groups
- Service user panels

This is supported from information directly from Data sources such as:

- The Children & Young People's Involvement Team (Essex County Council)
- Performance teams across the partnership
- Commissioning

## 10. Dispute resolution and escalation process

Transparency, openness and a willingness to understand and respect individual and agency views are a core aspect of multi-agency / inter-agency working. However, there may be occasions where individuals / agencies working with children and families disagree on how best to keep children safe and promote their welfare, and therefore all partner agencies have a responsibility to resolve any professional disagreement between them promptly and amicably in accordance with the SET Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures.

In the unlikely event that a disagreement cannot be resolved at local level by senior managers within the respective agencies, it can be escalated to the three ESCB Statutory Partners.

## 11. Funding and business support

The work of the ESCB is supported by a business unit hosted by Essex County Council.

The safeguarding partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of this business support and the work of the ESCB as a whole. Contributions from relevant agencies to support the local arrangements have therefore been agreed for 2020/21. These include the cost of child safeguarding practice reviews and other learning reviews.

**Funding for 2020/21 is as follows:**

<b>Contributing Partner</b>	<b>£</b>
Essex County Council	240,205
Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner	66,426
NHS North East Essex CCG	15,633
NHS Mid Essex CCG	14,555
City, District and Borough Councils (£1,210 each)	14,520
NHS West Essex CCG	11,440
NHS Basildon & Brentwood CCG	11,321
NHS Castle Point & Rochford CCG	6,948
Community Rehabilitation Company	5,082
National Probation Service	2,415
CAFCASS	550

These arrangements will be reviewed annually.

# Appendix

## Designated Relevant Agencies in Essex

The Safeguarding Partners have selected those agencies in Essex which are to be relevant agencies and members involved in the new safeguarding arrangements as shown below. These have been determined as those partners which have regular contact with children or have responsibility for services to them in the local area. (Local Safeguarding Partners Relevant Agencies Regulations 2018):

- All Primary Education Establishments including maintained nursery schools
- All Secondary Education Establishments
- All Special Schools
- All Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision Providers
- All Further Education Colleges
- Early Years Settings
- Voluntary Sector
- Adults Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Local Authority Housing
- District, City & Borough Councils
- Youth Offending Service
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service
- NHS England
- NHS Basildon & Brentwood Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Castle Point & Rochford Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS Mid Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS North East Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- NHS West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group
- Basildon & Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BTUH)
- Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust (MEHT)
- Southend Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust (SHUFT)
- East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT)
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH)
- Anglian Community Enterprise Community Interest Company (ACE)
- Emotional well-being and mental health service (EWMHS)
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT)
- East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST)
- Provide
- National Probation Service
- Essex Community Rehabilitation Company
- Essex Police



- Essex Fire and Rescue Services

**Statutory Partners lead areas (with the option of rotating annually):**

1. Clinical Commissioning Group lead covers the ESCB Executive Vice Chair role.
2. Assistant Chief Constable for Essex Police ratifies the decision making of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review sub-committee.
3. Dispute resolution and escalation process is overseen by the Clinical Commissioning Group leads to determine a way forward.
4. The Executive Director of Children's Services oversees the development of the independent scrutiny arrangements.



This information is issued by:  
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2<sup>nd</sup> publication: 29 June 2020

## **Briefing paper from Paul Secker**

### **Introduction**

This briefing has two key strands for the Scrutiny Committee to consider

The first part of this report focuses upon the critical issues in respect of the Essex Children and Families Service supporting children, young people and families throughout the period from March 2020 /the lockdown due to Covid 19 and what we have done to address these issues, which are of course ongoing.

The second part of the report gives the background to the significant changes in respect of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements across Essex introduced in September 2019, and describes the Essex position in September 2020, one year on.

### **Essex Children and Families principles, priorities and practice during the period from March 2020 to September 2020**

#### **Principles**

We have tried to adhere to the following principles during this period, in keeping with the key guidance from the Department of Education. These principles have included:

- Keeping the child at the centre of all that we do, and ensuring that our decision-making is always child-centred
- That our practice is always risk -assessed, and that we prioritise support and resources for children who are at most risk
- That we are family focused, harnessing the strengths in families and their communities
- That our practice is evidence based, ensuring decisions are proportionate and justified
- Collaborative working, in partnership with parents and with other professionals
- That those children and young people facing the highest risks are visited most frequently

#### **Our Priorities**

We have been very clear that our priority has been to make sure that our high-risk children and young people are as safe and well as they can be.

This has meant keeping in touch with our most vulnerable children and young people – in essence these are children on Child Protection Plans , on Child in Need Plans

where we know there are degrees of significant harm , Children in Care , Care Leavers , and children with disabilities / special educational needs.

The assessments of these vulnerable children, and the supports we could offer them, have been really important

We have understandably been very concerned about children who have in effect been “hidden” during this time, in other words out of sight of professionals and their agencies. These include children at increased risk of experiencing neglect, domestic abuse and sexual abuse; many of these children have not been seen by schools, health visitors, Accident and Emergency, family GPs, youth clubs etc

I think we accept that these are unprecedented times, and that no-one has had all the answers in respect of addressing these issues.

### **Social Work Practice**

We had to rethink our practice, in order to adapt to the changing situation within lockdown and then the easing of restrictions

We had both early and then subsequently regular discussions about how we could visit vulnerable children and young people, what might these visits look like, how we could use digital technology to keep in contact with children and their parents/ carers, how we might hold Child Protection Conferences , how we could hold child-care reviews etc .

Initially we were very concerned about the scale of the Covid 19 pandemic and the impact this would have on families ; we were very concerned about parents becoming ill with the virus or indeed dying ; we became concerned about young people going out in the community and not adhering to social distancing etc. We anticipated the likely pressure points, for example significant increases in requests for children to be taken into care, the availability of foster-carers, the possibility of whole teams having to self-isolate etc

We recognised the challenges of trying to undertake meaningful, fair and balanced parenting assessments during lockdown in relation to children considered to be at risk of significant harm.

More recently, with children returning to schools and with the easing of restrictions, we have been planning for the expected surge / spike in referrals, especially of children at risk of significant harm.

The Department of Education did propose some flexibilities in delivering reviews, especially in respect of timescales, though Essex took the decision that we did not need to apply such flexibilities.

Throughout the past six months , we have prioritised having contact with our most vulnerable children , we have continued to have Children and Families Social Workers coming into our Quadrant Offices , we have continued to hold Child Protection Conferences and Child Care reviews within timescales, and we have been encouraging vulnerable children to be going back into schools

Our Children and Families staff have shown real commitment and creativity in trying to ensure our children and young people have been seen supported and safeguarded during this time

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Overall , there was initially a very understandable drop in the level of referrals to the Children and Families Hub - whilst referrals from the Police and Health agencies were relatively consistent with the pre-lockdown period, the referrals from education dropped substantially when most children were not in school - however since the return of children to schools in September , the referral rates are back to at least normal levels both in total and from schools

We have not been able to be clear, as we would want to be, about the full impact of Covid 19 on children and young people; we expect this will become a little clearer as time goes on

We continue to be very concerned , as stated earlier , about those children in essence hidden over the past 5/6 months – including those vulnerable children not going to school , mental health issues ( both for young people themselves and for parents), the stresses on families staying at home , those affected by unemployment and poverty etc.

To give the Committee comparable statistics, there are currently 661 children on Child Protection Plans in September 2020 and this compares to 580 in May 2020; the numbers of children in care in Essex in September 2020 is 1107, and this compares to 1077 in September 2019.

There have been three young people who have killed themselves in Essex this year , and for two of these Covid 19 appears to have been a factor ( less structure and routine in their lives, less connectivity with other young people through school and social activities ), though this figure is similar to the last two years . There have also

been two children who have experienced very serious chronic neglect, where they had not been seen during the Covid restrictions and where the Local Authority then needed to initiate Care Proceedings in respect of them.

The safeguarding of vulnerable children is always multi-faceted , and during the past six months , the issues of children who are home-educated , the vulnerability of children with disability and/ or special educational needs , those children/ young people who regularly go missing , those at risk of child exploitation , those groomed into County Lines , families with homelessness issues etc have all had a high profile.

We have also been focusing on the impact of our decision-making in relation to the BAME communities – particularly in relation to the proportions of BAME children and young people excluded from school , those involved in the Youth Justice System , the numbers of children in care and the number on Child Protection Plans .

But before moving on to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, one of the most positive stories during this time involves a two-year old child in our care and her foster-carer. This child had experienced repeated seizures, was transferred to Addenbrookes Hospital, and was an in-patient there for eight weeks. We were very concerned for a period as to whether this child would survive (which thankfully they have). We would want to pay tribute to the foster-carer who stayed with the child in Hospital for the full eight weeks, without leaving the hospital once and not having contact with her own family members throughout that time.

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### **The Essex Multi -Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)**

The new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for protecting children were set out in the Children and Social Work Act 2017, with guidance provided in the revised Working Together – published in August 2018.

These changes followed from Alan Wood's review into the role and functions of Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCBs), and the part they played in protecting and safeguarding children. In essence, Wood concluded that LSCBs were not sufficiently effective, and Wood recommended that there needed to be action by government to reform the framework for Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA), and to improve learning from serious events affecting children.

The Wood report set out a new framework for improving the organisation and delivery of multi-agency arrangements to protect and safeguard children, re-casting the statutory framework underpinning LSCBs, Serious Case Reviews, and Child Death Overview Panels

We in Essex had little argument with Wood's comments about the effectiveness of LSCBs – it has always been a challenge to evidence the real impact of LSCBs , and

Wood's report found that there tended to be a clear relationship between the effectiveness of a LSCB and the quality of the Independent Chair.

The key proposals from the Wood Report were

- Replacement of LSCBs with a new more effective strategic framework that set out the strategic multi-agency arrangements for child protection
- This would have three Statutory Safeguarding Partners – Police, Health and the Local Authority, to share leadership and responsibilities for the multi-agency arrangements
- The Chief Officer within each agency would have responsibility and authority for ensuring full collaboration
- Encouraging local areas to determine how they organise themselves to improve outcomes for children
- No longer an Independent Chair with decision-making responsibilities
- Introducing the concept of "Independent Scrutiny"
- Moving the overall responsibility for the Child Death Overview Panel to the Department of Health

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners in Essex implemented these arrangements in September 2019.

### **The Essex Position- September 2020**

We are one year since the introduction of the new MASA in Essex in September 2019

I think there is a consensus that it is still relatively early days in respect of the new Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements , and of course since March there has been the understandable focus on Covid 19 and its impact on children and families, on individual agency responses and upon our multi-agency practice

Essex retained the name of Essex Safeguarding Children Board as it was considered to be easily recognisable both to partners and externally, but we have a different structure now and no longer have an Independent Chair with decision-making responsibilities. We appointed a new Chair/Facilitator, David Archibald, to the new revised role and he is a very experienced Chair of LSCBs and was previously a Director of Children's Services.

The Statutory Safeguarding Partners have met regularly throughout the last year - four meetings of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners themselves and four ESCB Executive meetings

In addition we have had frequent meetings, initially weekly, now fortnightly of the Statutory Safeguarding Partners across Southend, Essex and Thurrock during the Covid 19 period.

It was always our intention to review the MASA across Essex at this time, one year on. Each Statutory Safeguarding Partner has been asked to consider how well the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements are working, their impact on practice, how well the Statutory Partners have been working together with equal responsibility and what have been our strengths and what have been the challenges . The Essex Child and Families perspective is described below.

### **Essex Children and Families perspective**

We think we are still adapting to what “equal Statutory Safeguarding Partners” really means

Many practitioners both within Social Care and within partner agencies still consider that the Local Authority/ Children and Families is the lead agency for safeguarding children and young people

This is not surprising – Local Authorities have been the lead agency for child protection/ safeguarding since 1970 -we have clear and specific duties from the Children Acts in relation to Children in Need , Children at risk of significant harm etc ...and Working Together 2018 still describes the DCS and the Lead Member as the key points of professional and political accountability with responsibility for the effective delivery of these functions

Working Together 2018 does though emphasise that these duties can only be discharged with the full co-operation of other partners and the Children and Social Work Act 2017 strengthens these relationships by placing new duties on the Police and Health “ to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children “

So the Statutory Partners have the duty to make the arrangements work, but key specific safeguarding responsibilities are still in effect with the Local Authority.

These Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements will understandably take time to fully develop.

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### **Strengths of the new MASA in Essex**

In addition to the Essex Statutory Safeguarding Partners meetings, the Southend, Essex and Southend Statutory Partners Meetings during Covid 19 have been very helpful – enabling effective partnerships to develop, and they have provided short-cuts in respect of issues that needed problem-solving, including:

- Ensuring SEND children can attend local specialist schools during lockdown
- Children/ young people not attending Accident and Emergency



- Re-running the Safer Sleeping Campaign and Accidents in the Home Campaign
- Sharing of information weekly re all child deaths across SET
- Concealed pregnancies
- Weekly updates re Essex Police activity involving children and young people

**The strengths within our own MASA have included:**

- Have enabled a better understanding of the challenges and priorities of each partner agency, and how partner agencies have been responding to Covid 19
- Have enabled stronger working relationships to develop between partners
- Have been able to focus on recovery and what this is likely to mean across the partnership – potential increases in demand / spikes / referrals in respect of domestic abuse, child sexual abuse, neglect - all hidden from agencies during Covid 19
- Have enabled us to discuss the significant increase in Child Safeguarding Practice Review referrals
- Ensured representation from each statutory safeguarding partner on each Stay Safe group
- Have enabled us to become increasingly aware of the homelessness issues, families being re-located from London, and implications for both services and the families themselves

**Challenges**

**There are understandably ongoing challenges within our MASA – these include:**

- We have not been able to be as clear, as we would want to be, about the impact of the new MASA upon children and families themselves.
- We have not resolved equal funding until 2022/2023
- The frequency of personnel changes, particularly Senior roles within Essex Police, has had an impact on cohesion/ continuity
- We have only had a limited Education perspective, as Education are not one of the named Statutory Safeguarding Partners
- There have been some ongoing tensions between Health and Social Care in respect of Child Death Review funding, Child Safeguarding Practice Review referrals, and overall expectations of Social Care
- Independent Scrutiny is still evolving – we have decided that our real scrutiny is from our children and young people, as well as from practitioners and families.

Paul Secker

Director for Safeguarding, Essex County Council

## Work Programme

Reference Number: PAF/22/20

<b>Report title:</b> Work Programme	
<b>Report to:</b> People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee	
<b>Report author:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Date:</b> 8 October 2020	<b>For:</b> Discussion and identifying any follow-up scrutiny actions
<b>Enquiries to:</b> Graham Hughes, Senior Democratic Services Officer at graham.hughes@essex.gov.uk.	
<b>County Divisions affected:</b> Not applicable	

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The current work programme for the Committee is attached.

### 2. Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:
- (i) to consider this report and work programme in the Appendix and any further development or amendments;
  - (ii) to discuss further suggestions for briefings/scrutiny work.

### 3. Background

#### 3.1 Briefings and training

Further briefings and discussion days will continue to be scheduled on an ongoing basis as identified and required.

#### 3.2 Formal committee activity

The current work programme continues to be a live document, developed as a result of work planning sessions and subsequent ongoing discussions between the Chairman and Lead Members, and within full committee.

#### 3.3 Task and Finish Group activity

A Task and Finish Group has been established to look at particular aspects of domiciliary care and will meet for the first time later in the month.

Cont....

## **Work Programme**

### **3.4 Chairman and Vice Chairmen meetings**

The Chairman and Vice Chairmen meet monthly in between scheduled meetings of the Committee to discuss work planning and meet officers as part of preparation for future items. The Chairman and Vice Chairmen also meet the Cabinet Members for Education, Children & Families, and Health and Adult Social Care on a regular basis.

### **4. Update and Next Steps**

See Appendix.

### **5. List of Appendices –**

Work Programme overleaf.

People and Families Policy and Scrutiny Committee: 8 October 2020

2020 Work Programme (dates subject to change and some issues may be subject to further investigation, scoping and evaluation)

Date/timing	Issue/Topic	Focus/other comments	Approach
<b>Items identified for formal scrutiny in full committee</b>			
8 October 2020	Education portfolio update: <i>further follow-up</i>	1. Consider the draft Early Years Strategy; 2. A further update on wellbeing programmes and personal resilience; 3. Update on disadvantaged Pupils Pilot	Cabinet Member and Director – Education to be present
8 October 2020	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Structure Update – <i>further follow-up specifically on school attendance</i>	Monthly analysis on attendance at school during the lock-down, and planned recovery actions (as requested at July 2020 meeting of the Committee);	Written report only - Thereafter, likely to be consolidated into the future updates on improvement actions being taken to address issues raised by the Care Quality Commission/Ofsted Inspection of SEND services (next one due January 2021)
8 October 2020	Children's Safeguarding	(i) consider Children's Safeguarding Board report; and (ii) an operational focus	TBC
12 November 2020	Adults Safeguarding	1. Consider Adults Safeguarding Board annual report (usually presented in September but delayed by the pandemic). 2. Focussed operational update (TBC)	TBC
TBC	Adult Community Learning – <i>follow up</i>	Consider new national outcomes framework, how being benchmarked against it – to include measuring the social investment – and now to include the impact of the pandemic.	TBC
16 December 2020	Children and Families services	Broad update on the response to Covid and to include the 0-19 Virgin care contract follow-up	Cabinet Member and Lead Officers to be invited to attend
16 December 2020 (provisional)	Respite Care – <i>follow up</i>	Update on further parent and carers workshops held, completing the full-service review and ongoing support during the pandemic.	Cabinet Member and Lead Officers to attend
16 December 2020 (provisional)	Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards – <i>follow up</i>	Update on progress to reduce number of outstanding assessments.	Lead Officers to attend
14 January 2021	Special Educational Needs – Care Quality Commission/Ofsted Inspection – <i>further follow up</i>	To be updated on the multi-agency action plan and improvement actions being taken	Cabinet Member, Lead Officers and Health representatives to be present.
14 January 2021	Drug Gangs, knife crime and county lines - <i>follow up</i>	A Task and Finish Group report on multi-agency working was received and endorsed by the Committee in September 2020	To follow up on recommendations.

Date/timing	Issue/Topic	Focus/other comments	Approach
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**Task and Finish Group reviews**

October	Domiciliary care	Lead members in discussion with officers on scoping the review	TBC
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**Further issues under consideration**

TBC	Adult Carers strategy	To be scoped	TBC
TBC	Autism services	Issues identified during joint briefing with HOSC including transitions between services, timing for support and diagnosis, promoting employment, and consistency of mainstream school offer.	The Health Overview Policy and Scrutiny Committee is to lead on referral and diagnosis times.
TBC	PREVENT	TBC	TBC