



Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) 2016-17 THE HEADLINES

This summary is based on the ESCB Annual Report 2016-17 (the full report is available on the [ESCB website](#).)

Is Safeguarding a Significant Issue in Essex?

The vast majority of the 306,000 children in Essex led healthy, safe lives, in 2016-17, but a small minority faced challenges in their life and family circumstances which puts their wellbeing and safety at considerable risk. For example:

- 9,850 children were referred to Children's Services during the year because someone had a concern about a risk of abuse or neglect. Police (30%), schools (17%) and their own family members (7%) were most notable in making these contacts. 74% of those cases (over 7,200) were felt to need a Child and Family assessment by Children's Services.
- Investigations of child sexual exploitation continue to be needed. At the end of the year, current

investigations involved 107 Essex children with 38 of these being at a high risk of sexual abuse happening.

- Children are at risk of exploitation and harm when they go missing from home. Across the year 361 children were reported missing – 42% of them were 'looked after children'.
- National estimates show 1 in every 5 children is exposed to domestic violence by the age of 18. Within Essex, police officers recorded over 10,000 domestic abuse crimes in the year, many involved children as witnesses or in the household at the time of violence.
- Family issues significantly add to the levels of stress and anxiety for children, affecting their mental wellbeing. 25% of Essex households have children under 5 in

a household where family members have self-diagnosed with depression or stress.

victim, but cases of multiple offenders abusing a number of girls are happening.

Some exploitation is embroiled in drug trafficking and gang offending. Along with emotional ill health, the 'export' of gang related offending from cities into Essex is the biggest current threat to young people in Essex.

Are safeguarding issues getting better or worse?

Child Protection Plan numbers have remained consistent month on month across all quadrants, though the number of children on a Child Protection Plan was fractionally lower at the end of 2016-17 than 2015-16 figures by 5% (approx. 50 cases).

The Board was notified of 65 deaths of children from a wide range of circumstances during the year. Although below the 2015-16 figure, this is broadly similar to the numbers over the past four years. The most significant 'modifiable factor' in reviewed cases was the sleeping arrangements when young children die unexpectedly. These deaths showed a slight rise in number.

Nationally, levels of stress and emotional ill-health amongst children is worsening. In Essex, hospital admissions for under 24's who have self-harmed continue to increase, although they are still below national averages. Young women are more affected by this than young men.

Numbers of sexual exploitation cases have risen significantly in Essex over the past five years – but this reflects the much greater awareness and reporting of cases rather than changes in offending and abuse. The vast majority of child sexual exploitation cases involve one offender and one

How has ESCB focussed its work in 2016-17?

In a few pages, it is not possible to set out the very wide range of activities the ESCB has led or contributed to, however the work has included:

Working with children and young people

The Board used the County Council's research to identify the three key areas that most worried young people and asked for their views and experiences to shape the work of the Board and its partners going forward. These three areas were:

- **Self-harm** – over 200 young people shared their perceptions and experiences of self-harm and this was the focus of the Board Development Day in October 2016 which was led by young people. The findings of this work further informed the revision of an ESCB suicide prevention toolkit being used in schools and youth organisations. This work contributes to the suicide prevention strategy being implemented across Essex,

Southend and Thurrock. Children's Mental Health continues to be a ESCB priority for 2017-18.

- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – a significant amount of understanding has been gained by surveying over 2,000 Year 6 and Year 8 Essex pupils about their understanding of CSE risks. This is being used to design and deliver improved services by partners.
- **Challenges of Leaving Care** – young people leaving the care of the County Council put together a video about their experience and what needed to be improved. The challenges of housing, finance and support in making important decisions were particularly highlighted by the young people as they became independent. This, together with a survey of their experience, was used as the basis of two discussions at the ESCB Board. Individual partners are using the information to address the gaps in their particular services.

Child Deaths

Along with its neighbouring Boards, ESCB reviews the death of every child, whatever the circumstances. The overall number of deaths is low but in 2017-18 the reviews showed a slight rise in the number of Sudden Unexpected Deaths of Infants (SUDIs) where the child's sleeping

arrangements could have been a factor. As a result, the Board reinvigorated its campaign about 'Safe Sleeping', highlighting the risks of children sleeping with an adult. This included a 'Thunderclap' social media campaign in January 2017 with its messages reaching over 450,000 people.

Reviewing Serious Cases of Neglect and Abuse

The Board carries out in-depth case reviews if a child has died or been seriously injured through neglect or abuse. During the year, it considered five cases where children had been seriously injured. None of these required a formal, legally required process of 'a Serious Case Review' but the involvement of agencies in each case is being looked at in depth to ensure that any lessons are learned.

One Serious Case Review from a previous year was completed and published in 2016 regarding a non-accidental injury to a 14 week old baby. This review made a number of recommendations for improvements in practice, including:

- Promoting understanding of operational pathways between agencies
- Review of policy and procedures relating to parental mental health and the impact on parenting
- Inclusion of guidance around information sharing and recording in GP Contracts

These recommendations are now being implemented by all agencies.

The Board continued to work on a number of recommendations from previous years which had focussed on information sharing, pre-birth assessments, hospital discharge processes, complex parenting circumstances and risk management. The action plans for learning from these events were all completed in 2016 with new guidance and training being provided where needed.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The Board's 'I Didn't Know' campaign raising awareness of CSE was revitalised. It particularly targets parents, carers and school staff on dealing with risks using a range of material such as this [parent/carers leaflet](#).

Following the good examples set by Brentwood and Harlow Council, most of the City, District and Borough councils provide mandatory training for licensed premises and taxi drivers raising awareness of CSE. Where this isn't happening, councils provide information leaflets and cue cards to licensed taxi drivers as part of their induction and training.

A full description of the Board's work can be found in the ESCB Annual Report 2016-17 on the [ESCB website](#).

How much did ESCB's work cost in 2016-17?

The Board's work is funded by partner contributions and a small training income. In 2016-17 contributions totalled £384,000. The work was achieved within that budget. The contributing agencies were:

| Contributing Partner | £ |
|--|---------|
| CAFCASS | 550 |
| City, District and Borough Councils (1,210 each) | 14,520 |
| Community Rehabilitation Company | 5,082 |
| Essex County Council | 213,166 |
| 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 |

(In addition, Thurrock and Southend Councils contribute £5,551 each towards the cost of the Child Death Review process which involves all three areas).

Partners also support the Board's work by providing accommodation and specialist staff for specific tasks. Over recent years, Safeguarding Boards' increasing demands have included Child Sexual Exploitation, gang involvement and bullying through social media. Contributing agencies have recognised these increasing demands, by maintaining a standstill budget for the Board, when many other public sector budgets have had to be cut.

What will ESCB be focussing on in 2017-18?

ESCB priorities are featured in its [Business Plan](#) which includes taking into account issues arising from operational practice, lessons from case reviews, national priorities and partners' view of risks to children. The Board is prioritising:

1. Focussing on areas and issues of greatest risk and concern to safeguarding of children

These include:

- Evaluating the impact of Domestic Abuse
- Raising the profile of Neglect
- Evaluating the approach to Preventing Radicalisation
- Evaluating partners approach to internet safety
- Evaluating partners approach to youth offending and gangs
- Leading Child Sexual Exploitation Initiatives

2. Assessing the effectiveness of early help and appropriate interventions when needs are identified.

This includes:

- **0-19 services:** Evaluate the impact of the new 0-19 contract
- **Thresholds:** Assess the impact of threshold decisions on those children who are not stepped up to higher levels of intervention
- **Children moving into Essex:** Evaluate the safeguarding of children and instigate work with other Safeguarding Boards to

support agencies addressing these risks

3. Receiving assurance that children are kept safe through having access to appropriate services and support for their emotional health and well-being

This reflects the partners' awareness of the importance of effective mental health services in safeguarding children.

4. Strengthening partnership and leadership

This is a particular focus, as the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and related guidance is changing the safeguarding expectations on partners.