

# 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, 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   |