

Essex Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

2026-2027



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

FOREWORD BY THE LEAD SAFEGUARDING PARTNERS

Welcome to the Essex multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, which have been developed in accordance with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and the Children and Social Work Act 2017. These arrangements set out how we, as the Safeguarding Partners, will work together alongside other agencies in Essex to identify and respond to the needs of children and young people in our communities. Our ambition is to develop an equitable and robust partnership, and this plan sets out our ways of working.

All those working and volunteering with children and families in Essex do an incredible job ensuring children and families receive the help and support they need.

As the Lead Safeguarding Partners, we would like to thank everyone working, volunteering and supporting children and families in Essex.

We want all children in Essex to be happy, healthy and safe; to feel listened to, and to have the maximum opportunities to be ambitious. If children or their families need help and support, it should be at the right time, by the right person and in the right place for them.

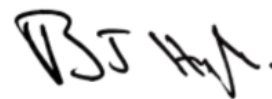
In Essex, effective safeguarding is anti-racist. Essex County Council has continued to lead and promote system-wide learning and development to address racism, challenge structural inequality and improve outcomes for children and families from Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and ethnically diverse communities. This focus was a central theme of the ESCB Stay Safe Conferences in 2026, supporting practitioners and leaders to reflect on racial bias, systemic racism, power, and the need for professional curiosity. In line with Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026), which strengthens expectations on understanding and addressing the impact of racism and discrimination, partner agencies across Essex are developing and implementing their own anti-racist strategies and action plans. This collective approach supports culturally competent, equitable and strengths-based safeguarding practice across the local safeguarding system.



Nicole Wood
Chief Executive of Essex County Council



Tom Abell
Chief Executive of Essex Integrated Care Board



Ben-Julian Harrington
Chief Constable for Essex Police

CONTENTS

Foreword By the Lead Safeguarding Partners.....	1
Introduction.....	3
Essex Vision and Values	8
Structure of the ESCB	10
Relevant agencies	14
Local safeguarding practice reviews and embedding learning	17
Multi-agency learning and development	18
Independent scrutiny arrangements	19
Dispute resolution and escalation process	20
Funding and business support.....	20

INTRODUCTION

This plan sets out the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements for Essex; it explains how the Safeguarding Partners in Essex, alongside the relevant agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Children and Social Work Act 2017 and its accompanying guidance [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026](#) place a joint and equal duty on the statutory safeguarding partners to make arrangements to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in the local area.

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 sets out the requirements for local Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASAs).

The partnership arrangements in Essex are referred to as the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) this plan sets out the detail of how the ESCB operates. ESCB 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 including those placed in secure settings.

Safeguarding Partners

The Safeguarding Partners are defined in legislation as follows:

A statutory safeguarding partner in relation to a local authority area in England is defined under the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act, 2017) as:

- The local authority
- An integrated care board for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area
- The chief officer of police for an area any part of which falls within the local authority area

These three partners have a joint and equal duty to make arrangements to:

- Work together as a team to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in a local area
- Include and develop the role of a wider local organisations and agencies in the process

The purpose of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements is to ensure that, at a local level, organisations and agencies are clear about how they will work together to safeguard all children and promote their welfare. This means:

- There is a clear, shared vision for how to improve outcomes for children locally across all levels of need and all types of harm
- When a child is identified as suffering or likely to suffer significant harm there is a prompt, appropriate and effective response to ensure the protection and support of the child
- Organisations and agencies are challenged appropriately, effectively holding one another to account
- The voice of children and families combined with the knowledge of experienced practitioners and insights from data, provides a greater understanding of the areas of strength and/or improvement within arrangements and practice
- Information is sought, analysed, shared, and broken down by protected characteristics to facilitate more accurate and timely decision-making for children and families, and through this the identification of groups of children who may be disproportionately over- or under-represented in services, to understand outcomes for different communities of children
- Effective collection, sharing and analysis of data enables early identification of new safeguarding risks, issues, emerging threats, and joined-up responses across relevant agencies, including the identification of groups of children who may be disproportionately over- or under-represented in services, so that services are adapted to address these issues
- Senior leaders promote and embed a learning culture which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice
- Senior leaders have a good knowledge and understanding about the quality of local practice and its impact on children and families

The Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs) for ESCB are:

- Nicole Wood - Chief Executive of Essex County Council
- Tom Abell - Chief Executive for Essex Integrated Care Board
- Ben-Julian Harrington - Chief Constable for Essex Police

From 1 April 2026, Essex ICB now covers the local authority areas of Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

In Essex, the Lead Safeguarding Partners have appointed the following people as their Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs):

- Essex County Council - Helen Lincoln, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education
- Education – Clare Kershaw, Director of Education, Essex County Council

- Essex Police - Lucy Morris, Assistant Chief Constable
- Essex ICB – Dr Giles Thorpe, Executive Chief Nursing Officer

In line with the recommendations in Working Together 2026, Essex Safeguarding Partners invited the Director of Education from the local authority to attend the Delegated Safeguarding Partners meetings. Education is already represented at all other levels of the partnership.

The Chair of Essex Safeguarding Children Board meetings for 2026 is Helen Lincoln, Executive Director of Children, Families and Education, Essex County Council, this role will rotate on an annual basis between the Delegated Safeguarding Partners. The Vice Chair role will be covered by the independent scrutineer.

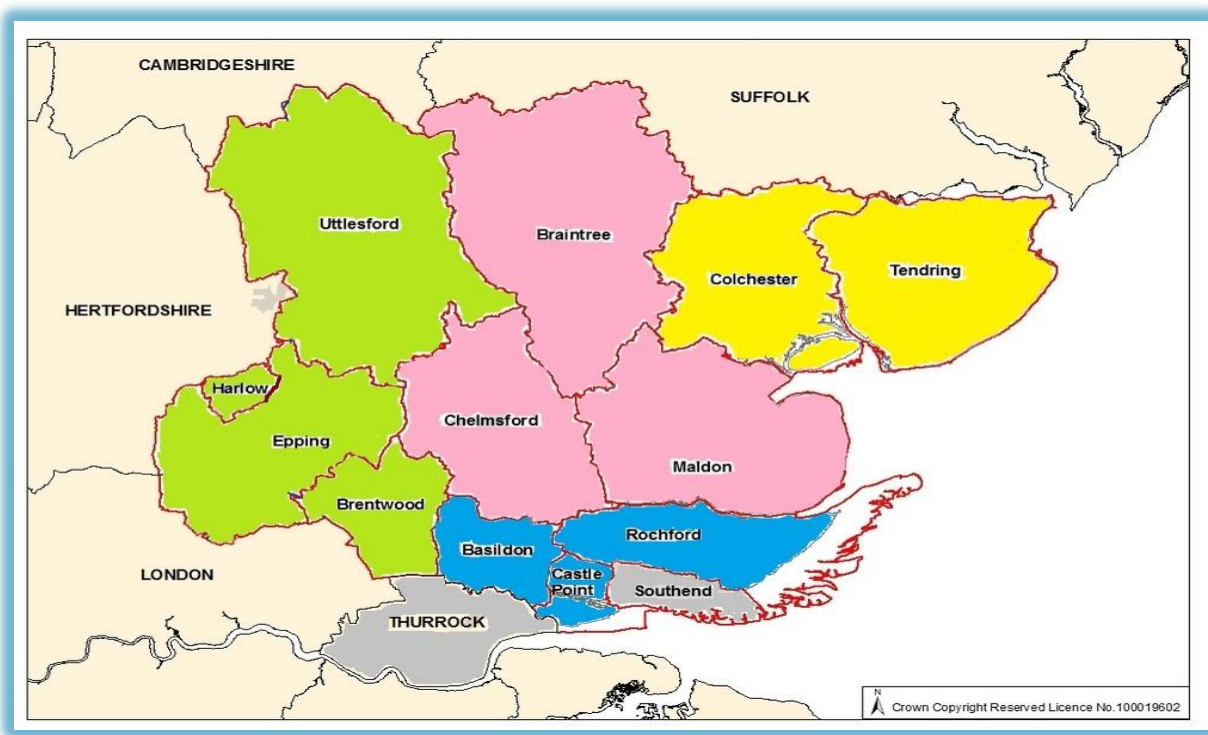
The Delegated Safeguarding Partners have the responsibility and authority for ensuring full participation with the safeguarding arrangements. Although the Lead Safeguarding Partners have delegated their responsibilities to those named above, they remain accountable for any action or decisions taken on behalf of their agency.

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.

THE ESSEX CONTEXT

Essex has a complex set of partnership arrangements to support a population of 1.56 million, of which 322,812 are children; this is equivalent to approximately 22% of the population. Essex County Council is one of the largest local authorities in the UK. There are twelve city, district and borough councils.

Within the geographical county of Essex there are two unitary authorities: Southend and Thurrock. Essex Police and Essex Integrated Care Board cover the geographical area of Essex.



Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

In March 2026 the Government announced the outcome of Local Government Reorganisation. The decision is that there will be five unitary authorities across Essex from April 2028, shadow arrangements will commence in May 2027 following elections to the shadow councils.

Southend, Essex and Thurrock are in the process of establishing a Mayoral Combined County Authority, elections for the role of Mayor will be held in May 2028.

Families First Partnership programme

Following the Independent Review of Children's Social Care, in 2022, Government is committed to rebalancing the children's social care system to ensure that children and families are supported at the earliest opportunity, making sure that their voices are amplified and being heard clearly. The government has set out its Plan for Change -

committed to rebalancing the children's social care system through the rolling out the Families First Partnership programme.

Work is underway across the partnership to implement the changes in line with Government guidance, for further information on the Families First Partnership programme visit [Families First Partnership programme - GOV.UK](#).

ESSEX VISION AND VALUES

Vision

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board'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 continually 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 adult 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 Board, through the sub-committees and stay safe groups to the frontline
- Ensuring involvement and focus on frontline practitioners
- Keeping a preventative mind-set and adopting a Whole Family Approach

EFFECTIVE SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN ESSEX

The development of a common understanding of language across the partnership is important to enable services and practitioners to assess the needs of children and their families. This forms an integral part of Essex's approach to supporting children, ensuring the right support is provided by the right agency, at the right time, based on the child's level of need. The approach also promotes earlier support for families to address issues before they escalate.

Partners have worked together to develop the multi-agency threshold guidance, [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#), the latest version was published in October 2024. The guidance provides a framework for everyone who works alongside children and their families in Essex.

It is important that all agencies understand the needs of each individual child within their own context, each situation is unique and specific to that child. This guidance should assist professional judgement in determining how best to support children.

The guidance recognises that however complex a child's needs are, universal services e.g. education and universal health provision, will always be provided alongside any additional support. Children's needs are not static, and they may experience different needs, at different points throughout their childhood years and adolescence.

The Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex document will be updated in line with the implementation of the Families First Partnership programme.

STRUCTURE OF THE ESCB

The work of the ESCB is delivered through sub-committees and stay safe groups that are strongly focussed on improving multi-agency safeguarding practice and ensuring an emphasis on learning, enabling a feedback loop across partner agencies and those working alongside children and families.

The following diagram outlines the ESCB governance structure and the links to other strategic partnerships.

[ESCB Structure chart](#)

Lead Safeguarding Partners

It has been agreed by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Lead Safeguarding Partners that it is more effective to meet across the greater Essex footprint, this also supports discussions in relation to local government reorganisation, Family First Partnership programme and the single Integrated Care Board that now covers the Greater Essex footprint.

The Lead Safeguarding Partners have identified six shared priorities across Greater Essex whilst acknowledging that the implementation in each area may look different. It is viewed as a positive step to have moved to shared priorities. The priorities for 2026-27 are:

- Neglect
- Child Exploitation/Child Sexual Abuse
- Domestic Abuse
- Mental Health
- Transition
- Neurodiversity

The Lead Safeguarding Partners oversee the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, plans for independent scrutiny, yearly report, business priorities for the coming year and learning from local child safeguarding practice reviews.

Delegated Safeguarding Partners

The Essex Delegated Safeguarding Partners meet regularly throughout the year and will ensure the Lead Safeguarding Partner for their agency is sighted on the work of the Board. The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are responsible for:

- The delivery and monitoring of multi-agency priorities and procedures
- Close partnership working and engagement with relevant agencies

- Implementation of effective information sharing arrangements between agencies including data sharing
- Delivery of high quality and timely rapid reviews and local child safeguarding practice reviews
- Provision of appropriate multi-agency safeguarding professional learning and development
- Seeking of, and responding to, feedback from children and families about their experiences of services

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are responsible for ensuring relevant agencies are fully engaged in undertaking and participating in the functions set out above.

Education representation

Essex has over 600 schools including primary, secondary, special and independent schools, approximately 1600 early years settings as well as numerous alternative education providers and further education colleges. The Essex Safeguarding Children Board has always had strong education representation across the Board, Sub-Committees and Stay Safe Groups. The Director of Education for Essex County Council is a member of the Delegated Safeguarding Partner meetings.

ECC Education Safeguarding Team offer termly safeguarding briefings to all settings, attend the head teacher forums and offer Designated Safeguarding Lead training to all education settings in Essex. The ESCB Business Support Team provide regular updates to the education safeguarding team and attend the safeguarding briefings at least annually.

Essex Safeguarding Children Board

Essex Safeguarding Children Board is the name of the wider partnership board, that brings the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and key relevant agencies together to ensure there is effective multi-agency safeguarding practice across the partnership.

The Delegated Safeguarding Partners have made the decision to drop the Executive from the title of the partnership board from January 2026, this is to better describe the wider partnership board and to give members ownership of the safeguarding partnership and the work it does.

The Essex Safeguarding Children Board meets four times a year, there are then additional meetings to agree Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and share local learning. Sub-committees and Stay Safe groups deliver the functions of Essex Safeguarding Children Board. The chairs of the sub-committees and stay safe groups meet three times a year with the independent scrutineer to share and support the flow of information across all groups. The summaries below outline the key functions of each of the sub-committees;

- **Stay Safe Groups** x 4 across Mid, South, West and North quadrants (chaired and vice chaired by Delegated Safeguarding Partner representatives).
These groups coordinate 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.

- **Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee**

Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of key areas of safeguarding practice across the partnership, receives annual reports from a range of services. The sub-committee is currently working with Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnerships to develop a multi-agency dataset.

- **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee**

Responsible for overseeing Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and any local learning reviews, including the process, quality assurance of reports and implementation of the learning from reviews. The sub-committee makes recommendations to the Delegated Safeguarding Partners on whether the criteria is met for a Child Safeguarding Practice Review following a rapid review.

Members of this sub-committee are responsible for informing their agency (or sector where appropriate) on progress of reviews, upcoming publication dates and sharing learning from reviews.

The sub-committee is responsible for reviewing the evidence of the impact of the learning from reviews from the partnership and sharing system learning.

- **Harm in our Community Sub-Committee**

This sub-committee focuses on developing and increasing awareness about early intervention and prevention work linked to a range of extra-familial harms including online harms.

- **Southend, Essex and Thurrock Learning and Development Sub-Committee (Children, Adults & Domestic Abuse)**

Identifies common learning themes from reviews conducted by all seven Boards¹ across Southend, Essex and Thurrock and produces, resources and learning opportunities for all to access.

¹ The seven Boards are Essex Safeguarding Children Board, Essex Safeguarding Adults Board, Southend Safeguarding Children Partnership, Southend Safeguarding Adult Board, Thurrock Safeguarding Children Partnership, Thurrock Safeguarding Adults Board and Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board.

- **Neglect Sub-Committee**

Focuses on improving multi-agency working in relation to neglect. The sub-committee are working on developing resources to support multi-agency working in relation to neglect. The sub-committee are taking forward the learning and recommendations from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, multi-agency case audits and a multi-agency thematic review of neglect.

- **Essex Learning and Development Group**

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.

- **SET Procedures Working Group**

Coordinates all work in relation to the SET Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures which has included launching web-enabled procedures in April 2026.

All sub-committees and groups provide an update for the quarterly business support team report that is shared with the Essex Safeguarding Children Board.

RELEVANT AGENCIES

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.

Specific relevant agencies hold formal representation on the Essex Safeguarding Children Board and are also involved in its sub-committees, Stay Safe groups and task and finish groups.

Other relevant agencies that are not core Board members may still contribute to the Board's work, either through sector representation or by participating in sub-committees, Stay Safe groups, or time-limited task and finish groups.

When identified by the Lead Safeguarding Partners as a relevant agency, an organisation must act in accordance with these local safeguarding arrangements. As part of this, all relevant agencies should:

- Have a clear understanding of its responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, and how it will discharge them
- Co-operate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements
- Share information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities
- Ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood and rigorously applied within their organisation

Relevant Agencies represented at Essex Safeguarding Children Board

- **Probation Service**
- **NHS Trusts and Providers** - NELFT who provide the CAMHS service across Essex and HCRG who provide the 0-19 Service across Essex
- **Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex**
- **Voluntary and Community Sector** – through the Chief Executive Officer of Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS)
- **Public Health** - The Public Health Consultant lead for children and young people
- **Representatives from Essex Primary Heads Association, Association of Secondary Heads and Essex Special Schools Education Trust**

Additional Relevant Agencies

In addition to the Relevant Agencies listed above who are required to attend the Essex Safeguarding Children Board, the Safeguarding Partners have selected the following agencies to be relevant agencies. Representatives from these agencies may be members of sub-committees, stay safe groups or task and finish groups.

Where relevant, other providers of commissioned services to Essex County Council Children, Families & Education and Integrated Care Boards are invited to contribute to the partnership through stay safe groups and specific task and finish groups.

Education settings - Essex uses a model of representation as described earlier in the document for all education settings. However, all individual education establishments, multi-academy trusts and childcare providers working with children up to the age of 18 are relevant agencies.

The named relevant agencies are:

- 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
- All Early Years Settings and childcare providers
- All City, Borough and District Councils
- Adult Social Care
- Local Authority Housing
- Housing Providers/Associations
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- NHS England
- Mid and South Essex Hospital Trust which covers Basildon, Broomfield and Southend hospitals
- East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT)
- North-East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH)
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT)
- East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST)
- Essex Wellbeing Service
- Essex Fire and Rescue Service
- British Transport Police
- Youth Justice
- Active Essex and Active Essex Foundation
- Provide Community Services
- All commissioned NHS providers

- Probation service
- Voluntary and Community sector
- ECC public health
- Faith communities
- Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner

Representatives should be able to promote the effectiveness of the partnership through their responsibility and accountability for the services their agencies deliver to children and families through their ability to influence the effectiveness of their agency's contribution to multi-agency safeguarding.

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, there are strong collaborative working arrangements in place to ensure that where there are opportunities to collaborate this happens.

Attendance at the partnership groups that are across Southend, Essex and Thurrock may be through ESCB members as well as representatives of the ESCB Business Support Team.

SET Groups:

- SET Strategic Child Death Overview Panel
- SET Child Exploitation Strategic Group
- SET Domestic Abuse Board
- Safer Essex

LOCAL SAFEGUARDING PRACTICE REVIEWS AND EMBEDDING LEARNING

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

The Safeguarding Partners have made arrangements to:

- Identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area and make a joint decision on when these cases meet the threshold for a Serious Incident Notification to the Department of Education.
- 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 from the partnership for continuous learning and improvement leading to enhanced practice and improved outcomes for children and families. Safeguarding Partners continue to take account of the findings from specific 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.

Findings from the reviews undertaken in Essex are shared with relevant agencies through author briefings, individual agencies sharing the learning internally and through discussion at stay safe groups. The ESCB Business Support Team regularly request information from agencies to evidence the impact of the learning from reviews and the implementation of recommended improvements.

The stay safe groups are a key mechanism for sharing the learning from reviews to frontline practice. The aim of the stay safe groups is for them to act as a mechanism to share good practice, identify areas of development and work together to improve local safeguarding practice and feedback to the Board on areas of challenge or risk.

MULTI-AGENCY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The partnership in Essex work together to develop and commission a comprehensive multi-agency learning and development programme.

The learning and development programme is informed by the Board priorities and considers practice issues arising from local safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency case audits, inspections, local and national priorities, section 11 audits, feedback from the partnership 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, virtual training, conferences, case studies, resources and learning activities via the stay safe groups. The ESCB will continue to be creative and innovative in developing learning opportunities.

The latest learning and development offer can be found on the [ESCB website](#).

INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

We believe children's voices are central to our independent scrutiny, and the ESCB's reinvigorated scrutiny plan brings together insights from young people's groups across Essex to help us identify what we are doing well and where we need to improve, viewed through the lens of children.

Essex Safeguarding Children Board has an independent scrutineer who provides rigorous and effective support and challenge at a strategic level. The independent scrutineer ensures that statutory duties are being fulfilled, quality assurance mechanisms are in place and are effective, and local safeguarding child practice reviews are analysed, with key learning areas identified and effectively implemented across the safeguarding system.

ESCB takes a multi-system approach to independently scrutinising the effectiveness of local safeguarding arrangements. This approach includes a range of functions, such as learning from:

- Inspections and Peer Learning Reviews across the statutory agencies.
- Best practice as identified through The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP)
- Children and families feedback throughout the safeguarding system
- Independent Scrutiny
- Section 11 audits, Section 157/175 audits for schools, alternative provision, colleges and pupil referral units and safeguarding audit for early years settings, joint children and adult safeguarding audit for housing associations/providers
- Multi-agency case audits (MACAs) and Multi-agency thematic audits (MATAs)

The ESCB scrutiny functions support the following:

- Consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners
- Ensure the Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners are providing strong leadership
- Review the ESCB Yearly Report before publication
- Promote an effective strategic safeguarding challenge and reflection to drive continuous improvement

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 working. However, there may be occasions where practitioners/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 appropriately 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 ESCB Delegated Safeguarding Partners.

FUNDING AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

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

The Safeguarding Partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of the business support team and the work of the ESCB. Funding for the ESCB is split equally between the Safeguarding Partners with additional contributions coming from the Probation Service and the City, District and Borough Councils.