Welcome to the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Board Briefing. The briefing is intended to provide you with the key headlines from each Board meeting so that you can quickly catch up with decisions and learning and disseminate them to your staff. Minutes of the meeting will continue to be circulated to Board members.

This briefing includes news from the 21 January 2021 virtual Board meeting. If you have any comments on the briefing, or questions about the contents, please contact us on ESSCP.Contact@eastsussex.gov.uk.

**Service risks and issues due to latest COVID-19 lockdown**

Colleagues updated on service pressures and challenges but noted these are closely monitored and reviewed. Jon Hull from Sussex Police noted reassuring efforts of MASH arrangements across the county to respond to demands and, despite the latest lockdown, the Police was due to launch ‘Custody Hour’ (see below for further details) on the 8 February. Stuart Gallimore, ESCC Children’s Services, noted that face to face visits were still occurring but that every visit was risk assessed. Michael Brown, Head of Safeguarding Sussex CCGs, noted the significant impact of COVID in Sussex, in this wave, with a 165% increase in demand for ITU beds across the county. Michael noted the impact on his team, and other health services, where staff had been redeployed to the vaccination programme or front-line service. Gail Gowland, acting Head of Safeguarding at ESHT, informed of continuing high vacancy rates within the Health Visiting service and action taken to deliver core services. Andrea Holtham informed that Family courts are operating and there are now many more virtual hearings. Expectation that all children are seen - even if this means virtually - remains in place. The Chair acknowledged the challenging times, inviting partners to continue to share challenges especially where joint working can mitigate risks.

**Sussex Children’s Sexual Assault Referral Centre (CSARC) Annual Report 2019/20**

Dr Tracey Ward, Designated Doctor for Safeguarding, presented the annual report for the Sussex [Child Sexual Abuse Referral Centre (SARC).](https://www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/services/servicedetails.htm?directoryID=22678) Children aged up to 14 years, or up to 19 with a severe learning disability, who have experienced sexual abuse or assault, are seen at the centre for holistic health assessments following a referral by police or children’s services. The Sussex Children’s SARC has been operational for five years and is now well embedded. Board members noted that 35% of SARC referrals came from East Sussex compared to 43% in 2018/19. The board noted SARC is working in partnership with local agencies to improve access to the service for children in care – as attendance is lower in this group – and to ensure that all children who would benefit from a health assessment receive one.

**Section 11 audit**

Agencies were thanked for their timely completion of the partnership’s bi-annual Section 11 self-assessment toolkit. Partners noted the Section 11 audit is a key mechanism for the partnership to monitor and evaluate agencies’ safeguarding practice, and the results of the audit present a good picture across East Sussex. The report highlighted a number of areas for focus for the partnership, which will be taken forward by the Learning & Development Subgroup, including: embedding ICON, involving care experience for young people in recruitment in key roles, and agency awareness of trauma informed practice. The Board agreed to review future year’s approach to ensure it is fit for purpose. This includes reducing the burden on agencies to complete while ensuring that it provides a robust view of safeguarding practice in East Sussex.

**Breakout session: Elective Home Education (EHE)**

Jess Holliday, Elective Home Education Lead in ESSC ISEND, presented an overview of the EHE landscape in East Sussex. Purpose of the presentation and breakout sessions is to develop the conversation about how multi-agency partners can help to identify EHE children and keep them safe.

The Partnership broke out in small groups to discuss the four ESSCP priorities:

* How can your services work with the EHE team to safeguard EHE children?
* Due to the potential vulnerability of EHE children, do you include elective home education in your data sets for reporting?
* Do you think your team has a role in safeguarding EHEs, and what does that look like? How do you share information about EHEs?
* What training needs do think your team has around EHE?

**Agency Updates and Information**

**Custody Hour** – From 8 February Sussex Police will commit to inform partners of a child arrest within 1 hour of the detention being authorised (not arrival) at a custody centre, both in and out of normal business hours. [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/sussex-police-implementation-of-custody-hour/)….

The **East Sussex Warm Home Check** service is providing an enhanced offer for families with children. [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/warm-home-service-enhanced-offer-for-families/)….

The team supporting the **Pan Sussex Child Death Reviews** (CDR) has produced their first newsletter. [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/pan-sussex-child-death-review-newsletter-edition-1-january-2021/)….

Following a safeguarding practice review, the West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership is sharing a briefing sheet in order to enable professionals to plan and **hold a conversation with a young person where there is an indication the young person may be pregnant.** [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/west-sussex-scp-planning-a-conversation-with-a-young-person-who-may-be-pregnant-briefing-sheet/)….

The Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Sussex have created a new ‘**Children and families who move across boundaries**’ procedure to clarify practice when families move. [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/children-and-families-who-move-across-sussex-new-procedure-and-guidance/)…

The enhanced **suicide bereavement support service** across Sussex is now up and running. This is a service for anyone in Sussex who has been affected by suicide recently or in the past. [More information here](https://www.esscp.org.uk/sussex-wide-suicide-bereavement-support/)….