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 15 July 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.

**Critical Service Issues**

Board members were invited to share critical service issues with the partnership. The Chair noted the considerable increase in the volume of case review work and the significant pressure this has placed on agencies to contribute, and the Case Review Group (CRG) to review. The Board noted the increase in case review work across the safeguarding system (as seen in the increase in Safeguarding Adults Reviews and domestic homicide reviews).

The Chair noted recent correspondence that Ticehurst Priory Hospital had closed its child and young person unit. Members discussed their concerns on the capacity of services to support young people with significant mental health needs, as a national as well as a local issue.

Concerns were also raised about the predicted additional pressure this winter on acute paediatric beds with children admitted to hospital for respiratory issues (as during COVID-19 they have been less exposed to coughs and colds).

Dr Ward noted the ongoing pressures on community paediatrics (including autism and developmental assessments) from the pandemic and reduced assessment space. There is a recovery plan in place but there continues to be a substantial wait, as the team prioritise safeguarding and looked after children.

**Child Protection Conferencing Annual Report**

Douglas Sinclair, Head of Childrens Safeguarding, presented the highlights of the 2020-21 Annual Report. Douglas flagged that following the use of digital technology to facilitate child protection conferences during the pandemic, the service would continue to use a hybrid model where agencies can attend virtually. The Board noted that the CP Unit is within range of its targets for the majority of performance indicators. The report also identified the team’s challenges to address, including: ensuring agency reports are consistently prepared and shared in advance of the conference; providing families with essential information in a way that they understand; ensuring GDPR compliance in all written information provided for conferences; and considering reasons why the proportion of disabled children subject of a CP Plan remains disproportionately low, compared to nationally.

The Board discussed the ESCC approach to ensuring that they have the ‘right children, on the right plan, for the right amount of time’.

Douglas reiterated the importance of agencies submitting reports in advance of CP meetings and noted that the CP Unit are following up with individual managers when this is not happening. The Chair also asked that this is followed by the Steering Group in September.

**Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) Annual Report**

Sam Efde presented the annual LADO report, which details the work of the team to provide independent advice to employers or agencies when a concern has been raised about an adult who works or volunteers in a role where they have contact with children. The Board noted how The pandemic has impacted significantly on referrals to the LADO service with reduced referrals from Education settings and Sports.

The Board also noted that safer recruitment continues to be an issue for agencies with the LADO team stepping up their training offer to meet demand. Training has also been offered to faith groups, employment agencies and Sports settings to promote learning and raise awareness of the LADO role. The Chair offered the partnerships support to the LADO team’s efforts to engage with faith groups and other out of school settings.

**Introduction to the new Serious Violence duty**

Justine Armstrong-Smith, Safer Communities Manager, presented an overview of the Serious Violence Duty and the implications for the ESSCP. The Board were informed of the requirement for local areas to formulate and implement a strategy to prevent and reduce serious violence (which includes knife crime, county lines drug dealing). The Board noted that there has been a Violence Reduction Partnership in East Sussex for a while which has focused on serious violence hotspots, including those in Eastbourne and Hastings, which brings together communities to troubleshoot. Justine informed the Board that the local rate for serious violence offenders/victims was highest in the 18-24 year old group. The Board discussed the overlaps with the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation work, contextual safeguarding, and work between child and adult services on transitions.

**Tackling Child Exploitation Support Programme – Research in Practice**

Anna Racher, from the organisation Research in Practice, attended the Board to talk about the work undertaken with the MACE strategic group to strengthen local arrangements to tackle child exploitation. Anna explained the focus has been on ‘building bridges’ between partner agencies, encouraging partners to build on their strengths in working with families, and considering how agencies can reflect on local practice to ensure they act with purpose. An outcome of the work has been to unlock local intelligence data to support the disruption of child exploitation – this includes agreeing common aims, widening MACE membership to include Criminal Justice representation, and developing a partnership intelligence policy. Board members considered this work in a breakout session, where members were asked: “*what is the role of the Partnership in navigating a pan-Sussex strategic response to a localised operational problem”.*

**Other business**

* Board members were reminded that NHS England are leading the re-commissioning of the sexual abuse referral centre services in Sussex - the Partnership will be formally consulted as part of the tendering process.
* The Board were informed that the ESSCP has been working with Safer Adults Board, and other local partnerships, to develop a Partnership Protocol, setting out how the partnerships will work together on areas of joint interest and share learning.
* The Chair thanked Stuart Gallimore for his service to children and families locally during his time as Director of Children’s Services. Board members echoed the Chair’s thanks and wished Stuart well in the future.