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 **11 November 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.

**Child Y Local Safeguarding Practice Review**

Board members discussed the learning from the draft Child Y Local Safeguarding Practice Review: this was the case of a seven-year-old child who attempted to take their own life at the family home. Sixteen months earlier they had made allegations that a family member had sexually abused them. Board members noted key learning arising, including:

* the importance of communicating with children about their world – professionals need to be reflective of the child’s priorities, rather than adhere to an adult assumption of what the child requires.
* More judicious use of Care Planning Forums when there is a lack of clarity about what the options are in reducing risk within families.
* Effective planning, assessment and recording at all stages of the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) process
* The importance of emotional intelligence and empathy in strengthening trauma informed practice with clients, to improve working relationships with families.

The Board accepted the recommendations in the report, and the action plan to take forward learning from the report. The Board also supported the proposal to publish the report anonymously to ensure the future wellbeing of the child and their family. Board members noted that a learning briefing, to be shared with staff, will be published in the New Year.

**Public Health Annual Report – impact of COVID**

Ben Brown, Consultant in Public Health, presented the Public Health Report for 2020/21, which focused on the wider impact of Covid-19. The report noted that whilst COVID-19 presented an immediate health crisis, many of the inequalities it has exposed require a long-term solution focussed on reducing inequalities in health, which requires reducing inequalities in wealth, access to decent housing, education and jobs. The Board discussed that the full impact of COVID on children and young people will not be known for some time, however agreed it has had an immediate impact on mental health. The board noted additional funding allocated for mental health, however this is not substantial and will require MA working to maximise resources.

**Update from the A&E/CAMHS/Education information sharing Task & Finish Group**

Gail Gowland, Head of Safeguarding at East Sussex Healthcare Trust (ESHT), provided an update on work to establish a pathway to share information from A&E settings in East Sussex with schools, where a child presents with mental health or self-harm concerns. The Board noted the aim of the pathway is to support children’s wellbeing, welfare and access to education. By sharing a child’s mental health assessment with the school, relevant support or liaison with other services can be implemented in a timely way and in some cases help safeguard the child. The Board noted sharing of information is consent based. The Chair commended the work of the group and the positive outcomes for children achieved.

**Update from the Public Law Working Group**

Andrea Holtham, Co-Chair of the Sussex Family Justice Board and Service Manager in CAFCASS, outlined the key challenges arising from the increasing number of children and families subject to public and private law proceedings. The Board noted, the impact of these challenges on children and families due to the delays in the system – including the lack of permanence and stability, where adoption panels are delayed or missed, and children exposed ongoing conflict. The Chair invited board members to identify where the Partnership can escalate or support resolution of issues.

**Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) Annual Report 2020/21**

Cynthia Florian, Chair of the Sussex CDOP, presented the annual report of the Panel, noting that CDOP was notified of 54 deaths of children living in Sussex in 2020-21 – this was the lowest number to date in the 11 years since the panels were established. The Board were informed that a third of child deaths reviewed in 2020/21 were found to have ‘modifiable’ factors - those where, if actions could be taken through national or local interventions, the risk of future child deaths could be reduced.

The Board noted the Pan Sussex CDOPs concerns, arising from the CDOP’s review work, regarding diversity and inclusion, services for parents who misuse substances, and professional’s understanding of working with children with complex neuro disabilities. The CDOP chair was asked to provide specific examples of these concerns so that a Pan Sussex/East Sussex response could be followed up.

The Board also discussed the impact on wellbeing of staff who respond to child deaths. A board member recommended ‘[First Hand’ a resource for anyone affected by witnessing suicide](https://first-hand.org.uk/).

**Any other Business and Critical Service Issues**

* Board members were informed of the substantial rise in case review activity, that is not only having a significant impact on CRG members and the ESSCP Business Unit, but also safeguarding leads in agencies.
* Board members noted the Lansdowne Annual Report, Safeguarding Annual Report, and ESSCP Annual Report which were circulated for information.
* Board members were asked to publicise the call for [fathers, and non-birthing partners, to take part in local research to understand the challenges about their engagement in services](https://www.esscp.org.uk/hearing-the-views-of-fathers-and-non-birthing-parents/).