



## **PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**TUESDAY, 19 NOVEMBER 2024**

**10.30 am COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES**

MEMBERSHIP - Councillor Johanna Howell (Chair)  
Councillors John Ungar (Vice Chair), Colin Belsey, Charles Clark,  
Anne Cross, Kathryn Field, Nuala Geary, Peter Pragnell, Stephen Shing,  
Colin Swansborough and Trevor Webb

John Hayling, Parent Governor Representative  
Maria Cowler, Roman Catholic Diocese representative  
Hurst, Diocese of Chichester Representative

### **A G E N D A**

1. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 September 2024 (*Pages 3 - 10*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosures of interests  
Disclosures by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct.
4. Urgent items  
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the appropriate part of the agenda. Any members who wish to raise urgent items are asked, wherever possible, to notify the Chair before the start of the meeting. In so doing, they must state the special circumstances which they consider justify the matter being considered urgent.
5. East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Annual Report (*Pages 11 - 62*)
6. Transition in services (*Pages 63 - 70*)
7. Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) (*Pages 71 - 112*)
8. Work programme (*Pages 113 - 134*)
9. Loneliness Stewardship Group (*Pages 135 - 144*)
10. ASC Peer Review and CQC preparations (*Pages 145 - 154*)
11. Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

PHILIP BAKER

Deputy Chief Executive  
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent  
LEWES BN7 1UE

11 November 2024

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## PEOPLE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the People Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 24 September 2024.

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PRESENT Councillors Johanna Howell (Chair), John Ungar (Vice Chair), Colin Belsey, Charles Clark, Anne Cross, Kathryn Field, Peter Pragnell, Stephen Shing, Colin Swansborough, Trevor Webb, Eleanor Kirby-Green (substitute for Councillor Nuala Geary) and John Hayling (Parent Governor Representative) and Maria Cowler (Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Representative)

LEAD MEMBERS Councillor Standley  
Councillors Bowdler and Maynard (attended online)

ALSO PRESENT Carolyn Fair Director of Children's Services  
Elizabeth Funge, Assistant Director Education  
Seona Douglas, Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board  
Ian Gutsell, Chief Finance Officer  
Rachel Jospeh, Strategic Lead: Inclusion and AP  
Emma King, Public Health Consultant  
Michaela Richards, Head of Safer Communities  
Sarah Russell, Assistant Director or Planning, Performance & Engagement  
Becky Shaw, Chief Executive  
Lucy Spencer, Safeguarding Adults Board Development Manager  
Rachel Sweeney, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser

### 10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

10.1 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2024 as a correct record.

### 11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

11.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Geary and Lesley Hurst. Councillor Kirby-Green attended as a substitute for Councillor Geary.

### 12. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

12.1 Councillor Webb declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest under item 6, Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources, as the Labour spokesperson for community engagement and anti-poverty at Hastings Borough Councillor and as a trustee of His Place voluntary organisation. Councillor Webb also declared the personal, non-prejudicial interest under item 8, Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report, as a trustee of His Place voluntary organisation.

### 13. URGENT ITEMS

13.1 There were no urgent items.

### 14. SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS SCRUTINY REVIEW

14.1 The Assistant Director Education introduced the report and updated action plan which set out progress made against the recommendations of the School Exclusions Scrutiny Review. The report also provided an update on local Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) provision.

14.2 The Assistant Director noted work across the Department to take forward the agreed action plan, including work with schools to build a sense of collective ownership, and noted that although there had been increases in the number of exclusions, this was not as significant as what was showing in national data, despite national issues also having an impact in East Sussex.

14.3 After the current PRU, College Central, was judged inadequate by Ofsted in February 2024, there had been challenges in delivering quality provision for the most vulnerable children and in delivering preventative work on exclusions. The Assistant Director noted that the Department for Education had agreed to transfer this provision to London South East Academy Trust, which would take place in 2025.

14.4 The Committee thanked officers for the report and discussed the following:

- **Progress against the action plan** – The Committee sought assurance on work underway to address actions that were rated amber in the action plan. The Strategic Lead: Inclusion and Alternative Provision noted challenges with the change in PRU and the delay with this process due to the general election and assured the Committee that the Department was working towards these. The Lead Member for Education, Inclusion and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) noted that work with Department for Education had impacted on this timeline, but assured the Committee that continued progress would be reported at the next update.
- **SEND pupils** – The Committee enquired about the number of SEND pupils with a permanent exclusion, as well as work to support SEND pupils who had been or were at risk of permanent exclusion. The Strategic Lead responded that in the last academic year, 64% of students who were permanently excluded were SEND. A key focus was to support schools in delivering a strong SEND provision, which would in turn benefit all children. She also noted most pupils at risk of permanent exclusion presented with additional needs, including social, emotional and mental health, autism spectrum disorder, communication, and processing skills and there were workshops and training available to schools to address these needs. The Assistant Director added that the alternative provision strategy aimed at meeting the needs of all children, with different tiers and levels of intervention available. The Department also worked with schools to ensure that, where possible, alternative provision was tailored to support any additional needs, including those identified by schools but without a formal diagnosis.
- **Exclusion data** – The Committee sought clarification on the number of permanent exclusions detailed in the report and heard that for 2023/24 there were 37 primary and 93 secondary permanent exclusions, and for 2022/23 there were 33 primary and 79 secondary permanent exclusion in East Sussex. The Committee welcomed news that this data was more positive than national exclusion data and asked how this had been achieved. The Assistant Director noted that although national complex reasons were mirrored locally in levels of demand across services, work had begun locally years earlier which was now having an impact. This included rethinking responses to exclusion and working with schools to develop a collaborative approach. The Strategic Lead noted the ongoing challenges locally, including higher number of permanent exclusions in Hastings, Rother and Rye, but that schools were working in partnership to support pupils and families.
- **Support for and engagement with parents** – The Committee enquired about support and engagement with parents when a pupil is at risk of permanent exclusion, including the process if parents do not wish to engage. The Strategic Lead noted the work of support practitioners who worked with families when a child has been permanently excluded and that these were often positive relationships as they are independent of the decision. Communication and

support could also take place through social workers where this applied to a family.

- **PRU provision** – The Committee enquired about PRU provision, including available accommodation. The Assistant Director noted that current work to transfer provision, including securing more permanent and secure provision, included accommodation in Hastings, Eastbourne, and Newhaven. In response to a question about provision in other parts of the county, the Assistant Director noted that buildings were in areas of highest need, but a range of provision was available across the county, including outreach services and in school provision.

14.5 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and to receive a further update report in six months time.

## 15. RECONCILING POLICY, PERFORMANCE AND RESOURCES (RPPR)

15.1 The Chief Executive introduced the report which included in its appendices a report to be considered by Cabinet on 26 September detailing the latest financial outlook, in the context of the projected revenue outturn for 2024/25. The report outlined the Council's response to the significant financial pressures, including a recommendation to begin public consultation on a range of specific potential savings. The Chief Executive outlined the next steps in the RPPR process, including considering the impact of any announcements in the national Budget which was expected on the 30 October.

15.2 The Director of Children's Services Department (CSD) highlighted the key pressures in Children's Services, including the impact of growth and complexity in need, particularly for care placements and SEND support, which had subsequently increased demand for home to school transport. The increase in demand and costs were reflective of national trends. The Director noted the local responses to these pressures, including work on prevention and early intervention, as well as national, local and regional work on the care market. The Department was also considering the potential for savings across support services and non-statutory services, as well as opportunities for consolidation, although there were currently no identified savings proposals that required public consultation.

15.3 The Assistant Director Planning, Performance and Engagement outlined the pressures in Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH), particularly on the community care budget, due to increased demand and complexity of need, cost of living challenges and increased levels of debt. The Assistant Director noted the Department's legal duty under the Care Act 2014 to provide care and support to those eligible and outlined the areas which had been protected as far as possible when identifying savings. 11 public consultations were due to be launched in October; 7 of these would cover community based directly provided services for older people and adults with a learning disability and proposals included reprovisioning services for people with eligible needs. The other consultations focussed on preventative commissioned services including supported accommodation, housing support and drug and alcohol services. Consultations would be used to develop equality impact assessments (EQIAs), which would be considered as part of the decision making process.

15.4 The Chief Finance Officer outlined the financial position which included a significant gap and noted that similar pressures were being experienced by other councils.

15.5 The Committee asked a number of questions regarding the information provided in the report including:

- **Council budget** – The Committee sought clarification on the increasing projected deficit for the current financial year. The Chief Finance Officer commented that, at quarter 1, services were forecasting significant in-year overspends linked to continued pressures and demand on services. As a result, it

was expected that further use of reserves would be needed for the current financial year. He noted that modelling on the Medium Term Financial Plan was continuing, and additional information would be presented at the November Cabinet meeting.

- **Savings proposals** – The Committee asked about the current budget for services identified in the proposals for consultation and enquired if alternative, more cost efficient ways of running these services had been explored. The Assistant Director noted that different models of running services, including Linden Court, were being explored, including through the consultation process. A question was also asked about how officers had identified these areas for savings in ASCH, and if more information could be shared on any initial considerations. In response, the Chief Executive recognised the potential impact these savings could have on vulnerable people and outlined that the proposals were made in light of significant financial pressures, and the need to set a balanced budget, and that protecting services with the most preventative impact had been prioritised. The Chief Executive welcomed any suggestions for alternative areas to consider for potential savings and clarified that the proposals were included in the report in order to begin consultation processes but that a further detail on the budgets could be provided outside of the meeting.
- **Consultation process** – The Committee sought assurance that the consultation process would seek to capture the views of vulnerable adults and older people and commented that those affected by the proposals did not always have the same advocacy as people engaged with other service areas, or the ability to engage digitally. In response, the Assistant Director noted different ways (including non-digitally) that people could engage with the consultations and recognised the importance of hearing a range of voices. She noted that there would be engagement with advocacy groups, forums, associations, families and carers to achieve this. In response to a concern that consultations would not affect decisions about savings, the Lead Member for ASCH commented on the value of consultations which had historically contributed to how service changes were implemented, and that it was important people engaged with these. In response to a question about the cost of undertaking consultations, the Chief Executive noted the legal duty to consult on these proposals and that the cost would primarily be staff time.
- **Equality considerations** – The Committee asked about the impact of proposed savings on vulnerable people, including people who had previously been impacted by service closures and changes, and if more information could be provided on initial considerations for equality impact assessments (EQIAs). In response, the Chief Executive explained that an initial EQIA had been carried out to consider the impact on people sharing protected characteristics and emphasised that people eligible under the Care Act would still receive a service. The Assistant Director added that more detailed EQIAs were underway, and staff were working with clients to understand need and any potential impacts and provide advocacy for those less able to engage. It was recognised that suggested alternative services would not be suitable for all clients, but a range of services would be available, and the consultation process would increase understanding of need.
- **Alternative ASCH services** - The Committee sought more information on the ASCH savings proposals which detailed alternative services and the potential for reduction in choice for clients. The Assistant Director clarified that, although some options would be removed, alternatives such as direct payments could provide different options for some clients. A mapping exercise was underway to identify available services that could be viable alternatives, including those provided by the VCSE sector and private providers. Appropriate alternative services would be dependent on individual circumstances.

- **Impact of proposals on partners** – The Committee raised concerns about the impact proposed savings could have on other organisations, including the NHS and district and borough councils. The Assistant Director recognised the potential impacts on partners, especially in regard to services for supported housing and homelessness support and noted that the Council was working closely with district and borough councils to identify potential impacts and avoid systemic pressures where possible. However, ASCH's priority was to meet its legal duty to support people eligible under the Care Act.
- **Home to school transport** - The Committee commented on the high costs of home to school transport and sought more information on plans to review this service. The Director of CSD responded that this was an area of continued focus, and the Department was reviewing the provision of solo transport, including shared transport opportunities and public transport, as well as opportunities to commission transport in a different way. The Committee recognised the complexity of this service, including the need to provide transport to schools identified in Education, Health and Care Plans which could be a long distance from a child's home, due to individual needs. The Director of CSD recognised the value of placing children in schools close to their home and noted work to increase inclusion across all schools so that they were better placed to meet the needs of their pupils.
- **Income generation** – A question was asked about plans for empty premises if proposals to close day services went ahead. In response, the Chief Finance Officer commented that a property asset management strategy was in place to ensure best value for money approaches were taken for council properties that were no longer needed.
- **Lobbying** – The Committee agreed that lobbying central government was an ongoing priority in response to financial pressures, including for the need to provide funding for preventative services.

15.6 The Lead Member for Education and ISEND commented on the difficult decisions needed to respond to departmental pressures and overspend and welcomed the input of Members in identifying any alternative areas for savings for consideration as well as contributing to lobbying efforts.

15.7 The Lead Member for ASCH noted the challenges arising from the demography of East Sussex and thanked officers for their work on the process so far. He also commented that the priority of the Department was delivering a good service to clients, which could be achieved without some of the physical buildings.

15.8 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report.

## 16. WORK PROGRAMME

16.1 The Chair introduced the report which outlined the Committee's latest work programme, noting that the Committee was meeting in October to discuss this in more detail.

### Forward plan

16.2 The Committee reviewed the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions.

### Work Programme

16.3 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the updated work programme and to review the work programme in more detail at the upcoming awayday.

## 17. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD - ANNUAL REPORT

17.1 The Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) introduced the report which outlined the work of the SAB for 2023-24 and set out the Board's priorities. The Chair informed the Committee that the SAB now had a dashboard which was presented at each meeting to view key data on safeguarding and identify any key themes or issues.

17.2 The Committee welcomed the report and asked questions and made comments on the following areas:

- **Safeguarding referrals from the NHS** – The Committee noted the increased number of safeguarding referrals from the NHS and asked if this was in line with what the SAB expected. In response, the Chair noted that there had been work to increase awareness of safeguarding issues and processes amongst NHS staff and there was an agreed strategy in place to ensure staff received the right support to identify and make referrals.
- **Drug and alcohol safeguarding concerns** - In response to a question on at what point multi-disciplinary care teams identified safeguarding concerns in relation to drug and alcohol, the Chair commented that a written response, in collaboration with relevant partner organisations, would be provided after the meeting.
- **Unpaid carers** – The Committee sought more information about the SAB's work with unpaid carers. The Chair clarified that work was focussed on ensuring staff considered unpaid carers when there were safeguarding concerns and enquiries, including supporting carers to access care assessments and available support. In response to a question on where referrals came from and how these were communicated to carers, the Chair noted that safeguarding concerns could be reported by anyone in the community, including neighbours and friends, and reassured the Committee that staff would utilise sensitive language when talking to carers. The Chair noted the Board's priority to increase knowledge of safeguarding in the community more widely. The Assistant Director, Planning, Performance and Engagement noted ASCH's wider support for and engagement with unpaid carers.

17.3 The Committee thanked the Chair for their work and RESOLVED to note the report.

## 18. ANNUAL REVIEW OF SAFER COMMUNITIES

18.1 The Head of Safer Communities introduced the report which outlined the performance across the Safer Communities Partnership during 2023/24. The Head of Safer Communities commented that the report showed that East Sussex remains a relatively safe place to live and visit, with crime rates below the national average, although there were pressures in some areas, such as housing and rough sleeping, and reinforced the importance of partnerships to address these challenges across the county.

18.2 The Head of Safer Communities outlined the strategic priorities of the Safer Communities Partnership, as well as key work including tackling violent extremism, drug and alcohol, and serious violence. She also noted that the Council had received White Ribbon re-accreditation as part of its commitment to tackle violence against women and girls and informed the Committee about an upcoming pan-Sussex domestic abuse conference that Members would be welcome to attend.

18.3 The Committee asked questions and made comments on the following areas:

- **Domestic abuse** – The Committee discussed the different types of domestic abuse and asked about older people's awareness of their rights against mental abuse, noting that some older people may not view this as abuse. The Head of



Safer Communities noted the challenges in ensuring people were aware of cohesive control and work on the White Ribbon accreditation included raising awareness of this through accessible language.

- **Perceptions of crime** – The Committee discussed perceptions of crime in local areas and asked what was being done to make people feel safe. The Head of Safer Communities commented that the Partnership aimed to take an evidenced based approach in responding to crime and provided communities with facts, however noted the difficulty in changing perceptions, even when crime had reduced in an area. An annual public survey aimed to identify these perceptions and noted that anti-social behaviour and anti-social driving remained a priority in responses. The Committee noted these concerns and the importance of work across the Council to address these, including improving road safety.
- **Knife Crime** – The Committee discussed knife crime and sought clarification on the future of the Habitual Knife Carriers programme. The Head of Community Safety noted that although government funding for the programme was coming to an end, it would continue due to its positive impact. The Government had announced the establishment of Youth Hubs, and it was hoped this would also support work to prevent and tackle knife crime, but details on this had not yet been published.
- **Violent extremism** – The Committee asked what work was taking place to educate children about violent extremism, including in the context of recent national riots. The Head of Safer Communities noted that although riots had not occurred in East Sussex, multi-agency preparations had been in place. The Committee also heard that resources produced by the Department for Education were shared locally with designated safeguarding leads and schools to support conversations and Prevent Officers visited schools to talk to children about extremism.
- **Support for migrants** – Following the discussion on recent national riots, a question was asked about work to ensure migrants and asylum seekers felt protected and safe in local communities. In response, the Head of Safer Communities noted that riots/civil unrest could be triggered at any time in response to an event and exploited by organised groups. The Partnership worked with the Police to monitor community tensions and shared intelligence with partners and the Home Office. There was also strong liaison with local community and faith groups. The Assistant Director noted the Council's work on understanding community tensions and countering extremism. The Assistant Director informed the Committee of the Council's wider support to migrants, including the Council's work with partners to address issues through the East Sussex Migration Partnership and schemes such as Homes for Ukraine.

18.4 The Committee RESOLVED to note the report and agreed to consider it in further detail at its upcoming away day.

## 19. HEALTHY AGEING SCRUTINY REVIEW

19.1 Councillor Ungar, as Chair of the Review Board, introduced the report. The Review Board was established to look at how the Council could respond to the challenges of an ageing population and support people in East Sussex to age well.

19.2 Overall, the Board found that supporting healthy ageing was a priority for the Department and work was driven by strong evidence. The Board also found that increased demand on statutory services, although more likely, was not an inevitable part of ageing and preventative actions, as well as work to tackle ageism, could enable people to age well. The Department should continue to identify and address barriers to healthy ageing initiatives. The Board also recognised the vital role of partnerships to support this work.

19.3 The Chair thanked the Members who took part in the review and the officers who provided support.

19.4 Councillors Pragnell and Webb, Members of the Review Board, noted the wide range of evidence considered, including previous scrutiny reports, that contributed to the Board's findings and recommendations and thanked officers for their support.

19.5 The Committee welcomed the report and asked if poor mental health and bereavement had been considered as a barrier to physical activity. In response, the Consultant in Public Health noted that this was an important consideration and there were many ways to encourage people to be more active, including linking in with groups in the community, and it could be very positive to work with bereavement groups to embed physical activity into their work.

19.6 The Committee RESOLVED to agree the Scrutiny Review report and its recommendations, and to receive six and twelve month monitoring updates on the Review.

The meeting ended at 1.33 pm

Councillor Johanna Howell (Chair)

The meeting ended at 1.33 pm.

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>19 November 2024</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>Detective Chief Superintendent Richard McDonagh Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police Service East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair and Delegated Safeguarding Partner</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2023/24</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To advise People Scrutiny Committee members of the multi-agency arrangements in place to safeguard children in East Sussex</b>

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**RECOMMENDATIONS** The People Scrutiny Committee is recommended to receive and consider the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report for 2023-2024

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## **1. Background**

1.1 [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) was refreshed in December 2023 and sets out the arrangements for cooperation between organisations and agencies to improve the wellbeing of children. This places a duty on police, Integrated Care Boards and the local authority to make arrangements to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

1.2 The publication of Working Together 2023 provided the opportunity to review the partnership arrangements in East Sussex and across the pan Sussex footprint. The Lead Safeguarding Partners, Delegated Safeguarding Partners and partnership members undertook extensive work to develop and shape the future partnership arrangements.

1.3 Section 4 of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Annual Report for 2023-2024 includes an overview of the arrangements in place during that period and also the revised [ESSCP Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) that came in to force on 2 September 2024.

1.4 In order to bring transparency for children, families and professionals, Working Together 2023 sets out that the safeguarding partners must publish a report at least once in every 12-month period. The report must set out what they have done as a result of the arrangements, including child safeguarding practice reviews, and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

1.5 The 2023/24 ESSCP Annual Report focuses on partnership evidence, learning, impact and assurance.

## **2. Supporting information**

2.1 The ESSCP Annual Report 2023/24 outlines the work undertaken by the partnership, highlighting key learning and achievements in section 2, which includes.

- Four multi-agency Rapid Reviews conducted in response to serious incidents; two progressed to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR), learning from the other two shared via learning briefings and action plans developed. One ongoing combined LCSPR/Domestic Homicide Review from 2022/23. Two LCSPRs published. One completed LCSPR awaiting publication due to pending family input.
- 718 multi-agency staff attended 50 training courses. 100% of evaluations returned rated courses as Excellent or Good.
- Three multi-agency audits held, which focussed on the quality and robustness of Strategy Discussion meetings; the safeguarding of Children Missing Education; and child protection plans for older teenagers.
- Development of pan Sussex and local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements in response to Working together 2023.
- Two learning and impact events focussing on the impact of the multi-agency response to suspected child suicide and the national and local learning in relation to children and domestic abuse.
- Additional safeguarding projects covering topics such as pan Sussex information sharing, engagement of voluntary and community sector partners and online Safety.

2.2 Section 5 of the annual report sets out how the partnership uses evidence to determine its priorities, shape the way multi-agency partners have taken actions or adopted specific practice models and evaluate the impact of partnership work.

2.3 The partnership's commitment to creating and strengthening a learning culture across all agencies in East Sussex who work with children and young people is highlighted in section 6. The partnership supports a culture which is open, able to challenge all partner agencies, able to identify learning, improve, and then evaluate effectiveness.

2.4 Section 7 of the report aims to convey the impact of multi-agency and partnership activity on practice and outcomes for children and families, with the final section, 8, detailing the activity of the ESSCP to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding practice through evidence-based auditing, performance management, and self-analysis.

2.5 The ESSCP Annual Report 2023/24 has been published on the [ESSCP website](#), and a copy of the published report shared with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the What Works Centre for Children's Social Care as per chapter 2 of Working Together 2023. A young person's accessible version of the report will also be published on the ESSCP website.

### **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 An effective Safeguarding Children Partnership is in place in East Sussex.

3.2 The People Scrutiny Committee is requested to receive and consider the ESSCP Annual Report 2023/24 and to note the new partnership arrangements in place from 2 September 2024 and the continuing agreed priorities for 2023-2026:

- **Safeguarding children in schools** including safeguarding children who are electively home educated, excluded from school, and missing education.

- **Safeguarding adolescents** including adolescents who are criminally exploited, self-harm and/or express suicidal thoughts, child to parent abuse, and transitional safeguarding.
- **Embedding learning** and evidencing impact from case review and audit work, including ensuring that learning from the 2020-23 priority on safeguarding infants was embedded.

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**East Sussex**  
**Safeguarding Children**  
**Partnership**  
**Annual Report 2023/24**

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## Foreword

We are delighted to present this annual report on behalf of the three statutory partners of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership.

We hope you find the report useful in understanding the partnership's work and celebrating some of the successes. These successes are only possible through the dedication and diligence of the many people working with children, young people and families across a range of agencies.

We continue to keep children at the centre of our thinking and delivery at all levels. Critical to this is promoting professional curiosity across the multi-agency workforce and ensuring the lived experience of the child is recognised.

On behalf of the partnership, we hope you find this report to be informative, and open and honest regarding our achievements and challenges over the last financial year.



**Becky Shaw**

**Chief Executive, East Sussex  
County Council**



**Adam Doyle**

**NHS Sussex (Sussex Integrated  
Care Board)**



**Chief Constable Jo Shiner**

**Sussex Police**

# 1. Introduction

Welcome to the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership 2023-2024 annual report. As Delegated Safeguarding Partners we are committed to improving outcomes for children and families in East Sussex by embedding learning and sustaining improvements in our local safeguarding system by ‘holding up a collective mirror’ to practice on the ground.

We continue to encourage a culture which is open and able to challenge all partner agencies to identify learning, improve, and then establish effectiveness - ultimately demonstrating impact on outcomes for children. Through risk analysis and decision making at the right levels we are proactive in identifying emerging challenges and respond as a multi-agency group. The revised Working Together 2023 guidance is an opportunity to reflect on how, through continuous improvement in practice and our collective service delivery, we will develop the role of the partnership and lead partners.

The partnership delivers and supports extensive activities within its financial envelope and throughout this report you will see the evidence and impact of these endeavours. As a collective group we will be ensuring that the partnership continues to make best use of its resources to meet statutory requirements and support positive outcomes for children.

In 2024-2025 we are excited to further explore the partnership’s role in the oversight of how safeguarding partners seek and utilise feedback from children and families to inform their work and influence service provision. We are also excited to develop our engagement with Education partners and Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise organisations.

A priority for the remainder of 2024 is to formalise the partnership’s programme of scrutiny, which includes our approach to commissioning scrutiny activity in response to local trends and learning through a network of independent scrutiny professionals, the development of the Lay Member programme, and specific activity to strengthen the voice of child.

Thank you for your ongoing support, your hard work and commitment to this vital area of work to improve the lives of our children and their families in East Sussex.



**Naomi Ellis**

**Deputy Chief Nursing Officer,  
Director of Patient Experience  
& Involvement, NHS Sussex**



**Carolyn Fair**

**Director of Children’s  
Services, East Sussex County  
Council**



**Richard McDonagh**

**Chief Superintendent, Head of  
Public Protection, Sussex  
Police**

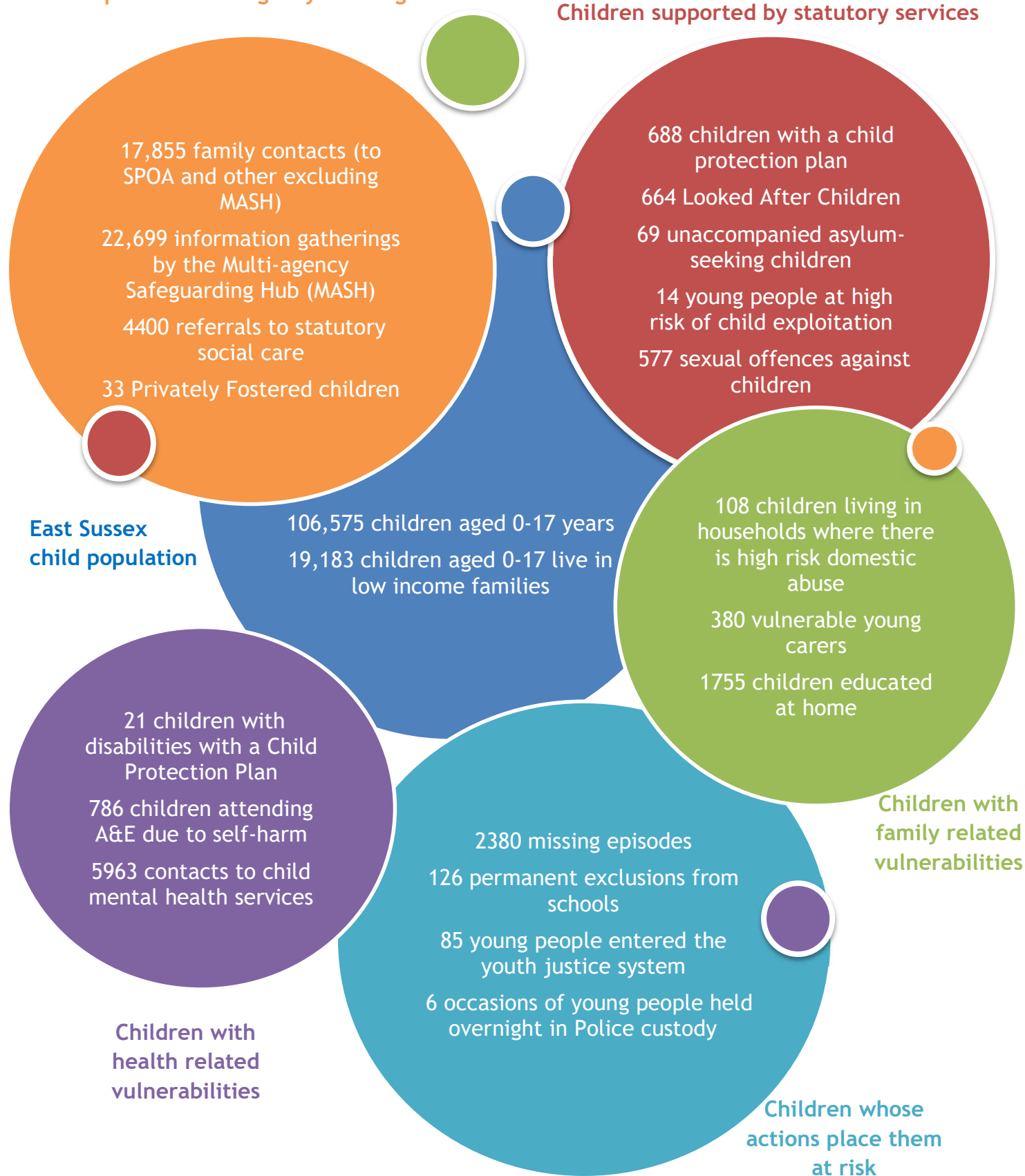
## 2. Key Learning & Achievements 2023/24



### 3. Safeguarding Context 2023/24

#### Impact of multi-agency working

#### Children supported by statutory services



See **Appendix A** for more detailed information.

## 4. Partnership Arrangements

### 4.1 Overview of the Partnership

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) acts as a forum for the lead safeguarding partner organisations ([Sussex Police](#), [East Sussex County Council](#), and the [NHS Sussex](#)) to:

- provide strong, collaborative leadership and timely decision-making to ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency working to protect children from abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- engage with, and develop the role of, wider local organisations and agencies in the coordination of safeguarding services in (the geographical local authority borders of) East Sussex.
- implement local, regional, and national learning, including from serious child safeguarding incidents.

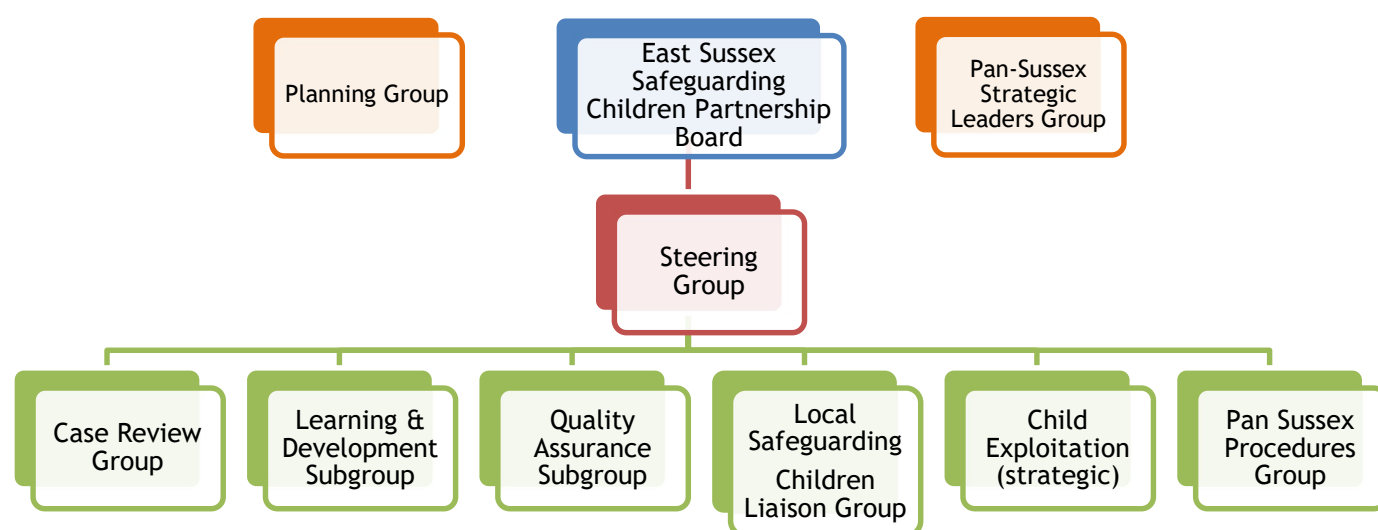
### 4.2 Partnership Structure and Subgroups

During 2023/24 the Partnership Board was chaired by an Independent Chair. The Board met four times a year and included the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) and relevant agencies (full list of board members is included in Appendix B). The Independent Chair also chaired the ESSCP Steering Group which met four times a year. The Independent Chair fulfilled the role of the Independent Scrutineer and acted as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection to drive continuous improvement.

Also during 2023/24 the three ESSCP DSPs and the Independent Chair formed the Planning Group, which likewise met quarterly. The Planning Group's purpose is to discuss and agree the short-term agenda for the work of the partnership and address any emerging safeguarding risks and issues requiring strategic input. In addition to this, the Independent Chair and DSPs across East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton & Hove met as a pan Sussex Strategic Leaders Group. The group's purpose was to focus on setting the 'road map' for future partnership development and identify shared safeguarding priorities and opportunities across the three areas.

The Partnership has a range of subgroups that lead on areas of ESSCP business and are crucial in ensuring that the Partnership's priorities are delivered. These groups ensure that the Partnership really makes a difference to local practice and to the outcomes for children and young people. Each subgroup has a clear remit and a transparent mechanism for reporting to the ESSCP, and each subgroup's terms of reference and membership are reviewed annually.

## ESSCP Structure during 2023/24, up to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024:



Terms of Reference for partnership groups are available on the ESSCP's website here: [Subgroups - ESSCP](#)

As noted in last years annual report, at the end of 2022/23 the ESSCP Business Unit sent a questionnaire to all Board and subgroup members to consider the effectiveness of the partnership. Actions taken in response to the feedback includes:

- ✓ The ESSCP Induction Pack has been updated and is sent out to all new members and available to existing members on the partnership website.
- ✓ Past Board, Steering and Liaison Group agenda items, reports and published documents are available to partnership members on the partnership website. Alongside this the partnership Digest newsletter provides local and national information and signposting.
- ✓ All partnership meetings have a formal action log with allocated SMART actions.
- ✓ The DSPs are committed to the continuous development of scrutiny across the partnership and its members, and has a strong focus on 'holding up a mirror' to local practice and the experience of children and families.
- ✓ All partnership meetings have a formal action log with allocated SMART actions.
- ✓ 2024/25 will focus on the engagement of Education partners and consider the implementation of an 'education' subgroup.

### 4.3 Review of Partnership Arrangements

In previous years the Partnership has undertaken a self-assessment as part of the activity to review the effectiveness of local partnership arrangements, using approaches such as the '*six steps for independent scrutiny of safeguarding children partnership arrangements*' developed by the University of Bedfordshire and the National Safeguarding Panel's '*reflective questions for safeguarding partners*', as set out in their annual report.



The publication of Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 in December 2023 provided the opportunity to review the partnership arrangements in East Sussex and across the pan Sussex footprint. The Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs), DSPs and partnership members undertook extensive work to develop and shape the future partnership arrangements. This included consultation with partnership agencies, through discussion and activities with the Partnership Board and Steering Group. In addition to this, communications have been shared with wider relevant agencies, such as education and Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, to invite them to collaborate with the safeguarding leads to explore how they will work together to improve outcomes for children and families.

For many years there have been common formal child protection procedures across Sussex and colleagues within each of the three partnerships have shared information and insight on an informal basis and developed some strong common processes and protocols, most recently in response to child suicides over the last two years. Through the new arrangements LSPs are committed to working ever more closely together to develop the strongest possible arrangements to ensure consistency in strategic approach while continuing to engage local partners, including partners in education.

In May 2024 LSPs proposed a partnership structure with the following components:

- (i) A single **Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE)** responsible for determining multi-agency safeguarding strategy and agreeing models for multi-agency working to safeguard children and young people.
- (ii) Three **Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LSCPs)** which each reflect the role of the SSCE while exercising separate responsibility for decision making about individual cases of serious incidents, rapid reviews and local practice reviews, through Case Review Committees. DSPs will be the Partnership Chair, reporting annually to the Sussex LSPs, meeting together as a group to review the effectiveness of arrangements across Sussex. The three partnerships to continue to make arrangements for the independent scrutiny of the operation of local partnerships.
- (iii) Three local **Partnership Groups (PGs)** which support the work of each LSCP, with a rotating DSP chair. These groups replace the current Boards and Steering groups. The broad membership of the PGs will be consistent across Sussex comprising representatives of local statutory, voluntary and community sector organisations. The engagement of education partners in each area will be strengthened building on existing local arrangements.

Following this proposal and further consultation with partnership members, revised [ESSCP Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#) came in to force on 2 September 2024, ensuring the requirements set out in Working Together 2023 are fully met. Through further engagement the ESSCP will define what agencies they require to work with them as ‘relevant agencies’, setting out any funding or resources agreed in connection with the arrangements, plus the approach to the monitoring of ‘relevant agencies’ responsibilities. Published multi-agency safeguarding arrangements will be updated throughout this process.

The arrangements will be reviewed annually and take in to account any future updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children. It is expected that a final version of the arrangements will be published in December 2024.

## 4.4 ESSCP Priorities

In March 2023 the ESSCP held an extraordinary Board meeting to discuss local evidence - including learning from case reviews, quality assurance activity, and the voice of children - and propose future priorities for the partnership. Proposed priorities were scoped which clearly identified the evidence to choosing as a priority, the intended impact on practice and outcomes for children, and how success would be evidenced. From the priorities proposed, the DSPs agreed on the following priorities for 2023 -2026:

- **Safeguarding in education** including safeguarding children who are electively home educated, excluded from school, and missing education.
- **Safeguarding adolescents** including adolescents who are criminally exploited, self-harm and/or express suicidal thoughts, child to parent abuse, and transitional safeguarding.
- **Embedding learning** and evidencing impact from case review and audit work, including ensuring that learning from the 2020-23 priority on safeguarding infants was embedded.

## 4.5 Pan Sussex Working

Although the ESSCP's focus is on safeguarding children in East Sussex, it should be expected that child protection and safeguarding procedures continue to be developed at a Pan Sussex level, and opportunities for joined up working across Sussex promoted where appropriate. Examples of Pan Sussex working in 2023/24 include:

- **Pan-Sussex Learning & Development opportunities:**
  - Considerable work has been undertaken to develop learning at a pan Sussex level, and opportunities for joined up working across Sussex are promoted where possible. During 2023/24 pan Sussex training continued with: *Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children* and *Harmful Practices*. From December 2023 pan Sussex Safer Sleeping courses were offered to raise awareness of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome). From January 2024 Suicide Prevention courses continued to run as a pan Sussex offer via Grassroots - with four sessions planned, two focussing on under 16-year-olds and two at 16-18-year-olds.
  - All three partnerships have reciprocal arrangements for shared learning, where certain courses are commissioned by one, but co-funded across the three, such as with *Adulthood (WS)*, *Equalities: Exploring Inclusive Practice - Racial, Ethnic and Religious Diversity (ES)* and *LGBTQ+(B&H)*.
  - Brighton and Hove SCP lead on a pan Sussex 'Virtual' Conference on Child Neglect and Co-existing Factors on November 29th, 2023. This was attended by 185 multi-agency professionals across Sussex, who heard from two keynote speakers - Dr Tracee Green, Head of the Centre for Child Protection and Reader in Child Protection and Social Work at the University of Kent presented *Neglect in the Context of Parenting Assessments & Parenting Capacity* and Dr Sheena Webb, Consultant Clinical Psychologist presented *Trauma Informed Assessment of Neglect Experienced by Children, Young People, and Within Families*. Four breakout sessions were also offered incorporating learning from reviews across Sussex.
- **The Pan-Sussex procedures working group** co-ordinates the development and timely review of policies, procedures and guidance for safeguarding and promoting the welfare



of children and young people across the three Pan-Sussex Safeguarding Partnerships. There is excellent attendance and buy in from all lead agencies and Pan-Sussex Local Authorities. Since March 2023 a number of new policies have been published. These include:

- Pan Sussex Protocol on the Transfer of Young People to Local Authority Accommodation from Police Custody
- Sussex Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews Procedure
- Pregnancy of Children/Young People Under 18 Who Become Parents
- Sussex Joint Protocol to Reduce the Criminalisation of Children in Care and Care Leavers

Over 50 existing policies and procedures were reviewed to ensure they remain current and effective for practitioners across the multi-agency workforce. In addition, the publication of "Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023" necessitated a revision of the group's planner to ensure that adjustments mandated by the updated statutory guidance were promptly addressed and prioritised. The Group actively engages with other pan Sussex committees, groups and forums. For instance, the Group regularly collaborates with the Harmful Practices Working Group on specific policy edits, including this year, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), and alternative medicines.

The group produces a quarterly briefing for all practitioners, summarising changes and new policies, for onward cascading to front line professionals. These can be read online [Welcome to your Pan Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual | Sussex Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures Manual](#). While some practitioners respond to these briefings and limited analytics show visit statistics, assessing the actual impact on safeguarding practice remains challenging.

In July 2023, a survey was conducted; all respondents (58 practitioners) indicated that they find the policies, procedures, and guidance relevant and helpful in their practice. However, 11% of respondents noted that the policies, procedures, and guidance were not written clearly and succinctly. In 2024/25 the procedures will move to a new platform/provider, which will offer the opportunity to review the accessibility of the content. Identifying and establishing alternative hosting arrangements for the procedures presents a critical challenge that the group is actively addressing.

## 4.6 Links to Other Partnerships

The Partnership has formal links with other East Sussex and Pan-Sussex strategic partnerships, namely the Health and Wellbeing Board; Pan Sussex Child Death Review Partnership (CDRP), Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB); Safer Communities Partnership; West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnerships; the Sussex Integrated Care System Children and Young People's Board, Children and Young People Trust (CYPT) and Local Head Teacher Forums. The **East Sussex Partnership Protocol**, which includes a number of the aforementioned partnerships, was refreshed for 2023/24. The protocol is intended to support effective joint working between strategic partnership boards in East Sussex, working together at every level to keep people in East Sussex safe from harm and abuse and improve their health and wellbeing. Links to significant partnership documents are highlighted in Appendix D.

The ESSCP Independent Chair was also the Independent Scrutineer for the West Sussex and Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Boards which enabled and facilitated greater joint working between the three areas. The Chair also maintained regular liaison with other key strategic leaders, for example, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Adult Partnership Chairs and Government inspection bodies. The ESSCP annual report is presented to the East Sussex County Council People Scrutiny Committee and Health and Wellbeing Board, and the East Sussex SAB. The report is also shared with the Safer Communities Board, the Police and Crime Commissioner and other ESSCP member organisations' senior management boards.

The CDRP Chair presented the **Child Death Review Partnership (CDRP) Annual Report** to the ESSCP board in October 2023. Actions undertaken in response to this include activity to improve the sharing of relevant learning with the East Sussex Housing Partnership with regards to room temperature relating to Sudden unexpected infant death (SUID). Also incorporating the CDRP learning from suicides into safeguarding training for Designated Safeguarding Leads in schools.

From August 2023, through partnership working with **Adult Social Care (ASC)** and the **Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)**, the partnership offered free training to the multi-agency audience on *Mental Capacity Act (MCA)* and *Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)*. Additional ASC/SAB training courses that are relevant to the ESSCP audience regularly appear in ESSCP training publicity, such as: *Modern Slavery; Impact of Sexual Violence and Abuse; Responding to First Disclosures*. The two latter courses are delivered under a commissioning arrangement regarding pan Sussex sexual safety and awareness. The partnership continues to offer joint training on *Coercion and Control*, with Adult Social Care and Change Grow Live.

Following the previous successful collaboration on the '*Preventing online Radicalisation*' events with **Safer East Sussex**, the SCP and Safer East Sussex offered free online safety training, delivered by GetSafeOnline. Professionals who attended were able to: identify online fraud; recognise if someone is at risk and take protective steps to keep safe. Participants can then become Online Safety Ambassadors to raise awareness in their own fields. Also, in October 2023 SEROCU (Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit), delivered the *Cyber Choices* programme which educates young people about legal boundaries, so they can make informed decisions about their online activity. They are a policing unit that seeks to reduce criminal computer use in young people and to avoid criminalising them where possible.

## 5. Evidence

This section of the ESSCP Annual Report sets out how the partnership is using evidence to determine its priorities; shape the way multi-agency partners have taken actions or adopted specific practice models; and evaluate the impact of partnership work. Examples of how the partnership are evidencing the impact of its work are also given in section 7 (Impact).

In March 2023 partner agencies held an extraordinary Board meeting to consider local evidence to set future priorities for the partnership for 2023-2026. The evidence presented included learning from local case review work, the ESSCP dashboard of indicators, multi-agency audits and self-assessments (Section 11 and education section 175/57), national safeguarding reviews, and the voice of local children and families.

A range of priorities were posed, with lead safeguarding partners agreeing on a final three:

- ✓ **Safeguarding in education**
- ✓ **Safeguarding adolescents**
- ✓ **Embedding learning**

ESSCP priorities for 2023-26 were chosen because they include the highest risk children in the county, where multi-agency working is essential and where significant change and/or commitment is necessary to reduce risk. It is in such areas where the partnership can be most effective in scrutinising and supporting practice.

### 5.1 Safeguarding in Education

#### *Why is safeguarding in education a priority?*

Everyone who encounters children, and their families, has a role to play in safeguarding children. Early years, school and college staff are particularly important as they see children daily and can identify concerns early and provide help for children, to prevent concerns from escalating. Education settings, and their staff, form a key part of the wider safeguarding system for children.

The ESSCP agreed that by making this area a priority for 2023-26, there would be a continued focus on effective joint working between local agencies and education settings, strategically and at a setting level. The COVID-19 pandemic and extended school closures for most children highlighted to many services the critical importance of education settings' role in safeguarding. Given the ongoing impact of the pandemic on safeguarding issues, including the rise in children being electively home educated and/or missing education, the ESSCP agreed that 'safeguarding in education' needs to be a priority for the partnership for 2023-26.

The evidence used to inform agreement as a priority includes:

- **ESSCP dashboard** - sustained rise in numbers of children who are electively home educated and missing education, rise in number of children excluded from school.
- **Case Review learning** - exclusions as a risk factor to exploitation (Child AA), EHE a feature within several local case reviews.
- **Audit learning** - Pan Sussex audit on safeguarding children who are electively home educated.

### ***Using evidence to deliver safeguarding in education***

The education safeguarding agenda has significantly altered as a result of COVID-19 national lockdowns with safeguarding, alongside emotional wellbeing, now a higher priority within all local education settings. Most education settings report that new safeguarding issues for different groups of children have emerged; these include higher incidences of children witnessing domestic abuse, demonstrating harmful sexual behaviour, and experiencing mental health issues. Improving school attendance in order to safeguard children is a priority both nationally and locally. The focus of the partnership in this priority is to:

- Provide **multi-agency expertise and support** to schools to effectively respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Schools have the **right information** to support their pupils.
- There is a **multi-agency informed preventative curriculum** available for schools to access.
- The partnership responds to the requirements in **Working Together 2023 to engage education as a fourth safeguarding partner**.
- There is a partnership wide approach to **safeguarding vulnerable children who are not in school**.
- **Schools effectively respond to learning** identified by the Partnership.

### ***Examples of using local and national evidence in 2023/24 has included:***

- The *Self-Harm Toolkit: Resources for East Sussex schools and colleges to help support students who self-harm or are at risk of engaging in self-harming behaviour*, was implemented in September 2023. The toolkits development was led by East Sussex County Council Education Division and East Sussex Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).
- Nationally permanent exclusions have increased, and in East Sussex this rise is also reflected. In response to this, children at risk of multiple suspensions and/or permanent exclusion are identified earlier and schools are contacted earlier. At secondary level the Inclusion Partnerships are the multi-agency monthly forum for raising complex cases and this has supported schools in not permanently excluding over 50 children this academic year as well as reducing their suspensions.
- Schools' Safeguarding Conference (October 2023) and Early Years Safeguarding Conference (February 2024) both included keynote presentations with learning from local and national reviews. The Business Unit held a trade stand at the October conference, promoting the ESSCP's purpose, training offer and how education partners could engage further with the partnership.
- The multi-agency Neglect Task & Finish group reviewed and updated the existing neglect toolkit, matrix and training offer for the multi-agency workforce, incorporating new areas - including home school education. The case studies used in the training now include an electively home educated child and incorporates the learning regarding EHE children from Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews.
- 100% of state funded schools completed the annual section 175 audit this year. The outcome of the audit led to the establishment of Online Safety Task & Finish Group,

which undertook activity to map and signpost to interventions and support that exists within East Sussex around Online Safety.

- Following on from the launch of the Harmful Sexual Behaviours Protocol for schools in January 2023, further development work has taken place to design a multi-agency briefing session for the wider children's workforce, with collaboration between the Education Division and SWIFT Sexual Risk Lead. Sessions will run throughout 2024/25.

## 5.2 Safeguarding Adolescents

### *Why is safeguarding adolescents a priority?*

During adolescence, the nature of the risks faced by children, and the way that they experience these risks, can differ from earlier childhood - as do their needs. Specifically, children may be faced with a new set of complex risks - ones not posed by families, but instead by peers, partners, and adults unconnected to their families in communities and online. Peer and social relationships become more central to children's lives and their identity.

The evidence used to inform the decision to make 'safeguarding adolescents' a priority included:

- **ESSCP Dashboard:** increase in attendances at A&E due to self-harm, increase in the number of permanent exclusions from school, rise in number of children reported as missing, and continued levels of children at risk due to exploitation.
- **Case Review Learning:** learning from recent local safeguarding practice reviews (Child AA and Thematic Review), which identified the need to strengthen support for vulnerable school leavers, including those with an Education and Health Care Plan, and those young people at risk of criminal and sexual exploitation, who are moving into adulthood. Learning about safeguarding adolescents was also highlighted in the East Sussex safeguarding adult reviews SAR Charlie, and in the West Sussex SCP thematic review featuring suicide.

### *Using evidence to safeguard adolescents*

For many young people adolescence can be a challenging time. Alongside the many physical and emotional changes that are part of adolescence, growing up also involves changes in roles, relationships, expectations, and status within family, amongst friends and the wider community of home, school, and work.

The focus of the partnership in this priority is to:

- To work collaboratively to **safeguard children from all forms of exploitation** and oversee the effective service provision and support for victims of exploitation, and their families.
- To ensure the **disruption of perpetrators of child exploitation**.
- Ensure a **coordinated multi-agency response when child suicides** occur, which also identifies any at risk children within the wider network.
- Develop a **Transition to Adulthood protocol** that outlines key principles for joint working across agencies when supporting vulnerable young adults.

### *Examples of using local and national evidence in 2023/24 has included:*

- The multi-agency **Child Exploitation Strategic Group** continues to coordinate multi-agency activity to safeguard children from all forms of child exploitation. During 2023/24 the group has focused on:
  - Delivering evidenced based preventative interventions within schools and communities. This has included the commissioning of Theatre performances for Year 9 and 10 pupils, specifically on drug and alcohol misuse.
  - Delivering a holistic and effective response to children and young people referred to SAFER, that reflects learning from previous case audit and service user feedback.
  - Strengthening support and safeguarding arrangements for those young people who are reported Missing or are referred to SAFER.
  - Delivering ‘disruption measures’ to divert children and young people away from being exploited and stop those engaging in child exploitation.

In June 2023, partners were invited to the two-year celebration of CACE.

**Collaboration Against Child Exploitation (CACE)** is a parent-led partnership between East Sussex Youth Justice Service (YJS) and local parents with lived experience of child exploitation. It seeks to provide support for parents/carers of children who are at risk of, or experiencing, criminal or sexual exploitation.

SAFER keyworkers - YJS staff and parent mentors - offer intensive 1-2-1 support to children and families, identified through the YJS SAFER panel, as being at most risk of exploitation. They also run a 6 session groupwork programme for parents and carers. In addition, parent mentors lead monthly, open access, support groups, providing parents/carers a space to come together to share their experiences and support each other, and run a parent helpline, Facebook and Instagram pages, and WhatsApp groups, to enable parents/carers to get support from CACE mentors 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. There is also a [video for parents and professionals about CACE](#), and the experiences of those involved, featuring a number of parents.

Feedback from parents who have been involved with CACE show that it provides valuable support for them, as well as helping those whose children are at risk to help keep them safe from exploitation.

- A transitions task and finish group was established in 2023 by the ESSCP and East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), chaired by the Head of Safeguarding for NHS Sussex. A scoping activity was undertaken to identify current pathways for children who reach eighteen in East Sussex. The work of the task and finish group concluded in January 2024 with the production of the [East Sussex Multi-Agency Transition to Adulthood Protocol](#). The protocol sets out a commitment, from the partner agencies of the ESSAB and the ESSCP, that a young person’s transition experience is positive, coordinated, and supportive. The protocol is supported by individual ‘pledges’ from agencies on how they will respond and implement the six principles for joint working in transition to adulthood.



- The [ESSAB Safeguarding Adult Review SAR Charlie](#) recommended that the ESSCP should undertake a multi-agency audit young people aged between 16 and 18 subject to child protection plans, to provide assurance that effective safeguarding arrangements were in place. In February 2024 a ‘deep dive’ audit was undertaken by the QA Subgroup, involving front line professionals working with the child and family, of two recent cases where a 16-18-year-old had a child protection plan. In both cases, the CPP was seen as appropriate, robust, and supported the family to reduce risk. The audit identified strong social work, and multi-agency, practice in both of these cases. The audit also explored the challenges to safeguarding vulnerable young adults and identified areas for multi-agency learning.
- In January 2024 the ESSCP hosted a ‘**learning from the multi-agency response to suspected child suicide**’ event. The event explored the impact and learning from the introduction of [Pan Sussex procedures on responding to suspected child suicide](#) in 2022.
- Following a rapid review in 2022, which concerned the suspected suicide of a young person, a multi-agency action plan was developed and monitored by the ESSCP Case Review group during 2023/24. Action taken following the rapid review has included:
  - All post 16 colleges participated in a safeguarding review of college provision for students aged 14-16. (these students are made up of two groups - EHE students, and students accessing the college as Alternative Provision, organised by schools). Strengths and areas for development were identified and shared with relevant colleges, and all secondary Heads. Individual Colleges have reported that significant improvements have been made since - for example in considering the separation of under-16 and over-18 year old students, and the creation of pastoral hubs for this group of students.
  - Children/young people who are admitted to hospital following suicide attempt are assessed by Mental Health Liaison in a rapid and timely manner. This work with young people includes their families to create a care plan to identify and engage with community provision and ensure they are followed up appropriately. This follow-up includes, for those not known to CAMHS, a 7/7 follow up call from paediatric liaison.
  - SPFT recruited to a (interim) CAMHS Suicide prevention lead, working across Sussex.
  - Professional development sessions in schools were undertaken in January and July 2023 to promote the timely identification of substance misuse needs and making appropriate referrals.
  - The independent Cass Review made recommendations on the services provided to children and young people who are exploring their gender identity or experiencing gender incongruence. We know many families, children and young people in Sussex are looking for emotional wellbeing and mental health care to support them. NHS Sussex has developed a list of services and support that professionals can signpost children and their families to: [Support for children and young people exploring their gender identity](#)

## 5.3 Embedding Learning

### *Why is embedding learning a priority?*

The ESSCP is committed to creating and strengthening a learning culture across all agencies in East Sussex who work with children and young people. A culture which is open, and able to challenge all partner agencies, will be able to identify learning, improve, and then evaluate effectiveness. The ESSCP agreed to make 'embedding learning' a priority to ensure that the partnership becomes better focused on learning with the following three aims: the learning reaches the right people; there are effective mechanisms for sharing learning; and learning is embedding into practice and outcomes for children.

It is the focus of the partnership in this priority to ensure:

1. Mechanisms to **disseminate learning** from Rapid Reviews, Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews and audits (multi-agency and single agency), and national reviews are reviewed and improved.
2. **Training** delivered by the ESSCP is effective, responds to local learning, and is having a measured impact on safeguarding practice.
3. The ESSCP is able to evidence that **ESSCP learning is impacting on safeguarding practice** and is making a positive impact on outcomes for children.
4. The ESSCP promotes a **culture of learning from experience**, including the experience and views of children and parents/carers.
5. The ESSCP promotes a culture of learning through **effective scrutiny of safeguarding practice** which is transparent and recognises the importance of challenge to drive improvement.
6. Learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice.

### *Using evidence to embed learning in East Sussex*

The arrangements for assuring the effectiveness of safeguarding practice are set out in the **ESSCP's Learning & Improvement Framework**. This framework and the priority action plan are overseen by the ESSCP Learning & Development Subgroup, chaired by the Designated Nurse for Safeguarding, NHS Sussex.

### *Examples of using local and national evidence in 2023/24 has included:*

- The ESSCP Business Unit has supported the Case Review Group to develop and publish three learning briefings, which concisely highlight key learning for professionals arising from local rapid reviews and LCSPRs. The business unit has also coordinated multi-agency learning events, or contributed to materials, for the annual **Schools Safeguarding conference**, the **Early Years Safeguarding Conference**, responding to suspected child suicides, safeguarding and domestic abuse, and Pan Sussex Conference on neglect.
- In collaboration with the Safer Communities Team and the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, **Professional Curiosity Resource Pack** has been developed and published. Professional curiosity was an area identified as a common theme across East Sussex reviews. The resource pack was based on the Swindon Safeguarding Partnership resource pack. This resource aims to raise awareness of professional curiosity and how being professionally curious is necessary to fully understand a situation and the risks an adult may face, which are not always immediately obvious. The expectation is that practitioners will share the resource pack and use it in team meetings and as part of group/individual supervision or for their own development.



- The ESSCP Business Unit promoted a culture of learning through effective scrutiny of safeguarding practice by making improvements to the **ESSCP Dashboard** - aligning with priorities, deep dives and escalation into concerning areas and developed a log of escalated indicators.
- Development of inclusion of the **voice of the child**: Focussed Board activities and specific consideration of the child's voice for every item brought to Board and Steering groups, young people attendance at the Liaison Group and the child's view (and family) sought as part of the case review process.
- The ESSCP Business Unit has continued to ensure that learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice. Examples have included:
  - Presentations on key local and national learning at the East Sussex Early Years Safeguarding Conference and senior social worker forum.
  - Creation of partnership resources on the engagement of fathers and male carers, on the ESSCP website: [Unseen Men \(engagement of fathers and male carers\) - ESSCP](#)
  - Supporting the delivery of briefing sessions on safer sleeping, in particular in out of routine situations, over the past year.
  - Coordinating multi-agency input into the pan **Sussex ICON Steering group**. The purpose of the group is to ensure that the ICON message is embedded across agencies in the partnership, support practitioners in their role with families, and to ensure consistent messaging across the partnership.

## 6. Learning

The ESSCP is committed to creating and strengthening a learning culture across all agencies in East Sussex who work with children and young people - a culture which is open, able to challenge all partner agencies, able to identify learning, improve, and then evaluate effectiveness.

Below are examples of 'learning' within and across the ESSCP in 2023/24.

### 6.1 Learning from Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

#### Case Review Activity 2023/24

In 2023/24 the ESSCP undertook four Rapid Reviews following serious safeguarding incidents, where a child had died or been seriously injured, and where abuse or neglect is known or suspected. Of the four Rapid Reviews undertaken:

- ✓ Two progressed to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPR); Child E and Child F, which both have commissioned independent authors and will be completed mid-2024.
- ✓ Two did not lead to a LCSPR. In these cases learning was shared via learning briefings and multi and single agency actions from rapid reviews monitored by CRG.

There was one referral into CRG that did not progress to a Rapid Review due to limited multi-agency involvement and the child not being seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect. In this case a single agency review was undertaken and shared with CRG for oversight.

There is one ongoing review from 2022/23; the joint LCSPR and Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) (Family D). This large complex review, adhering to both LCSPR and DHR requirements, involved an extensive period of information gathering from single agencies and is working alongside a number of parallel procedures. The review is due to be completed by autumn/winter 2024.

During 2023/24 the ESSCP published two LCSPRs:

<p><b>Child V</b> (published 14 Nov 2023)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Child V SCR Overview Report (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Child V SCR Addendum (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Infant Injury Learning Briefing I (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Infant Injury Learning Briefing II (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><b>Key learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ The importance of GP's being part of the Child Protection planning process</li><li>✓ Recognising and understanding domestic abuse and the risk of both emotional and physical harm to small children</li></ul>	<p><b>Family CC</b> (published 6 Nov 2023)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Family CC Executive Summary (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Family CC Partnership Response (esscp.org.uk)</i></a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Family CC and Neglect Learning Briefing (esscp.org.uk)</i></a> This briefing also reflects on learning from rapid reviews, featuring significant neglect</p> <p><b>Key learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Working with 'highly resistant' parents</li><li>✓ Safeguarding children who are EHE in the context of neglectful parenting</li></ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Importance of full investigations of <i>all</i> injuries to infants</li> <li>✓ Enhanced support for care leavers when they become parents</li> <li>✓ Importance of proactive information seeking and sharing across agencies</li> <li>✓ Professional confidence to challenge families and other professionals</li> <li>✓ Understanding of the role and remit of other professionals working with a family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relevance of neglect and/or abuse of animals when assessing risks to children</li> <li>✓ Relevance of history when screening for service delivery</li> <li>✓ Role of voluntary sector agencies in providing support to vulnerable families</li> <li>✓ The cumulative risk of harm when risk factors are present in combination or over time</li> </ul>
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### One LCSPR is awaiting publication:

**Child Z** (delay in publication due to gaining parent input into the review. Criminal proceedings completed January 2024, sentencing due late July 2024)

[Child Z Learning Briefing 2022 \(esscp.org.uk\)](https://esscp.org.uk)

#### Key learning:

- ✓ The legacy of relationships characterised by domestic abuse
- ✓ Information sharing about adults who may pose risks to children
- ✓ The importance of assessing background information
- ✓ Assessing risk to children from risky adults who are not household members, but part of the child's wider network

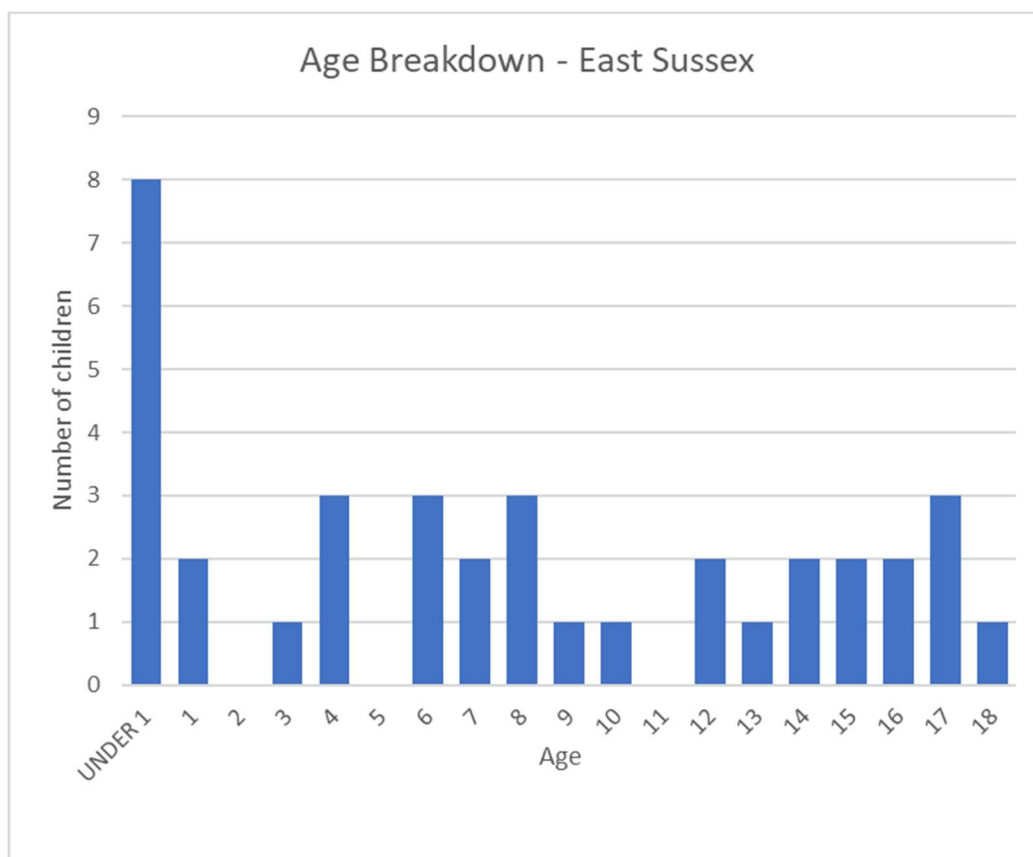
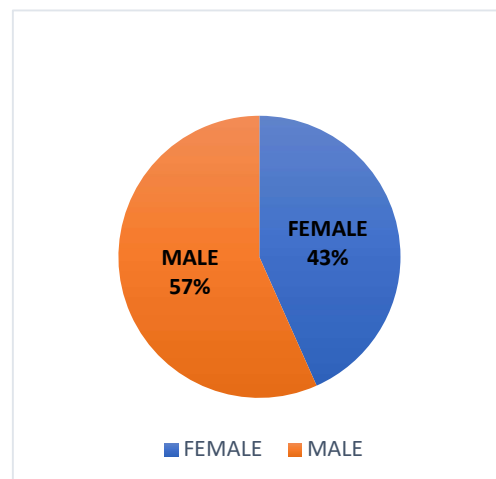
### Rapid Review learning

<p><b>Child 2 Rapid Review</b></p> <p><a href="https://esscp.org.uk">Learning Briefing - Child 2 Rapid Review (esscp.org.uk)</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Information should be shared regularly through professional networks and through effective core groups convened to review risks</li> <li>✓ Pre-birth and subsequent assessments should always include information about significant adults, such as grandparents, or other children, living at the same address, and be informed by a full picture of what is happening in the household as a whole</li> <li>✓ Importance of secure housing - stable housing should be considered by the core group in assessments and interventions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Child 3 Rapid Review</b></p> <p><b>Key learning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Senior Manager oversight of effective and efficient screening of referrals</li> <li>✓ Safety planning at point of case closure, where a known risk is likely to result in fluctuating periods of instability</li> <li>✓ Cumulative impact of parental mental health and emotional neglect on a child's development</li> <li>✓ Effective multi-agency assessments, the engagement of fathers and use of Family Group Conference</li> <li>✓ The significance of non-attendance of under 5's at an Early Years setting when assessing Early Years settings referrals about children they are worried about.</li> </ul>
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## Analysis of Case Review Activity

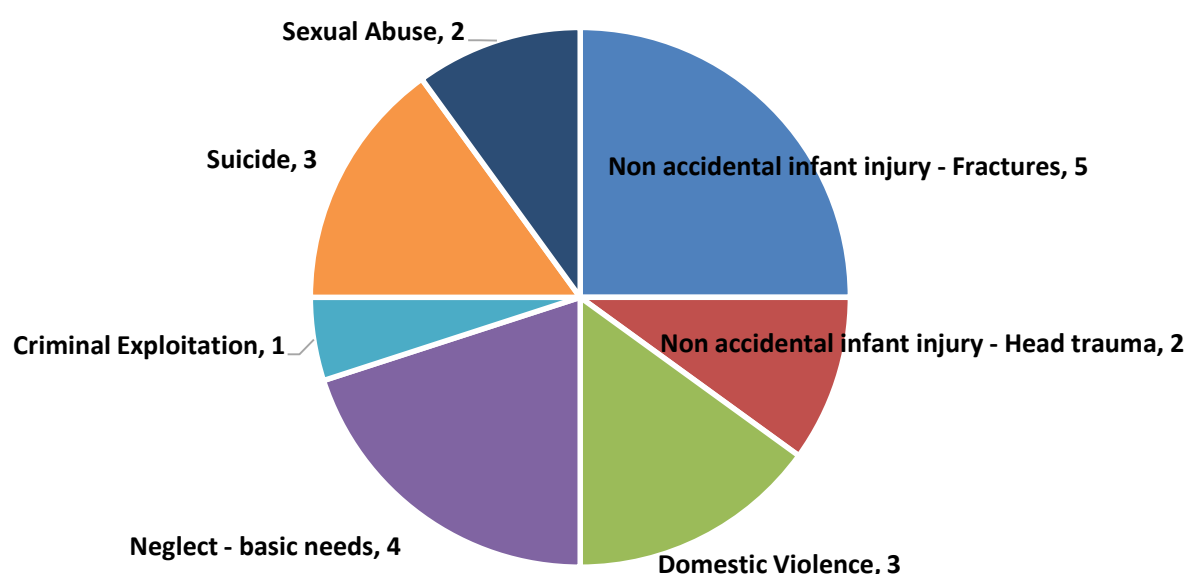
Since March 2020, the partnership Case Review Group (CRG) has undertaken **20 Rapid Reviews**, resulting in **9 (45%) progressing to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews** (figures up to March 24). A total of 37 children are the subjects of the 20 Rapid Reviews; 57% male, 43% female. This remains the same proportion as reported in last years annual report and is in line with national figures, where males are the most common gender at 55% (March 2023).

Under 2 year olds represent 27% of all children considered within rapid reviews in East Sussex. This age group featured predominately due to experiencing non-accidental injuries, such as fractures and abusive head trauma. This is slightly less prominent than reported in 2022/23 (30%), but remains in keeping with the national picture which also shows a predominance of infants under 1 amongst children involved in serious incidents notified to the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (35% of 456 children notified 2022/23)

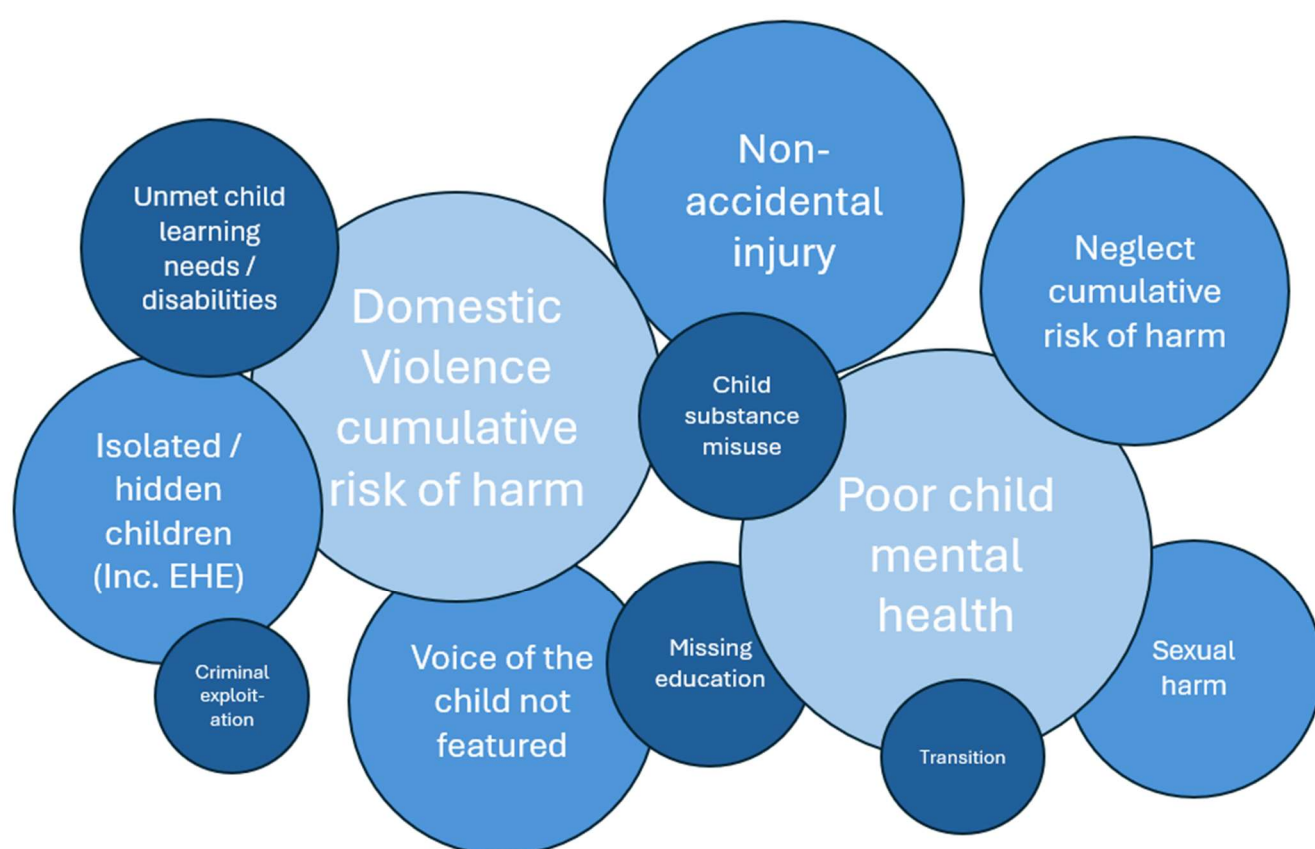


When the East Sussex rapid reviews are analysed by the primary types of abuse and/or neglect known in the family at the point of notification of the serious incident, non-accidental infant injuries (fractures and/or head trauma) featured in 7 of the cases; followed by neglect (4) and domestic violence (3) and suicide (3). However, most cases involved complex families with multiple factors contributing to the safeguarding risk to the child/children.

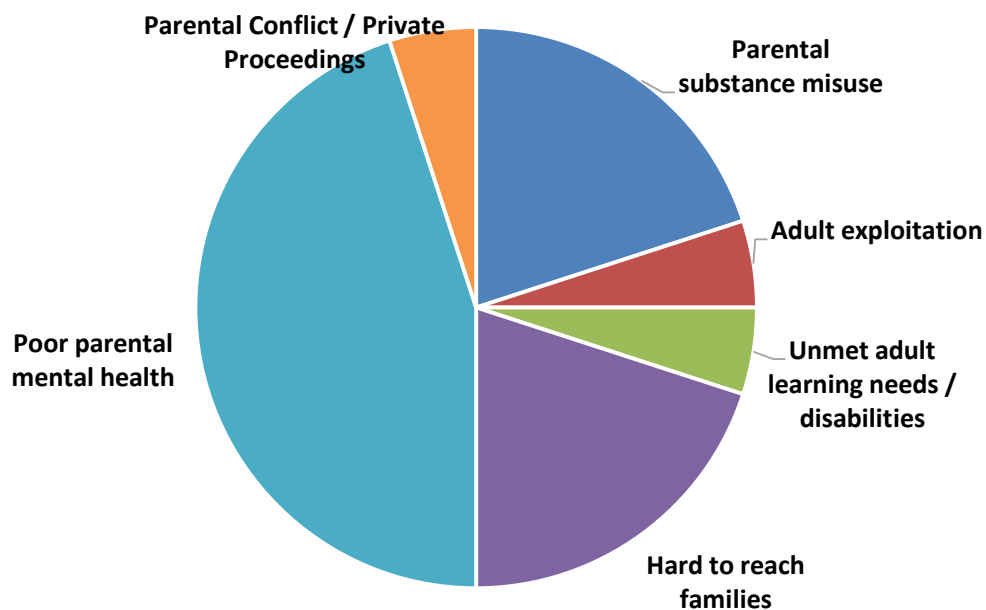
### Primary Types of Abuse/Neglect recorded in Rapid Reviews



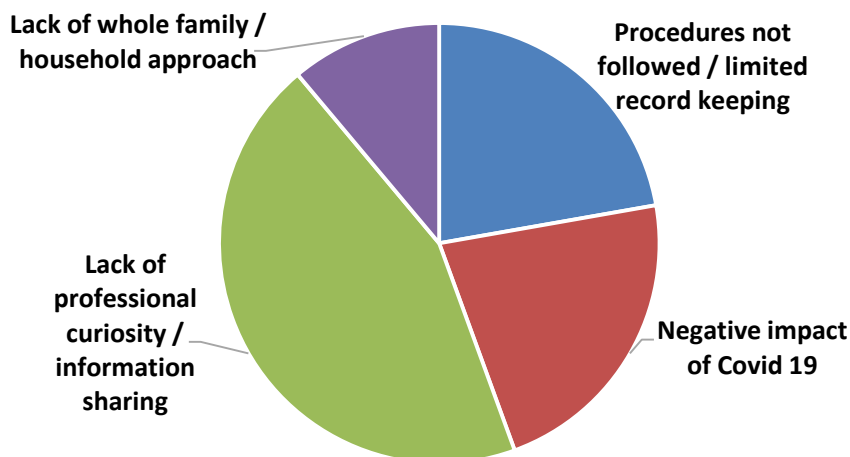
Each Rapid Review and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review can result in a number of key themes for learning. The graphic below shows the breadth of learning themes for children and young people captured across the reviews undertaken since March 2020:



### Learning Themes - parent/adult



### Learning Themes - system



New learning themes in 2023/24 are the **impact of significant parental conflict** and the **importance of a whole family/household approach to safeguarding**. The five most commonly occurring learning themes in Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice reviews remain the same as reported in 2022/23:

- Poor or unmanaged parental mental health
- Poor or unmanaged child mental health
- The cumulative risk of domestic violence
- Fatal and non-fatal non-accidental fractures and head trauma injuries in under 2 year olds
- Inadequate professional curiosity and information sharing between agencies




### ***Multi-agency Safeguarding and Domestic Abuse (DA) - Learning from reviews (Jan 23):***

Brought together ESSCP and East Sussex DSVA Oversight Group members to digest **national** and **local** review learning in relation to children and DA and consider this in the context of current DA provision and planning in East Sussex, including;

- What works well
- Improvement opportunities
- How we consider children as victims of DA/the cumulative effect of DV
- Current systems, training and resourcing

Discussion and learning was incorporated into the DVA Oversight strategy refresh.



### ***National Learning:***

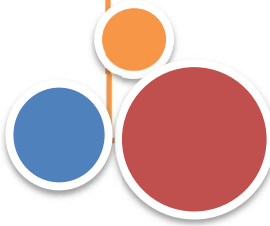
[Children with disabilities and complex health needs placed in residential settings](#)  
[Safeguarding children with disabilities in residential settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

#### **Immediate action taken:**

Completed Quality and Safety Reviews for each of the children resident at the provisions listed by Ofsted. Partnership are assured that children reviewed have their social, emotional, health and educational needs met, and are safe in their placement.

#### **Further action, Phase 2:**

Routine assurance programme includes a thematic review of children with complex needs and disabilities resident in dual placements. Eight recommendations taken forward through national implementation plans or local partnerships. Additional consideration of current arrangements to ensure quality of provision for children with complex needs.





## 6.2 Quality Assurance Audits

The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2023/24: an audit on the quality and effectiveness of s47 strategy discussions; an audit on safeguarding children who are ‘missing from education’; and a ‘deep dive’ audit, with front line practitioners, on the robustness of child protection plans for 16-18-year-olds.

Learning from the audits is shared at the ESSP Steering Group and one page learning briefings are shared with the wider ESSCP network and on the ESSCP website [Quality Assurance Group - ESSCP](#). QA audit reports are routinely shared at the Learning & Development Subgroup and Liaison Group to ensure that learning arising from audit activity is more efficiently and effectively embedded into local training and learning activity.

Key learning across audits include:

- The complexity of cases involving Perplexing Presentations and the considerable time it takes to pull together all the information that is needed for a Strategy Discussion.
- Following disclosures and/or observations of physical abuse, consideration must be given for a Child Protection (CP) medical in all cases, and if this is not pursued, a clear rationale must be added to the file to evidence decision making.
- The limited power to challenge lack of parental engagement with the elective home education and children missing education teams. Parents can choose not to allow home visiting. Where there is a lack of evidence that suitable home education is being provided, or a child missing education persists, the processes to address this can be protracted. The difficulties around relying on parental engagement when cases were held under s17 was identified in four cases, where parents declined the service.
- Once a parent is prosecuted the School Attendance Order process starts again if the child remains not on a school roll. This is difficult as a parent can be prosecuted a number of times and does not necessarily result in the child returning to education.
- Before the EHE team refers to CME the service should consider submitting a Statement of Referral to the front door for screening if the child has not been seen. The EHE service will action this on a case by case basis and update all internal processes to reflect these new steps.
- Primary Care need a system in place to follow up with Children’s Services when a Family Assessment has taken place to inform their view on future risk and vulnerability when the parent/child accesses health care again.
- Supporting health and wellbeing in relation to emerging sexual orientation and gender identity is a core aspect when working with young people. There is a need for further guidance to be given around this area within all agencies.
- The importance of agencies attending multi-agency meetings, including initial and review CP conferences. The agencies who do not attend the meeting are unable to provide challenge, scrutiny and share ownership of the plan.
- The need to pursue young carer provision when appropriate to reduce the negative, and highlight the positive, impact of being a carer, such as increased resilience, empathy, non-judgemental attitude and caring nature.
- The difficulties when children and young people move between Local Authorities and transferring case responsibility in a timely manner. It demonstrated the importance of alerting managers of the issues and the impact this can have, so timely escalation can be taken forward.
- The off-rolling form completed by schools should always contain safeguarding concerns.



Further details on the ESSCP QA audits in 2023/24 can be found in the **Assurance** section of this report. Following are examples of actions taken in response to learning arising from audits:

- The **Professional Difference Statement** is routinely read out and included in the minutes of Strategy Discussion Meetings. In 2023 East Sussex Children's Services developed a 'good strategy discussion' guide which was disseminated to all practice managers and was the focus of a development session.
- The Partnership has increased the profile of the additional vulnerabilities of children missing education, replicating communication work previously undertaken regarding children who are electively home educated. Children missing education has frequently been flagged in the ESSCP monthly digest, was an agenda item at the ESSCP steering group, and a separate indicator on CME was added to the 2024/25 Section 11 audit tool that all agencies complete, to ensure that the vulnerabilities of CME are promoted internally within agencies.
- The Partnership has shared and promoted the '**Transition to Adulthood**' protocol, to ensure that professionals and agencies are working towards the key transition principles.

### 6.3 ESSCP Learning & Development subgroup

The Learning & Development (L&D) subgroup reviews learning from safeguarding practice reviews and audits, reviews the training programme, analyses training data such as attendance and evaluation feedback, and develops effective strategies for sharing learning. The subgroup also includes consideration of ESSCP communications which links to training and learning, such as learning briefings about audit outcomes and local and national safeguarding practice reviews. The subgroup comprises of representatives from the ESSCP, Health Services, Children's Services, SAB, Police and Education.

The work of the L&D subgroup is to ensure that the East Sussex workforce and volunteers working with children, young people and/or adults who are parents/carers are provided with appropriate and effective multi-agency training to meet their needs, and that practice is underpinned with appropriate policies and procedures. The activity of the L&D subgroup continued to be monitored in line with the ESSCP Priority 'Embedding Learning', the ESSCP Learning and Improvement Framework and undertook its functions in line with the ESSCP Learning Strategy.

The ESSCP L&D subgroup complimented the pan-Sussex Learning & Development Planning Group, whose function was to agree and co-ordinate the planning of pan Sussex Learning and Development activity. This group agreed and monitored a 2-year plan for pan Sussex L&D activity, including a 2-year cycle for pan Sussex Conference and Section 11 audit.

Following the publication of Working Together 2023 in December 2023, the Lead Safeguarding Partners for the respective local authority areas within Sussex agreed to move to a Sussex wide model for L&D, with a Sussex wide Learning and Development subgroup (reporting to the new Sussex Safeguarding Executive Group) and the delivery of a Sussex wide learning and development programme. This model, due to be implemented from September 2024, will replace the current three place-based L&D subgroups and pan Sussex Learning & Development Planning Group. The ESSCP Learning and Improvement Framework and ESSCP Learning Strategy will also be amalgamated into pan Sussex relevant strategies as part of this work.

## 6.4 ESSCP Training Programme

The ESSCP L&D subgroup has continued to offer both classroom-based training courses as well as virtual sessions for multi-agency practitioners. This mixed mode of delivery is now embedded within the training programme and continues to be positive, most practical, and cost effective for the growing number of pan Sussex events and in-house shorter courses.

Between 1st April 2023 and 31st March 2024, 50 training courses ran with 718 participants from a range of agencies attended, which equates to 71% attendance rate across the 50 courses. This compares with 68% attendance on the courses during 2022/2023 and an increase in numbers, with 166 more professionals attending, which is encouraging given work pressures across the range of partnership agencies.

The rate of evaluation returns from the 718 participants is 80% (573 returns). This figure is the highest recorded to date and almost double the average return rate per quarter of 45% (recorded since the introduction of on-line recordings in 2016). This indicates that the introduction of the QR code evaluation process in September 2022, where participants scan at the end of the training, has become an extremely effective method of obtaining high evaluation returns. The majority of participants continue to rate courses as either Excellent (75%) or Good (25%).

A number of new developments are planned in 2024/2025 in response to learning from local and national safeguarding practice reviews:

- *Harmful Sexual Behaviours* multi-agency briefings.
- Relaunch of multi-agency *Neglect* training, to include the updated Neglect Toolkit and Matrix, is planned for July 2024.
- Secured ongoing training on self-harm, with trainers from the Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust and Schools Mental Health Support Team service offering courses on *Understanding Self-harm in Children and Young People* and the *East Sussex Toolkit*.
- pan Sussex delivery of *Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession* training provided by an expert provider, who is the National Chairperson for NWG Forum for Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spiritual Possession (ALWSPA).

As stated in 6.3, following the publication of Working Together 2023, the SCPs will move to a Sussex wide model for L&D with one Sussex wide Learning and Development subgroup from September 2024. The development of this group will capture the new work areas identified above and explore further opportunities for effective approaches to L&D.

## 7. Impact of Partnership Activity

This section aims to convey the impact of multi-agency and partnership activity on practice and outcomes for children and families.

The **Child Z LCSPR** highlighted professional uncertainty regarding what information can be shared with parents about individuals who pose a safeguarding risk to their child.

As a result, a multi agency task and finish group developed and published pan-Sussex guidance:

### [2.3 Sharing information with family members about other adults and the risk they may pose](#)

The guidance was shared via ESSCP and pan Sussex procedures communications routes, with professionals reporting use of the procedure to enable effective conversations with parents.

### Impact of ESSCP training on practice

*“I am more confident with safety planning and working with perpetrators. I feel more empowered through the knowledge gained”*

*“This course has given me more confidence to be curious and ask questions and not to be worried about the response”*

*“I now have greater awareness of the signs and indicators of suicide which enables me to offer improved direct support to young people”*

*“I am now better informed about how to help parents/carers to understand behavioural differences and how to go through the process for diagnosis”*

### Thematic Review Action Plan

Following the review, the introduction of the Family Safeguarding Model (Jan 2024) invested in skilled and qualified practitioners who sit in front line Social Work teams working with parents around mental health, substance misuse and domestic abuse enables the allocated social worker to devote more time to working directly with the child to understand the impact on them of the parents difficulties.

These additional resources have enabled the children’s social workers to focus to a greater extent on the needs of the child, whilst the allocated Adult Mental Health Practitioner in the team (for example) devotes their time to parental needs.

### Evidencing Impact: Family CC LCSPR

The review, and increasing vulnerabilities of the local community, offered the opportunity for Eastbourne Foodbank to reflect on safeguarding provision within the organisation, including staff awareness and training, policy, reporting and recording of concerns.

Through this development work the Foodbank implemented a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) role, similar to the model used in schools, to act as the lead for co-ordinating safeguarding processes and best practice within the organisation.

*“The Family CC Review has led us to make substantial changes to how we work, and to our lines of communication with other services, which we feel would have made a real difference in this case. If a similar situation were to occur now, our robust procedures would mean that we’d be an effective part of the bigger safeguarding picture.”* **Eastbourne Foodbank**

### Evidencing Impact Activity: Child Y LCSPR

Sexual Abuse is an extremely complex area of practice where no one size fits all in terms of response. Notable **improvements in practice** in response to child sexual abuse/Child Y LCSPR learning include:

- Routine SWIFT and CSARC involvement in all CSA strategy discussions (and/or consultation post strat in the event SWIFT are unable to attend)
- Improved pathway for accessing CSARC
- Evidence of SMARTer outcomes arising from strategy discussions
- Procedural changes around additional strategy discussions chaired by Operations Managers in CSA cases where the child was still facing risks following s47 - to mirror the same approach children’s social care use in physical abuse suspected NAI cases
- Evidence of therapeutic needs considered (and recorded) as part of strategy discussions
- Sharing of ABE notes with social worker are explicitly stated within the strategy discussion action plan.

**A recent audit (April 2024) of CSA cases by children’s social care evidenced the above is embedded in case work.**

### Safeguarding in Education Priority:

Due to the high profile of **Safeguarding in Education**, and the range of resources and training available to East Sussex Schools, the **Primary and Secondary Improvement Boards** have commissioned a further set of bespoke focussed reviews for schools.

All maintained primary and secondary schools, and all special schools, are now part of a cycle of regular **Quality Assurance** and support visits based on the **175 safeguarding audit**.

### Safeguarding Adolescents Priority: Multi-agency response to suspected child suicide

In January 2024 multi-agency partners attended a learning event to explore the impact from the introduction of [Pan Sussex procedures on responding to suspected child suicide](#) in 2022. The event found:

- The procedures had provided a clear process for identifying those affected by the death, identifying vulnerable contacts and their support needs; identifying possible clusters requiring an enhanced preventative response; and provided a coordinated response that reduced duplication and contained professional anxiety.
- Multi-agency involvement in the procedure has been exceptional and provided a coordinated and comprehensive approach.
- The support provided by the wider network was welcomed by all professionals, in particular schools.


### Embedding Learning Priority:

The **Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group** continued to expand and thrive in 2023/24, since the meetings were moved to MS Teams, enabling more professionals to attend.

In the past year, the group has an average of over 20 professionals attending from across multi-agency partners, including the three statutory partners, schools and voluntary and community groups.

In 2023/24 the LSCLG held two **multi agency case discussions** to explore learning for multi-agency work, such as procedural and practice development across the system.

One case discussion led directly to amendments to the [harm linked to alternative health practices](#) pan Sussex procedure.





The **Family CC LCSPR** was a significant review regarding the neglect of a large sibling group. In response to this a multi agency pan Sussex Neglect Task & Finish Group was initiated to refresh the neglect toolkit and matrix to consider the impact of poverty, develop guidance with regards to self-neglect/medical neglect, teenagers, and broaden out the consideration of race / religion / ethnicity / disability.

The **Young People's (YP) Reference Group (Feb 2023)** undertook a facilitated discussion on neglect to feed into the work of the Task & Finish group. The YP provided reflections on what kind of parenting they felt they needed, what YP felt workers should ask them about neglect at home and how workers can support YP better with self-care.

The refreshed neglect matrix and toolkit was launch in **July 2024** offering effective resources and training that provides practitioners with the skills and tools to place sufficient focus on understanding the lived experience of the child with regards to neglect.

During 2025 the refreshed multi agency training will be evaluated by attendees and also in line with the ESSCP Learning Strategy and Framework.

The neglect strategy, toolkit and matrix will be reviewed regularly in conjunction with Children's Services and wider partners, and in view of any new learning from local and national reviews.





#### **Voice of the child:**

**July 2023 Board** focussed on '**Student and Schools Voice**' including responses from children to the *My School My Health* survey, alongside the school S175 audit and Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) data. Discussion groups considered the issues raised and actions to take forward for the safeguarding children in schools priority.

**September 2023 Liaison Group** attended by **Children in Care Council** members who provide an overview of their role and the development of a 'rucksack' resource containing objects representing significant elements to a child in care.

#### **Direct and indirect activity undertaken by the partnership includes:**

- Each Board/Steering report is asked to consider how work is informed by the voice of child.
  - Agency challenge and participation of care experienced young people in Section 11 scrutiny process.
  - Childs view (and family) sought as part of case review process.
  - Oversight of agency activity capturing children's views
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## 8. Assurance

One of the roles of the ESSCP is to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding practice, which it does through evidence-based auditing, performance management, and self-analysis. The SCP ensures that there is continual evaluation of the quality of services being provided, as well as effective communication and joint working between all SCP partner agencies.

The **Quality Assurance (QA) Subgroup** has the lead role, on behalf of the Partnership, for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the work carried out by partners. It does this through regular scrutiny of multi-agency performance data and inspection reports, and through an annual programme of thematic and regular case file audits. This subgroup is chaired by the Detective Chief Inspector of the Safeguarding Investigation Unit in Sussex Police.

Examples of assurance undertaken by the ESSCP during 2023/24 include:

- The **ESSCP Independent Chair** whose function is to provide challenge and scrutiny of the effectiveness of the lead partners and other relevant agencies, via the Board and Steering Group meetings, and to also work with the lead partners to ensure the effectiveness of the safeguarding work carried out by partners. The approach of the Chair is to act as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection and continuous improvement and to provide support to that improvement. This included:
  - Reviewing and endorsing the recommendation to conduct two Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) arising from serious safeguarding incidents, and providing support and challenge to the National Safeguarding Panel on the rationale for local decision making following one further rapid review.
  - Reinforcing key multi-agency actions arising from LCSPRs, in particular raising concerns with agencies regarding their attendance and participation in Child Protection Conferences processes and requesting agencies consider their responsibilities.
  - Overseeing the development of a partnership Scrutiny Plan providing an overview for lead partners on key areas of challenge to multi-agency working and progress with responding to national learning.
  - Escalating concerns about the long-term viability of the ESSCP budget with the Lead Safeguarding Partners.
  - Providing a bi-annual report to the Lead Safeguarding Partners on current key risks and issues to safeguarding children in East Sussex.
  - Coordinating Public Health messages across the three Sussex safeguarding children partnerships in relation to safer sleeping for babies, over the Christmas and holiday periods.
  - Providing challenge to agencies in the Peer Review scrutiny of Pan Sussex agencies 2023 Section 11 returns.
  - Presenting the 2022/23 ESSCP Annual Report, on behalf of the lead safeguarding partners, to the East Sussex People's Scrutiny Committee, and the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board.

*“As the Independent Scrutineer for the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership I am happy to be able to say in this report that the Partnership continues to do all it can to safeguard children and improve outcomes for them and*



*their families. They have developed and maintained a culture where independent scrutiny is seen as a vital part of their core business. I believe that they will focus on developing this culture to provide the best possible scrutiny and seek opportunities for continual improvement.*

*Looking forward, Working Together 2023 provides an opportunity to further optimise independent scrutiny. The removal of the Independent Chair role will afford the Partnership to task individual pieces of scrutiny to be completed more frequently. These pieces of work should be focussed on priority areas. It will also increase opportunities to engage with children, families and practitioners, gaining valuable insight into their lived experiences.”* **Chris Robson, Independent Chair**

- In addition to the Independent Chair, **three Lay Members** play a critical role in the partnership. The Lay Members act as further independent insight, on behalf of the public, into the work of agencies and of the partnership. As well as acting as critical friends at Board meetings, providing additional challenge and scrutiny, one Lay Member is a standing member of the SCP Case Review Group (CRG), and Lay Members are involved in the panel meetings for all LCSPRs. Their role has been critical at CRG, via the rapid review process and subsequent LCSPR process, in advocating the voice of the child. Lay Members are also invited to meet with individual members of the Board, for example one of our Lay Members met with the Head of Service for Looked After Children, after their presentation of their annual report on the services for Looked After Children.

*”I have been a lay member for the ESSCP for nearly six years now and continue to be impressed by the diligence and commitment of its members. In particular I would like to commend the Case Review Group. Every case is carefully considered and the learning, which should help prevent harm to children in the future, is teased out and widely disseminated. Resulting action plans are well monitored by the Partnership and, where possible, their impact assessed. Every attempt is made to obtain the views of the families involved. Practitioners are treated with respect.*

*Considerable time over the last few months has been taken up with making the changes to the organisation of the Partnership required by Working Together (2023). While there are some positives, for example greater opportunities to work closely with Brighton and Hove and West Sussex and to re-examine how partnership working is kept under scrutiny, it is to be hoped that the new arrangements, and the recent cuts in resources, will not have an adverse effect on the high quality of multi-agency work that currently goes on within East Sussex to keep children and young people safe.”*

**Harriet Martin**

*”Over the last year I have witnessed many examples of dedicated professionalism across the Partnership, and I am greatly reassured by the exemplary work being undertaken to safeguard children in East Sussex.*

*The changes that Working Together 2023 brings to the structure of the Partnership will pose some challenges, particularly with regards to independent scrutiny, but I believe the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership is forward thinking, and well placed to adopt new and robust procedures”* **Nick Porter**

*"Safeguarding Children and Young People has always been challenging and to offer effective protection to children requires a high level of understanding of the key issues faced by children and their families in today's world.*

*The ESSCP has a clear understanding of protecting children and has worked hard on case reviews, disseminating information, supporting teams of professionals and ensuring a high level of work takes place protecting children and young people across the county. The ESSCP is well placed to mirror the expectations outlined in Working together (2023) keeping children at the heart of their exemplary practice."* Anne Moynihan

- The QA Subgroup reviews the '**ESSCP Performance Dashboard**' on a quarterly basis. The dashboard includes 60 performance indicators which are presented by: impact of multi-agency practice; children supported by statutory services; children with family related vulnerabilities; children with health-related vulnerabilities; and children whose actions place them at risk. Indicators are reviewed by the QA subgroup and escalated to the Steering Group if required. During 2023/24, performance indicators escalated by QA to Steering included:
  - **Indicator 46 and 47 (% of routine CAMHS assessments and attendances)** was escalated to consider the reasons behind the decline in the percentage of CAMHS routine assessments and treatments completed within target timescales. The CAMHS service manager explained that although the majority of initial assessment appointments were offered within four weeks, the service had been impacted by a 54% increase in accepted referrals into CAMHS over the past three years, and the CAMHS caseload had increased by over 60%, with an excess of 7,000 children currently open to CAMHS in East Sussex. The Manager also noted that reporting on wait times had changed in the previous year: if a young person does not attend a planned appointment, this does not stop the waiting time clock (as it did previously). SPFT have a robust 'Child Not Brought' (CNB) policy to address potential safeguarding concerns around a young person not being brought to appointments. Further appointments and proactive contact attempts will be offered, until CAMHS has direct contact with a young person and family for assessment.
  - **Children missing education:** was escalated to consider the sustained increase in the numbers of children recorded as missing education, alongside the continued increase in children who are electively home educated. The QA subgroup proposed that they conduct an audit to review the multi-agency safeguarding response to CME when there were current or previous safeguarding concerns. The final report was presented at Steering in December 2024 alongside a report from the CME Service Manager identifying current service response and proposals on multi-agency action to support this vulnerable group.
  - **Indicator 42 (Attendances at A&E due to deliberate self-harm)** was escalated to consider the significant increase in attendances by children to East Sussex A&E departments due to deliberate self-harm. A detailed report was shared with Steering providing further analysis of the cohort of children presenting and the current system in place to triage and support children's immediate mental health needs. The QA subgroup proposed to conduct an audit of a selection of cases to

provide further insight into the quality and robustness of safeguarding response to these children. This was scheduled for May 2024.

- The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2023/24:

The QA subgroup held an audit to review the quality and robustness of safeguarding response on six recent multi-agency **Strategy Discussion meetings**. The purpose of the audit was to test how learning and action identified in the May 2022 multi-agency audit of the 'Front Door', based on the Ofsted JTAI inspection criteria, was embedded. In the 2002 audit, several cases identified issues around the strategy discussion process, around either the initial identification of strategy discussion threshold being met, or quoracy and multi-agency representation at the meeting itself.

The children featured in the audit had experienced a range of safeguarding needs: domestic abuse, neglect, Perplexing Presentations (PP), missing education, physical abuse and parental mental health issues. Three of the children were on Child Protection Plans and one child was a Child in Need. Three cases were closed to Children's Services following an assessment. One child was Electively Home Educated, and another had a disability.

The audit found evidence of effective practice in identifying and reducing risk. The audit also found effective assessment, application of thresholds and collaborative multi-agency working resulted in proportionate outcomes in the majority of cases. In four of the cases all relevant agencies attended the Strategy meeting. However, the audit found that multi-agency representation, in particular ensuring Health input, at the Strategy Meetings continued to be an issue. In two cases, the GP did not attend or reply to the Strategy Discussion invite but MASH Health did attend in one of those cases and provided relevant information.

**Learning from the audit** was shared by agency representatives at the QA subgroup and Steering Group, with agencies reminded of their responsibilities to ensure minutes of strategy meetings are uploaded in to their relevant recording systems. The 'statement of professional difference' is routinely read out at the start of Strategy Meetings and is recorded in the minutes. Within Children's Social Care, a 'good strategy discussion guide' was developed which was disseminated to all practice managers and was the focus of a practice manager development session. A single agency strategy discussion audit is scheduled for early 2024/25 to take stock of how recommendations are impacting on practice.

The QA audit group held an audit on the safeguarding of **Children Missing Education**. This audit theme was chosen given the sustained increase (over 25% increase over the previous year) in the number of children recorded as missing education. These are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. The purpose of the audit was to provide assurance on the quality and robustness of the safeguarding response for these vulnerable children.

Twelve cases were selected using Children's Services data to include a range of cases that had recent multi-agency involvement. The children had either a safeguarding

concern, a child protection plan in place (under S47 of the Children Act 1989), were a Child in Need (under S17 of the Children Act 1989) or were involved with Early Help at the time of the audit.

Overall, the audit found there was strong multi-agency working and information sharing, with good communication between agencies in the majority of cases. Recent changes to some agency recording systems had made it easier to flag when a child was CME or EHE, which informed safeguarding practice. However, the audit also highlighted the lack of professional curiosity by some agencies to question or enquire why a child may be missing education, and understanding of the additional vulnerabilities of a child missing education.

The audit highlighted the challenges faced by agencies, in particular of the CME and EHE teams to challenge lack of parental engagement, parents not allowing home visits, or the difficulties around parental engagement when cases were held under s17 (noted in four cases).

The **QA subgroup recommended** that the Partnership should raise the profile of the additional vulnerabilities of children missing education, linking it with the work previously undertaken regarding safeguarding children who are electively home educated. They also recommended that all agencies should raise awareness across their workforce of the additional vulnerabilities a child may have when missing education, and ensure that agency safeguarding recording systems are able to record if a child is missing from education.

When the report was presented at the ESSCP Steering Group it was also agreed that 'educational neglect' should be incorporated in to the revised Neglect Matrix and Toolkit.

The QA subgroup held a 'deep dive' audit of two cases of **Children aged 16-18 with a Child Protection Plan**. In 2022 the East Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board commissioned a Safeguarding Adult Review (SAR) to explore the circumstances that led to the death of an 18-year-old, who was referred to in the review as '[Charlie](#)'. One of the recommendations of the review was for the ESSCP to undertake a multi-agency audit of selected young people aged between 16 and 18 subject to child protection plans in the last two years to "assure themselves that effective safeguarding arrangements were in place". At the time of selecting the audit cases, there were thirty-one 16-18 year olds with a CPP.

Both cases demonstrated that multi-agency interventions had improved outcomes for the children and the family. In both cases social work practice was excellent, and the voice of the child was captured. In Case One the child and family were receiving support from social services, School, Missing Education Team, GP and the Tavistock Unit. In Case Two, Early Help and Social Care, College and CAHMS had been involved. The agencies have also been assisting the mother with her own health needs. Overall, the audit highlighted the passion, dedication, skill, and tenacity of the professionals working with the families.

In both cases neglect was a feature as well as experiencing poverty. Poverty led to the young people taking on inappropriate employment or caring responsibilities to reduce

the financial pressure on their parents. The audit highlighted the need for agencies to understand the impact of poverty on neglect. Children's Services have created a poverty framework for practitioners to support in their assessments.

Since January 2024, operational instructions in ESCC children's social care have changed for safeguarding and case planning for 16-18 year old children where there are extra-familial risks, or risks from criminal exploitation. Child protection processes are often not best suited to reducing risk for these children and have agreed, that where appropriate, safeguarding needs may be best met through the [SAFER safeguarding pathway](#).

Two **recommendations** were made: 1) The need for agencies to see how they can support the emotional wellbeing and mental health of gender questioning children. It is important for agencies to collate resources regarding support to gender questioning and share across the partnership; and 2) The Partnership to share and promote the recently drafted 'Transition to Adulthood' protocol more widely, to ensure that professionals and agencies are working towards the key transition principles.

- The Partnership has a key role in **evaluating the effectiveness of support for looked after children and care leavers** - it does this via the annual scrutiny of the ESCC Annual Looked After Child & Care Leaver Report, the annual Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) report, regular monitoring of key performance information in the ESSCPs quarterly dashboard, and via the Section 11 process. In addition, one of the ESSCP Lay Members met with the Operations Manager for Looked After Children to scrutinise data on the disproportionate representation of some ethnic groups in the cohort, following presentation of the annual report at Board.
- The Partnership has a key role in **evaluating the effectiveness of early help services** - it does this via the regular monitoring of key performance information in the ESSCPs quarterly dashboard.
- Towards the end of 2022/23 the ESSCP, along with Brighton & Hove SCP and West Sussex SCP, held its seventh bi-annual '**section 11**' **audit**. All organisations represented on the ESSCP were requested to complete a self-assessment and provide evidence of how they comply with s11, of the Children Act 2004, when carrying out their day-to-day business. The audit provides an indication of how well organisations are working to keep children safe. An overview of agency's performance in the section 11 audit, across the partnership, was presented at the October 2023 ESSCP Board meeting where an action plan for the top ten lowest performing indicators was also presented.
- In 2023/24 the ESSCP held a series of **Peer Challenge** events following the completion of the section 11 audit tools. These included a Pan Sussex peer challenge event in June, led by the Independent Scrutineer for the three partnerships, peer challenge events for the three separate children's services divisions in ESCC, and a further peer challenge event for the district and borough councils. An action plan has been developed for the top ten lowest rated standards which is overseen by the Learning & Development Subgroup.



- The annual [Schools Safeguarding Audit Report \(s175\)](#) was presented to the ESSCP Steering for scrutiny and challenge in July 2023. All schools (including maintained, independent, academies, free schools, and colleges) in East Sussex are requested to complete the safeguarding audit toolkit on an annual basis, assessing their practice in line with statutory guidance and local good practice. Engagement with the process is strong with 100% of state funded schools returning their audit. The audit provides all schools with a robust framework against which they can evaluate their practice and identify areas for development as necessary and the data gathered by the Education Safeguarding Team, through having the audits returned to them, informs the ongoing development of guidance, training and support to schools. It was agreed at ESSCP Steering in July 23 that the partnership would coordinate a short life task and finish group, to map multi-agency online safety interventions to support schools. This would highlight potential gaps to inform commissioners.
- Other examples of assurance work undertaken include:
  - ✓ [Health Visiting Service](#)
  - ✓ [ESCC ILLAC Ofsted Inspection](#)
  - ✓ [Lansdowne Secure Children's Home](#) is within the Partnership's local area. In February 2023 the unit was temporarily closed due to ongoing challenges regarding staff recruitment, resulting in only being able to utilise a small proportion of the places in the unit. During its period of closure, the unit has undergone an extensive review and redesign of the staffing structure and developed an enhanced recruitment strategy to allow a resilient and sustainable service in the future. The unit re-opened in February 2024. The ESSCP Manager met with the Manager of the home in April 2024 to review any incidents of restraint involving the one resident in the home during March 2024. The Manager at Lansdowne Secure Children's Home has resumed annual reporting to the ESSCP, including a review of the use of restraint within the establishment, due April 2025 for inclusion in the 2024/25 partnership annual report. The home was inspected by Ofsted in December 2022 and received a 'Good' judgement.

## 9. Appendices

### 9.A Safeguarding Context

<b>Impact of multi-agency working</b>		
Family contacts (to SPOA and other excluding MASH)	↔	The total number of contacts remains consistent with last year (17,855 compared to 17,798 compared to 17,011).
Information gatherings by Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	↑	The number of multi-agency information gathering (MIG's) increased by 7.2% (22,699 compared with 21,181) continuing the year on year increase (between 2022-2023 MIGs increased by 8%)
Referrals to statutory social care	↑	The number of referrals to statutory social care increased by 8.2% from last year (4400 compared to 4018).
Privately Fostered children	↓	Following a peak of 64 in summer 2023, the number of Privately Fostered children fell to 33 at the end of 2023/24. Generally, the number of privately fostered children is lower than previous years.
<b>Children supported by statutory services</b>		
Children with a child protection plan	↔	The number of CP plans has continued to rise throughout 2023/24 to a peak of 766 at the end of February 2024. The number of children with plans fell slightly, to 688, at the end of March 2024. While this is a similar number to the number of plans at the end of March 2023 (691), this represents a 28% increase over a two year period (536 in March 2022)
Looked After Children	↑	The average number of Looked After Children increased by 4.2% in 2023/24 compared to the previous year (672 compared to 645 across the year in 2022/23). The number peaked in September 2023 at 686 but has been on a downward trend since Nov 2023.
Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children	↑	Although the total number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in East Sussex at the end of March 2024 was lower than at the same point in 2023 (69 compared to 73), the average number of UASC across the year increased by 18.0% in 2023/24, compared to the previous year, peaking at 82 in Nov 2023.
Young people at high risk of child exploitation	↑	The average number of children rated as RED within the SAFER process has remained fairly similar - there were an average number of 14 children rated 'red' in 2023/24 compared to 13 in 2022/23. Overall, the number of 'red' and 'amber' cases held at SAFER has increased by 30% (30 at the end of 2023/24 compared to 20 in March 2023).



Sexual offences against children	↑	The number of non-penetrative sexual offences in East Sussex recorded against children in East Sussex has increased by 10% (377 in 2023/24 compared to 343 in 2022/23) compared to an 8% reduction across Sussex. However, the number of penetrative sexual offences has decreased by 12% (200 in 2023/24 compared to 227 in 2022/23), mirroring the decrease also show across Sussex.
<b>Children with family related vulnerabilities</b>		
<i>Children living with domestic violence (MARAC)</i>	↓	In March 2024 there were 108 children living in households that were discussed at MARAC (MARAC is a local, victim-focused meeting where information is shared between different statutory and voluntary agencies, on the highest risk cases of domestic violence and abuse). This is significantly lower than the March 2023 figure of 206.
Vulnerable young carers	↑	There were 380 children's social care assessments completed in 2023/24 where a young carer was identified as a factor, this is an increase compared to 328 in the previous year (but similar to the 2021/22 number of 371 in the previous year)
Children educated at home	↑	The number of children school age children recorded as being electively home educated continues to rise to a high of 1755 children at the of March 2024. This is a 40% increase on the end of March 2023 figure of 1262. The rate of children EHE also continues to rise and peaked in March 2024 at 191 per 10,000 of the 4-18-year-old population.
<b>Children with health related vulnerabilities</b>		
Children with disabilities with a Child Protection Plan	↔	At the end of March 2024 there were 21 children with disabilities with a child protection plan; similar to the number at the end of March 2023 (22 children). This represents an average of 3% of all CP plans.
Children attending A&E due to self-harm	↑	786 children in 2023/34 attended A&E in East Sussex hospitals due to deliberate self-harm, and 14% increase from 692 in 2022/23 and 612 in 2021/22. There was a peak of 83 attendances in September 2023.
Contacts to SPOA CAMHS	↑	A total of 5963 contacts were made to the CAMHS 'front door' (SPOA) in 2023/24 compared to 5379 in 2022/23; this represents an 11% increase in contacts.
<b>Children whose actions place them at risk</b>		
Missing episodes	↑	There were a total of 2380 missing episodes in 2023/24, a 7% increase on the 2022/23 figure of 2083. The number of missing individuals decreased by 3% over the same period.

Number of permanent exclusions from school	↑	A total of 126 permanent exclusions from school across the 2023/24 financial year, compared to 96 in the previous year. This represents a 31% increase.
Young people entering the youth justice system	↑	85 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time in 2023/24 compared to 62 in 2021/22, however this is still below the number in 2021/22 (100). The rate of FTE per 100,000 0-17-year-olds is still well below the target rate (34 per 100,000 compared to a target of 74.9)
Young people held overnight in Police custody	↓	There were only 6 occasions of young people being held overnight in Police custody in 2023/24, lower than in previous years (11 in 2022/23 and 2021/22)

## 9.B: Board Membership - up to March 2024

NAME	TITLE, ORGANISATION
Chris Robson (Chair)	Independent East Sussex SCP Chair
Louise MacQuire-Plows	Manager, East Sussex SCP
Victoria Jones	Manager, East Sussex SCP
Harriet Martin	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Anne Moynihan	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Nick Pointer	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Maxine Nankervis	Partnership Support Officer, East Sussex SCP till March 2024

Gail Gowland	Head of Safeguarding (Adults and Children), East Sussex Healthcare Trust
Gareth Knowles	SECamb Trust Safeguarding Lead, Clinical Supervisor
Jackie Dyer / Lynne Torpey	NHS England and NHS Improvement - South
Jayne Bruce	Director of Nursing, Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust (SPFT)
Jo Tomlinson	Assistant Head of Safeguarding Children/Designated Nurse, NHS Sussex
Judith Sakala	Named GP for Child Safeguarding, NHS Sussex
Martin Ryan	Named Nurse/Associate Director Safeguarding Children, SPFT
Michael Brown	Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children, NHS Sussex
Naomi Ellis	Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Director of Patient Experience & Involvement, NHS Sussex
Sergio Lopez-Gutierrez	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children for NHS Sussex
Tracey Ward (Deputy Chair)	Designated Doctor Safeguarding Children, NHS Sussex
Vikki Carruth	Director of Nursing, ESHT

Richard McDonagh	Detective Chief Superintendent Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police Service
David Kemp	Head of Community Safety, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
Debbie Knight	Head of East Sussex Probation Delivery Unit
Kate Adams	Service Manager, Sussex Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service CAFCASS

Annabel Hodge	Dir. Of Safeguarding, Bede's Senior School
Richard Green	Deputy Head Teacher, Chailey Heritage School
Richard Preece	Executive Head teacher, Torfield & Saxon Mount Federation

Alison Jeffery	Director of Children's Services. Till April 2024
Amanda Glover	Operations Manager, ESCC
Ben Brown	Consultant, Public Health, ESCC
Bob Bowdler, Cllr	Lead Member for Children and Families
Catherine Dooley	Strategic Lead, Safeguarding and Emotional Wellbeing, Education Division

<b>Douglas Sinclair</b>	Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Children's Services
<b>Fraser Cooper</b>	Head of Safeguarding Adults
<b>Justine Armstrong</b>	Safer Communities Manager, ESCC
<b>Kathy Marriott</b>	Assistant Director (Early Help & Social Care), Children's Services
<b>Lucy Spencer</b>	Safeguarding Adults Board Development Manager
<b>Rachel Doran</b>	Legal & Coroner Services Manager, ESCC
<b>Vicky Finnemore</b>	Head of Specialist Services, Children's Services

<b>Charlotte O'Callaghan</b>	Senior Policy Officer, Wealden District Council (Maternity Leave)
<b>Trevor Scott</b>	Chief Executive, Wealdon District Council
<b>Peter Hill</b>	Policy Officer, Wealden District Council, Wealdon District Council
<b>Seanne Sweaney</b>	Strategy and Corporate Projects Officer, Lewes DC and Eastbourne BC
<b>Richard Parker-Harding</b>	Richard Parker-Harding - Head of Environmental Health, Rother District Council
<b>Verna Connolly</b>	Head of Personnel & Organisational Development, Hastings Borough Council

<b>Kate Lawrence</b>	Chief Executive Lotus Families East Sussex
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## 9.C ESSCP Budget

### ESSCP - Actual Income and Expenditure 2023/24:

Income 2023/24		Area of Spend	Confirmed Expenditure
Sussex Police	£36,750	Independent Chair	£24,297
NHS Sussex	£53,987	Business Manager(s) & Administrator	£124,779
East Sussex County Council	£135,300	Administration	£2,163
Training Income	£5,863	Learning & Development Consultant	£62,626
ESSCP brought forward from 2022/23	£3,051	Training Programme and Conferences	£9,426
DfE Working Together 2023 Transitions Grant	£47,300	Projects (QA and Data support)	£17,514
		Pan Sussex Procedures	£7,092
		IT Software & Hardware	£1,342
		Safeguarding Practice Reviews	£4,866
		<i>cfwd (balancing fig)</i>	<i>£28,146</i>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£282,251</b>		<b>£282,251</b>

- The WT2023 transitions grant (£47,300) received from the DfE in January 2024 has been spent in full as per the Annex G return.
- The remaining funds contributed by LSPs for the continuing function of the partnership during 2023/24 was £28,146. This has been carried forward into the 2024/25 partnership budget as per DSP agreement.

## 9.D Links to other documents

[CDOP annual reports - Sussex Health and Care \(ics.nhs.uk\)](#)

[East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

[East Sussex Children and Young Peoples Plan](#)

[Children and Young People's Trust](#)

[Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner - Police and Crime Plan 2021-24](#)

[East Sussex Safer Communities Partnerships' Business Plan 2023-26](#)

[East Sussex Safeguarding Adult Board Strategic Plan 2024-2027](#)

[East Sussex Youth Cabinet](#)

[West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Brighton & Hove Safeguarding Children Partnership;](#)

## 9.E Acronyms

<b>ABE</b>	Achieving Best Evidence
<b>ALWSPA</b>	Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spiritual Possession
<b>AMH</b>	Adult Mental Health
<b>B&amp;H</b>	Brighton & Hove
<b>CACE</b>	Collaboration Against Child Exploitation
<b>CAFCASS</b>	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
<b>CAMHS</b>	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
<b>CCG</b>	Clinical Commissioning Groups
<b>CDRP</b>	Child Death Review Panel
<b>CME</b>	Children Missing Education
<b>CNB</b>	Child Not Brought
<b>CPP</b>	Child Protection Plan
<b>CQC</b>	Care Quality Commission
<b>CRG</b>	Case Review Subgroup
<b>CSARC</b>	Children's Sexual Assault Referral Centre
<b>CSP</b>	Community Safety Partnership
<b>CYPT</b>	Children and Young People Trust
<b>DA</b>	Domestic Abuse
<b>DAT</b>	Duty and Assessment Team
<b>DfE</b>	Department for Education
<b>DHR</b>	Domestic Homicide Review
<b>DSP</b>	Delegated Safeguarding Partner
<b>DSVA</b>	Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
<b>EET</b>	Education, Employment, or Training
<b>EHE</b>	Electively Home Educated
<b>ES</b>	East Sussex
<b>ESFRS</b>	East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
<b>ESHT</b>	East Sussex Health Trust
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>HSB</b>	Harmful Sexual Behaviour
<b>JTAI</b>	Joint Targeted Area Inspection
<b>LAC</b>	Looked After Children
<b>LADO</b>	Local Authority Designated Officer
<b>LCSPR</b>	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
<b>LGBTQ</b>	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender queer
<b>LSCLG</b>	Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Groups
<b>LSP</b>	Lead Safeguarding Partner
<b>MACE</b>	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group
<b>MASA</b>	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
<b>MASH</b>	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
<b>NAI</b>	Non Accidental Injury
<b>NPS</b>	National Probation Service
<b>PG</b>	Partnership Group
<b>PP</b>	Perplexing Presentations
<b>SAB</b>	Safeguarding Adults Board
<b>SAFER</b>	Situation, Assessment & Actions, Family, Expected Response, Referral & Recording
<b>SAR</b>	Safeguarding Adult Review
<b>SCARF</b>	Single Combined Agency Report Form
<b>SCP</b>	Safeguarding Children Partnership
<b>SCR</b>	Serious Case Reviews
<b>SECamb</b>	South East Coast Ambulance
<b>SEROCU</b>	Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit
<b>SLES</b>	Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service
<b>SMART</b>	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based



<b>SPFT</b>	Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust
<b>SPOA</b>	Single Point of Advice
<b>SSCE</b>	Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive
<b>STP</b>	Sustainability and Transformation Plan
<b>SUDI</b>	Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy
<b>SWIFT</b>	Specialist Family Services
<b>VCSE</b>	Voluntary Charity Social Enterprise
<b>VFM</b>	Value for money
<b>WS</b>	West Sussex
<b>YOT</b>	Youth Offending Team

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>People Scrutiny Committee</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>19 November 2024</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>Director of Adult Social Care and Health</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Preparing for Adulthood Model Update</b>
<b>Purpose:</b>	<b>To Update the Committee on the implementation of Preparing for Adulthood Model between Children's Services and Adult Social Care.</b>

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The People Scrutiny Committee is recommended to note, review and agree the progress of implementation for Preparing for Adulthood.

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## **1. Background Information**

1.1 Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) is about enabling and empowering children, young people and adults with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities), as well as their families and/or carers to prepare for a seamless transition from Children's Services (CS) through to Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH). This seamless way of working is instrumental in underpinning the four pillars of the PfA principles:

- **Opportunities to access further education, employment**  
Children and Adult services are focused on supporting young people/adults with SEND to acquire the skills and knowledge they need to access ongoing education, pursue vocational opportunities and supported employment. Working with education partners, our approach is to develop children and young adults' skills, abilities and confidence that they will need to maximise / promote their independence and wellbeing. This includes independent travel training, life skills, and management of finances, daily living skills and building positive sustaining relationships with friends into adulthood.
- **Independent living including access to supported living**  
A Care Act assessment will consider their future aspirations, and our work will be to support options around supported living where appropriate. Choice and Control and capacity are important factors when considering the next steps in a young person's accommodation needs. ASCH will continue to invest in Capital Development schemes over the next 3 years to provide supported living options for people with complex needs.
- **Full inclusion and active participation in local communities as an equal citizen and being supported to build relationships and friendships.**  
The support through the Pfa for young people with SEND is to become young successful active and participating citizens, involved in local communities like their non-disabled peers.

- **To maintain health and wellbeing with reasonable adjustments in place as appropriate to support the access to mainstream health provision and services.**

Accessing and maintaining good health and wellbeing is achieved through better and timely accessibility to health services by utilising health passports, thereby avoiding unnecessary delays to the correct type of health support and interventions. Key to delivering this will be continuing to foster good working relationships with health colleagues. We will continue to support and advocate eligibility through Continuing Care (CC) for children and Continuing Healthcare (CHC) when they move to ASCH.

1.2 By working in partnership across CS and ASCH, the aim is to ensure that appropriate advice and information is made available in accessible formats for young people and young adults with SEND and their parents/carers (including young carers) regarding these 4 Pfa pillars. Transition planning is about all stakeholders working in partnership with young people/adults with SEND, their families and carers to plan and prepare from an early age to think about what it means to be an adult.

## **2. Preparing for Adulthood Pathway**

2.1 Effective transition planning means getting the right support and plans in place at an early stage. We start the planning process from year 9 (age 14). This is a key stage in a child's life and a milestone in key services being galvanised around them, from their schools, key worker, social worker, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, personal advisor, therapy service worker and any other relevant partners. Successful transition should be an engaging and positive experience that builds confidence, promotes and maximises independence. The development of transition plans for each young person/adult with SEND will differ in line with their needs and aspirations and so a personalised approach is required to ensure that plans, pathways and services are able to meet individual and very specific needs on a consistent and coherent basis.

2.2 The work of the Preparing for Adulthood Operational and Processes Group is in place and under regular review, so that the young person/adult with SEND and their families will know of the expectations from year 9 (age 14), who is involved, and what the expected outcomes should be along that Preparing for Adulthood pathway. The 4 PFA principles are considered when determining the pathways for each young person.

2.3 All elements of the four pillars of PfA continue to be considered in partnership with the young person and their representative during their Care Act Assessment which starts at 17 ½ years old. A parent-carer transition assessment (Carer's Assessment) is also completed at this time where relevant. The Children's Disability Service (CDS)/ASCH liaise with the Designated Social Care Officer (DSCO) regarding parent-carer assessments and collaborative working.

2.4 For many young people/adults with SEND, transition planning will be part of the EHCP (Education, Health and Care Plan) and will combine with other pathway planning where relevant including those open to other social care services and children with Continuing Care/Continuing Healthcare needs.

### **3. Supporting information**

3.1 The transition planning process should fully consider and take into account the following:

- Physical, psychological, emotional and social needs, including how the young person can be best supported through the process
- Communication needs and how these will be accommodated
- Mental Capacity and any decisions that might be needed to be made in an individual's best interest if the young person lacks capacity to make the decision(s) in question
- Advocacy, peer support including coaching and mentoring
- The role of assistive and mobile technology
- Access to the correct information at the right time in the most appropriate format

3.2 Our statutory duties in relation to PfA come under the following legislation:

- Children's Act 1989
- Care Act 2014
- Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Reforms
- SEND Code of Practice (2015), Chapter 8
- Children and Families Act 2014, Section 19
- Equality Act 2010
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

### **4. Actions and Progress to Date**

4.1 Pathways are in place between CDS and the ASCH Transitions team. Work is underway to provide the young person and their family/carer with information packs on the young person's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday and when they are 17 ½. This enables the PfA pathway to be clear and informative.

4.2 Each young person is now allocated a PfA Link Worker from the Transitions team to work alongside them and their family as they progress along the pathway towards adulthood. At 17 ½, an ASC case manager is allocated to undertake all relevant assessments and referrals relevant to the young person's assessed needs. These could be:

- Care Act Assessment
- Care and Support Planning
- Mental Capacity Assessment
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards
- Carer's/Young Carer's Assessment
- Consideration of Continuing Healthcare (CHC)
- Consideration of accommodation
- Client Financial Assessment referral

4.3 Since Continuum of Need Level 4 became part of the access criteria to receive support from CDS, the Transition Service changed their own access criteria to allow for a similar cohort of young people to transfer across.

4.4 There is a bi-monthly Preparing for Adulthood Panel (formerly known as the Through Care Panel) that includes representation from the Through Care Service, Family & Youth Support, CDS, Adult Principle Occupational Therapist, ASCH Neighbourhood Support teams, Adult Community Mental Health teams and Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust. This allows for early recognition and identification of the correct pathway for young people. The appropriate team will engage with the young person and their family from age 17 ½ years. This meeting is chaired by a representative from ASCH.

4.5 Pathways are also being developed between the Transition team and the SEND Phased Transfer team; it is recognised that these pathways need to be more robust, and plans are ongoing to strengthen, develop and build a joint approach to reviewing each education care package in a timely manner.

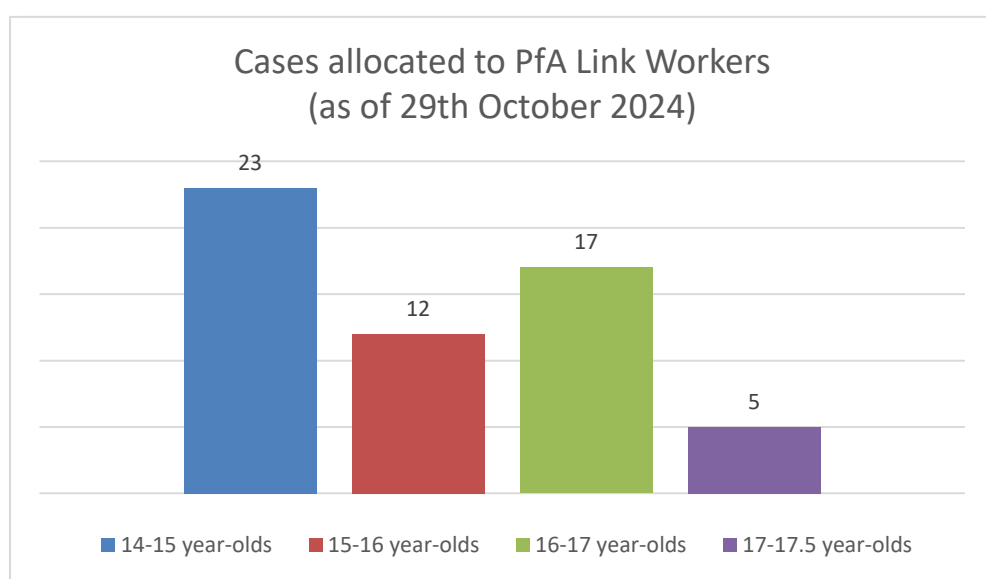
4.6 Staff and partner feedback sessions were carried out in Spring 2023 which highlighted several areas of practice improvement, most of which have been taken forward and implemented, such as Mental Capacity and Deprivation of Liberty training for staff, joint and collaborative approach to working together between CDS and the wider Adult Social Care network. A joint review of the current pathway for 16–18-year-old has now concluded and it has been agreed that these young people will remain with CS until the age of 18.

4.7 Another key element for consideration at 16+ is Mental Capacity and potential Deprivation of Liberty (DOLs). These are undertaken by CDS until the young person is 18 years old. In preparation of moving into adulthood at 18, the transition case manager will complete relevant MCA's (if capacity is in doubt), hold Best Interest Meetings and make a referral to the Court of Protection for a CoP DOLs.

4.8 It is proposed to go out to consultation to rename the Transition Service to the Preparing for Adulthood Team in early 2025.

4.9 The introduction of the Designated Social Care Officer from SEND is strengthening the offer and support to young people and family/carers through the transition period.

## 5. Performance Figures



**Total:** 57 cases between ages 14 and 17.5 yrs old

## **6. Pfa Success Story**

6.1 The case study below shows the positive impact that Pfa can have on a young person and the joint work from both CS and ASCH. To ensure anonymity, the young person will be referred to as Young Person (YP) throughout.

6.2 YP has a severe learning disability, high level autism, anxiety and has presented with aggression to both parents when they were heightened. Both parents had their own medical needs and asked for increased support for YP to ensure their needs were being met and could be supported to remain within the family home. A package of care was put in place by CS including direct payments for a Personal Assistant to support YP and family.

6.3 The Children's Disability Services worked with the Transitions Team to ensure comprehensive future planning with YP and his parents. The care manager, YP and his family formed a positive working relationship built on trust and respect centred around YP's needs, and an assessment was undertaken.

6.4 As a result, several post 18 living options were explored and a smooth transition to supported accommodation was achieved for YP. This accommodation is close to the family home, and they continue to have regular family time with their parents. They are engaged in a range of positive activities within the community and now have a full life with a range of purposeful activities.

6.5 Close liaison and joint planning between CS and ASCH ensured a smooth transition for YP into appropriate adult services. This included developing a comprehensive support plan focused on securing appropriate health provision, Continuing Health Care considerations, alternative living options and education. Parents said they felt listened to throughout their journey and that YP's needs had been fully considered together with their own. YP has settled well into the supported accommodation and is enjoying life to the full.

## **7. Governance**

7.1 Updates are taken through Departmental Management Teams (DMTs) in both CS and ASCH.

7.2 Transitions is also an area of focus in the upcoming Care Quality Commission (CQC) assurance visit for ASCH and in the recently announced SEND Inspection through OFSTED. Both departments are working closely together to ensure that we have a One Council approach to information shared with both CQC and OFSTED.

7.3 A quarterly Strategic Oversight Board for Pfa will commence in January 2025, overseen by both Assistant Directors for CS and ASCH, this will cover performance data, updates on progress and ensure that Pfa is and continues to be a strong partnership across both departments and meets the needs of all young people moving into Adult Services.

7.4 Our SEND Strategy Governance Board (SGB) has members who represent the large number of different groups and services that help and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Meeting quarterly, it oversees the SEND Strategy at its implementation.

## **8. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

8.1 We recognise that the transition for a young person and their family/carers can be a difficult and uncertain time. The aim is to remove the 'cliff edge' and allow for a seamless transition for the young person and their family / carer as they transition from being supported by Children's Services onto Adult Social Care and Health, with the young person becoming a full independent citizen and to build their confidence and self-esteem.

8.2 The CDS, alongside the Transition Service, have been collaborating on embedding the Preparation for Adulthood Model since April 2023. It continues to provide positive outcomes in partnership working between CDS and Transitions staff. PfA planning now also includes our Adult Social Care Community Mental Health teams and Neighbourhood Support teams. This in turn enables offering a flexible approach to care planning, clearer pathways for young people and their family / carer as the young person moves into adulthood. It can be difficult to make choices about the future without knowing and understanding what it means to be an adult. It is important to start planning early, so the young person has time to make informed choices, and their family are aware of all the upcoming changes.

## **APPENDIX A: Preparing for Adulthood Flowchart**

### **MARK STANTON**

Director Adult Social Care and Health

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Child Protection

Link Worker / Transitions Worker

Age 14 - Case responsibility held by Children's Disability Service

Age 14

- Education reviews
- Annual CIN reviews
- CIC statutory processes
- Continuing Care processes

Age 16

- Consideration of:
  - o Mental Capacity
  - o Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards

Age 17.5

**Preparation to transfer to ASC**

- Transitions Hub (Duty)
- Social Care Assessment
- Consideration of Continuing Healthcare (CHC)
- Consideration of referral to SPFT
- Carer's Assessment (if appropriate)
- Client Financial Assessment referral
- ASC to chair Through Care Panel & Transitions to undertake the screenings
- Consideration of accommodation (Transitions Cohort Planning meeting - accommodation panel 17.5 - 25)

Age 18 - Case responsibility held by Transition Service

Age 18

- Care Leavers Personal Advisor involvement / Pathway Plans
- Finalised Social Care Assessment & Care and Support Plan or transfer to CHC (if eligible)
- Consideration of funding from Adult Social Care
- Consideration of accommodation (LD Housing Panel - cases referred over 18 y.o.)
- Consideration of employment (Steps To Work)
- Community resources / annual review of Care and Support Plan

Age 19 - 25

Transfer to relevant Adult Social Care team once the EHCP is ceased

Adult Safeguarding

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**Report to:** People Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 19 November 2024

**By:** Chief Executive

**Title:** Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)

**Purpose:** To provide an update on the Council's business and financial planning process, Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR), and the committee's input to the process.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Scrutiny Committee is recommended to:

- (1) consider the information in the attached RPPR Cabinet report of 13 November 2024 (appendix A), including the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP), savings proposals and capital programme update; and
  - (2) identify any further work or information needed to aid the Scrutiny Committee's contribution to the RPPR process for consideration at the RPPR Board, or as part of the committee's ongoing work programme.
- 

## **1. Background**

1.1 On 13 November Cabinet will consider a Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) update report. Following on from the State of the County report in June and an exceptional RPPR update report to Cabinet in September, the report provides the latest assessment of the financial outlook, including the potential impact of announcements made at the recent national Budget.

1.2 The report (attached at Appendix A) includes:

- an updated overall assessment of the planning position and financial outlook;
- updates on key policy context developments since the State of the County report in June;
- an updated Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and reserves position;
- further savings proposals, as signalled in September; and
- an update on the capital programme, including a review and proposed reduction of the programme.

1.3 The report highlights that the RPPR process, which brings together our policy, business and financial planning and risk management, continues to provide the robust mechanism to help us navigate the severe financial challenges, support planning for 2025/26 and beyond and maintain focus on our priority outcomes.

## **2. Scrutiny engagement in RPPR planning**

2.1 At the **July** meeting the People Scrutiny Committee discussed relevant parts of the 2023/24 year end monitoring report and the State of the County 2024 report, both of which had been considered by Cabinet in June. These reports enabled the committee to review current service and financial performance information, as well as considering new developments which impact on

services, to ensure a full understanding of the current context and future pressures for the areas within the remit of the committee.

2.2 At the **September** meeting the People Scrutiny Committee discussed the report to 26 September Cabinet detailing the latest financial outlook and the Council's response to increasing financial pressures, including a recommendation to begin public consultation on a range of specific potential savings.

2.3 The scrutiny work planning **awayday** held in October provided an opportunity to further consider current and forthcoming challenges for the services within the committee's remit, including departments' approaches to identifying savings and efficiencies, and whether, or how, these challenges should be reflected in the committee's ongoing work programme.

2.4 The **November** meeting provides an opportunity to consider the further developments in the policy and financial context, as set out in the attached Cabinet report, and how these will impact on planning for 2025/26 and beyond. Members are invited to:

- consider and comment on the developments in the planning context, particularly as they impact on services within the committee's remit;
- review the updated Medium Term Financial Plan (appendix 1 to the Cabinet report);
- consider the next set of identified savings proposals (appendix 2 to the Cabinet report), particularly as they impact on services within the committee's remit;
- review the capital programme update (appendix 2 to the Cabinet report); and
- identify any further work or information needed to aid the Scrutiny Committee's contribution to the RPPR process for consideration at the RPPR Board, or as part of the committee's ongoing work programme.

2.5 The People Scrutiny Committee's **RPPR Board** will meet on 5 December 2024 to agree detailed comments and any recommendations on the budget and emerging portfolio plans to be put to Cabinet on behalf of the committee in January 2025. The Chairs of the People and Place Scrutiny Committees are invited to attend the RPPR boards of both committees.

2.6 In **March 2025** the committee will review the process and their input into the RPPR process and receive feedback on how scrutiny input has been reflected in final plans. Any issues arising can be reflected in the future committee work programme.

2.7 Running alongside this process, there will be a number of opportunities for all Members to engage in the RPPR process.

### **3. Conclusion and reason for recommendations**

3.1 As part of its ongoing input to the RPPR process, the committee is recommended to consider the updated information provided by this report and identify any further information it requires to support further engagement in the planning process. The committee is also recommended to consider any amendments to its work programme to aid its contribution to the ongoing RPPR process.

**BECKY SHAW**  
**Chief Executive**

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<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>13 November 2024</b>
<b>By:</b>	<b>Chief Executive</b>
<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) – update on planning for 2025/26 and beyond</b>
<b>Purpose of report:</b>	<b>To update Members on the latest policy context, Medium Term Financial Plan and capital programme.</b>

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**Cabinet is recommended to:**

- i. note the updated policy context as set out in paragraph 2;**
  - ii. note the updated Medium Term Financial Plan as set out in paragraph 3 and appendix 1;**
  - iii. note the reserves summary set out in paragraph 3;**
  - iv. note the savings proposals set out in paragraph 4 and appendix 2;**
  - v. note the capital programme update as set out in paragraph 5 and appendix 3;**
  - vi. note recent lobbying activity and agree to continue pressing Government for sustainable funding to meet the needs of the residents of East Sussex, particularly in light of the immediate review of funding in light of local deprivation and need; and**
  - vii. note our ongoing commitment to work with partners to make best use of the resources we have and to identify ways to mitigate the impact of savings proposals wherever possible.**
- 

## **1. Background**

1.1 The County Council provides a diverse and essential range of support to East Sussex residents, businesses and communities, particularly care services for the most vulnerable children and adults which make up over two thirds of our net revenue budget. The Council spends over £540m net (over £1bn gross) each year on services which make a daily difference to lives and livelihoods and delivers both local and national priorities. We are committed to strong partnership working to ensure we make the very best of the resources we have available as well as seeking to minimise, wherever possible, the impact of making necessary savings.

1.2 However, despite our efficient and effective services and partnerships, there remains a fundamental mismatch between the needs of East Sussex residents for essential statutory support, the level of demand, the cost of delivering these services, and the funding we expect to have, even after factoring in some additional short term national support. Councils across the country, including ESCC, have experienced a rapid escalation in both demand and costs as a result of national factors beyond local control. In particular, ongoing growth and complexity of need and increased costs in children's social care, special educational

needs and disability (SEND), home to school transport and adult social care, due to increased need, demographic change and national market conditions. The legacy of Covid and more recent cost of living increases has been both increased demand for a range of services and more complex needs, particularly in Children's Services.

1.3 These pressures are not unique to East Sussex but they are especially pronounced here because of the demographic make-up and needs of our population, the resources available to us, and the steps we have already had to take over many years to respond within limited and reduced resources, and funding mechanisms which do not properly reflect the level of need. East Sussex is ahead of the national ageing population trend and has pockets of significant deprivation which also impact on demand. The county differs substantially from the wider south east in this respect. East Sussex offer an exceptional natural environment in which to live and work but also places limitations on the development and infrastructure which support economic growth, prosperity and the related generation of business rates to help fund services. Earnings are below both the national and regional average.

1.4 Coupled with the significant needs within the county, we have fewer resources at our disposal than many other county councils. Our overall reserve balances have significantly reduced in recent years, and we have relatively limited assets. Our residents already experience relatively high Council Tax levels as there has been increasing reliance by Government on raising money to fund social care through this route. Business rates income is relatively flat, given the challenges in the local economy. Fundamentally, the national formula used to allocate funding to individual councils is long overdue for reform and does not reflect current local needs, particularly in places like East Sussex, with high demand for social care.

1.5 In September Cabinet considered an exceptional report, outside the usual Reconciling, Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) cycle, which set out the acute and growing financial challenge we face. A combination of national cost pressures and increasing local needs is impacting on the sustainability of the essential services the County Council provides, particularly to support our most vulnerable residents. The report set out the substantial shortfall in the funding available to the Council to respond to these escalating needs and costs, both in the current year and for the future. Cabinet considered and agreed the immediate steps needed in response to the deteriorating position including additional action, over and above the robust response already in place. Public consultations on an initial phase of savings proposals were agreed and are now underway, enabling us to better understand the impacts and issues to inform sound decision making later in the RPPR process. As signalled in September, we have also begin consulting with our staff where this has been necessary to progress potential savings.

1.6 This report provides our latest assessment of the financial outlook, including the potential impact of announcements made at the recent national Budget. It also provides, in line with our usual RPPR process, an overview of key national developments since the State of the County report in June which we need to take account of in our planning. The planning context has developed significantly since the general election and change of Government in July, as a result of national policy announcements and the developing economic picture, summarised at paragraph 2 below.

1.7 The updated assessment set out in this report confirms that the outlook remains highly challenging, with important decisions still to be made by the Government and information still to be received and assessed. The Government has acknowledged the substantial pressures on local authorities and the impact these are having on services for local people, and its first Budget signalled some additional support. But this was offset by additional costs, for the Council and our providers, as well as the uncertainty of major

financial and service reforms yet to come. Although welcome, the funding provided will be required to help meet future costs and is unlikely to make a fundamental difference to the overall underlying position we face. The impact on local businesses is yet to become clear.

1.8 The RPPR process, which brings together our policy, business and financial planning and risk management, is the tool we use to help us navigate a challenging and uncertain environment. It ensures we direct the resources we have on the evidence-based priorities we aim to deliver and where we will have most impact. The severe financial challenges we face present a renewed challenge to maintaining the decent and effective services our residents need and deserve. It is vital we maintain focus, through RPPR planning, on our four priority outcomes for the county and the Council:

- Driving sustainable economic growth;
- Keeping vulnerable people safe;
- Helping people help themselves; and
- Making best use of resources, now and for the future - the test applied to all activities to ensure sustainability of our resources, both in terms of money and the environment.

## 2. Policy context update

2.1 The general election on 4 July, and subsequent change of Government, has led to some significant shifts in national policy which will impact on our planning, with further announcements expected in the coming months. The key areas in which there have been developments since the State of the County report, or in which further developments are expected, are detailed below.

2.2 **Government priorities** – The new Government has set out its intention to be ‘mission-led’ with a focus on five key missions covering economic growth, clean energy, improving the NHS, safer streets and increasing opportunity through education. The King’s Speech in July provided further detail on the Government’s legislative priorities with key Bills of relevance to ESCC including those focusing on Children’s Wellbeing, English Devolution, Planning and Infrastructure, Better Buses, Mental Health and Employment Rights. Some of this legislation has now been published, with further detail expected in the coming months.

2.3 **National economic context** – Inflation, as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI), fell to 1.7% in the 12 months to September, a larger than anticipated reduction, which brought the rate below the Bank of England’s 2% target for the first time in three and a half years. However, the latest Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts expect CPI to increase in the short term, averaging 2.6% in 2025, before gradually falling back to target. These projections are higher than previous OBR forecasts published in March 2024. Reflecting the reduced rate of inflation, the Bank of England made the first cut in interest rates since the Covid pandemic to 5% in August, a reduction of a quarter of a percentage point, and held rates at this level in September. Analysts have predicted a further reduction this year, with the next rates decision to be made by the Bank of England on 7 November. After remaining flat in 2023, the economy is expected to grow by just over 1% this year, rising to 2% in 2025, before falling to around 1.5% over the remainder of the OBR’s five year forecast.

2.4 Previous higher levels of inflation and cost of living pressures have continued to impact on households. In September, the Government announced another extension to the Household Support Fund to March 2025. Deployment of this funding in East Sussex was agreed by Lead Members in September. It was announced at the Budget in October that the Fund would be extended into 2025/26 and further detail is awaited. From winter 2024/25, Winter Fuel Payments for people of state pension age will be restricted to those receiving



Pension Credit or other means-tested benefits. The Deputy Prime Minister and Work and Pensions Secretary have written to local authorities in support of the Government's Pension Credit awareness drive to identify households not claiming the benefit and encourage pensioners to apply.

**2.5 Budget and Spending Review** – In July, alongside the outcomes of a Public Spending Audit, the Chancellor announced that the Government would undertake a two stage Spending Review, with phase 1 setting revised departmental spending totals for 2024/25 and 2025/26 at the Autumn Budget, followed by phase 2 - a multi-year Spending Review to report in spring 2025. The Government's longer term intention is to undertake Spending Reviews on a two year cycle, to inform three year department settlements. The Chancellor has also committed to one major Budget statement a year, to be delivered each autumn.

**2.6** The Chancellor delivered the Budget Statement on 30 October which focused on economic stability, public services and capital investment, with an overarching aim of driving economic growth. The Budget contained significant changes to taxation to raise additional revenue, notably an increase to the National Insurance contributions paid by employers, including those in the public sector. The Budget also confirmed that the National Living Wage will increase by 6.7% from April 2025, with a larger increase for employees aged under 21 as part of moving towards a single adult rate. This level of increase, plus the uplift to employer National Insurance contributions, will have significant impacts in the care sector.

**2.7** Government department spending is planned to grow by an average of 2% per year in real terms between 2023/24 and 2029/30. This sets the overall funding envelope for Phase 2 of the Spending Review, concluding in late spring 2025, which will set out a longer-term settlement for public services with a focus on reform. The Budget also set a 2% productivity, efficiency and savings target for Government departments and formally launched the new Office for Value for Money.

**2.8 Local government funding** – Financial pressures faced by councils across the country have continued to attract national attention. The majority of local authorities are experiencing significant increases in demand, notably in children's services and adult social care and, with limited resources to respond, in-year overspends and increasing medium term deficits have been widely reported. The Local Government Association (LGA) submission to the Chancellor ahead of the Budget Statement highlighted that councils face a combined funding gap of £6.2bn over the next two years to keep services at current levels.

**2.9** At the Budget the Chancellor provided some indications of the funding which will be available to local authorities for the coming year, although detail is awaited. There was welcome acknowledgement of the specific issues driving pressure on local authorities and the need for reforms in key areas, including increased focus on prevention. An additional £1.3bn grant funding for local government overall, including at least £600m new funding for social care, was announced. In addition, a £2.3bn increase in the Core Schools Grant will include £1bn for SEND in 2025/26. However, increases to the National Living Wage and National Insurance paid by employers will impact on our providers and, potentially, the costs of commissioning services, particularly in the care sector. Higher than expected inflation will further affect costs across a range of services. We will continue to assess the impact of these announcements for ESCC as we receive further detail from Government in the coming weeks. However, given the balance of funding and costs, it is already clear that the overall impact is likely to be limited and the Council will continue to face a substantial funding gap in the year ahead. Further detail on the potential impact of Budget announcements is set out in section 3.

2.10 Longer term, there remains considerable uncertainty. The Budget confirmed that there will be reform to local government funding arrangements in 2025, including the basis on which funding will be allocated to individual areas in future, to inform a longer term financial settlement for councils. Reforms to adult and children's social care and the SEND system will also be set out next year, with the potential for significant impacts, both financially and in service provision. There remain many unknowns which makes future planning very difficult.

2.11 The Government has committed to multi-year settlements for local authorities to support longer term planning, including simplifying the wider local funding landscape, reducing the number of grants and consolidating them into the Local Government Finance Settlement. The intention to end competitive bidding has also been set out. However, given the timescales for the Spending Review, another one year settlement is confirmed for 2025/26 with a multi-year settlement to follow from 2026/27. The Budget confirmed there will be reform of local government funding arrangements as part of this longer term settlement, indicating that this will include redistributing funding to ensure that it reflects an up-to-date assessment of need and local revenues. Government has already committed to reform of business rates but has ruled out reforming Council Tax.

2.12 A key foundation of Government's approach to local government finance is addressing the local audit backlog in England. Proposals, which will be set out in legislation, involve setting a series of backstop dates to clear the backlog of unaudited accounts, up to and including financial year 2027/28, to allow assurance to be rebuilt over several audit cycles.

2.13 **Workforce** – The broader economic context has been an important factor in pay negotiations. The Government has agreed a range of public sector pay uplifts in recent months. In October, the 2024/25 pay award for local government staff on single status grades was agreed, following negotiations between national employers and unions. There remains a competitive and challenging environment for recruitment and retention of staff in local government and a national recruitment campaign has been launched by the Local Government Association (LGA) to support local recruitment activity.

2.14 The Government has announced a new Employment Rights Bill which sets out a range of reforms, including establishment of a new Fair Pay Agreement in the adult social care sector and plans for a new 'Adult Social Care Negotiating Body' responsible for negotiating pay and conditions for care workers. The Bill also sets out the reinstatement of the School Support Staff Negotiation Body and 'day one' rights for workers, including protection against unfair dismissal, parental leave, flexible working arrangements and sick pay. The Bill also commits to end 'fire and rehire' practices and zero hours contracts, as well as the adoption of post-maternity leave protections. The Government is expected to hold a consultation on proposed reforms before implementation.

2.15 The draft Equality (Race and Disability) Bill, also announced in the King's Speech, will enshrine in law the full right to equal pay for ethnic minorities and disabled people and will mandate ethnicity and disability pay reporting for larger employers (those with 250+ employees).

2.16 **Children's services** – Significant pressures arising from demand and complexity of need continue to impact children's services nationally and locally. In the Autumn Budget it was confirmed that, in the short term, the Government will provide funding to continue testing children's social care reforms, including additional support for kinship and foster care. Plans for fundamental reform of the children's social care system will be set out in phase 2 of the Spending Review, including promoting early intervention to help children stay with their families where possible and addressing issues in the care market. The Secretary of State

has previously indicated her intention to address excess profit making by private residential care providers and it is likely that the development of Regional Care Co-operatives, bringing local authorities together to manage and develop the care market, will continue. The South East region was successful in bidding for one of the pathfinder projects and the County Council, as part of the project, will play an important role in shaping future delivery of this key development.

2.17 In response to ongoing pressures, the Council continues to embed a Valuing Care approach, focused on placement sufficiency and enhancing our ability to secure the right care for the right child for the right length of time. Connected Families Intervention Practitioners have continued to provide dedicated support to support families to stay together and improve the wellbeing and life chances of children, and additional funding has been invested in our in-house foster care programme. The Supporting Families transformation programme has also continued to develop a joined-up whole family, whole system approach to early intervention.

2.18 Demand and complexity in SEND also continues to rise. We remain concerned that the previous Government's SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan does not address the underlying mismatch between the current legal framework and available resources. A recent joint study, commissioned by the County Councils Network and LGA, into an effective and financially sustainable approach to SEND in England, found that the 2014 reforms had failed to improve the educational outcomes for SEND pupils, despite costs trebling in a decade. The report stressed the importance of radical reform – recommending investment in therapists, educational psychologists and inclusion support within schools to reduce the reliance on specialist school places. As well as providing an initial uplift of funding in 2025/26 as set out above, the Government has confirmed its intention to bring forward plans to reform SEND provision to improve outcomes and address financial sustainability. Without sufficient steps being taken to address the sustainability of the system nationally, councils will continue to face significant pressure on resources for SEND at local level for the foreseeable future.

2.19 The Children's Wellbeing Bill is expected to bring together a range of measures including requiring free breakfast clubs in primary schools (750 schools with primary aged pupils will be invited to take part in a pilot from April 2025), and local authorities to maintain registers of children not in school and to provide support to home educating parents. The Bill is also expected to require school co-operation with councils on admissions and SEND inclusion and to require all schools to teach the national curriculum.

2.20 In addition, the Government has launched a curriculum review and abandoned previous plans to create the Advanced British Standard. The Department for Education is also seeking expressions of interest from schools interested in converting unused classrooms to additional nursery capacity, as part of its commitment to continue the roll-out of additional funded hours of childcare announced by the previous Government. In inspection and regulation, Ofsted's single word grades for schools and children's social care services have been replaced with a broader assessment, and a new programme of inspections will look at how local services link up in response to domestic abuse.

2.21 Other national announcements relating to children and young people include the establishment of a Child Poverty Task Force to develop a Child Poverty Strategy for publication in spring 2025 and a 'youth guarantee' of access to training, an apprenticeship, or support to find work for all young people aged 18-21.

2.22 **Adult social care** - In July, the Chancellor announced that the adult social care charging reforms, previously postponed to October 2025, would not go ahead. Given our and other councils' significant concerns about the affordability and deliverability of these

reforms on this timescale, this is welcome. However there remains an urgent need for a comprehensive plan for the funding and reform of adult social care which will ensure that those in need of care services can receive appropriate and timely care. The Government committed in its manifesto to create a National Care Service. Details have not yet been published, beyond suggesting this would be a long-term project underpinned by national standards, with the aim of delivering consistency of care across the country. Initial focus has been on a 'new deal for care workers' through a Fair Pay Agreement with engagement to inform this due to start soon. This, together with the reforms to workers' rights and the increase to the National Living Wage outlined above, has potentially significant implications for the care market.

2.23 Following a rapid review of the NHS, the Prime Minister signalled major reforms would be needed, which will also impact on social care and Public Health. The Government's 10 Year Health Plan, due to be published in spring 2025, will include moving from analogue to digital; shifting care from hospitals to communities; and moving focus from sickness to prevention. To inform the development of the plan, the Department for Health and Social Care has begun a national conversation on the future of the NHS. Ministers have indicated that a 10-Year Plan for social care will run alongside the 10-Year Plan for the NHS and that adult social care reforms will be announced within the next 12 months. In line with the focus on prevention, Government has committed to bringing forward legislation to strengthen controls on tobacco and vaping, including banning disposable vapes from June 2025 and introducing a new tax on vaping liquid from 2026.

2.24 Locally, we have supplied initial information to the Care Quality Commission as part of its assessment of how the Council meets its duties under the Care Act, to be carried out under its new local authority assessment programme. We expect a site visit as part of this process in the coming months, to be followed by an assessment report. Demand on our local acute hospitals remains high, creating ongoing challenges in maintaining the flow of discharges. The County Council, as a key member of the wider health and care system, is playing its part to mitigate the impact of these pressures.

2.25 **Devolution and local economic growth** – The Government has committed to deepening and widening devolution to all parts of the country through the English Devolution Bill, and to publishing an updated devolution framework, the full details of which are expected by the end of the year as part of a Devolution White Paper. Some aspects are expected to remain unchanged, particularly the Government's strong preference for a mayoral governance model and the reservation of certain powers for areas with this model. Shortly after the General Election, the Deputy Prime Minister wrote to all upper tier local authorities without a devolution agreement inviting them to submit initial devolution proposals. In September, the County Council, with the agreement of all five district and borough councils, submitted an expression of interest supporting exploring devolution on an East Sussex geography. Within the Budget, it was indicated that the forthcoming White Paper will also set out plans for Government to work with councils to move to 'simpler structures' and that it envisages 'efficiency savings from council reorganisation helping to meet the needs of local people'.

2.26 The Government has also published a Green Paper to inform the development of its Industrial Strategy. The document outlines plans for long-term sectoral growth and the Government's priority industries for investment, for consultation with businesses ahead of the final strategy being published in spring 2025 alongside the Spending Review. To align with the national Industrial Strategy, the Labour manifesto outlined a new statutory requirement for areas to produce Local Growth Plans, although details are yet to be confirmed, and the initial Government focus is on working with Mayoral Combined Authorities. In light of its focus on extending mayoral devolution, and working with Mayors and local leaders to deliver growth, the Budget indicated ministers are minded to cease

funding for the functions previously delivered by Local Enterprise Partnerships. Locally, the recently agreed East Sussex Economic Prosperity Strategy 2024-50 will act as a flexible and iterative economic growth strategy for the county, as the Government's plans become clearer.

2.27 Within the Budget it was confirmed that Levelling Up funding commitments made by the previous Government would largely be maintained. This includes funding to East Sussex districts and boroughs through Levelling Up Partnerships and the Long Term Plan for Towns. The UK Shared Prosperity Fund, which is also allocated to districts and boroughs, will continue for a further year at a reduced level. Government expects this transitional arrangement to allow local authorities to invest in local growth, in advance of wider reforms to the local growth funding landscape in phase 2 of the Spending Review.

2.28 A Get Britain Working White Paper will be published shortly, which will set out new plans to support people in returning to work. It is expected that this will focus on the root causes of ill-health-related inactivity, supporting young people who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), and helping people to develop their career. Central government will also work with local authorities on the Connect to Work scheme, a new supported employment programme matching people with disabilities or health conditions into vacancies and supporting them in their roles.

2.29 In September, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) announced a review of the role of the Office for Local Government (Oflog) by the end of 2024. In the meantime, Oflog has been asked to deliver its previous remit, but to pause the rollout of its current model of 'early warning conversations' while the Government considers its overall approach to early warnings and interventions.

2.30 **Transport** – The Government has pledged to repair one million more potholes a year nationally, in part with funding that had been earmarked for the A27 Arundel bypass in West Sussex, plans for which have been dropped following the Chancellor's statement on the public finances in July. The Budget confirmed updated national funding for roads maintenance. This has already been assumed as part of our modelling and will support our existing planned maintenance programme within the capital programme. The Chancellor also announced additional investment of £200 million in 2025/26 to accelerate the rollout of electric vehicle charging infrastructure, including funding to support local authorities to install on-street charge points across England, and an additional £100 million investment in cycling and walking infrastructure in 2025/26, to support local authorities to install cycling infrastructure and upgrade pavements and paths.

2.31 In addition, the Department for Transport (DfT) has announced the 'biggest overhaul to buses in a generation' through legislation that will give all local transport authorities the power to introduce a bus franchising system and reverses the ban on councils setting up and running their own bus companies. The Government has extended the bus fare cap, currently £2 to the end of December 2024, with a new cap from January to December 2025 at the higher rate of £3. Alongside this, there is an intention to develop a more sustainable model of Government support for the bus sector that is better value for taxpayers and bus passengers. On rail services, the Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill, which would bring all passenger rail into national ownership under Great British Railways, as contracts with private operators expire, is currently progressing through Parliament.

2.32 **Environment and planning** – The Government views planning reform as a key enabler for its economic growth and housing ambitions. In July, amendments were made to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to remove the de facto ban on new onshore wind farms. Also in July, MHCLG launched a consultation on proposed reforms to the NPPF, outlining changes it aims to make to the policy to support the Government's target of building

1.5 million homes over the next five years. The proposals include changes to the methodology for determining housing targets, new mechanisms for cross-boundary strategic planning, taking a 'vision-led' rather than 'predict and provide' approach to transport planning and increases in planning fees. A response to this consultation is expected by the end of this year. Further to amending the NPPF, the Government's Planning and Infrastructure Bill, expected in early 2025, will seek to will make improvements to the planning system at a local level, modernising planning committees and increasing local planning authorities' capacity to deliver services.

2.33 The Budget reaffirmed the Government's commitment to move towards a zero-waste economy and implement the Collection and Packaging Reforms Programme, including Extended Producer Responsibility. A rapid review of the Environmental Improvement Plan will be completed by the end of the year. The review will inform the development of a new, statutory plan to protect and restore the natural environment and delivery plans to meet each of the Environment Act targets.

2.34 **Migration** – The new Government has indicated that there will be changes to the approach to asylum seekers and refugees. Whilst more detail is expected, some current known developments are a new Border Security Command and measures to strengthen border security, enforce immigration rules and increase returns. The impact of these changes on local areas remains to be seen. Early indications are that the new Government will continue with the general direction and principles of Full Dispersal.

2.35 We expect detail on the Government's approach on these and other key areas, and the resulting implications for the County Council, to become clearer in the coming months and will continue to factor this information into planning for 2025/26 and beyond.

### 3. Medium Term Financial Plan

3.1 Planning for 2025/26 and beyond remains highly challenging. With demand for services, and the cost of providing them, continuing to rise, the total level of expenditure required to deliver our services continues to grow. As the level of Government funding that ESCC will receive between 2025/26 – 2027/28 is yet to be confirmed (the provisional Local Government Settlement 2025/26 is not expected until late December 2024), the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) has been updated for the best estimated available information.

3.2 The MTFP does not currently account for the impacts of the Budget Statement of 30 October 2024, the financial impacts of which will be worked through as further information and detailed council allocations are published.

3.3 The MTFP presented within the State of the County report in June estimated a deficit budget position by 2027/28 of £83.6m. Since then, the MTFP has been updated to include our latest assessment of departmental service pressures and updated financial modelling. The impact of the updates is summarised in the table below and provides a deficit budget position by 2027/28 of £84.6m.

Medium Term Financial Plan	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28
	£m	£m	£m
<b>Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus)</b>	<b>42.619</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>
Carry Forward of 2024/25 Deficit	14.344		
<b>Annual Budget Deficit / (Surplus) after Carry Forward</b>	<b>56.963</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>
<b>Total Budget Deficit / (Surplus)</b>	<b>56.963</b>	<b>71.027</b>	<b>84.625</b>

3.4 A detailed MTFP after normal updates and proposed pressures is shown at appendix 1.

3.5 As set out above, our estimated deficit for 2025/26 is £57.0m. Given the uncertainty around future funding levels, scenarios are being explored to bridge the deficit and present a balanced budget for 2025/26. Current identified options have the potential to reduce the 2025/26 deficit, as set out below:

	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
	£m	£m	£m	£m
<b>Revised deficit</b>	<b>56.963</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>	<b>84.625</b>
<b>Scenarios currently being considered</b>				
Continuation of Adult Social Care (ASC) grant funding	(5.386)			(5.386)
Proceeds of Business Rates (NNDR) pooling	(2.194)	2.194		0.000
Council Tax: Premiums on second homes	(3.524)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(3.666)
Council Tax: Eastbourne Reduction Scheme Proposals	0.778			0.778
Reduction in contractual inflation in line with forecasts	(6.481)			(6.481)
Council Tax Flexibility: Add a further 3.00% to our current 1.99% assumption to get to <b>4.99%</b> (2.99% plus 2.00% ASC Precept) in all years	(11.138)	(12.254)	(13.476)	(36.868)
<b>Deficit/(surplus) after scenarios</b>	<b>29.018</b>	<b>3.934</b>	<b>0.050</b>	<b>33.002</b>

3.6 Given the scale of the remaining deficit, even if all the above scenarios materialise, at this point in the RPPR process it is not possible to present a balanced MTFP.

3.7 Cabinet requested in June that officers explore areas of search for savings as part of work to address the projected deficit. Departments have undertaken work to identify how savings could be delivered, identifying a total potential saving of £16.1m for 2025/26. The impact of the proposals is set out in the table below. This includes the c£4m of proposals set out to Cabinet in September. These proposals relate to all departments, and impact on both frontline and supporting services across the Council. More detail is provided in section 4:

Department	Savings £m			
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Adult Social Care & Health	8.930	2.525	0.000	<b>11.455</b>
Business Services	1.077	0.000	0.825	<b>1.902</b>
Children's Services	4.033	0.070	0.020	<b>4.123</b>
Communities, Economy & Transport	1.842	0.621	0.374	<b>2.837</b>
Governance Services	0.248	0.063	0.000	<b>0.311</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.130</b>	<b>3.279</b>	<b>1.219</b>	<b>20.628</b>



3.8 The impact on the MTFP, should the savings proposals be delivered in full, is set out in the table below:

<b>Medium Term Financial Plan After Savings</b>	<b>2025/26</b>	<b>2026/27</b>	<b>2027/28</b>	<b>Total</b>
	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>	<b>£m</b>
<b>Deficit / Surplus after scenarios</b>	<b>29.018</b>	<b>3.934</b>	<b>0.050</b>	<b>33.002</b>
Savings	(16.130)	(3.279)	(1.219)	(20.628)
<b>Deficit / (Surplus) after savings</b>	<b>12.888</b>	<b>0.655</b>	<b>(1.169)</b>	<b>12.374</b>

3.9 As illustrated in the table above, even if the proposed savings are delivered in full, ESCC will face a deficit of £12.9m for 2025/26 after likely scenarios, and £12.4m at the end of the MTFP period, subject to any impact from the recent Budget Statement.

3.10 On 30 October, The Chancellor delivered the Autumn Budget Statement, announcing an increase in local government funding for 2025/26:

- Additional £1.3bn grant funding for local government, including £600m for social care and £700m of un-ringfenced resources, with the allocation of this funding to be determined in the Provisional Local Government Settlement in December.
- A £1bn increase to SEND and Alternative Provision funding, equivalent to 6% real growth, that will reduce councils' SEND deficits. This will not impact on the Council's MTFP in 2025/26 due to the statutory override that allows SEND deficits to be excluded from councils' revenue budgets.
- £233m additional spending in 2025/26 on homelessness, paid to district and borough councils, bringing total spend to £1bn.
- £1.1bn of new Extended Producer Responsibility funding in 2025/26 through the implementation of the scheme to improve recycling outcomes from January 2025.

3.11 While ESCC welcomes the additional funding, there were a number of other developments which will increase the financial risk to the Council for 2025/26 and beyond:

- From April 2025, the National Insurance rate for employers will rise from 13.8% on earnings above £9,100 per year to 15% on earnings above £5,000 per year. It is understood that the increased cost to public sector organisations will be funded, although the mechanism has not been announced.
- The National Living Wage will rise by 6.7%, from £11.44 to £12.21 from April 2025. For 18 to 20-year-olds, the minimum wage will rise by 16% from £8.60 to £10, and for apprentices, the minimum wage will rise from £6.40 to £7.55 (up 18%). Whilst not directly impacting on the Council's pay costs, the impact will be felt by service providers, particularly in social care.
- Inflation (CPI) is higher than reported in the Spring Budget, throughout the forecast, which will add the Council's non-pay and contractual inflation costs.
- Government plans to reform local authority funding and take a more targeted approach to the distribution of funding, in particular to areas of increased need based on levels of deprivation, could risk impacting the funding the Council will receive in 2025/26 and beyond. Our current modelling assumes that existing grants will carry forward on the same basis, but the impact of reforms means this is not expected to be the case. A policy statement is expected from MHCLG by end of November which will provide more detail although, until the provisional local government settlement is issued on 19 December, significant uncertainty remains and the opportunity to lobby will be significant.

3.12 It is not possible to calculate the financial impact to the Council of the Budget until we receive detailed allocations in the provisional financial statement. However, there is nothing in the Budget that would suggest ESCC should stop the work currently being undertaken to address future deficits.

3.13 The Council reported a projected overspend for 2024/25 of £9.4m at Quarter 1, which will require a further draw on strategic reserves. The updated projected revenue outturn at Quarter 2, which will be available in December, will provide a further indication of the likely impact. The latest projected reserve balances as at 1 April 2029 are set out in the table below. This position reflects the additional draw to balance 2024/25, based on the Quarter 1 forecast, but is prior to any draw on balances required to set a balanced budget for 2025/26.

Reserves Balance (£m)	Balance at 1 Apr 2024	Estimated balance at 1 Apr 2025	Estimated balance at 1 Apr 2029
	£m	£m	£m
<b>Earmarked Reserves:</b>			
<b>Held on behalf of others or statutorily ringfenced</b>	<b>31.3</b>	<b>27.8</b>	<b>29.6</b>
<b>Named Service Reserves</b>			
Waste Reserve	19.5	18.9	11.8
Capital Programme Reserve	9.9	9.5	0.0
Insurance Reserve	7.4	7.4	7.2
Adult Social Care Reform Reserve	3.0	0.6	0.0
<b>Subtotal named service reserves</b>	<b>39.8</b>	<b>36.4</b>	<b>19.0</b>
<b>Strategic Reserves</b>			
Priority Outcomes and Transformation	7.3	2.6	1.8
Financial Management	35.8	7.6	5.4
<b>Subtotal strategic reserves</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>10.2</b>	<b>7.2</b>
<b>Total Earmarked Reserves</b>	<b>114.2</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>55.8</b>
<b>General Fund Balance</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>TOTAL RESERVES</b>	<b>124.2</b>	<b>84.4</b>	<b>65.8</b>

3.14 The projected level of strategic reserves of £10.2m as of 1 April 2025 means that the Council will have very limited scope to use reserves to address the budget deficit or any emergent pressure, without further action over and above current steps. We continue to take a range of robust measures to contain costs in-year, including the implementation of stringent spending and recruitment controls on top of our existing robust governance and financial management systems. These measures will have some impact but the difference they will make will be limited in the context of the overall deficit and ongoing pressures on services.

#### 4. Savings

4.1 In light of the substantial projected deficit forecast in the State of the County report, which has since grown as set out above, Cabinet requested in June that officers explore areas of search for savings with a focus on:

- Discretionary and non-statutory preventative services;

- Directly provided services;
- Support services and back office functions;
- Income generation.

4.2 Departments have undertaken work to identify how savings could be delivered, guided by these areas of search. As reported in September, there are significant constraints, as the majority of the Council's budget is now spent on delivering or supporting statutory services and meeting other statutory duties, leaving fewer areas for consideration. Many discretionary areas of work have already been reduced or removed in previous rounds of savings. Some areas of work are funded through ringfenced grants with specific criteria. There are also restrictions on actions that can be taken at pace given ongoing contracts and commitments. The approach taken in each service area is detailed below at 4.6 onwards, with the detailed proposals set out in appendix 2.

4.3 It was clear in September, when Cabinet agreed to begin a number of consultations on proposals to reduce services, that this would be the first phase, and that further savings proposals would be needed as we work towards bridging the 2025/26 financial gap. The Budget has not removed or reduced the requirement to identify savings given the legal requirement to balance the budget. Further difficult choices are required to address the expected financial gap for the coming year. Following further work, this report now sets out the next phase of savings proposals to be considered. This broader set of proposals affects a range of frontline and supporting services and has further significant and wide ranging impacts – on residents, partners and staff. It is important to restate that savings are being brought forward out of necessity given the financial position we face. They are all tough choices. There are no easy options and these are not proposals that we would want to make.

4.4 The additional proposals set out, if implemented, would not fully close the funding gap we expect to have. After many years of service reductions, transformation and efficiencies, this reflects the very limited opportunity to make further savings whilst still meeting our statutory duties and basic operating requirements. The savings proposed would, however, make a significant contribution towards bridging the deficit.

4.5 Ahead of further detailed funding announcements we will continue to take all opportunities to impress on Government the position faced by ESCC, the impacts on the people, businesses and communities of the county, and the financial and service reforms needed, and we have been engaging the support of local MPs in making this case.

## **Adult Social Care and Health**

4.6 Savings proposals for Adult Social Care and Health have been developed taking into account five priority areas to protect as far as possible. As set out in September, these include the community care budget; maintaining a sufficient workforce to manage the increase in demand and carry out statutory assessments, including financial assessments; and working with the care market to ensure the availability of appropriate and best value care. In addition, infrastructure funding for the VCSE and support for unpaid carers has been protected as far as possible, recognising the significant contribution they make to managing demand for services.

4.7 A number of savings proposals have already been progressed to public consultation with Cabinet's agreement, where they would entail significant changes to services. These are included and highlighted in appendix 2. Additional proposals now brought forward focus on the following themes:

- Reducing capacity and improving efficiency in management and support functions
- Budget reductions and reallocations
- Optimising charging and income

- Review of service models
- Refocusing of external grants to better align with Council priorities, while still in line with grant conditions
- Seeking efficiencies in contracts

## **Children's Services**

4.8 Children's Services' focus remains on taking forward our programmes of work to address the ongoing significant pressure on the availability and cost of suitable care placements for looked after children. We also want to continue investment in prevention where we have good evidence that it is having an impact on managing demand and reducing pressures on statutory services such as safely reducing the numbers of children in care and on child protection plans.

4.9 In identifying further savings, we have incorporated anticipated cost reductions from the above work and we have reviewed the few remaining non-statutory areas of provision within the department. We have also looked at our support services to identify potential for further savings. Detailed proposals are set out in appendix 2 with key areas of focus being:

- Support services – reducing capacity, including through consolidating functions across the divisions within the department and reductions in staff support costs;
- Maximising income – including through our traded services and performance-related grants; and
- Reviewing service models in home to school transport and Buzz Active.

4.10 As set out in the appendix, the proposed savings would reduce the department's capacity to deliver improvements, transform services and respond to new demands. Reduced capacity will also impact on the resilience and responsiveness of a range of support services and the outcomes which can be delivered.

## **Communities, Economy and Transport**

4.11 A large proportion (72%) of the Communities, Economy and Transport department budget is committed to the major, long-term contracts covering highways maintenance and waste and the statutory requirement to provide concessionary fares. These commitments significantly limit the ability to make savings in these areas. In addition, the department provides a range of frontline services which deliver statutory requirements. The department has sought to identify and develop savings proposals primarily in areas of the budget which are not contractually committed, as well as in remaining areas of discretionary work. Opportunities for efficiencies or budget reductions have also been identified where possible.

4.12 The savings proposals set out in appendix 2 cover all divisions within the department, and impact on a range of frontline services. They focus on:

- reducing preventative work – including in Trading Standards and Road Safety;
- stopping non-statutory work – particularly in Economic Development;
- increasing the use of technology and other efficiencies – including in Libraries and the Registration Service;
- reducing the staff capacity and non-staffing budgets in a number of services – including Rights of Way, Planning and Waste;
- increasing income to ensure it offsets costs – including in parking and registration; and
- undertaking further reviews of service models to identify potential savings.

4.13 As set out in the appendix, these savings would have an impact on the services we offer to residents. This may include longer response times, reduced access or less work undertaken. A number of savings have impacts on partners, including district and borough councils. They also impact on the resilience of services to new or unexpected demands.

## **Business Services and Governance Services**

4.14 Business Services and Governance Services provide a range of essential support services for the organisation as a whole, including areas such as Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT) and Digital, Procurement, Finance, Legal Services, Communications and corporate governance functions. In doing so, the departments ensure the Council meets a wide range of statutory requirements. These support functions have been subject to significant savings over the past decade as back office services were reduced earlier and more significantly, in order to maintain funding for frontline services for as long and as far as possible. This means that these services are already run very leanly and include single points of failure.

4.15 The scale of the proposed savings across departments, set out in this report, necessitates significant change, and the necessary expertise and support will be needed to deliver the change required. This will create additional demand on the support services over the next 12-18 months alongside the usual business needs of the Council. Once agreed savings have been implemented, with support provided to manage the processes involved, it will then be possible to review the ongoing needs of the organisation and identify where further reductions in support functions can be made. The approach to savings proposals reflects these demands.

4.16 All services provided by these departments have been reviewed to identify where further reductions or efficiencies could be made. The proposals set out at appendix 2 focus on:

- Reductions in IT provision and maximising the use, efficiency and financial return of property assets;
- Reduced staff capacity in a range of teams providing support functions to the whole organisation and, in some cases, to partner organisations;
- Reduced support for business planning and performance improvement; and
- Reduced communications support for service priorities, residents' information needs and staff information needs.

4.17 Income generating assets and planned capital receipts are routinely incorporated into the core budget and the capital programme. As part of identifying further savings or sources of income, the full portfolio of assets has been reviewed to identify any further marginal financial gains in the 'sweating of assets', reflecting the level of property team capacity available to deliver on these (noting capacity levels referenced in 4.14). This most notably includes the planned closure of sections of County Hall to reduce running costs (albeit only marginally) and to generate income through the letting out of freed up space to third parties.

4.18 The savings proposed would bring the support budgets down to a level whereby any further reduction would impact on support to statutory and other customer facing services and the overall resilience of the organisation. Consequences would include:

- Increased risk of plant failure (e.g. heating, lighting, lifts)
- Increased risk of IT incidents (e.g. data loss, system or WiFi failure)
- Increased risk of challenge to procurement processes and delay in procuring services
- Risk of inability to provide key information and support to enable the Council to continue to function effectively with appropriate levels of governance (e.g. financial information, HR, legal)
- Risk of not meeting the communication needs of service departments and to the resilience of the Council's online information and services.

## **Savings - next steps**

4.19 The potential savings in 2025/26 from these proposals, if agreed, are set out in appendix 2. The savings identified to date have the potential to reduce the potential £29m 2025/26 financial gap, after scenarios, by £16m. This incorporates the £4m from proposals already brought forward in September and currently subject to public consultation, if they were implemented.

4.20 All savings proposals identified will be taken forward through our usual governance, decision making and HR processes. Progressing potential savings will entail consultations with our staff on restructures and potential redundancies. As noted by Cabinet in September, in some cases it has been necessary to begin these processes already in order to be in a position to implement agreed changes ahead of the new financial year and deliver a full year saving to support the budget position. We will work hard to minimise compulsory redundancies as far as possible, applying our comprehensive redeployment processes and support to retain valued staff within the organisation wherever we can. We currently estimate that in the region of 160 posts (130 full time equivalent) may be deleted as a result of savings proposals, although the picture will become clearer as service reviews and consultations progress.

4.21 Even if all identified savings were fully delivered, which is subject to further consultations and decisions, as well as delivery risks, a substantial gap of c£13m would remain for 2025/26, subject to any impact from the recent Budget Statement.

4.22 We will continue to work through the impacts of Budget announcements and await further detail and specific allocations through the financial policy statement expected from MHCLG later in November and the provisional Local Government Finance Settlement in December. This will enable us to confirm or amend our assumptions, and clarify the position in relation to specific grants, providing an updated deficit position. In light of this, options for setting a balanced budget for 2025/26 can be considered.

## **5. Capital programme**

5.1 The capital programme has been updated in accordance with Capital Strategy principles and the risk based review of the programme. Appendix 3 presents a revised programme of £670.0m, of which £210.6m is planned for delivery in the period to 2027/28. The programme will be updated further to reflect the impact of the Budget once detailed allocations are known.

5.2 The capital programme is funded from several sources and can be split into the elements that are funded from identified specific sources (such as grants, developer contributions and earmarked specific reserves), and elements considered to be Core Council Funded. Core Council Funded relates to those projects funded from Council resources that ultimately increases the Council's need to borrow.

5.3 In order to reduce the cost of borrowing appendix 3 proposes changes to the capital programme outside of normal Capital Strategy updates, to reduce the level of investment in Core Council Funded programmes. The recommendations made throughout the report are based on an assessment of risks and likely implications made by services of removing or reducing core funded programmes based on set criteria. The projected impact of this review is an annual reduction in borrowing costs of £3.9m by the end of the MTFP period.

## **6. Engagement, lobbying and communications**

6.1 We will continue to engage and communicate openly and widely with our residents, partners and staff on our approach to the financial position and the impacts of specific savings proposals, and to progress specific consultations where these are required.

6.2 The current financial position, and in particular the Government's recently announced review of how funding is targeted to reflect increased need in areas of deprivation, means it is essential that we continue to press Government as strongly as possible for additional funding and support to be provided to East Sussex. Since September this has included:

- writing to all local MPs to outline the urgency of the Council's financial situation, the requirement to make savings, and to seek their support in making the case to Government;
- the leaders of all ESCC's political groups meeting with all East Sussex MPs to reiterate the position and how they can help;
- a further meeting of a number of MPs with the Leaders of ESCC and district and borough councils to discuss the financial pressures facing all councils;
- officer engagement with officials at MHCLG; and
- continuing to contribute to national campaigning undertaken by the County Councils Network and LGA.

All of this activity has focused on standing up for the interests of East Sussex, and ensuring Government is fully aware of the unsustainable situation faced by the County Council, the consequences for local people, staff and partners, and the immediate and longer term steps needed to secure the sustainability of services which can meet local needs.

6.3 We will continue to press home these vital messages - individually and with our local, regional and national partners - ahead of the policy announcement expected by the end of November, the provisional financial settlement expected on 19 December, the final settlement in February and the longer term Spending Review in the spring. We will continue to call for immediate support with the impacts of current demands, costs and market conditions over which we have very limited control locally. We will highlight the lack of funding to invest in the preventative approaches which are the only way to mitigate increasing need, as well as to achieve the best outcomes for our residents, and we will work to influence reforms. And we will continue to make the case for a sustainable funding regime for local government, which is appropriately reflective of local need and the costs of delivering statutory services.

## **7. Looking ahead - conclusion**

7.1 The Council's financial position continues to be highly challenging, despite indications of some additional national support. This report outlines the substantial financial gap we continue to face which means we must propose further reductions to our services and the support we provide to local people.

7.2 Much is still to be determined around specific funding allocations for the coming year, and the funding outlook for 2026/27 onwards, the impact of new and ongoing national reforms, and the medium to longer term impact of the increases in demand and cost our services continue to experience.

7.3 Work will continue into the winter to understand the detailed funding picture as it emerges, the implications of national policy developments, and to refine our understanding of the county's needs. This analysis will feed into our ongoing business and financial planning, ahead of final proposals for the 2025/26 budget and Council Plan being brought to Cabinet in January for consideration, and Council in February for decision.



7.4 We will also progress the savings proposals set out to Cabinet through our consultation, governance and decision making processes, to ensure that Members have the information necessary to take budget decisions in the new year.

7.5 Members will continue to be involved in developing plans through Cabinet, County Council, Scrutiny Committees, and specific engagement sessions throughout the 2024/25 RPPR process.

**BECKY SHAW**  
**Chief Executive**

## 1. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update (November 2024)

- 1.1 The MTFP has been updated for regular calculated adjustments and the additional year of 2027/28, the movements are summarised below. The overall position includes a deficit of £14.344m carried forward from 2024/25 that was temporarily funded from a one-off contribution from reserves. The full MTFP is provided at Annex 1.

	Ref	Estimate (£m)			
		2025/26 Annual	2026/27 Annual	2027/28 Annual	Total Cumulative
<b>Council 6 February 2024 DEFICIT/(SURPLUS)</b>		<b>30.978</b>	<b>16.503</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>47.481</b>
CARRY FORWARD OF 2024/25 DEFICIT		14.344	0.000	0.000	14.344
<b>Total After Carry Forward</b>		<b>45.322</b>	<b>16.503</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>61.825</b>
<b>Normal Updates:</b>					
Council Tax Inflation	A			(8.010)	(8.010)
Council Tax Base				(5.948)	(5.948)
Business Rates Retention (inflation and growth)	B	(0.032)	(0.211)	(2.195)	(2.438)
Revenue Support Grant inflation update	C	(0.002)	(0.009)	(0.089)	(0.100)
Inflation for contracts (normal and contract specific)	D	0.032	0.210	15.116	15.358
CET: Waste Housing Growth	E	(0.048)	0.026	0.342	0.320
Treasury Management: Update	F	(0.100)	(0.100)	1.800	1.600
Treasury Management: Capital Programme Review		(0.800)	(2.000)	(1.100)	(3.900)
Treasury Management: Impact of SEN deficit		tbc	tbc	tbc	tbc
Pay award	G	1.491	0.567	5.555	7.613
Levies Increase	H			0.014	0.014
General Contingency	I		0.030	0.150	0.180
<b>Pressures added to / (removed from) the MTFP:</b>					
ASC: Growth & Demography	J			3.917	3.917
ASC: Service Demand		5.709			5.709
CSD: Growth & Demography	K			0.808	0.808
CSD: Home to School Transport Growth & Demography		5.908	1.926	1.858	9.692
CSD: Service Demand – Looked After Children	L	0.763	(4.328)	0.680	(2.885)
CET: Waste PFI additional income	M	(1.800)	0.400	0.700	(0.700)
Pressures approved by Protocol	N	0.520	1.050		1.570
<b>DEFICIT/(SURPLUS) AFTER NORMAL UPDATES</b>		<b>56.963</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>	<b>84.625</b>

<b>Updates to be considered – for review of likelihood and/or for local decision:</b>					
Continuation of Adult Social Care grant funding	O	(5.386)			(5.386)
Proceeds of NNDR Pooling	P	(2.194)	2.194	0.000	0.000
Council Tax: Premiums on Second Homes	Q	(3.524)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(3.666)
Council Tax: Eastbourne Reduction Scheme Proposals	R	0.778			0.778
Reduction in contractual inflation in line with forecasts	S	(6.481)			(6.481)
Council Tax Flexibility: <i>Add a further 3.00% to our current 1.99% assumption to get to 4.99% (2.99% plus 2.00% ASC Precept) in all years.</i>	A	(11.138)	(12.254)	(13.476)	(36.868)
<b>DEFICIT/(SURPLUS) AFTER UPDATES TBC</b>		<b>29.018</b>	<b>3.934</b>	<b>0.050</b>	<b>33.002</b>

## Normal Updates:

### A Council Tax Inflation and Base

The Government provided local authorities in England additional flexibility in setting Council Tax by increasing the referendum limit for increases in Council Tax to 3% and the ability to increase the Adult Social Care Precept by up to 2% in 2024/25, however, this flexibility has not been confirmed for future years. Council Tax inflation is therefore currently assumed at 1.99% only for all years in MTFP, with potential continuation of the increased flexibility included as an update to be considered.

For every 1% increase in Council Tax charged, it is estimated to generate an additional £3.720m in 2024/25. Therefore, to fund the current deficit of £57.638m (before scenarios), there would need to be a council tax increase of approximately 17.50% (current base assumption of 1.99%, plus an additional 15.51% to fund the deficit). There would undoubtedly be an impact on collection rates, which is not factored into this calculation.

Council Tax base growth is being estimated at 1.5% for all years. Regression analysis suggests that the base position will continue to improve following reductions during the Covid-19 pandemic. Estimates will be updated based on submissions from District and Borough Council in December.

### B Business Rates Retention and Growth

Business rates have been updated for the additional year reflecting the latest inflation estimates by the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) published in March 2024.

Business rates will continue to be monitored along with the collection fund and reviewed alongside the District and Borough Councils latest collection forecasts to understand any further impacts.

### C Revenue Support Grant

The current planning assumptions for Revenue Support Grant (RSG) reflect latest inflation estimates each year ahead of any potential funding reform or multiyear settlement.

### D Inflation for contracts (normal and contract specific)

The inflation model as per the approved pressures protocol allows for contracts to be uplifted annually per the contract conditions but does not provide inflation for utilities and other running costs e.g. building maintenance, communications and software. Contractual negotiations, e.g. Foster Care and Concessionary Bus Fares are considered for inclusion within the MTFP by CMT.

The service inflation model has been updated for an additional year and reflects the latest inflation estimates by the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) published in March 2024. As per normal practice, the inflation model will be updated to reflect latest inflation due in October 2024. The table below shows changes in inflation estimates published in March 2024 compared to those included as part of the approved budget in February 2024.

	2024/25		2025/26		2026/27		2027/28	
	Nov 23	Mar 24	Nov 23	Mar 24	Nov 23	Mar 24	Nov 23	Mar 24
<b>CPI*</b>	3.33%	<b>1.65%</b>	1.60%	<b>1.63%</b>	1.43%	<b>1.64%</b>	1.78%	<b>1.98%</b>
<b>RPI*</b>	4.76%	<b>2.51%</b>	2.40%	<b>2.17%</b>	2.55%	<b>2.59%</b>	2.85%	<b>3.01%</b>
<b>RPIX*</b>	3.65%	<b>1.74%</b>	2.10%	<b>2.19%</b>	2.30%	<b>2.43%</b>	2.68%	<b>2.86%</b>
<b>NLW**</b>	£11.44	<b>£11.44</b>	£11.60	<b>£11.59</b>	£11.76	<b>£11.75</b>	£12.08	<b>£12.04</b>

*\*Inflation estimates are as of September of each calendar year to provide the best mid-point within each financial year.*

*\*\*National Living Wage per hour. Contracts will not necessarily increase in line with the NLW; however, this would be a key driver for some contracts with a high element of staffing.*

The MTFP normal update includes inflation increases from 2025/26 onwards. Normal practice is that in year services would be expected to manage movement in actual inflation through contract/budget management and the pressures protocol.

**E CET: Waste Housing Growth**

The forecast pressure for 2027/28 has been added to the current plan. Further review and update will be required to reflect the latest modelling and reflect any offset, such as increased recycling prices.

**F Treasury Management**

The additional year of 2027/28 shows the budget estimated cost to support the borrowing required to fund the approved Capital Programme and Strategy.

In addition, the Capital Strategic Asset Board (CSAB) has conducted a capital programme risk review to consider the risks and implications of removing / reducing core funded programmes to seek reductions to the cost of borrowing that impact the MTFP position. The revised capital programme, including the impact of the capital programme risk review, would reduce the level of borrowing to £39.9m up to 2027/28, which is estimated to have a positive MTFP impact for cost of borrowing of £3.9m per annum by the end of the MTFP period.

A further update will be provided following the Q2 monitoring and Autumn Statement to factor in any reported slippage on the capital programme, changes to reserves forecasts and a forecast interest rate update in early November following the Autumn Statement.

**G Pay Award Added Year and uplift**

Estimated based on the National Employers offer of £1,290 up to LMG2 SP10 and a 2.5% increase for higher grades for 2024/25 (now agreed for LGS for 2024/25) are higher on average than the flat rate 3% previously provided, and has an impact on future years. An estimate of the additional year of 2027/28 has been included and provision for an award of 2.5% in all years of the MTFP.

**H Levies Increase**

The figures are reflective of the latest estimates of the Flood & Coastal Protection Levy and Sussex Inshore Fisheries Levy.

**I General Contingency**

This is calculated at an agreed formula of 1% of net budget less treasury management. The figures reflect the addition of 2027/28 and impacts of other changes.

**Pressures added to / (removed from) the MTFP:****J ASC: Services Growth & Demography and Demand**

Values for ASC growth and demography and additional demand have been included based on a continuation of current pressures.

**K CSD: Services Growth & Demography**

Values for CSD general growth and demography have been included based on a continuation of current pressures, plus updated estimates for Home to School Transport as the annual average increase in the number of pupils requiring home to school transport continues to increase.

**L CSD: Service Demand – Looked After Children**

Updated estimate of changes in demand; assumes lower case growth in LAC numbers.

**M CET: Waste PFI Additional Income**

The budget requirement for 2025/26 can be reduced by £1.8m; mainly due to electricity and recycling income forecast above baseline assumptions, less an allowance to offset Highways streetlighting electricity overspend. Reducing electricity prices will result in annual pressures with £0.4m expected for 2026/27 and £0.7m for 2027/28.

**N Pressures Protocol**

There has been an adjustment in the MTFP for a previously approved bid to reflect that the project is due to end in 2026/27, plus a number of bids that have been approved in principle by CMT, see table below:

<b>Pressures Protocol</b>	<b>2025/26 £m</b>	<b>2026/27 £m</b>	<b>2027/28 £m</b>	<b>Total £m</b>
Previously approved:				
CET: Access to Employment and Skills - adjustment		(0.200)		(0.200)
Approved by CMT:				
BSD: Occupational Health and Employee Assistance	0.036			0.036
CET: Statutory Concessionary Fares reimbursement increases		1.250		1.250
BSD: IT&D Microsoft 365 Licencing	0.351			0.351
BSD: Corporate ArcGIS Licencing	0.044			0.044
BSD: Controller of Premises for Corporate Estate	0.089			0.089
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0.520</b>	<b>1.050</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>1.570</b>

#### **Updates to be considered pre review of likely / less likely:**

##### **O Continuation of Adult Social Care grant funding**

The Government provided additional, previous unannounced grant funding of £500m as part of the Local Government Settlement 2024/25, with the ESCC share being £5.386m. Future years allocations are uncertain, however, due to the ongoing pressures in the social care system, it is likely that this value will be rolled into future financial years.

##### **P Proceeds of NNDR Pooling**

Confirmation has been received that pooling will continue into 2026/27. The council is working with ESFRS and Districts & Boroughs to submit the application.

##### **Q Council Tax: Premiums on Second Homes**

Under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, council tax billing authorities have been given the discretion to introduce a premium in respect of second homes (dwellings that are unoccupied but furnished) of up to 100%. Where a decision to impose a premium is made, it must be taken at least 12 months before the financial year to which it would apply, and therefore the earliest the change would take effect would be the 2025/26 financial year. The estimated impact on ESCC is provided in the scenarios based on reports from the billing authorities, with the full impact of these changes is to be assessed with District / Borough councils and reflected in the ongoing council tax assumptions.

##### **R Council Tax: Eastbourne Reduction Scheme Proposals**

Eastbourne Borough Council are currently consulting on changes to their Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme (LCTRS) for 2025/26 which will see a reduction on Council Tax income received by the County Council, estimated to be £0.778m. ESCC have submitted a response to the consultation following approval by the Lead member for Resources and Climate Change on 1 November.

##### **S Reduction in contractual inflation in line with forecasts**

The impact of lower than previously forecast inflation rates will need updating following the revised OBR rates.

# Annex 1 Medium Term Financial Plan

Medium Term Financial Plan	2024/25 Approved Budget £million	2025/26 Estimate £million	2026/27 Estimate £million	2027/28 Estimate £million
<b>TAXATION &amp; GOVERNMENT FUNDING</b>		(538.102)	(545.458)	(560.822)
Council Tax	(352.015)	(9.515)	(13.483)	(13.958)
Adult Social Care Precept	(21.535)			
Business Rates (Inclusive of BR Pooling in 2022/23)	(102.469)	1.676	(1.809)	(2.195)
Social Care Grant	(45.393)			
ASC Market Sustainability and Improvement Grant	(11.312)			
Services Grant	(0.478)			
Revenue Support Grant	(4.346)	(0.071)	(0.072)	(0.089)
New Homes Bonus	(0.554)	0.554		
<b>TOTAL TAXATION &amp; GOVERNMENT FUNDING</b>	<b>(538.102)</b>	<b>(545.458)</b>	<b>(560.822)</b>	<b>(577.064)</b>
<b>SERVICE PLAN</b>				
Service Expenditure	457.488	515.467	558.368	581.794
<b>Inflation</b>				
Non-pay Inflation	28.222	15.783	16.220	15.094
Allocation of pay award and pensions to service departments	10.401	1.948		
<b>Adult Social Care</b>				
Better Care Fund - Discharge Funding	(2.035)	5.088		
Discharge Funding - New Burdens	2.035	(5.088)		
Growth & Demography	3.917	7.491	3.917	3.917
Future demand modelling net of attrition (Covid-related)	(0.365)			
Pressures approved via protocol: ASC Strategy	0.330	0.330		
Service Demand		5.709		
<b>Children's Services</b>				
Growth & Demography	0.973	0.808	0.808	0.808
Looked After Children Placements Covid-related	(0.347)	(0.519)		
Covid Grant Funding for Looked After Children Placements	(0.442)	0.519		
Family Safeguarding	(0.194)	(2.075)	(3.533)	
Net Operational Pressures incl. Careleavers and Locality		0.475	2.929	
Pressures approved via protocol (23/24)	0.124			
Looked After Children Demand	18.340	3.856	0.042	0.680
Locality Social Work and MASH	0.782			
IT & Digital Systems Development	0.044	0.039	0.144	
Foster Care Service	1.540			
Additional Staffing Capacity	0.645	(0.105)		
Subject Access Requests Resource	0.122			
Reprofile of Public Health Investment	(2.420)	0.459	(0.586)	
Home to School Transport Growth & Demography		5.908	1.926	1.858
<b>Communities, Environment &amp; Transport</b>				
Waste Housing Growth	0.265	0.307	0.414	0.342
Waste PFI Additional Income	(3.000)	1.200	0.400	0.700
Highways Contract Mobilisation	(2.313)			
Highways Contract Mobilisation (offset by Reserve Contribution)	0.817			
Pressures approved via protocol (23/24)	(0.800)			
Local Planning Advice Resourcing	0.090		(0.080)	

# Annex 1 Medium Term Financial Plan

Medium Term Financial Plan	2024/25 Approved Budget £million	2025/26 Estimate £million	2026/27 Estimate £million	2027/28 Estimate £million
Access to Employment and Skills	0.200		(0.200)	
Local Nature Recovery Scheme		0.100		
Pan Sussex Tourism	0.225		(0.225)	
Highways Core - TUPE Updated Data	0.158			
Highways Core - Second Grass Cut	0.080			
Pressures approved via protocol 24/25: Statutory Concessionary Fares reimbursement increases			1.250	
<b>Business Services</b>				
Pressures approved via protocol (prior years)	(0.078)			
Modernising Back Office Systems (MBOS)	0.386			
Licences, including digital and robotics	0.403			
Pressures approved via protocol 24/25:				
Occupational Health and Employee Assistance		0.036		
IT&D Microsoft 365 Licencing		0.351		
Corporate ArcGIS Licencing		0.044		
Controller of Premises for Corporate Estate		0.089		
<b>Governance Services</b>				
Pressures approved via protocol incl. Coroners Services	0.567	0.148		
<b>Savings</b>				
Review of BSD Savings Options	(0.693)			
<b>NET SERVICE EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>515.467</b>	<b>558.368</b>	<b>581.794</b>	<b>605.193</b>
Corporate Expenditure	43.814	36.979	44.053	50.055
Treasury Management	(2.850)	3.700	0.400	0.700
General Contingency	0.390	0.040	0.150	0.150
Contingency for Potential Pay Award, Recruitment and Retention	(3.343)	4.413	5.419	5.555
Inflation Risk Provision	3.245	0.015	0.019	0.022
Provision for Energy Price Increase	(1.300)			
Pensions	(3.149)			
Movement in Reserves	0.144	(1.107)		
Levies & Grants	0.028	0.013	0.014	0.014
<b>TOTAL CORPORATE EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>36.979</b>	<b>44.053</b>	<b>50.055</b>	<b>56.496</b>
<b>TOTAL PLANNED EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>552.446</b>	<b>602.421</b>	<b>631.849</b>	<b>661.689</b>
<b>CUMULATIVE DEFICIT/(SURPLUS)</b>	<b>14.344</b>	<b>56.963</b>	<b>71.027</b>	<b>84.625</b>
<b>ANNUAL DEFICIT/(SURPLUS)</b>	<b>14.344</b>	<b>42.619</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>
One of use of Financial Management Reserve	(14.344)	14.344	0.000	0.000
<b>ANNUAL DEFICIT/(SURPLUS) AFTER USE OF RESERVES</b>	<b>0.000</b>	<b>56.963</b>	<b>14.064</b>	<b>13.598</b>



Savings Proposals 2024/25 to 2027/28

Department	Gross Cashable Saving £'000				
	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total
Adult Social Care and Health	1,510	7,420	2,525	0	11,455
Business Services	17	1,060	0	825	1,902
Children's Services	794	3,239	70	20	4,123
Communities, Economy and Transport	349	1,493	621	374	2,837
Governance Services	15	233	63	0	311
Total	2,685	13,445	3,279	1,219	20,628

Adult Social Care & Health - Proposed Savings (Shaded lines are proposals which were included in the September Cabinet report and are already subject to public consultation)			Net budget £'000	Gross Cashable Saving £'000					Specific or disproportionate impacts relating to protected characteristics										
Service Area	Proposed Action	Likely Impact	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total	Age	Disability	Sex	Gender Reassignm	Ethnicity	Marriage / Civil	Pregnancy /Maternity	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified	Further Information
Older People's Directly Provided Services	Phoenix Centre - Lewes: Proposal to close the day service for older people with physical and mental health needs, and to support people to access alternative services in the community.	Potential reduction in choice and control for individuals currently using these services, including people in some rural areas. Potential disruption caused by changing provision, potential loss of friendship networks, and increased concern for carers (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk).	273		191			191	Y	Y									Carers are also impacted
Older People's Directly Provided Services	Milton Grange day service - Eastbourne: Proposal to close the Milton Grange day service for older people with a range of physical and mental health needs associated with dementia, and support people to access alternative services in the community.	For day services: Potential reduction in choice and control for individuals currently using these services, including people in some rural areas. Potential disruption caused by changing provision, potential loss of friendship networks, and increased concern for carers (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk).	872		521			521	Y	Y									Carers are also impacted
	Dementia outreach service - Countywide: Proposal to cease the specialist mental health community outreach service and provide services via existing universal services.	For MH community outreach: Potential impact in choice and control for individuals currently using the service, as they would need to access universal services.																	
Learning Disability Directly Provided Services	Linden Court - Eastbourne and Beeching Park - Bexhill: Proposal to close the Linden Court day service for people with a learning disability, and to merge with the Beeching Park day service or to support people to access alternative services in the community.	Potential reduction in choice and control for individuals currently using these services, including people in some rural areas. Potential disruption caused by changing provision, potential loss of friendship networks, and increased concern for carers (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk).	652		200	127		327		Y									Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Learning Disability Directly Provided Services	Community Support Services: Proposal to cease the service which currently supports adults living independently at home and to adapt the service for adults living in supported accommodation, and to support people to access alternative services. The service supports with tasks such as shopping, preparing meals, and accessing the community. People living at home would be found alternative support in the community, while Supported Living services would be reconfigured so an individual's support was all provided by the accommodation based staff.	Potential impact on individuals with a learning disability receiving support in their own home and in the community, including the possible reduction in opportunities to participate in community activities.	637		286			286		Y									Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Learning Disability Directly Provided Services	Steps to Work (including Shine Car Wash at County Hall, Lewes) - Countywide Service: Proposal to close the service, which helps people with a learning disability to prepare for, access, and retain employment and to support people to access alternative services in the community.	Potential reduction in choice and control for individuals currently using these services, including people in some rural areas. Potential disruption caused by changing provision, potential loss of friendship networks, and increased concern for carers (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk). Potential impact on employment for individuals (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk).	418		194			194		Y									Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Learning Disability Directly Provided Services	Hookstead Day Service – Crowborough and St Nicholas Centre – Lewes: Proposal to close the Hookstead day service for people with a learning disability, and to merge with the St Nicholas Centre day service or to support people to access alternative services in the community.	Potential reduction in choice and control for individuals currently using these services, including people in some rural areas. Potential disruption caused by changing provision, potential loss of friendship networks, and increased concern for carers (although measures will be put in place to minimise this risk).	995		124			124	Y	Y									Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Vulnerable Adults Supported Accommodation	Supported accommodation provision for vulnerable adults: Proposal to cease on-site support to develop independent living and tenancy sustainment skills, and support to access training, qualifications and employment.	Potential increased risk of people becoming homeless. Potential impact on district and borough councils, which have statutory responsibility for housing. Potential impact on care management teams in adult and children's social care, and potential impact on health services.	258		129	129		258	Y	Y									Carers are also impacted
Adults with Mental Health needs Supported Accommodation	Supported accommodation provision for adults with mental health needs: Proposal to cease on-site support to develop independent living and tenancy sustainment skills, and support to access training, qualifications and employment.	Potential increased risk of people becoming homeless. Potential impact on district and borough councils, which have statutory responsibility for housing. Potential impact on care management teams in adult and children's social care, and potential impact on health services.	356		178	178		356	Y	Y									Carers are also impacted
Housing - Related Floating Support	Housing related floating support provision: Proposal to significantly reduce funding for this service which supports people aged 16+ years with their housing, or helps them to stay in their own home.	Potential increased risk of people becoming homeless. Potential impact on district and borough councils, which have statutory responsibility for housing. Potential impact on care management teams in adult and children's social care, and potential impact on health services.	4,373		1,937	1,936		3,873	Y	Y	Y				Y				Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Substance Misuse Contracts	Drug and Alcohol Services: Proposal to cease the funding of drug and alcohol recovery services when the current contracts for carers service, street community service, and support networks end.	If the reduction in recovery services contributes reduced relapse prevention, then there is a potential greater demand for treatment services, and possible increase in drug and alcohol related harm. Reducing recovery services funding may also present a barrier to receiving future grants.	319		234	85		319		Y									Carers are also impacted
Substance Misuse Contracts	Drug and Alcohol Services: Proposal to reduce funding for treatment services.	Potential increased risk of people being unable to access the full range of treatment services they require. Measures would be put in place to minimise the impact of these proposals. However, reducing treatment is likely to increase the number of people with drug and alcohol dependency, and therefore a potential increase in the number of associated hospital admissions and deaths, as well as a potential increase in the broader social and societal costs of drug and alcohol misuse. In addition, the proposals may potentially widen health inequalities.	158	100	407			507	Y	Y									Rurality is a further impacted characteristic
Learning Disability Commissioning	Proposal to close the Learning Disability Development Fund budget	Limited likely impact as there is an existing budget underspend.	50		50			50										Y	

Adult Social Care & Health - Proposed Savings (Shaded lines are proposals which were included in the September Cabinet report and are already subject to public consultation)			Net budget £'000	Gross Cashable Saving £'000					Specific or disproportionate impacts relating to protected characteristics										
Service Area	Proposed Action	Likely Impact	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total	Age	Disability	Sex	Gender Reassignm	Ethnicity	Marriage / Civil	Pregnancy /Maternity	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified	Further Information
Strategy	Review of Adult Social Care Strategy action plan: Proposal to reduce potential activity in some areas of the Action Plan.	Likely curtailment of some of the service enhancements contained within the Adult Social Care Strategy: What Matters to You. Likely impact is the opportunity cost of potential activity in some areas of the Action Plan, including aspects of preventative work.	400	150	180			330	Y	Y	Y		Y					Y	Carers are also impacted
Operations	Benefits Maximisation: Reviewing approx.1800 clients to ensure all clients are receiving correct benefits and paying the correct contribution to their care, in line with ESCC's charging policy.	Potential insufficient benefit claims to be identified following other benefit maximisation activity.	0		80			80										Y	
Operations	Review of charges for clients who self-fund: Reviewing policy on charging these clients for advice and assessments.	Clients who fully fund the cost of their own care may choose not to access this service if it becomes chargeable. If this proposal is progressed it would be subject to a full public consultation.	0		70	70		140	Y	Y									Carers are also impacted
Operations	Discretionary East Sussex Support Scheme (DESSS): Proposal to cease the DESSS and provide support via alternative funds.	Limited likely impact as use of the current DESSS budget has been superseded by the introduction of other schemes.	130	130				130										Y	
Operations	Sensory Support Team: Proposal to merge this team into the existing Occupational Therapy Team.	Potential reduction in specialist management oversight but limited impact on frontline service delivery as existing Rehabilitation Officers for the Visually Impaired (ROVIs) will continue to provide support to adults with sensory needs in the community.	593		120			120		Y									Carers are also impacted
Operations	Grangemead service model: Review service model at Grangemead respite unit to enable the in-sourcing of complex bedded respite care for adults with a Learning Disability.	Whilst the service will remain open and operational, existing clients of planned respite may experience a change in the timetable for their rolling programme of respite to maximise occupancy and create capacity for the new cohort of clients.	966		500			500		Y									Carers are also impacted
Operations	Review high cost care packages: Negotiate with providers to ensure current care costs reflect the level of need and care and support being provided through the package of care.	Limited likely impact on clients. This activity would focus on high cost care packages.	NA	180				180		Y									Carers are also impacted
Community Development	Consolidated programme: Bringing together three separate VCSE and Community Development support programmes (Making it Happen, GIS, and Community Networks) into a single programme.	Potential limiting impact on scale and scope of ESCC community and VCSE development work beyond infrastructure funding.	978	461	500			961	Y	Y		Y	Y					Y	Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Community Development	Reapportionment of migrant support service costs in Children's Services to the Homes for Ukraine grant.	Maximisation of external grant funding within existing conditions. Likely impact is the opportunity cost of alternative investment of the grant funding.	0	200				200					Y						
Planning, Performance and Engagement	Review of Training and Development, contracts, and staffing structures	Potential impact on support and training to operational staff. Decreased capacity to support strategic and delivery goals.	1,041	289	425			714		Y									Carers may also be impacted
Public Health	Public Health review and realignment: Public Health funding is ringfenced to address public health outcomes but some existing contracts and targeted outcomes would be reduced as a result to fund alternative workstreams more aligned to Council Plan priorities but still within Public Health grant conditions.	An overall reduction in funding towards prevention activities is likely to result in a higher demand for health and care services in the future, and may affect our more vulnerable communities more. Out of the 21 identified areas for savings across the public health budget, 3 have been identified to have an impact on equalities and equalities considerations are underway. We will be closely monitoring the impacts on health equalities over time. (NB: the Public Health grant for 2024/25 is £30.389m)	0		1,094			1,094											Difficult to say impact because of varied funding impacting varied groups; specific Equality Considerations will be done for each of the proposals.
TOTAL - Adult Social Care & Health				1,510	7,420	2,525	0	11,455											

Business Services - Proposed Savings			Net budget £'000	Gross Cashable Saving £'000					Specific or disproportionate impacts relating to protected characteristics										
Service Area	Proposed Action	Likely Impact	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total	Age	Disability	Sex	Gender Reassignm	Ethnicity	Marriage / Civil	Pregnancy /Maternity	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified	Further Information
Information Technology (IT) and Digital	Adjust the core IT provision to meet minimum user requirement and council financial constraints	Reduced data usage, increasing recycling and re-using of IT kit, reduced licencing costs and capitalisation of new user laptops	8,805		464			464										Y	
Corporate Office budget	Reduce running costs, increase rental income and maximise efficiency from the corporate estate	Alternative use of County Hall space in the context of the asset being currently underutilised. Reducing running costs and maximising use, efficiency and financial return for property assets in general.	1,409		174			174										Y	
Financial Planning	Financial Planning service review	Risk of not being up to date with information on local government finance, including benchmarking of costs against comparator authorities and external funding opportunities, in a rapidly changing environment.	801	17	117			134											Consequence of potential missed funding is unidentifiable
Services to Schools traded income	Revise charging model to generate additional contribution to the cost of service provision	There are significant risks from academisation, particularly given that academies have historically preferred to keep finance services in-house. Increased contributions would help to cover the costs of service provision more adequately. The proposal also includes £10k of additional income from Services to Schools conference stalls	235		25			25										Y	
Property (Joint Use)	Review of Joint Use Agreements	As joint use agreements are renewed and placed on longer term or alternative footings, less property resource would be required to support them	300				100	100											Currently unknown - is dependent on the arrangements put in place
Postal Hub	Review use of the postal hub (ESCC's inbound and outbound post service)	Reduced costs of running the postal hub and potential upside to be explored on use of the hub by third parties	370		80			80										Y	
Business Services Department (BSD)	Review of support services across the department	Service reviews will be undertaken to ensure capacity within support services is aligned to changed organisational needs and resources. In the medium term this is likely to result in reductions in capacity/staffing in a number of services. In the short term It is necessary for BSD to retain the capacity to support the delivery of wider savings. For example, it is not possible to undertake robust staff consultations without Human Resources (HR) support or to make changes to the uses of certain assets without Property support.	26,105		200		725	925										Y	
TOTAL Business Services				17	1,060	0	825	1,902											

[illegible]

Communities Economy and Transport - Proposed Savings (Shaded lines are proposals which are already subject to public consultation following Cabinet or Lead Member agreement to consult)			Net budget £'000	Gross Cashable Saving £'000					Specific or disproportionate impacts relating to protected characteristics											
Service Area	Proposed Action	Likely Impact	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total	Age	Disability	Sex	Gender	Reassignm	Ethnicity	Marriage / Civil	Pregnancy /Maternity	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified	Further Information
Trading Standards	Review the delivery of the Trading Standards European Union (EU) exit statutory duties and the preventative interventions undertaken to inform vulnerable people about the risks of becoming victims of financial and doorstep crime.	We will maintain trading standards services, using a risk based approach to target areas where we need to intervene or act. There would be no change to the direct interventions to protect vulnerable people who have been targeted or been victims of financial and doorstep crime, however, there would be a reduction in the number of preventative engagement sessions delivered. In addition, we will not have the capacity to respond to any new duties or new legislative requirements.	1,095	95	94			189	Y	Y										
Emergency Planning	Review of current team core duties and functions	We will maintain core Emergency Planning services but will have less capacity to support Sussex Resilience Forum and partnership work and will target resource where it provides best return. We will not have the capacity to respond to new duties.	279	28				28											Y	
Road Safety	Review the delivery of road safety training and engagement duties and functions.	Reduced capacity to respond to road safety enquiries which would result in longer response times and greater use of standard responses to queries. There will a reduction in face to face engagement activities with partners and stakeholders, instead providing advice via telephone/written correspondence.	926	14	18	17		49											Y	
Archives	Review of the Archive service offer	Potential changes to the current service offer.	664			75		75											Y	
Registration Service	Review customer contact and seek to manage demand through creating more opportunities for customers to self-serve. Fee increase in statutory fees.	Introduction of customer self-check in at the four registration offices, and slower response times to customer queries and document requests. A fee increase has been agreed by Lead Member and takes effect in 2025/26.	1,750	15	119	51		185	Y	Y										To avoid equality impacts a member of staff will always be present to assist. No further equality impact assessment is required.
Library and Information Service	Refocus our accredited adult learning in libraries to an online offer.	Accredited online English, Maths and Information and Communications Technology (ICT) courses that learners could undertake in our libraries with support from the commissioned supplier if there is not a suitable local provider which meets the learners needs, and also IT learning through courses including IT4U and Step into Reading. This will remove the current duplication of face-to-face adult learning, with comparable training available in the locality provided by local further education colleges.	4,198		92			92	Y	Y										
Library and Information Service	New contract procured for purchase of stock	Efficiencies achieved as stock can be delivered to more than one location.	4,198		100			100											Y	
Library and Information Service	Review the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy Accessibility Analysis	An addendum to the current Strategy will be completed which may result in a change to the service offer	4,198				187	187											Y	
Parking	Increase on street pay and display parking charges by 5%	The cost of providing parking services needs to keep up with inflation to ensure our towns allow for a turnover of parking spaces. Any surplus generated goes to support transport related improvements across East Sussex. We also want to make sure parking costs are equitable across East Sussex, including pay and display and permits.	(265)		110			110	Y											Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Parking	Adjustments to the current parking regime in Rother District	Introduction of parking charges at Broomhill Sands. Changes to the pay and display tariff to bring Rother district in line with other civil parking enforcement (CPE) areas, and changes to permit charges	(265)		438			438	Y											Carers and rurality are further impacted characteristics
Waste	Introduction of a booking system for all East Sussex County Council household waste recycling sites	The introduction of a booking system will mean less queueing to deposit waste, and reduced costs for the County Council through better policing of trade waste. There is no evidence that suggests a booking system increases fly tipping. This proposal would make the visit to a tip an easier experience and it should be possible to book slots 'on the day' depending on demand.	33,317		50			50	Y	Y										
Waste	In light of changing government policy we will review of waste management services in relation to management of closed landfill and waste transfer, including a review of waste disposal sites.	Slightly less maintenance for closed landfill sites each year. Adjustments to the methodology for transfer station use for collection authorities. Changes to household waste disposal sites. Additional disposal cost savings as a result of national policy changes.	33,317	25	65	270		360											Y	
Rights of Way and Countryside Sites	Review and changes to Rights of Way operations, including countryside management	The outcomes of this work mean it will take longer to deal with footpath diversions and enquiries from the public and local access groups. It may impact on our ability to maintain our rights of way network and essential repairs will take longer.	852	45	48			93											Y	
Highways	Do not replace Agency Asset Engineer post when current contract ends in September	This has always been a very difficult role to recruit to, hence the long term use of agency staff. We will endeavour to recruit a permanent member of staff to the post.	16,616	50	50			100											Y	
Economy Division (Service-Wide)	Review of economic development offer to reflect post Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) environment, and service-wide vacancy management process	No funding for business case preparation and pipeline project development, therefore significantly compromising our ability to secure external funding, including funding required to enable infrastructure for new development in local plans.	2,170	77	309	208	187	781											Y	
Planning and Environment	Cease direct Climate Change activity	Will effectively remove our ability to deliver on the County Council's decarbonisation commitment where only indirect activity will be able to be delivered (e.g. through non-decarbonisation specific programmes, such as transport schemes delivered through the Local Transport Plan (LTP4))	1,239		60			60											Y	
TOTAL Communities, Economy & Transport				349	1,493	621	374	2,837												



Governance Services - Proposed Savings				Net budget £'000	Gross Cashable Saving £'000					Specific or disproportionate impacts relating to protected characteristics									
Service Area	Proposed Action	Likely Impact	2024/25	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	Total	Age	Disability	Sex	Gender Reassignm	Ethnicity	Marriage / Civil	Pregnancy /Maternity	Religion / Belief	Sexual Orientation	No impacts identified	Further Information
Member Services and Policy	Reduction in staff	This proposal involves sharing administrative support across the Member Services and Policy Teams, resulting in decreased administrative support for both teams.	1,017		32			32										Y	
Performance, Research and Intelligence	Reduction in staff and non-staffing budgets	This proposal involves reducing the size of the current Performance, Research and Intelligence Team and the non-staffing budget for the team. The reduction will limit the performance improvement support provided by the team to other services under our corporate Best Value duty. It will also mean the team will have reduced capacity to support improvements to how we deliver analytics work across the Council. It is also proposed that the funding of the East Sussex in Figures (ESiF) site is reviewed and funded through the Public Health grant if possible.	529	15	99			114										Y	
Communications	Reduction in staffing and non-staff budget	This proposal reduces the size of the Communications Team and its non-staff budget. The reduction would mean the Communications Team would no longer be able to meet all service departments' current demand for campaigns and projects. These communications projects include work on web, design, marketing, media and social media and they support key activity by service departments. There would also be less support for internal communication so the Council's ability to keep staff informed and supported to do their jobs would be reduced. Savings would delete or reduce resources for public engagement and software.	1,211		62	63		125										Y	
Coroner's Service	Property costs	No negative impact, service improvement and reduced costs.	1,400		40			40										Y	
TOTAL - Governance Services				15	233	63	0	311											

### 1 Background

- 1.1 Through the Reconciling Policy Performance and Resources (RPPR) process the Capital Strategy and programme are reviewed annually to ensure that they support the Council's responsibilities and departmental service strategies. To manage investment to a sustainable level, the Capital Strategy focuses on the delivery of targeted basic need for the council to continue to deliver services as efficiently as possible, rather than rationing through prioritisation. Basic need for the purpose of strategic capital planning is provided below:
- Place: ensuring we can deliver services by planning for future need.
  - Asset Condition: maintaining our assets to an agreed level.
  - ICT Strategy: ensure that our ICT is fit for purpose for delivering modern council services in a digital era and protecting data.
  - Climate Change: supporting the Council's aim of reaching carbon neutrality from our activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050 in an appropriate and cost-efficient way.
- 1.2 At Full Council in February 2024 the target led basic need capital strategy of 20 years, supported by a 10-year planned capital programme was approved. The approved programme was further updated at State of the County in July 2024 to reflect the 2023/24 outturn, project and programme reprofiles and approved variations, revising the gross programme to £797.0m to 2033/34. For planning purposes, the first 3 years of the programme are considered approved, whilst the remaining years are indicative to represent the longer-term planning for capital investment.
- 1.3 The capital programme is funded from a number of sources, and can be split into the elements that are funded from identified specific sources (such as grants, developer contributions and earmarked specific reserves), and elements considered to be Core Council Funded. Core Council Funded relates to those projects funded from council resources that ultimately increases the Council's need to borrow.
- 1.4 The financial outlook for local authorities is increasingly challenging, with uncertain funding allocations, inflationary pressure on contracts and wages, increasing service demands and the impact of national reforms leaving much uncertainty about the Council's future financial position, with a large financial deficit being forecast as part of the RPPR planning process. Capital investment decisions have a direct impact on the council's revenue budget, particularly relating to borrowing costs, and are therefore to be considered in the context of their impact on the MTFP.
- 1.5 This update proposes changes to the Capital Programme outside of normal Capital Strategy updates, to reduce the level of investment of core council funded programmes that increase the Council's borrowing requirement. The recommendations made throughout this update are based on an assessment of risks and likely implications made by services of removing / reducing core funded programmes based on set criteria.

### 2 Capital Programme Update

- 2.1 Table 1 below summarises the gross movements to the approved capital programme since State of the County in July 2024 and proposed updates to be made in accordance with Capital Strategy principles and the risk-based review of the programme. The updates provide a revised capital programme of £670.0m, of which £268.4m is planned for delivery in the period to 2027/28. The first three years of the programme over the MTFP period to 2027/28 are to be presented for approval, whilst the remaining years to 2034/35 are indicative to represent the longer-term planning for capital investment. A detailed capital programme that reflects all the proposals outlined in this update is provided at **Annex A**.



Table 1 - Capital Programme Gross Expenditure Updates	Ref:	Current Year 2024/25 £'000	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £'000	Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000		
<b>Approved Capital Programme (State of the County 2024)</b>		<b>108.305</b>	<b>116.650</b>	<b>67.960</b>	<b>72.251</b>	<b>431.879</b>	<b>797.045</b>
Approved Variations	A	0.931	2.710	0.039	-	-	<b>3.680</b>
Capital Programme Extension	B	-	-	-	1.150	35.185	<b>36.335</b>
Capital Programme Risk Review	D	-	(16.185)	(14.547)	(19.418)	(116.871)	<b>(167.021)</b>
<b>Total Updates</b>		<b>0.931</b>	<b>(13.475)</b>	<b>(14.508)</b>	<b>(18.268)</b>	<b>(81.686)</b>	<b>(127.006)</b>
<b>Revised Capital Programme</b>		<b>109.236</b>	<b>103.175</b>	<b>53.452</b>	<b>53.983</b>	<b>350.193</b>	<b>670.039</b>
Capital Slippage Risk Factor	C	(24.281)	(14.769)	(7.291)	(5.086)	51.427	<b>0.000</b>
<b>Approved Capital Programme (after Capital Slippage Risk Factor)</b>		<b>84.955</b>	<b>88.406</b>	<b>46.161</b>	<b>48.897</b>	<b>401.620</b>	<b>670.039</b>

## Normal Capital Strategy Updates

### A Approved Variations

There is a gross increase to the programme of £3.7m relating to fully funded schemes having a net nil impact on the capital programme borrowing due to the identification of specific funding in accordance with the Capital Strategy, as detailed in Table 2 below:

Table 2 – Approved Variations since State of the County 2024	Gross Variation (£m)
School Basic Need - National Wraparound Childcare Programme (funding from specific grant)	0.165
Hollington Youth Centre (funding from specific grant)	3.412
Children's Services Essential System Developments (funding from approved revenue contribution)	0.103
<b>Total Net Nil Approved Variations</b>	<b>3.680</b>

### B Capital Programme Extension

The capital programme has been updated to extend the programme by a further year to maintain a 10-year planning horizon. This extends annual envelopes of funding for ongoing programmes of work and those fully funded by grants by one year into 2034/35.

### C Capital Slippage Risk Factor

A capital slippage risk factor was applied to the capital programme from 2024/25 onwards to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project/programme level and has been updated to reflect the latest capital proposals. The risk factor is held at a corporate level to enable services / project managers to manage project budgets at a local level, whilst ensuring greater robustness to the planning and monitoring process at a corporate level.

## Capital Programme Risk Review

### D Capital Programme Risk Review

The Capital Strategic Asset Board (CSAB) conducted a capital programme risk review, starting from an assumed base position of removing all core funded projects and providing the capital programme at funded levels only, to provide the maximum level of potential MTFP savings. This would reduce the capital programme by £129.2m over the period 2025/26 to 2027/28. Services then considered the risks and implications of removing / reducing core funded programmes from the capital programme based on set criteria. The outcome of the review is summarised below.

Remove/Reduce the following programmes:

- Remove Adults and Children's Carers House Adaptations programme and seek alternative funding sources.
- Reduce Special Educational Needs place planning to anticipated grant levels only.
- Reduce the Schools Basic Need programme to provide for temporary place requirements only over the MTFP period.
- Reduce the Integrated Transport Programme back to funded levels (DfT Grant and developer contributions) only.
- Remove the core-funded element of the Highways Structural Maintenance Programme and provide at DfT grant levels only.
- Remove the core-funded element of the Broadband programme, with the remaining committed programme requirement to be funded from gainshare funding held.
- Remove Economic Intervention Fund (Grants), Stalled Sites and Upgrading Empty Properties programmes.
- Remove future years allocation of the Newhaven Port Access Road project, to reflect anticipated project underspends and absorb future costs within other existing funded programmes.
- Remove Queensway Depot Programme.
- Remove the Climate Emergency Works programme, subject to review of alternative funding proposals\*

Maintain the following core-funded programmes:

- Capital Corporate Building Improvement programme to ensure essential health and safety works are maintained and to support pressure on the Council's revenue reactive maintenance budget.
- Special Educational Need Provision at Grove Park as this was approved on an invest to save business case basis. Options to maximise external funding from developer contributions will be explored.
- Children's Services Essential System as this was subject to an approved business case.
- Bridge / Structure Maintenance and Street Lighting Replacement programmes as these are critical to maintaining public safety.
- Rights of Way Surface Repairs and Bridges programme as this provides essential health and safety works to ensure public safety in line with statutory duty, although seek to maximise funding from alternative sources (e.g. developer contributions) where possible.
- Libraries Basic Need programme as this is essential to maintain libraries in a safe condition.
- Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment programme as this is required to ensure that the council continues to offer sites and amenity block facilities that are safe and meet the basic needs of our Gypsy and Traveller community.
- Various projects funded by Local Enterprise Partnership Option 4 grant, as removal would result in the need to repay grant values; although seek to maximise funding from alternative sources (e.g. in-year grant underspends) where possible.

\*Proposals for reduced investment include removing climate emergency works from the capital programme, together with associated revenue spend. This would have an impact on meeting the corporate climate emergency targets. Corporate climate change work that could continue as part of business as usual includes:

- Producing the local nature recovery strategy for East Sussex and working with partners to deliver biodiversity net gain.
- Climate change adaptation through flood risk management on relevant highway schemes.
- Work to align relevant Council decisions with the organisation's climate change ambition where possible and appropriate.
- Carbon reduction that will be achieved through the Property planned maintenance programme, to ensure replacement of heating systems, window replacement, insulation and roof replacement are focused on energy reduction and carbon emissions.
- Training for site managers and controllers of premises on energy efficiency.
- Awareness-raising and engagement with staff and Members.
- Staff travel offers that promote cycling, as well as the use of public transport and electric vehicles.
- Bidding for external funding.
- Lobbying government for long-term and sustainable levels of funding.
- Monitoring and reporting annually on progress.

### 3 Capital Programme Funding Update

3.1 Table 3 below provides an updated capital programme funding position to reflect the capital programme updates and their associated funding assumptions outlined above and other more specific updates.

Table 3 – Capital Programme Funding Update	Ref:	Current Year 2024/25 £'000	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £'000	Total £'000
			2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000		
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>		<b>84.955</b>	<b>88.406</b>	<b>46.161</b>	<b>48.897</b>	<b>401.620</b>	<b>670.039</b>
Specific Funding	E	(30.575)	(36.075)	(3.796)	(1.150)	-	<b>(71.596)</b>
Specific Developer Contributions	F	(3.613)	(2.022)	(2.179)	(2.512)	(0.100)	<b>(10.426)</b>
<b>Net Expenditure</b>		<b>50.767</b>	<b>50.309</b>	<b>40.186</b>	<b>45.235</b>	<b>401.520</b>	<b>588.017</b>
Formula Grants	G	(25.772)	(27.130)	(26.930)	(28.520)	(191.577)	<b>(299.929)</b>
Capital Receipts	H	(4.802)	(3.950)	(4.075)	(4.795)	-	<b>(17.622)</b>
Reserves & Revenue Set Aside	I	(11.391)	(0.440)	(0.385)	(0.452)	(6.383)	<b>(19.051)</b>
Capital Reserve	J	(1.558)	(2.589)	-	(3.836)	(5.884)	<b>(13.867)</b>
Developer Contribution Target	-	-	-	-	-	(17.601)	<b>(17.601)</b>
<b>Capital Programme Borrowing</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>7.244</b>	<b>16.200</b>	<b>8.796</b>	<b>7.632</b>	<b>180.075</b>	<b>219.947</b>

#### E Specific Funding

The approved programme is supported by £71.6m of scheme specific grants and external funding which is sourced and managed by services at a project level, in the main comprising of DfT grants for Bus Service Improvement Plan, social care capital grants towards supported living improvements; Youth Investment Fund grant towards youth centre improvements; Levelling Up Fund grant towards Exceat Bridge replacement; and Devolved Formula Capital grant toward schools delegated capital works.

#### F Developer Contributions

Developer contributions is a collective term used to refer to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 planning obligations, being funding secured in support of the provision of infrastructure and to mitigate the impact of development, largely in respect of school places provision, transport and rights of way improvements, and libraries provision. The Council seeks to maximise the use of Developer Contributions to fund basic need requirements and unfunded infrastructure schemes (via net nil variation). For future planning purposes, capital programme includes a reasonable funding target for future years. An assessment of the current developer

contribution position has identified £0.983m of S106 to be added to the capital programme to fund basic need programmes and reduce the future years funding target.

### **G Formula Grants Update**

The capital programme is supported by £299.9m of non-specific government formula grant towards capital expenditure. Formula grant assumptions reflect best estimates but noting that there continues to be risk in relation to these grants as values for future years are still yet to be announced. The level of assumed formula grants will continue to be reviewed to ensure that they represent prudent estimates and updated once the detailed implications of any announcements are known, noting that changes in funding formula could change the level of grants anticipated and impact on the level of borrowing. In accordance with Capital Strategy principles, formula grants are used to fund the approved Basic Need capital programme and reduce the Council's need to borrow.

### **H Capital Receipts**

Property Services hold a schedule of capital receipts available to support the capital programme, which is reviewed regularly with estimates being based on Property Officers' professional judgment on a site by site basis. In accordance with Capital Strategy principles, the profile of capital receipt funding has been updated to prioritise funding towards assets with the shortest useful life, such as IT equipment, to reduce the requirement to borrow for assets that attract a greater annual Minimum Revenue Provision cost on the revenue budget.

### **I Reserves and Revenue Set Aside**

The Council can use revenue resources to fund capital projects, where these have been approved as part of the budget setting process, an approved business case or approved variation. This includes specific reserves, payback from invest to save schemes and revenue contributions. The revised profile of reserve and revenue funding of the capital programme reflects the wider review of Council reserves to ensure usages provides best value.

### **J Capital Programme Reserve**

The Council also holds a Capital Programme Reserve to support the capital programme to reduce the need to borrow, that has a consequential increase in pressure on revenue budgets. In accordance with Capital Strategy principles, the profile of capital reserve funding has been updated to prioritise funding towards assets with the shortest useful life, such as IT equipment, to reduce the requirement to borrow for assets that attract a greater annual Minimum Revenue Provision cost on the revenue budget.

### **K Capital Programme Borrowing**

The updated capital programme has a total borrowing requirement of £219.9m, of which £39.9m is anticipated over the period to 2027/28. This presents a decrease in required borrowing of £39.1m over the period to 2027/28 compared to that reported in the State of the County 2024 due to the updates presented in this report, largely being the impact of the capital programme risk review, capital programme reprofiles and their impact on the slippage risk factor.

## **4 Impact on the Revenue Medium Term Financial Plan and Treasury Management Capacity**

- 4.1 Decisions on future capital investment should be considered in the context of the impact on the Treasury Management (TM) capacity to fund the investment and the revenue budget position, whereby the cost of funding and Minimum Revenue Provision needs to be included within the MTFP. The proposed capital programme has been prepared to seek reductions in the Council's borrowing requirement to support the revenue budget position, whilst considering the level of risk associated to removing/reducing investment.

- 4.2 Current TM modelling for the direct costs of borrowing estimates that **for every £10m of additional borrowing, there would be an associated revenue cost of approximately £750,000 per year over the full life of the asset** (based on a 30 year asset life), although the value and profile of costs will vary dependent on a number of variables such as timing, internal balances and interest rates. As highlighted at budget setting in February 2024 the current planned programme borrowing requirement will need Treasury Management budget increases outside the current MTFP period.
- 4.3 The revised capital programme, including the impact of the capital programme risk review, would reduce the level of borrowing to £39.9m up to 2027/28, which is estimated to have a positive MTFP impact for cost of borrowing of £3.9m as detailed in Table 4 below. Treasury Management modelling takes a holistic approach considering a number of variable factors including availability of cash balances and interest rates impacting borrowing costs and return on investments. Therefore any updates to the MTFP will consider the overall impact on the TM budget.

Table 4 – Cost of Borrowing Impact on the MTFP	MTFP Period			Total £'000
	2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'000	
Normal Capital Strategy Updates	-	-	-	<b>0.000</b>
Capital Programme Risk Review	(0.800)	(2.000)	(1.100)	<b>(3.900)</b>
<b>Total Impact on the MTFP</b>	<b>(0.800)</b>	<b>(2.000)</b>	<b>(1.100)</b>	<b>(3.900)</b>

## 5 Risk Provision Update

- 5.1 A £7.5m ongoing risk provision was approved in February 2024 to mitigate against capital programme risks, representing more than 2% of the programme over the MTFP period. This risk provision is a permission to borrow for emerging risks and is managed through ensuring Treasury Management capacity rather than representing funds that are within the Council's accounts. Its utilisation, if approved by CSAB would, therefore, require additional borrowing and be reported through the RPPR process and quarterly monitoring in the normal way.
- 5.2 There are several risks and uncertainties regarding the programme to 2027/28 and beyond which have necessitated holding a risk provision. These risks previously reported include:
- Uncertainty about delivery of projects in the programme, e.g. highways and infrastructure requirements
  - Any as yet unquantifiable impact of supply issues and cost increases
  - Any as yet unknown requirements
  - Residual project provision (previously removed) if required; and
  - Uncertainty regarding the level of government grants and the ability to meet developer contribution targets.
- 5.3 There may be increased risks following the proposed recommendations throughout this report, particularly relating to reductions in the capital programme. Potential risks include reputational, impact of service delivery and revenue budgetary implications. All recommendations have been made based on an assessment of risk against the level of borrowing reductions in an environment of significant revenue pressure. The level of risk associated to the capital programme and required risk provision will continue to be monitored as part of the ongoing RPPR process.

## 6 Capital Strategy

- 6.1 The CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) Prudential Code was includes the requirement for Local Authorities to produce a Capital Strategy. The Council's current Capital Strategy covers the period 2024/25 to 2044/45 and was approved as part of

RPPR 2023/24. The Capital Strategy has been reviewed to ensure it continues to reflect emerging risks, principles and corporate priorities, and informed by decisions made as part of the RPPR process.

## Annex A – Detailed Capital Programme

Detailed Capital Programme (Gross Expenditure)	Current Year 2024/25 £'000	MTFP Period			2028/29 to 2034/35 £'000	Total £'000
		2025/26 £'000	2026/27 £'000	2027/28 £'0000		
Adult Social Care						
Adults House Adaptations	0.050	-	-	-	-	0.050
Learning Disability Support Living Scheme	3.700	1.256	0.081	-	-	5.037
Greenacres	0.070	0.070	-	-	-	0.140
Adult Social Care Total	3.820	1.326	0.081	-	-	5.227
Business Services						
SALIX Contract	0.350	-	-	-	-	0.350
Lansdowne Secure Unit	0.039	-	-	-	-	0.039
Youth Investment Fund	7.003	-	-	-	-	7.003
Hollington Youth Centre	0.663	2.710	0.039	-	-	3.412
Disability Children's Home	0.024	-	-	-	-	0.024
Westfield Land	0.017	-	-	-	-	0.017
Special Educational Needs Provision	0.525	0.500	0.500	0.500	-	2.025
Special Educational Needs Provision Grove Park	1.300	11.000	3.390	1.430	-	17.120
Schools Basic Need Provision	0.518	0.400	0.512	5.941	54.668	62.039
Capital Building Improvement (Schools)	5.781	4.589	4.389	4.389	30.723	49.871
Capital Building Improvement (Corporate)	4.401	4.000	4.000	4.000	28.000	44.401
IT&Digital Strategy Implementation	6.399	6.409	4.075	8.631	45.720	71.234
IT & Digital Strategy Implementation – Oracle Implementation	9.634	-	-	-	-	9.634
IT&D – Utilising Automation	0.024	-	-	-	-	0.024
Business Services Total	36.678	29.608	16.905	24.891	159.111	267.193
Children's Services						
Children's House Adaptations	0.050	-	-	-	-	0.050
Schools Delegated Capital	1.150	1.150	1.150	1.150	-	4.600
Children's Services Essential System Developments	0.839	0.885	0.958	0.774	-	3.456
Children's Services Total	2.039	2.035	2.108	1.924	-	8.106
Communities, Economy and Transport						
Broadband	0.065	1.945	-	-	-	2.010
Bexhill and Hastings Link Road Complementary Measures	0.241	-	-	-	-	0.241
Economic Intervention Fund – Grants	-	-	-	-	-	0.000
Economic Intervention Fund – Loans	-	0.300	0.300	0.300	0.797	1.697
Upgrading Empty Commercial Properties	-	-	-	-	-	0.000

Growing Places Fund Loan Scheme	-	-	-	-	4.958	<b>4.958</b>
Community Match Fund	0.379	0.066	-	-	-	<b>0.445</b>
Community Road Safety Interventions	0.547	-	-	-	-	<b>0.547</b>
Newhaven Port Access Road	0.135	-	-	-	-	<b>0.135</b>
Real Time Passenger Information	0.180	0.131	-	-	-	<b>0.311</b>
Passenger Services Software	0.005	-	-	-	-	<b>0.005</b>
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Bus Prioritisation	6.933	11.380	-	-	-	<b>18.313</b>
Bus Service Improvement Plan - Passenger Transport	1.251	-	-	-	-	<b>1.251</b>
Queensway Depot Development	0.120	-	-	-	-	<b>0.120</b>
The Keep	0.172	0.040	0.085	0.152	0.628	<b>1.077</b>
Other Integrated Transport Schemes	2.957	4.595	4.818	3.523	20.587	<b>36.480</b>
A22 Corridor Package	0.100	-	-	-	-	<b>0.100</b>
Exeat Bridge Replacement	5.340	0.880	-	-	-	<b>6.220</b>
Schools Streets	0.150	-	-	-	-	<b>0.150</b>
Eastbourne Liveable Town Centre	0.316	-	-	-	-	<b>0.316</b>
Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections	0.706	8.624	-	-	-	<b>9.330</b>
Libraries Basic Need	0.773	0.550	0.467	0.449	0.898	<b>3.137</b>
Highways Structural Maintenance	24.704	19.100	19.100	19.101	133.707	<b>215.712</b>
Bridge Assessment and Strengthening	7.945	2.901	2.901	1.830	14.447	<b>30.024</b>
Street Lighting Replacement Programme	3.835	3.988	3.429	1.041	8.790	<b>21.083</b>
Rights of Way Programme	0.588	0.643	0.662	0.702	5.780	<b>8.375</b>
Gypsy and Traveller Site Refurbishment	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.490	<b>0.770</b>
Visibly Better Roads	0.504	-	-	-	-	<b>0.504</b>
Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure	0.400	2.298	1.843	-	-	<b>4.541</b>
Flood & Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme	0.758	0.989	0.683	-	-	<b>2.430</b>
Flood Management and SuDS in Schools	0.218	-	-	-	-	<b>0.218</b>
Climate Emergency Works	3.336	-	-	-	-	<b>3.336</b>
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a	2.079	1.746	-	-	-	<b>3.825</b>
Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2b	0.022	5.050	-	-	-	<b>5.072</b>
Eastbourne / South Wealden Walking & Cycling Package	0.990	1.328	-	-	-	<b>2.318</b>
Hailsham / Polegate / Eastbourne Movement & Access Corridor	0.134	-	-	-	-	<b>0.134</b>
Hastings / Bexhill Movement and Access Package	0.746	3.582	-	-	-	<b>4.328</b>
<b>Communities, Economy and Transport Total</b>	<b>66.699</b>	<b>70.206</b>	<b>34.358</b>	<b>27.168</b>	<b>191.082</b>	<b>389.513</b>
<b>Capital Programme Total</b>	<b>109.236</b>	<b>103.175</b>	<b>53.452</b>	<b>53.983</b>	<b>350.193</b>	<b>670.039</b>



**Report to:** People Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 19 November 2024

**By:** Deputy Chief Executive

**Title:** People Scrutiny Committee Work Programme

**Purpose:** To review and discuss the People Scrutiny Committee's future work programme

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Committee is recommended to:

- 1) review and agree the latest work programme set out at Appendix A;
  - 2) review upcoming items on East Sussex County Council's Forward Plan as set out at Appendix B to identify any issues that may require more detailed scrutiny.
- 

## 1 Background

1.1 The work programme is an important tool in ensuring the correct focus and best use of the Committee's time in scrutinising topics that are of importance to the residents of East Sussex, and the efficient and effective working of the Council. It also provides clarity for those who may be requested to give evidence to the Committee on the issues under review, and the questions the Committee requires answers to.

1.2 Discussion of the work programme provides the Committee with the opportunity to consider topics that it may be of value to scrutinise, and to decide whether further scoping work is required. This provides a basis for deciding the best way of scrutinising a topic, the timescale, and who from the Committee will be involved in carrying out the review work. If there are a number of potential topics for review, Members can determine the priority of the work within the resources available to the Committee.

## 2 Supporting information

### **Work programme**

2.1 The work programme was reviewed by the Committee at its work planning awayday on 21 October, where it was agreed that input into Adult Social Care and Health's (ASCH) preparations for a Care Quality Commission assessment should remain on the work programme, and to receive an update from ASCH on progress of its Carers Partnership Strategy. The Committee also agreed to add the following items to the work programme for the incoming committee to consider for future scrutiny work:

- transport for all age care as a potential review topic;
- recruitment of foster carers as a potential review topic;
- support for carers as a potential review topic; and
- an update in autumn 2025 on the impact of any agreed savings on services within the committee's remit.

2.2 These changes are reflected on the latest draft work programme attached at Appendix A. The Committee is asked to review, discuss any further amendments to, and agree the latest work programme.

2.3 When considering potential topics for inclusion in the work programme, the Committee is asked to consider a range of questions. These include:

- Is the topic relevant to the Council's Corporate Priorities?
- Is the issue of concern or of relevance to East Sussex residents?
- Can Scrutiny have an impact and add value by scrutinising this issue, service or policy?
- Is the issue one that the Committee can realistically influence?
- Are the resources needed to undertake the review available?

### ***Briefings and training***

2.4 As part of ongoing development, Members are invited to consider any other topics of interest for training to support their role on the Committee.

### ***Forward Plan***

2.5 A copy of the Council's Forward Plan of executive decisions for the period 1 November to 28 February 2025 is included at Appendix B. The Committee is requested to review the forthcoming items on the Forward Plan to identify any issues within the remit of this Committee that may require more detailed scrutiny. The Forward Plan is revised and published on a monthly basis and Committee members should regularly review the Forward Plan.

## **3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

3.1 An important part of managing the work of the People Scrutiny Committee is regularly reviewing its future work programme. This involves the Committee assessing its priorities, ensuring its ongoing reviews are completed in a timely fashion and identifying new areas for scrutiny.

**PHILIP BAKER**  
**Deputy Chief Executive**

Contact Officer: Rachel Sweeney, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser

Tel. No. 07561267461

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## People Scrutiny Committee - Work Programme

Current Scrutiny Reviews		
Title of Review	Detail	Proposed Completion Date
Initial Scoping Reviews		
Subject area for initial scoping	Detail	Proposed Dates
Suggested Potential Future Scrutiny Review Topics		
Suggested Topic	Detail	
Elective Home Education	<p>The Committee heard at their 2021 work planning awayday that issues relating to the increase in the numbers of children being electively home educated (EHE) remain a concern for the Children’s Services Department and expressed an interest in scrutinising the work the Department is doing in response.</p> <p>The Committee received additional updates on the local situation, as well as national updates, at their November 2022 and November 2023 meetings, including information at the November 2023 meeting on a DfE Consultation that has opened on revised home education guidance for Local Authorities to provide more clarity about ‘suitable education’ and support to be provided for home educators. In the absence of legislation for a statutory register, the guidance proposes Local Authorities set up a voluntary registration scheme for parents who home educate.</p> <p>The Committee agreed at the November 2023 meeting to retain this as a potential area for review but will await further information from the DfE consultation.</p>	
Scrutiny Reference Groups		
Reference Group Title	Subject area	Meeting Dates
School Attendance	The Committee agreed in July 2024 to convert a planned scrutiny review on attendance into a Reference Group to provide timely input into targeted programmes which were developing at pace. The Group would review attendance data, including data on children who were persistently absent, as well as children with SEND and those who were disadvantaged.	January 2025

	<p>The next meeting is planned for January 2025 and will consider the latest attendance data, progress of current initiatives, and an update on a project with Beacon Academy on emotional school based avoidance.</p> <p>Membership of the Reference Group: Cllrs Field and Howell and John Hayling (Chair) Parent Governor Representative.</p>	
Prevention in Children's Services	<p>The Committee agreed in March 2023 to convert a planned scrutiny review on prevention in Children's Services into a Reference Group in order to provide regular and timely input into key projects and programmes which were under development and progressing at pace. The Group has considered work to develop preventative approaches including Family Hubs and the Family Safeguarding model, and has provided ongoing scrutiny challenge.</p> <p>This Reference Group last met on 17 June 2024 and agreed that after several meetings, it was assured the Department was developing a range of work focused on prevention and that an update on progress of this work to the whole Committee in 6 months would be an appropriate way forward. It was agreed to pause the Reference Group on the understanding that the Group would reconvene if there were significant work or policy developments that would benefit from scrutiny input.</p> <p>Membership of the Reference Group: Councillors Cross and Howell, and John Hayling Parent Governor Representative (Chair)</p>	TBC pending further developments
CQC Preparation Reference Group	<p>The Committee agreed at its 2023 awayday to establish a Reference Group to support ASCH with the upcoming CQC inspection and LGA Peer Review.</p> <p>The Reference Group last met on 17 June 2024 and received a presentation from the Department on findings from the recent LGA Peer Review and the Department's response to these findings, including the development of an ASCH Departmental Priority Action Plan. The Group welcomed the positive findings from the LGA report, discussed some of the areas for consideration, and agreed to continue to provide scrutiny support to the Department in its preparations for the upcoming CQC assessment.</p> <p>The next meeting is planned for autumn 2024 and will consider progress on the Departmental Priority Action Plan.</p> <p>Membership of the Reference Group: Councillors Cross, Geary (Chair), Howell, Ungar and Webb.</p>	January 2025
Health and Social Care Integration Programme (HASCIP) Reference Group	<p>The Committee agreed to establish a Reference Group to monitor progress of the East Sussex Health and Social Care Integration Programme and identify areas for future scrutiny. It reviews HASCIP progress reports provided to the Health and Wellbeing</p>	Next meeting: TBC

	<p>Board and meets on an ad hoc basis as required to consider issues arising in more detail.</p> <p>The Group last met on 24 June 2024 to consider the Shared Delivery Plan year 2 refresh. The Group welcomed the progress of integrated care in East Sussex and discussed the new governance arrangements, hospital discharge, NHS funding, and the specific are of focus in the SDP on Children and Young People at a pan-Sussex level.</p> <p>Membership of the group: Councillors Clark, Geary (Chair), Ungar and Webb.</p>	
Educational Attainment and Performance Scrutiny Reference Group	<p>The Committee agreed in June 2018 to establish a Reference Group to focus on reviewing data on educational attainment in East Sussex and related issues. The Group meets on an annual basis.</p> <p>The Group met on 27 March 2024 to consider attainment results for the 2022/23 academic year. Members discussed the impact of Covid on attainment for all key stages, the role of Multi Academy Trusts in providing local support to communities, and the impact of short term government funding. The Group agreed the Department was working to support schools through a range of challenges.</p> <p>Membership of the group: Councillors Field (Chair) and Howell.</p>	Next meeting: March 2025
Adult Social Care reforms Reference Group	<p>The Committee agreed at its 2022 work planning awayday to establish a Reference Group to consider the impact and implementation of the national Adult Social Care reforms. Implementation of the reforms was subsequently delayed in the 2022 Autumn Statement from October 2023 to October 2025 and the first meeting of the Group will take place closer to implementation.</p> <p>Membership of the group: Councillors Geary and Ungar.</p>	TBC pending further developments
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) Board	RPPR Board meets annually to agree detailed comments and any recommendations on the emerging portfolio plans and spending and savings proposals to be put to Cabinet on behalf of the scrutiny committee.	Next meeting: 5 December 2024
<b>Reports for Information</b>		
<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Proposed Date</b>
Carers Partnership Strategy	To provide the Committee with a briefing on the ASCH Carers Partnership Strategy.	November 2024
<b>Training and Development</b>		
<b>Title of Training/Briefing</b>	<b>Detail</b>	<b>Proposed Date</b>

<b>Future Committee Agenda Items</b>		<b>Author</b>
<b>19 November 2024</b>		
East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Annual Report	Presentation of the annual report of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership.	Independent Chair, East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership
Loneliness Stewardship Group	The Committee agreed at its March 2024 meeting to request a further update on the Loneliness Stewardship Group.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health
ASC Peer Review and CQC preparations	To provide the Committee with an update on progress against the action plan following recommendations from the LGA Peer Review of ASC in preparation for a CQC assessment.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health
Transition in services	To provide the Committee with clarification on the process of transitioning between Children's Services and ASCH.	Director of Children's Services and Director of Adult Social Care and Health
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To continue the Committee's work on the RPPR process for 2024/25 financial year.	Chief Executive
<b>17 March 2025</b>		
Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) Annual Report	To update the Committee on the work of SACRE.	Roy Galley, Chairman of SACRE / Director of Children's Services
Equality and Inclusion in ASCH Scrutiny Review	12 month monitoring report on progress with the Review's recommendations.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health
School Exclusions Scrutiny Review	12 month monitoring report on progress with the Review's recommendations.	Director of Children's Services

Prevention in Children's Services	To update the Committee on key work concerning prevention in Children's Services, including the Family Safeguarding Model.	Director of Children's Services
Children's Services work with IMPOWER	The Committee agreed at its 2024 July meeting to request a further updated on the Department's work with consultants IMPOWER to review and develop cost effective and outcome focused children's care arrangements, including the long term use of foster carers in the county.	Director of Children's Services
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To continue the Committee's work on the RPPR process for 2024/25 financial year.	Chief Executive
<b>14 July 2025</b>		
Healthy Ageing Scrutiny Review	6 month monitoring report on progress with the Review's recommendations.	Director of Adult Social Care and Health
Committee Work Programme	To manage the Committee's programme of work including matters relating to ongoing reviews, initial scoping boards, future scrutiny topics, reference groups, training and development matters and reports for information.	Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	To commence the Committee's involvement with the RPPR process for 2025/26 financial year by reviewing the information in the Quarter 4 (end of year) (2024/25) Council Monitoring report and the State of the County report.	Chief Executive
<b>Items to consider for future work programme</b>		
Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR)	At its 2024 away day the Committee agreed to recommend that a report on the impacts of any agreed savings be brought to the Committee in September 2025 as part of its Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) item.	
Carers Partnership Strategy	At its 2024 away day the Committee agreed to recommend that a report on the progress of the Carers Partnership Strategy be brought to the Committee and that it may wish to consider this topic for a future scrutiny review.	
Recruitment of foster carers	At its 2024 away day the Committee discussed the vital role of foster carers and agreed that exploring ways to improve the recruitment and application process, including seeking best practice in other local authorities, could be a potential topic for a future scrutiny review.	
Transport for all age care	At its 2024 away day the Committee discussed the challenges in transport for care and home to school transport and agreed that this, in collaboration with Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Health, could be a potential topic for a future scrutiny review.	

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## EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL'S FORWARD PLAN

The Leader of the County Council is required to publish a forward plan setting out matters which the Leader believes will be the subject of a key decision by the Cabinet, individual Cabinet member or officer in the period covered by the Plan (the subsequent four months). The Council's Constitution states that a key decision is one that involves

- (a) expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the County Council's budget, namely above £500,000 per annum; or
- (b) is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions.

As a matter of good practice, the Council's Forward Plan includes other items in addition to key decisions that are to be considered by the Cabinet/individual members. This additional information is provided to inform local residents of all matters to be considered, with the exception of issues which are dealt with under the urgency provisions. Only key decisions to be taken by officers are included.

For each decision included on the Plan the following information is provided:

- the name of the individual or body that is to make the decision and the date of the meeting or relevant time period for an officer decision
- the title of the report and decision to be considered
- groups that will be consulted prior to the decision being taken
- a list of documents that will be considered when making the decision
- the name and telephone number of the contact officer for each item.

The Plan is updated and published every month on the Council's website two weeks before the start of the period to be covered.

Meetings of the Cabinet/individual members are open to the public (with the exception of discussion regarding reports which contain exempt/confidential information). Copies of agenda and reports for meetings are available on the website in advance of meetings. Key decisions taken by officers will not be taken at a meeting – documents listed can be made available on request to the contact officer, with the exception of those which contain exempt/confidential information.

For further details on the time of meetings and general information about the Plan please contact Stuart McKeown at County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE, or telephone 01273 481583 or send an e-mail to [stuart.mckeown@eastsussex.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.mckeown@eastsussex.gov.uk). For further detailed information regarding specific issues to be considered by the Cabinet, individual Member or officer please contact the named contact officer for the item concerned.

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL  
County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE

For copies of reports or other documents please contact the officer listed on the Plan or phone 01273 335274.

# **FORWARD PLAN – EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (including Key Decisions) –1 November 2024 TO 28 February 2025**

Additional notices in relation to Key Decisions and/or private decisions are available on the [Council's website](#).

Cabinet membership:

Councillor Keith Glazier - Lead Member for Strategic Management and Economic Development  
Councillor Nick Bennett – Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change  
Councillor Penny di Cara – Lead Member for Economy  
Councillor Claire Dowling – Lead Member for Transport and Environment  
Councillor Carl Maynard – Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health  
Councillor Bob Bowdler – Lead Member for Children and Families  
Councillor Bob Standley – Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability

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Date for Decision	Decision Taker	Decision/Key Issue	Decision to be taken wholly or partly in private (P) or Key Decision (KD)	Consultation	List of Documents to be submitted to decision maker	Contact Officer
1 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	New property arrangements for Rye Sports Centre To agree new 20 year Lease Agreement between East Sussex County Council and Rye Town Council and under lease by Rye Town Council to the Rye Recreation and Wellbeing Community Interest Company. This is to enable the continuation of the curriculum and community use of Rye Sports Centre and swimming pool.	<b>P</b>  <b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Nigel Brown, Pauline Young 07394 410630, 01273 481180

1 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme: Consultation Response To consider the proposed response to Eastbourne Borough Council billing authority on proposed changes to their Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell, Thomas Alty 01273 481399, 07701 394836
4 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	Buzz Active next steps To note options and agree next steps for the delivery of Buzz Active. (Buzz Active offers outdoor land and water based activities from three locations within East Sussex: Eastbourne Seafront, Bushy Wood in Hailsham and Cuckmere Haven. This decision will enable the Council to progress with the exploration of a different operating model to ensure Buzz Active is fully supported to grow as a centre of excellence for outdoor education and activities for children, young people, their families and the wider community within East Sussex.)	<b>P</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Michelle Ingham 01273 482550

13 Nov 2024	Cabinet	HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection of Youth Justice Service delivered in East Sussex Cabinet is asked to note the findings of HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) inspection of Youth Justice Service delivered in East Sussex 10 – 14 June 2024, which was published week commencing 16 September and the action plan which has been developed to address the areas for improvement.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Amanda Watson 01273 481339
13 Nov 2024	Cabinet	Scrutiny Review of Healthy Ageing To consider and comment on the report of the People Scrutiny Committee and agree the response to the recommendations of the review.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rachel Sweeney 07561 267461
13 Nov 2024	Cabinet	RPPR update - 2025/26 next steps and Medium Term Financial Plan To consider an update on the reconciling policy, performance and resources (RPPR) process for 2025/26, the next steps and the medium term financial plan.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Beard 07894 708914

18 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Consultation outcome for revised Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue bus priority proposals in Eastbourne To consider the outcome of the second public consultation on revised bus priority proposals for Seaside and St Anthony's Avenue as part of the East Sussex Bus Service Improvement Plan.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Indi Hicks 07514 721385
18 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition: To request that the Road Safety Team carry out a full Traffic Safety Survey with a view to introducing a new 40mph speed limit through Arlington and Caneheath To consider a petition for a traffic safety survey and implementation of a 40mph speed limit within the parish of Arlington.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Clare Akehurst 03456 080193
18 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2a - revised scope To note and approve the revised scope for Eastbourne Town Centre Movement and Access Package Phase 2a.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Isobel Kellett 07513 833903

Between 18 Nov 2024 and 29 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Economy	<p>East Sussex County Council's proposal for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Employment Support Programme</p> <p>The DWP is inviting East Sussex County Council to submit a proposal to deliver a devolved Employment Support programme from April 2025 until April 2029. The Council will be accountable for the programme and spend. This decision is to seek agreement to submit a proposal for the DWP Employment Support Programme and to seek a delegation of responsibility for oversight and future decisions for the programme to the Director of Communities, Economy and Transport.</p>	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Holly Aquilina 01323 463538
19 Nov 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	<p>Former Broad Oak Primary School - Disposal of Freehold</p> <p>This is a former school site that is surplus to operational requirements. Lead Member approval is being sought to formally declare the whole of the asset to be surplus to operational requirements and to approve the disposal of the former main school site. The Lead Member report will seek for the Chief Operating Officer to be granted authority to agree detailed terms with the preferred purchaser at a later date.</p>	<b>P</b> <b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312371

November 2024	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Award of contract to carry out a Detailed Design for the A22 Major Road Network (MRN) corridor scheme Award of contract, following the conclusion of a procurement process, to a consultant to undertake a detailed design for the A22 MRN corridor scheme.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Clare Marten White 07513 703841
November 2024	Director of Communities, Economy and Transport	Transport for the South East technical call off contract modification The Director will consider the increase in contract award for the Transport for the South East technical call off contract, that will allow for the delivery of the technical programme. As per the Value of Services section of the contract, a modification is being sought to increase the initial contract value by £2,000,000 to meet the total estimated value of £4,000,000 as the contract is approaching the initial limit of £2,000,000 (£1,000,000 per calendar year) allocated to the initial term between 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.	<b>P</b> <b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Lewis Milligan 0300 3309574
3 Dec 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	Pacific House, Eastbourne To consider and agree the proposed future asset management strategy for Pacific House, Eastbourne.	<b>P</b> <b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312371

3 Dec 2024	Lead Member for Resources and Climate Change	<p>Land parcels at the Phoenix Causeway and North Street, Lewes - Disposal of Freehold</p> <p>The Lead Member for Resources previously declared parcels of land to be surplus to the County Council's operational requirements in 2018. The Council now proposes to retain some of the surplus land but dispose of its land holdings in this locality. There will be delegations to the Chief Operating Officer to finalise the detailed terms with the preferred purchaser.</p>	<b>P</b> <b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Rebecca Lewis 07955 312371
Dec 2024	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	<p>School Organisation Plan 2024 to 2028</p> <p>To seek Lead Member approval to publish a School Organisation Plan for the period 2024 to 2028. The School Organisation Plan sets out how East Sussex County Council (the local authority), in accordance with its statutory duty, seeks to ensure there are sufficient primary, secondary, and special school places in the right locations to meet demand.</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Gary Langford 01273 481758
9 Dec 2024	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	<p>West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School</p> <p>To seek a final decision on a proposal to amalgamate West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School and to change the new school's age range to 2-11.</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Gary Langford 01273 481758



10 Dec 2024	Cabinet	Annual Accounts for Lewes Charitable Trust Requirement to report annually to Cabinet in line with the current practice where the County Council is a Corporate Trustee.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Samantha McManus 01273 482080
10 Dec 2024	Cabinet	Council Monitoring: Quarter 2 To consider the Council Monitoring report for the second quarter of the financial year 2024/25 as part of the Council's Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR) budget monitoring process.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Victoria Beard 07894 708914
10 Dec 2024	Cabinet	Exceat Bridge Replacement Project To provide an update on final options for the Exceat Bridge Replacement Project and agree next steps.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Karl Taylor 01273 482207
10 Dec 2024	Cabinet	The LAC Annual Report 2023-24 Cabinet are asked to receive and consider the Annual Report for the LAC service in their role as Corporate Parents. This report will be presented on behalf of the Corporate Parenting Panel.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Kathy Marriott 01273 481274

10 Dec 2024	Cabinet	Treasury Management Annual Report and Mid-Year Report 2024 To consider a report on the review of Treasury Management performance for 2023/24 and the outturn for the first six months of 2024/25, including the economic factors effecting performance, the Prudential Indicators and compliance with the limits set within the Treasury Management Strategy.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell 01273 481399
16 Dec 2024	Lead Member for Transport and Environment	Petition - traffic management in Maplehurst Road, Hastings To consider and respond to the petition received from local residents requesting the closure of Maplehurst Road in Hastings at its junction with the A21/A28 Westfield Road junction or the introduction of access only restrictions and appropriate enforcement measures.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jon Wheeler 01273 482212
December 2024	Director of Adult Social Care and Health	Healthwatch and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service (IHCAS) contract Extension 2025 - 2027 The Healthwatch and Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service contract comes to the end of the main contract period on 31 March 2025 and has 1 year + 1 year extension options for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Extending the contract by the full 2-year period, will enable cash releasing efficiencies to be generated whilst maintaining service stability and continuity.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Mark Hendriks 07701 394501

21 Jan 2025	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	Recommissioning of the Adult Drug and Alcohol Treatment Service contract The current contract to deliver drug and alcohol treatment in East Sussex ends in March 2026. This includes an allowed for 24-month extension. This request is to agree to commence the process of recommissioning this service in April 2025. The new contract will start in March 2026.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Caz Kearton-Evans 07879 117579
28 Jan 2025	Cabinet	New corporate Climate Emergency Action Plan The current Climate Emergency Action Plan ends in March 2025. A new plan, which will run from April 2025 to March 2029, will be presented to Cabinet and full Council for consideration.	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Andy Arnold 01273 481606
28 Jan 2025	Cabinet	Value For Money External Auditors Report 2023/24 Auditor's Annual (VfM) Report on East Sussex County Council 2023/24 from Grant Thornton, External Auditors.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell 01273 481399

28 Jan 2025	Cabinet	<p>Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources (RPPR): Draft Council Plan 2025/26, Revenue Budget and Capital Programme</p> <p>To ask Cabinet to approve the draft Council Plan, Council Tax levels, Revenue Budget and Capital Programme for 2025/26 for recommendation to the County Council (including Savings Proposals, Equality Impact Assessment, Engagement and Scrutiny feedback).</p>	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Claire Lee 07523 930526
28 Jan 2025	Cabinet	<p>Conservators of Ashdown Forest Budget 2024/25</p> <p>Cabinet is asked to approve the Conservators of Ashdown Forest's core budget for 2024/25.</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell 01273 481399
28 Jan 2025	Cabinet	<p>Treasury Management Strategy 2025/26</p> <p>To consider the Treasury Management Strategy for 2025/26. This includes setting the Prudential Indicators as set out in the Prudential Code and approving the Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement and Annual Investment Strategy for 2025/26.</p>	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Gutsell 01273 481399

January 2025	Director of Adult Social Care and Health	<p>Recommissioning of Domestic Abuse Refuge Services</p> <p>The current provider has given notice on this contract and they will cease to deliver services on 31st March 2025. The decision will be for the Director of Adult Social Care and Health to award the contract to a new provider to ensure they are in place to provide continuity of service for residents within the refuges and to allow a mobilisation period for TUPE requirements to be undertaken for current staff within the service.</p>	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Caz Kearton-Evans 07879 117579
10 Feb 2025	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	<p>Admission arrangements for East Sussex schools 2026-27 (determine)</p> <p>Following the outcome of the consultation agreed at the October 2024 meeting, the Lead Member is asked to determine the admission arrangements for 2026-27 for schools for which East Sussex County Council is the admission authority.</p>	<b>KD</b>		Report, other documents may also be submitted	Ian Johnson 01273 482944
10 Feb 2025	Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability	<p>East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty 2025-2026</p> <p>To approve the publication of the East Sussex Childcare Sufficiency Duty Report for 2025.</p>			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Jane Spice 01323 747425

20 Feb 2025	Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health	East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan The decision is to agree the content of the East Sussex Autism Action Plan. This is being led through the Autism Partnership Board. This plan will be developed following public consultation consisting of focus groups and a public survey.			Report, other documents may also be submitted	Bernadette van Gaalen 07745 106727
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**Report to:** People Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 19 November 2024

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**Title:** Stewardship approach to tackling loneliness in East Sussex

**Purpose:** To update on progress with implementation of the stewardship approach to tackling loneliness

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**RECOMMENDATIONS** The People Committee is recommended to note the progress update on implementation of the stewardship approach to tackling loneliness and provide any relevant feedback.

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## 1. Background

1.1 In April 2021, a public health funded COVID-19 recovery project was initiated in East Sussex. The overall aim of this 'Connected People and Places' project was to gain a better understanding of the nature and impact of loneliness on East Sussex residents and identify future opportunities and approaches to mitigate the worst effects of loneliness. Loneliness had previously been identified as a topic area of interest for scoping and exploration by the People Scrutiny Committee. Therefore, rather than a full scrutiny review, a Loneliness and Resilience Reference Group was formed to provide valuable input to the project and its recommendations.

1.2 The resulting project activities and recommendations have formed the basis of the 2022/23 annual Director of Public Health (DPH) report, '[Connecting People and Places - Bringing communities together in East Sussex](#)', which focuses on social connections and multi-agency work to tackle loneliness.

1.2 The PartnershipPlus Executive Board<sup>1</sup> holds the responsibility for ensuring that progress is made with the recommendations to tackle loneliness as a system across East Sussex. The headline recommendations are to:

- establish a System Stewardship Group to build and maintain the required collaborative leadership across the system;
- create a 'connection test' to apply a loneliness perspective to the policy making process;
- develop an action plan for developing social infrastructure rooted in the principles of ABCD (asset-based community development) and harnessing the potential of community ownership and community businesses;
- 'connect the connectors' by creating learning communities that learn and test ideas together and model and incentivise ongoing learning; and
- mobilise and equip a movement of connectors stretching across all public facing roles, businesses and communities.

1.3 The stewardship approach which underpins this programme seeks to encourage system partners to make best use of available resources to tackle loneliness, make decisions collectively and hold joint responsibility for the achievement of improved outcomes. To enable this to happen it is important to attend to the quality of relationships in the system and to hold each other to

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<sup>1</sup> PartnershipPlus is partnership of senior leaders from local authorities, the NHS, the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VSCE) sector and others in East Sussex.

account as joint stewards of the system. It requires partners to take on system leadership behaviours i.e. working beyond the boundaries of their organisation and formal role, moving away from authority and control to embrace an adaptive and collaborative leadership style, and an explorative, learning mindset.

1.4 To support the development of the stewardship approach, the Council has worked in collaboration with the East Sussex Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector Alliance and system partners to design how a host/convenor could be appointed to facilitate multi-agency progress. From December 2023 the Council entered into a two-year grant agreement with the organisation selected to lead the stewardship facilitation function, Sussex Community Development Association (SCDA). As part of the arrangements, East Sussex Community Voice (ESCV) is providing evaluation, data and monitoring capacity, and other VCSE organisations such as 3VA, Age UK East Sussex, Care for the Carers and Possability People are helping reach target communities and involve other local organisations as the project develops. A Programme Facilitator and a Loneliness Stewardship Reference Group have been supporting delivery and guiding development of the programme.

1.5 A progress update about the programme was requested by the People Scrutiny Committee following a previous presentation delivered at its March 2024 meeting.

## 2. Community engagement

2.1 An important first step for the Stewardship Group was to establish an aspirational long-term vision for the programme which will help to quickly communicate its aims. A number of proposed vision statements were consulted upon with system partners, informed by previous engagement activities and the recent input of the Stewardship Group. The following provisional vision statement has been agreed:

***“Our vision is for East Sussex to be a place where no-one feels lonely.”***

2.2 This statement is based on the principle that, whilst some people may choose and enjoy social isolation at times, no one chooses to be lonely. By definition, loneliness is a mismatch between someone’s desired levels of connection and what they experience.

2.3 This vision statement will be used, when appropriate, in conjunction with the existing ‘Connecting People & Places – Tackling loneliness in East Sussex’ programme identity, which emphasises the importance of positive social connections between people within local communities.

2.4 Community engagement and the lived experience of individuals and communities continues to form an important part of the programme. The wide range of partners involved, along with specific collaboration and engagement events, such as those listed below, are helping to shape the development of the programme.

- **Shared Learning Lunches** – Hastings and Rother for frontline practitioners to learn about loneliness and share their experience. Events held throughout summer and autumn in Hastings and Rother areas initially.
- **‘Connecting the Connectors’** in-person event aimed at frontline staff/volunteers, co-hosted with Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) in partnership with the National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) - 65 participants. 80 new connections were made and recorded between participants.
- Developing a **“Let’s Talk About Loneliness”** engagement format to build on our understanding of experiences of loneliness in East Sussex e.g. trialled at Recovery Café Eastbourne (women’s group) in August.



- **Creative Health and Tackling Loneliness (TL) programme** – online shared learning event, in collaboration with Public Health and the Creative Health Associate South East (NHS Sussex) – September – 30 arts projects attended. Focus to support fundraising opportunities.

2.5 The programme is keen to encourage as many people as possible in East Sussex to have a better understanding of loneliness and the importance of social connections, and how they can help tackle it. Between December and January we will launch communications inviting anyone with an interest to get involved. The key routes will be:

- accessing our new ‘Loneliness Matters’ awareness training (online and in-person) or the [National e-learning for Health \(NeLFH\) resource](#)
- joining a local event, including shared learning lunches, themed events and activities focused around communities of interest.
- joining the new online East Sussex [Tackling Loneliness Hub](#) group (see Section 4.1).

2.6 A previous proposal to create local loneliness ‘champions’ is still under consideration.

### 3. Governance

3.1 Since the last update provided to the People Scrutiny Committee, the programme has developed defined workstreams that will enable the appropriate engagement of system partners. The Loneliness Stewardship Reference Group has further developed the programme’s core governance, communications planning and evaluation principles.

3.2 This collaborative work will underpin our broader communications strategy which includes existing public sector and VCSE representation, private sector organisations and other networks and bodies such as Chambers of Commerce, Team East Sussex and the East Sussex Wellbeing at Work programme.

3.3 The first formal meeting of the Stewardship Group took place in May 2024 and involved a wide range of system partners and 35 individual attendees. The session covered: the background to the system stewardship approach; the intended purpose of the group; exploration of a shared vision; the role of members as stewards; presentation of emerging collaborative work with partners; and small group discussion on collaboration opportunities to help create a healthy system that helps tackle loneliness. The next meeting of the Stewardship Group is planned for the New Year.

### 4. Collaboration, learning and events

4.1 The programme has established an online [East Sussex Tackling Loneliness Hub](#) group which will provide a focus for sharing information and keeping up to date with developments. The group is hosted within the Tackling Loneliness Hub, an online learning and exchange space for people working on loneliness across research, policy and practice funded by the Department for Culture Media & Sport and supported by [Neighbourly Lab](#).

4.2 The Hub will help us to:

- create a committed and established network across all sectors in East Sussex;
- support people to work collaboratively and generate action;
- share best practice and increase the evidence base on loneliness; and
- support a local conversation on loneliness and connection.

4.3 The Programme Facilitator has continued to network widely to ensure that links and collaboration between the programme and existing groups and other programmes are made. For example, collaboration has taken place with the following groups/programmes:

- Social Prescribing Information Sharing Group
- East Sussex Mental Health Action Group (MHAG) and VCSE Mental Health Network, Men's Mental Health Community of Interest
- Creative Health Support Collaborative
- Rother Community Network supported by Rother Voluntary Action (RVA)
- Hastings Voluntary Action (HVA) Community Resource Hub, HVA Ageing Network, Mr Hastings and St Leonards (men's mental health project)
- National Academy for Social Prescribing (NASP) Older People programme – in collaboration with HVA Ageing Network
- Suicide Prevention Steering Group
- East Sussex Senior Association (ESSA)
- Adult Social Care Life Transitions work
- Community Networks Support Programme (CNSP)

4.4 The 'Connection Test' element of the work programme aims to embed considerations about the impact on loneliness within existing impact assessment processes, backed up with the available evidence base. Work has begun to explore this potential within health impact assessments and/or equalities impact assessments.

4.5 Groups, services and organisations across the county will be invited to explore whether their activities help people feel less lonely. This is part of collective efforts to understand more about the nature and impact of different activities and approaches to tackle loneliness in county. A new short and accessible guide to measuring loneliness has been developed (see Appendix A). This encourages services to measure loneliness through incorporating between one and three validated questions into their monitoring and evaluation.

## **5. Evaluation**

5.1 East Sussex Community Voice have been working alongside the Loneliness Stewardship Reference Group and Programme Facilitator to ascertain the evaluation needs of the programme. Due to the complexities of measuring systems change, and changes in behaviours and attitudes, it has been proposed that Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) would be a suitable approach to support the evaluation of the programme. REM is a qualitative method that can be used to capture the wider (intended and unintended) impacts of a programme over time. Through this approach, people who have been involved in the delivery of the programme are brought together in a participatory workshop (or workshops) to co-create ripple effect maps by visually mapping out what they have done and the impacts to date over a timeline. This can be a way of capturing information such as stakeholders involved, changing mindsets, and shifts within systems; it also indicates the length of time it takes for different impacts to occur.

5.2 Other more immediate evaluation activities have included assessment of the effectiveness of the first stewardship group meeting in achieving its aims through a questionnaire co-created and distributed to stewardship group members. A template 'learning log' has also been created which will allow the project team to capture learnings from programme activity and support both the facilitation and evaluation of the programme.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

6.1 The stewardship approach to tackling loneliness in East Sussex has progressed through the formation of the multi-agency Stewardship Group and the creation of a shared vision for the programme. Numerous co-produced events have taken place to build programme capacity and support collaborations to tackle loneliness across the county. Shared learning and training events will increase the capacity for anyone with an interest to contribute to the programme delivery. It is recommended that the Committee note this progress and provide any relevant feedback.

**APPENDIX A:** A short guide to measuring loneliness for organisations in East Sussex

**MARK STANTON**

Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Contact Officer: Ben Brown, Consultant in Public Health,  
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# CONNECTING PEOPLE & PLACES

## Tackling loneliness in East Sussex

### A short guide to measuring loneliness in East Sussex

The Connecting People and Places: Tackling Loneliness programme is keen to encourage everyone in East Sussex to have a better understanding of loneliness and the importance of social connections.

We are therefore inviting groups, services and organisations across the county to explore whether their activities help people feel less lonely. This is part of our collective efforts to understand the impact of different activities and approaches.

Loneliness is ‘a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want’.

### Which questions should you use?

There are various ways of measuring loneliness, for example, using positive or negatively framed questions. We suggest that you use the nationally recommended ‘gold standard’ questions proposed by the ONS. Using these questions will enable comparison with other surveys – and between different projects and activities – to help understand what really works.

There are slightly different sets of questions for young people aged 10-15 years (see Appendix A) and for people 16 and over (see Appendix B). These are both made up of three indirect questions and one direct question to cover a comprehensive picture of loneliness. If you only have space or time to ask one question, you should use the fourth question: "How often do you feel lonely?".

### When should you use the loneliness measurement questions?



- The questions can be used to measure change over time, so ideally you would ask them at several points during your project or activity.
- It is best practice to ask the questions as close to the start of your activity as possible so you can establish a ‘baseline’.
- You can then repeat the questions at a later date (for example, 3 or 6 months) and compare the results.
- The questions should not be used to determine eligibility or thresholds for a service or activity.

## Be clear why you are asking the questions

Make sure that anyone asking these questions knows how to explain why they want to know this information. People being asked to respond to the questions need to understand:

- the aims of the activity and its evaluation
- how you will be using, storing, sharing and publishing any information about them
- how you will make sure their information remains confidential, and how anything they tell you will be kept anonymous if published or shared
- how to opt-out at any point during the process, should they no longer want to take part.



It can sometimes be difficult to ask people about how they feel, particularly when questions might bring up painful experiences of loneliness. Staff and volunteers should have the right support, training and guidance to be able to help people should they have any questions or if they become distressed.

## How to understand the results



The responses for the first three questions can be combined to calculate a 'loneliness score' from 3 to 9 for each respondent. The lowest possible combined score on the loneliness scale is 3 (indicating less frequent loneliness) and the highest is 9 (indicating more frequent loneliness). However, there is no agreed threshold above which someone would be considered lonely - and it's more helpful to look at the average scores across your sample to see what has changed over time, and how different people score relative to the average.

The fourth question should be treated separately in terms of scoring, and the results shouldn't be added to the aggregate score for the first three - it's a standalone score.

We know some groups of people are more likely to experience chronic loneliness, so you may want to add some of these options to your demographic questions if you don't have them already. You could include: age; gender; ethnicity; number of people living in the household; marital status/living as a couple; rented or owned accommodation, poor health, disability or limiting conditions.

## Share your findings with us

We'd welcome hearing from groups, services or organisations adopting these questions and who are able to share anonymised summary information with us, to help broaden our understanding of activities and their impact in East Sussex. Please also get in touch if you would like to collaborate on more detailed measurement and evaluation activities, including qualitative experiences of loneliness and other forms of insight gathering.



# Further information and support

If you would like any help or advice on measuring loneliness or evaluating your activities, please contact: [tacklingloneliness@sussexcommunity.org.uk](mailto:tacklingloneliness@sussexcommunity.org.uk) You can also find lots more helpful information in What Works Wellbeing's [Brief Guide to Measuring Loneliness](#)



## APPENDIX A:

### Recommended questions for young people aged 10-15 years

We would like to ask you a few questions to enable us to measure how helpful our services/activities are. You can choose to answer all or none of the questions, and choosing not to answer will not affect your access to any of our services in any way.

When answering the questions, you could take account of the following:

- There are no right or wrong answers
- We would like you to be completely honest
- In answering the questions it is best to think of your life as it generally is now (we all have some good or bad days)

#### Questions

		Hardly ever	Some of the time			Often
Q1	How often do you feel that you have no one to talk to?	1	2			3
Q2	How often do you feel left out?	1	2			3
Q3	How often do you feel alone?	1	2			3
		Often/ always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
Q4	How often do you feel lonely?	1	2	3	4	5

## APPENDIX B:

### Recommended questions for people aged 16 and over

We would like to ask you a few questions to enable us to measure how helpful our services/activities are. You can choose to answer all or none of the questions, and choosing not to answer will not affect your access to any of our services in any way.

When answering the questions, you could take account of the following:

- There are no right or wrong answers
- We would like you to be completely honest
- In answering the questions it is best to think of your life as it generally is now (we all have some good or bad days)

#### Questions

		Hardly ever	Some of the time		Often	
Q1	How often do you feel that you lack companionship?	1		2	3	
Q2	How often do you feel left out?	1		2	3	
Q3	How often do you feel isolated from others?	1		2	3	
		Often/ always	Some of the time	Occasionally	Hardly ever	Never
Q4	How often do you feel lonely?	1	2	3	4	5

**Note:** An introduction to the questions may not always be necessary in the context of your service delivery or activity. An important consideration is how well the questions flow on from preceding questions in your work with people and whether it is necessary to introduce the questions to signal a change of topic. The decision may also depend on whether all four questions are used or just one.

If an introduction is used, we recommend that the word “loneliness” is not included because this may affect responses to the first three questions, which are intended to measure loneliness without mentioning the word.

#### Sources:

What Works Wellbeing (2019) *A brief guide to measuring loneliness for charities and social enterprises*. Available at: <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Brief-Guide-to-measuring-Loneliness-Feb2019.pdf>

ONS (2018) *Measuring loneliness: guidance for use of the national indicators on surveys*. Available at: [www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/measuringlonelinessguidanceforuseofthenationalindicatorsonsurveys](http://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/methodologies/measuringlonelinessguidanceforuseofthenationalindicatorsonsurveys)

Campaign to End Loneliness (2015) *Measuring your impact on loneliness in later life*. Available at: <https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/wp-content/uploads/Loneliness-Measurement-Guidance1.pdf>



**Report to:** People Scrutiny Committee

**Date of meeting:** 19 November 2024

**By:** Director of Adult Social Care and Health

**Title:** Preparation for CQC assessment of ASCH

**Purpose:** To appraise the Committee of the CQC's new assessment methodology and ASCH's preparations for this.

To review the role of People Scrutiny Committee in CQC assessment of ASCH's delivery of the Care Act.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The People Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note, review and agree the preparations for CQC assurance.

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## 1. Background Information

### **CQC Assessment**

1.1 In December 2021, the Government confirmed its intention to re-introduce assessment for adult social care departments in the White Paper 'People at the Heart of Care'. Adult social care departments have not been assessed by a regulator in this way for 15 years. The key focus of the new Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment regime is to determine how well local authorities are performing their duties under Part 1 of the Care Act 2014.

### **Self-assessment**

1.2 As part of our preparations for assessment by the CQC we undertook an extensive 'self-assessment' exercise in 2023. The basis for this was a workbook created by the Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) and the Local Government Association (LGA) which is the industry standard tool for conducting a comprehensive adult social care self-assessment exercise.

1.3 We used the findings from this exercise to create a Self-assessment document for adult social care in East Sussex. We know that the Self-assessment document is a critical part of the CQC process. The Self-assessment provides the CQC with a picture of East Sussex, our particular areas of strength and our priority areas for development. The Self-assessment document is key to the CQC framing their assessment and developing their 'key lines of enquiry'.

1.4 We undertook extensive consultation and engagement work on the draft Self-assessment document between November 2023 and January 2024. This included work with key external partners, across sectors, as well as with citizen and 'experts by experience' groups. In November 2023 the draft Self-assessment was presented to the People Scrutiny Committee CQC Reference Group for comment and approval.

### ***Local Government Peer Challenge Review***

1.5 As part of our preparation for CQC assessment, we commissioned the LGA to carry out a Peer Challenge Review in February 2024. The People Scrutiny Committee CQC Reference Group was briefed in preparation for meeting with the LGA and were one of the 37 meetings held locally with the LGA.

1.6 In June of this year, the CQC Reference Group considered the findings from the LGA review. This included noting the high degree of correlation between our internal self-assessment exercise the LGA team's findings. The Reference Group considered how the findings were being used by ASCH to give focus and drive to the improvement journey. This included the development of five Departmental Priorities as well as ensuring progress was tracked against all of the areas for consideration, identified by the LGA, that do not fall within the five priorities.

1.7 The CQC Reference Group requested a further update in November 2024. This update has been rescheduled for January 2024 due to the CQC providing us with notification of the start of our assessment.

### ***The CQC Assessment***

1.8 On the 12 August 2024 the CQC wrote to the Director of ASCH formally commencing the assessment process in East Sussex.

1.9 Phase 1 of the assessment involved completing the CQC Information Return. This required supplying the CQC with c.250 items, including data reports, guidance documents, plans and strategies. Critically it included a copy of our latest Self-assessment document which has been updated to reflect the key findings from the LGA Peer Challenge Review, as well as a copy of the LGA's report itself.

1.10 We now await a second notification from the CQC to commence the second phase of their assessment. This notification could arrive any time in the next four months. The summary timeline for the assessment is set out below (noting that there remains a degree of uncertainty of the precise requirements of the CQC as their new assessment regime is still in its infancy and subject to change):

- a) Email providing 6-8 weeks' notice of on-site visit.
- b) ASCH will begin an intensive programme of preparation and briefing work across ESCC and partners.
- c) ASCH will be requested to supply 50 cases to the CQC within 2 weeks of the notification. The CQC will choose 6 of these cases to conduct interviews with the adult, their representative (where appropriate) and their carer (where appropriate).
- d) ASCH will meet with the CQC Lead Inspector who will describe their exact requirements in terms of focus groups etc. whilst on site.
- e) ASCH will organise the CQC site visit, as required, and ensure that everyone invited to meet with the CQC is fully briefed, supported and de-briefed after the sessions.

1.11 Other authorities have noted that it is important not to underestimate the size of the logistical task of setting up a CQC assessment. We believe that our experience of running an LGA Peer Review means that we have an excellent understanding of this. We have already

drafted a plan for all of the work that will need to commence at pace when the second CQC notification arrives.

1.12 As above, there remains a degree of uncertainty as to what exactly the CQC will want for their assessment in East Sussex and when they will start the next phase of their assessment. Whilst it is probable that the CQC will not visit East Sussex until early in 2025, it remains possible that they could undertake their assessment before the end of 2024. We are already engaged in a wide range of preparatory work as summarised below.

### ***Learning from others***

1.13 We have worked extensively with colleagues in Children's Services to understand and learn from their experience of OFSTED inspections. Whilst the OFSTED process is significantly different from the CQC process, the insights from Children's Services have been extremely helpful – including colleagues from Children's Services talking about their experiences at ASCH staff preparation sessions.

1.14 We have spoken with nine other local authorities, most of whom have already been through the CQC assessment process. They have been generous in sharing their learning and some of their preparatory materials with us.

### ***Members***

1.15 We have held briefing sessions for the Leader of the Council (primarily in his role as Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board) and for the Lead Member for ASCH. In addition to reporting to the People Scrutiny Committee on CQC Preparations at its November meeting, we will hold a briefing session on 12 November for the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee and ASCH spokespeople, who are most likely to be asked to meet with the CQC. The next CQC Reference Group is planned for January 2025 and will consider progress against the 5 ASCH Development Priorities.

1.16 We have commissioned a former Director of Adult Social Care, who is also the Chair of our Safeguarding Adults Board, to undertake practice interviews with the Leader, Lead Member and Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee so we can understand if there are any areas where further preparatory work would be beneficial. A written briefing note has been prepared and will be provided to these Members ahead of their practice interviews.

### ***Staff - Senior Officers***

1.17 Senior Officers have also been invited to practice interviews, including:

- The Chief Executive
- The Director of Adult Social Care and Health
- The Director of Public Health
- The ASCH Assistant Directors
- Heads of Service with primary responsibility for delivering the Safeguarding development work noted in Self-assessment
- The Principle Social Worker
- The Head of Inclusion and Support Services

### ***Staff – Frontline Staff Nominated for CQC Focus Groups***

1.18 We have run three information and engagement sessions open to all staff in ASCH.

1.19 We have engaged Partners in Care and Health (PCH) to run preparatory workshops, in December, for staff likely to be interviewed by the CQC. All these staff have also been offered briefing sessions ahead of the PCH workshops. A next round of preparation sessions is planned for January 2025 which will be subject matter specific e.g. Safeguarding, using data to manage performance, tools we use to ensure quality of practice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and ensuring equity of experience and outcomes etc. The precise content will be informed by feedback from the PCH workshops.

### ***Expected Key Lines of Enquiry***

1.20 We expect that the CQC will use our Self-assessment to identify many of their key lines of enquiry. We are therefore recommending that anyone meeting with the CQC reads the ASCH Self-Assessment (or the parts of it relevant to them) before they meet with the CQC.

1.21 We expect that the CQC will focus on the five Departmental Priorities which we have identified through our own Self-assessment work and the LGA Peer Review. A summary for each of these is provided below:

### ***ASCH Departmental Priorities - Prevention***

1.22 Section 2 of the Care Act requires local authorities to ensure the provision of services which help prevent, delay or reduce the development of care & support needs (including carers' support needs). Given the East Sussex context, we are looking to further strengthen our approach to this:

- **Prevention Strategy** – this is being worked on now and due to be published by the end of this year.
- **Public Health initiatives** – Specifically work under: Building blocks of good health, Importance of the Life course approach, Improving Healthy Life Expectancy, Reducing Health Inequalities, Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Our embedded **strengths-based practice** supports the prevent, reduce, delay approach.
- The LGA praised Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) as a tangible example of joint work between social care and health. It also recognised there may be scope for a more preventative approach when people first approach ASCH. There will be a review of HSCC (linked to the overarching Prevention Strategy) starting in March 2025 to ensure we have the best possible approach to prevention at our 'front door'.

### ***Waiting Times***

1.23 A formal project to improve waiting times for Care Act assessments and reviews began in April 2024. We have implemented an enhanced approach to waiting times data which supports greater visibility, accountability and grip. This has already enabled us to improve management of waiting lists. At the end of August, the average waiting time for adult assessments had reduced by 8% and carers by 5%, since March 2024.

1.24 In line with one of the LGA's key findings, we have developed an improved standardised process for management of waiting lists which has been consulted on across ASCH and will be signed off in November, with a plan for it to be implemented and fully embedded by the end of 2024/25.

1.25 We have already improved our communication with people on waiting lists. Anyone who is not identified as being urgent (i.e. will not be assessed within 3 days) now receives a standard letter which provides: information on the expected wait time, how to contact ASCH if

their circumstances change during this period and information on other, local sources of support.

1.26 We are working to improve our performance for annual reviews for people receiving long-term support which is a statutory duty under the Care Act. This is an area of challenge for us, as it is for many authorities. In line with the LGA Review Findings, we have added annual reviews to the ESCC Corporate Risk Log to ensure the right level of importance and scrutiny is given to this.

1.27 The main factor impacting our performance on reviews is demand (including hospital discharge and safeguarding) outstripping capacity. However, the Waiting Times project is now looking at ways of improving performance and we will continue to monitor progress on this key area of business.

1.28 Our next area of focus will be Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Assessments (DoLS). Our current performance puts us in approximately 9<sup>th</sup> place out of 17 authorities across the South East, for the number of people (per 10,000 population) awaiting a DoLS assessment, and 11<sup>th</sup> for people waiting over six months for a DoLS assessment. Performance on DoLS assessments has been added to the Corporate Risk Register. We are working on an improvement plan to reduce the number of people waiting and the number of long waits for DoLS assessments and will monitor the impact of this, including quarterly reporting to Members.

1.29 In order to improve the visibility and oversight of waiting times, additional measures will be included in the Council Plan monitoring from Quarter Two 2024/25.

### ***Safeguarding***

1.30 The LGA praised our Safeguarding case work and also suggested we could achieve higher levels of assurance in some areas. In response we have:

- Strengthened our information gathering and oversight of decision making in the Safeguarding Hub within HSCC. We have provided additional staffing for the Hub, are gathering more information before making decisions and have increased the oversight of decisions not to proceed to a Safeguarding enquiry. This more robust process went live at the start of November.
- We have improved our weekly reporting on Safeguarding, across ASCH, to managers at all levels to ensure visibility, accountability and grip of performance on the end-to-end Safeguarding process.
- The LGA recommended that we undertake a higher number of audits of Safeguarding cases. An updated approach has already begun in the latest audit cycle running from October 2024 – March 2025 and will be fully embedded in January 2025. The new audit framework includes specific consideration of the statutory three-stage decision as to whether a case should be taken into the safeguarding process and is more proportionate to enable a greater number of cases to be audited.
- We are working to increase the number of people who provide us with feedback following a Safeguarding process so that we can continue to learn from this and improve how we work.

- We have undertaken specific case review work to understand whether our apparently 'high' conversion rate (when compared to other authorities' data) for taking potential Safeguarding concerns into a full enquiry process was due to risk averse practice. The case reviews, and conversations with other authorities, have allowed us to assure ourselves that the apparent issue is related to different recording practice rather than risk averse decision making.

## **Quality**

1.31 Our quality priority is in two main parts:

- Quality of ASCH performance and practice; and
- Quality of service provision – particularly across commissioned services

1.32 Our response to these areas so far this year includes:

### Quality within ASCH

1.33 Our Quality Practice Framework has been improved incrementally over the last 12 months with a full re-launch scheduled for mid-December 2024. Already this year we have:

- Implemented a Case File Audit dashboard which enables managers to see how many audits have been completed by their teams and for themes from the audits to be identified at team and department level; and
- Updated Supervision process (launched in 2024). We are currently working on a proposal for auditing the quality of supervisions within ASCH.

1.34 We have improved our use of risk logs within ASCH and corporately so that we have the right visibility and monitoring of key areas of risk. We are developing the data reporting to support this at every level of the Council.

1.35 The regular liaison between Director of ASCH and Members – particularly the Leader, Lead Member and Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee provides assurance of our delivery under the Care Act. The specific role of the People Scrutiny Committee in preparation and assurance for CQC assessment is set out in section 2 below.

### Quality of commissioned services<sup>1</sup>

1.36 We have adapted how we work in recognition of fewer resources across ESCC/ASCH and providers to undertake quality monitoring tasks. Our 'Supplier Relationship Management' approach is underpinned by mature relationship with providers, the CQC & the NHS engaged in market quality work. Issues are identified early and we work collaboratively to resolve these. This includes our regular multi-agency Market Oversight Panels and regular meetings with providers so that we have excellent market intelligence. The success of this approach is evidenced by the capacity and quality of the care market in East Sussex – with no providers being rated by the CQC as inadequate.

### Value for money

1.37 Ultimately the CQC are concerned with how we are delivering the Care Act, regardless of our financial position. However, we know that the CQC appreciate the financial pressures local authorities are under and recognise this can impact our ability to deliver services. We

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<sup>1</sup> Noting that services provided by ASCH are subject to their own discreet assessment by the CQC

also know that the CQC are interested in how authorities are responding to challenges – including financial ones – and developing new and innovative ways of working in response to these. We will ensure that our initial briefing to the CQC<sup>2</sup> sets out our current financial position and what we are doing to manage and mitigate this.

### **Other Potential Areas of Focus**

1.38 We expect that there may be some additional focus on:

- Hospital assessment – the position across Health and social care services is challenging across Sussex. Hospital discharge performance has now been included on the corporate ESCC Risk Register in order to ensure there is the requisite focus on this area.
- Transitions – both young people who transition between Children's Disability Services and the ASCH Transitions Team (given that the CQC are likely to visit shortly after an assessment of the Council's Special Educational Needs and Disability service); and also the other young people who have been known to Children's Service, for example through child protection or having been a looked after child, who then engage with adult social care services.

## **2. Role of People Scrutiny Committee**

2.1 The CQC note that their expectations of the role of People Scrutiny Committee are (in relation to CQC assessment):

- *'Be aware of the preparation being done by the Director of Adult Services (DASS)'*
- *'Ensure the Self-assessment document is reflective of East Sussex'*

### **Role of People Scrutiny Committee in preparing for assessment by the CQC**

2.2 The People Scrutiny Committee was first informed that ASCH was preparing for a CQC assessment at its July 2023 meeting. The Committee agreed to set up a CQC Preparation Reference Group. The Reference Group has had two formal meetings regarding CQC preparation:

- December 2023 – To review the ASCH preparations for CQC assessment and to review and agree the ASCH Self-assessment document; and
- June 2024 – To review the LGA Peer Challenge Review findings and consider the ASCH response i.e. the development of the 5 ASCH Departmental Priorities and associated workstreams, as part of CQC preparations.

2.3 The CQC Reference Group also received a briefing in February 2024 as part of specific preparations for the LGA Review.

2.4 As above, the CQC Reference Group was due to meet in November 2024 to consider progress against the ASCH 5 Departmental Priorities. As the CQC notification has been received in the meantime, this meeting has been replaced by:

- A report to the full People Scrutiny Committee on preparation for CQC assessment
- A briefing for the People Scrutiny Committee Chair and ASCH spokespeople

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<sup>2</sup> There is an opportunity for a three hour presentation to the CQC at the start of their assessment where we can provide additional information and narrative

### 3. Community Engagement

#### ***Citizen's Panel***

3.1 The Adult Social Care Citizens' Panel is made up of a group of residents that have personal experience of drawing on care and support in East Sussex, or who are caring for someone who does. The panel works together through co-production, to develop and implement the Department's direction, policies and services.

3.2 CQC preparation has been on the agenda at all Citizens' Panel meetings this year. Meetings were held on 11 January, 15 April, 11 July and 11 October 2024. At the January meeting, panel members provided their views on the Department's strengths and development areas under the key themes in the Self-assessment document. 17 Citizens' Panel members also met with LGA assessors as part of the Peer Challenge Review in February 2024.

#### ***PartnershipPlus***

3.3 PartnershipPlus which brings together ESCC with voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations, district and borough authorities and the NHS, has also been involved and engaged in our CQC preparations. In October 2023, the group was appraised of the CQC assessment regime and later that year the group gave their feedback on the Self-assessment document, which was updated as a result of their feedback.

3.4 PartnershipPlus was briefed on the LGA Peer Challenge Review in January 2024 and many of PartnershipPlus's members met with the LGA in February. The final LGA report was shared with PartnershipPlus this summer. The Director of ASCH notified PartnershipPlus of the start of CQC assessment in East Sussex in September and a brief presentation on this was delivered at their October 2024 meeting.

### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 ASCH recognises that the return of the regulator has been a catalyst for providing additional focus and drive to our continuous improvement journey.

4.2 In line with CQC recommendations, the People Scrutiny Committee has:

- *'contributed to shaping the council's adult social care strategy'; and*
- *'provided checks and balances on the executive, testing performance, raising issues of concern, holding decision makers to account'*

4.3 The People Scrutiny Committee CQC Reference Group has overseen the key stages of our preparation for CQC assessment and ensured that the Self-assessment document is reflective of Adult Social Care and Health in East Sussex.

4.4 As part of the on-site assessment work, we anticipate that the CQC will want to speak with the Chair of the People Scrutiny Committee and possibly with the opposition spokespeople who also sit on the CQC Reference Group. We have run a briefing session for these Members and have arranged for a practice interview session for the Chair with an ASCH subject matter expert. When we receive notification of the second phase of the CQC assessment we will undertake further briefings and preparatory work.

4.4 We have used our own preparatory work for the CQC assessment and the findings of the LGA Peer Review Team to create the 5 ASCH Departmental Priorities which have given focus and drive to our improvement journey. We continue to undertake a huge amount of



preparatory work with staff who have been nominated to meet with the CQC to ensure they are informed and are fully supported throughout the process.

4.5 The CQC preparations have also been a catalyst for developing our internal assurance processes with three key areas of risk now added to the ESCC Risk Register:

- Hospital discharge
- Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard assessments
- Annual reviews for people receiving long-term care

4.6 The People Scrutiny Committee are recommended to note, review and agree the preparations for CQC assurance.

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