



EAST SUSSEX HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

TUESDAY, 9 DECEMBER 2025

2.00 PM COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY HALL, LEWES

MEMBERSHIP - Councillor Keith Glazier, OBE, East Sussex County Council (Chair)
Jayne Black, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust (ESHT)
Carolyn Fair, Director of Children's Services
Darrell Gale, Director of Public Health
Councillor Amanda Jobson, Hastings Borough Council
Veronica Kirwan, Healthwatch East Sussex
Dr Stephen Pike, NHS Sussex
Councillor Carl Maynard, East Sussex County Council
Ashley Scarff, NHS Sussex
Mark Stainton, Director of Adult Social Care
Councillor John Ungar, East Sussex County Council
Councillor Trevor Webb, East Sussex County Council
Councillor Kelvin Williams, Wealden District Council
Ian Smith, NHS Sussex

INVITED OBSERVERS WITH SPEAKING RIGHTS Councillor Dr Kathy Ballard, Eastbourne Borough Council
Councillor Paul Davies, Lewes District Council
Duncan Kerr, VCSE Alliance
Councillor Teresa Killeen MBE, Rother District Council
Simon Morris, Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner
Becky Shaw, Chief Executive, ESCC
David Kemp, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service

A G E N D A

1. Minutes of meeting of Health and Wellbeing Board held on 23 September 2025 (*Pages 3 - 10*)
2. Apologies for absence
3. Disclosure by all members present of personal interests in matters on the agenda
4. Urgent items
Notification of items which the Chair considers to be urgent and proposes to take at the end 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 urgently
5. East Sussex Health and Social Care Programme - update report (*Pages 11 - 24*)
6. East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) Annual Report 2024-25 (*Pages 25 - 86*)
7. Sussex learning from lives and deaths (LeDeR) Annual report 2024/25 (*To Follow*)
8. Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Update report (*Pages 87 - 92*)

9. Work programme (*Pages 93 - 94*)
10. Any other items previously notified under agenda item 4

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

1 December 2025

Contact Rachel Sweeney, Senior Policy and Scrutiny Adviser,
07561 267461
Email: rachel.sweeney@eastsussex.gov.uk

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EAST SUSSEX HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board held at Council Chamber, County Hall, Lewes on 23 September 2025.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councillor Keith Glazier, OBE (Chair)
Carolyn Fair, Councillor Amanda Jobson, Veronica Kirwan,
Stephen Lightfoot, Ashley Scarff, Mark Stainton and
Councillor John Ungar

Councill Maynard (attended online)

INVITED OBSERVERS PRESENT

Becky Shaw, Councillor Kathy Ballard, Councillor Paul
Davies, Councillor Teresa Kileen, Simon Morris and Duncan
Kerr

13. MINUTES OF MEETING OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD HELD ON 15 JULY 2025

13.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

13.2 The Chair thanked Stephen Lightfoot for his contribution to the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) and the Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB) ahead of his upcoming retirement, recognising his leadership in promoting collaborative working across health and social care.

13.3 Stephen Lightfoot responded that the progress achieved had been a collective effort and expressed appreciation for the Board's support.

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

14.1 The following apologies for absence were received from members of the Board:

- Darrell Gale, Director of Public Health
- Dr Stephen Pike, NHS Sussex
- Jayne Black, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
- Councillor Trevor Webb

14.2 The following apologies for absence were received from invited observers with speaking rights:

- Hannah Youldon (East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service)

14.3 The following substitutions were made for invited observers with speaking rights:

- David Kemp, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service substituted for Hannah Youldon

15. DISCLOSURE BY ALL MEMBERS PRESENT OF PERSONAL INTERESTS IN MATTERS ON THE AGENDA

15.1 There were no disclosures of interest.

16. URGENT ITEMS

16.1 There were no urgent items notified.

17. SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD (SAB) ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25

17.1 Seona Douglas introduced the report, outlining the statutory responsibilities of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB) under the Care Act, including the development of a strategic plan, publication of an annual report, and commissioning of Safeguarding Adults Reviews (SARs). Seona emphasised that while she serves as Independent Chair, the SAB operates as a partnership, with strong collaboration across statutory and wider partners.

17.2 Seona highlighted the role of sub-groups in supporting the SAB's work and expressed disappointment at the dissolution of Healthwatch, thanking Veronica Kirwan and her team for their contributions, particularly in amplifying the voice of service users.

17.3 Seona noted an increasing national concern around self-neglect and hoarding, as outlined in the report, as well as work locally to develop tools to support practitioners in responding to these issues. Seona also noted the use of a multi-agency dashboard and audits as mechanisms for learning and improvement.

17.4 The Chair thanked Seona for the report and noted the challenges and complexity in safeguarding and welcomed the successful outcomes of the SAB.

17.5 Stephen Lightfoot, Chair of NHS Sussex, commended the SAB's exemplary multi-agency working, including contributions from justice, probation, and fire services, and thanked Seona for her leadership.

17.6 Councillor Ungar praised the breadth of work reflected in the report. He also noted historical low levels of GP safeguarding referrals and asked whether engagement had improved. Seona responded that while nurses often make referrals, there was positive engagement from GPs, with a GP attending Board meetings regularly. She acknowledged the need for ongoing improvement and learning, especially during staff transitions. Improvement more widely was a continued focus for the partnership and part of its role was to challenge each other.

17.7 David Kemp, Head of Prevention and Designated Safeguarding Lead, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, commented that the SAR Board was well attended, and that while SARs focus on rare cases where things go wrong, the vast majority of interactions with vulnerable people were positive and reflected the professionalism of staff.

17.8 Councillor Jobson raised concerns about men's mental health and referenced a local suicide and the Baton of Hope initiative in Hastings. Seona confirmed the SAB worked with Public Health on suicide prevention, including representation on the Board, and that SARs did include suicide where care and support needs were present.

17.9 Councillor Ballard asked how domestic abuse and violence against women and girls was reflected in safeguarding. Seona noted the domestic abuse strategy and work with Safer Communities on these issues and cited research with Durham University on domestic abuse in

older populations, particularly where dementia and traditional relationship roles intersect. Seona emphasised the importance of awareness and appropriate support and noted work with partners, including Safer Communities, to share information.

17.10 The Board RESOLVED to note the report.

18. ICB PROGRESS UPDATE

18.1 Stephen Lightfoot provided an update on the formation of the Surrey and Sussex Integrated Care Board (ICB), which will be coterminous with the two mayoral authorities. Ian Smith had been appointed Chair, and recruitment for the Chief Executive was underway. Stephen acknowledged the uncertainty faced by staff and noted that changes to the ICB, including redundancies, were likely to be delayed until 2026 due to lack of national funding.

18.2 Stephen noted the ongoing commitment to neighbourhood health services as part of the Government's plan to shift care from hospital to community and outlined differences in neighbourhood health models between Surrey and East Sussex, with Surrey's model based on populations of 30–50,000 and the East Sussex model which was aligned with district and borough footprints. NHS clinical leaders had been working with stakeholders, including local government and the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector, to develop new care models for the ICTs and this was due to be presented to the NHS Sussex Board shortly. Stephen also confirmed that Hastings and Rother had been selected for a £10 million Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme bid.

18.3 The Chair expressed disappointment that the new footprint was not coterminous with the proposed Sussex Combined Authority, and emphasised the value of community teams, but welcomed the opportunity to collaborate and share learning with Surrey and confirmed he had already met with the new Chair.

18.4 Veronica Kirwan, Chief Executive of Healthwatch, asked how the ICB would retain an independent patient voice. Stephen commented on the importance of this and confirmed that the commissioning intentions, to be presented to the NHS Sussex Board, included a commitment to working with VCSE partners to maintain the independent voice of the public. Stephen commented that the NHS should not undertake this role alone, and that the ICB would fund a new mechanism to achieve this through the VCSE sector, although also stressed the importance of collaboration with local government and NHS Trusts across Sussex.

18.5 Councillor Jobson suggested neighbourhood panels to capture resident experience. Stephen noted the development of population health profiles for the ICTs to gather patient feedback.

18.6 Mark Stainton, Director of Adult Social Care and Health, welcomed Stephen's commitment to independent voice and his comments on Healthwatch and confirmed that East Sussex County Council had written to the ICB on this matter and were exploring options. Mark also noted that the Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme would progress at pace, and updates would be brought to future meetings as part of reports on integrated programmes.

18.7 The Board RESOLVED to note the update from NHS Sussex in response to the NHS Reforms and Neighbourhood Health.

19. INTEGRATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

19.1 Vicky Smith, Programme Director, East Sussex Health and Social Care Transformation, presented an update on the East Sussex Health and Social Care Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) Integration Programme. Progress on the SDP priorities in quarter 1 included the development of Integrated Community Teams (ICTs), work being progressed on multi-disciplinary teams, and the use of a new risk tool to identify individuals at risk of hospital admission. The report also outlined the discussions at the recent informal Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) session on the JSNA theme of reducing health inequalities and measuring the impact of collaborative work on population health and wellbeing, which Vicky confirmed would feed into the forthcoming HWB strategy refresh in 2026.

19.2 Vicky noted the successful East Sussex submission to the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, focussed on Hastings and Rother as part of the broader approach to ICTs and which provided an opportunity to develop joint plans to commission and deliver a sustainable model for neighbourhood health services. The report outlined the new planning framework for NHS England, including 5-year ICB strategic commissioning plan and NHS provider delivery plans, and Vicky emphasised the role of the HWB in developing a new neighbourhood health plan as part of this framework.

19.3 The Chair thanked Vicky for the report and acknowledged the scale of change and the importance of maintaining services.

19.4 Ashley Scarff, Director of Joint Commissioning and ICT Development (East Sussex), NHS Sussex, thanked Vicky for the report and welcomed the news of the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme which will focus initially on Hastings and Rother. Ashley noted the ambitious programme around neighbourhood health and the development of ICTs in East Sussex and said that learning from Hastings and Rother would be used to strengthen ICTs across Sussex. Ashley emphasised the HWB's leadership role in planning for and meeting the population needs of East Sussex which was demonstrated through the discussions at the informal HWB sessions.

19.5 Mark Stainton reiterated that learning from the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme would be shared across East Sussex. He noted the successful rollout of the Johns Hopkins Risk Stratification Tool into all GP practices, which would be a key focus of the Programme. Mark clarified that while the £10 million investment would be retained centrally, local systems would be expected to use their own resources to deliver the programme.

19.6 Councillor Ballard raised concerns about smoking as a key driver of health inequalities. Mark Stainton confirmed that ICTs had a 20-30% flexibility in funding to tailor interventions to local needs and noted smoking cessation as a priority in Hastings as an example. There were plans for a "Making Every Contact Count" approach across health and care professionals as an opportunity to raise awareness of public health initiatives, including smoking cessation.

19.7 Stephen Lightfoot stressed the importance of place-based governance and the HWB's central role in this. He noted health inequalities and disparities in healthy life expectancy across the county and the need to ensure resourcing for ICTs to provide targeted interventions to address local issues. The success of these initiatives would likely be seen over the long term, and consideration was needed as to how short-term progress would be measured.

19.8 Councillor Jobson raised access issues for disabled residents in Hastings, citing limited disabled bays to access the local pharmacy for residents on Bohemia Road, and suggested an audit of disabled bays. Vicky commented on the importance of partnership working at a community level to address these issues, including monitoring via dashboards, and the development of the joint management structure to lead ICTs at the level of frontline delivery in communities.

19.9 The Board RESOLVED to:

1. note the progress in quarter 1 for the East Sussex HWB Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) priorities and plans in 25/26 as set out in Appendix 1;
2. agree the outcomes from the informal HWB development session on reducing health inequalities and measuring the impact of our work as a health and care system, as set out in the summary briefing note contained in Appendix 2;
3. endorse the successful submission from East Sussex to be part of the Government's National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, and our collective delivery of the programme starting in September 25 focussed on Hastings and Rother; and
4. endorse the HWB's leadership role in supporting the development of the new neighbourhood health plan, in line with further guidance that is expected from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and NHS England (NHSE), and aligning with the 5-year organisation plans for the NHS.

20. PHARMACEUTICAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT

20.1 Graham Evans, Head of Public Health Intelligence, presented the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA), outlining its purpose, methodology, and key findings and thanking partners on the steering group in the production of the report. Graham confirmed that the PNA, used to assess the adequacy of pharmaceutical services across East Sussex, was used by NHS Sussex to support market entry decisions. Since the last PNA, there had been a national decrease in physical premises, which was also reflected in East Sussex. While provision of community pharmacies in East Sussex was slightly lower than urban areas such as Brighton and Medway, it was higher than similar counties like West Sussex, Kent and Surrey.

20.2 Graham reported that a county-wide resident survey had been conducted to understand usage patterns and satisfaction levels and thanked colleagues for their support to promote the survey. The findings indicated that the public were generally pleased with the availability and quality of pharmaceutical services across East Sussex. The PNA reported that no gaps were identified in the location, availability, or operating hours of pharmaceutical services that would fall below the required minimum standards. The report included recommendations around maintaining service levels, improving public information, and enhancing access via transport and out-of-hours provision.

20.3 Councillor Amanda Jobson enquired about the impact of new housing developments on pharmacy demand and if the provision of pharmacies in new supermarkets would be considered. Graham responded that no current planned developments had triggered the threshold for new provision, but any future changes would be reassessed as part of ongoing monitoring. In terms of new supermarkets, Graham clarified that this was part of the market entry requirement and NHS colleagues would look to the PNA to identify any gaps or potential gaps in provision.

20.4 Stephen Lightfoot thanked Graham for the report and noted that the PNA was a vital tool to ensure pharmacy coverage across the population. Stephen commented that while geographical coverage may be adequate, access in terms of opening hours, particularly evenings and weekends, remained a challenge, especially in rural areas. He emphasised the importance of pharmacies as a point of access for healthcare advice and treatment as part of the Pharmacy First programme and supported the proposal that NHS Sussex should continue to review out of hours services.

20.5 Ashley Scarff added that the PNA was a valuable commissioning tool. The information within the report on out of hours access and rurality were particularly relevant within the context of the NHS 10-Year Plan, which promotes alternative care pathways and a more proactive role

for pharmacies, and informed the Board that there were representatives from community pharmacy in local ICT groups.

20.6 The Board RESOLVED to:

1. approve the 2025 East Sussex Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment attached as Appendix 1; and
2. agree to the publication of the Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment.

21. EAST SUSSEX ALL AGE AUTISM ACTION PLAN

21.1 Sarah Crouch, Strategic Commissioning Manager, introduced the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan which was developed in response to the national autism strategy and shaped through extensive consultation with autistic individuals and families. The Action Plan identified three priority areas for the next three years: health and wellbeing; education; and employment.

21.2 Sarah explained that 26 actions had been identified, with a focus on deliverability and affordability. Year 1 deliverables were underway, including the development of a communication strategy to raise the profile of autism in East Sussex, a review of current autism training, and collaboration with NHS Sussex on the neurodevelopmental pathway programme. Sarah also noted work with colleagues in local authorities across Sussex to share learning and avoid duplication.

21.3 Stephen Lightfoot welcomed the report and acknowledged the significant health inequalities faced by autistic people. He highlighted the importance of raising awareness about available services for autistic people and welcomed plans to do this in the report and asked where this information would be available.

21.4 Sarah responded that a range of resources were already available via the Council Local Offer website, East Sussex One Space, and through an employability brochure. Partners, including district and borough councils, were also delivering a range of services, including a new autism advice service in Lewes and it was part of the Autism Partnership Board's role to promote these further. The training offer was also being reviewed to increase awareness and understanding of autism. Sarah acknowledged that service visibility remained a challenge and confirmed that a communications strategy was in place to address this.

21.5 Stephen suggested that partner organisations should link to these resources from their own websites to ensure consistent messaging and accessibility. Sarah confirmed that ESCC was working with other Sussex councils and NHS Sussex to collaborate and share information about local work and resources.

21.6 Councillor Ungar thanked Sarah for the report and the work it reflected and shared personal experiences of working with autistic adults and noted the historical lack of services and employer understanding of autism. He welcomed the 'all age' approach, highlighting the benefits of a diagnosis for people at all ages, and stressed the importance of staff training to support individuals effectively.

21.7 Sarah agreed that increasing awareness and understanding of autism was a key priority of the Autism Partnership Board and noted that the Council was focusing on internal training as a starting point for this. There was also a national NHS delivered training programme called the Oliver McGowan programme. Sarah expressed a desire for all businesses to develop autism awareness.

21.8 Councillor Jobson referenced her visit to Hastings College, where many young people were enrolled in special needs courses, and emphasised the need to empower young people and ensure they feel supported and valued. Sarah agreed with the need to enhance the benefits that young people with autism could bring to employment.

21.9 Councillor Ballard raised concerns about transitions from primary to secondary education and into employment, noting that primary schools often managed autism well but challenges arose later and asked what more was needed to be done in secondary schools. Councillor Ballard also enquired whether VCSE sector training could support autistic people into employment and whether the strategy addressed broader neurodiversity.

21.10 In response, Sarah acknowledged that primary schools often benefited from smaller communities and more inclusive adaptive practices. She confirmed that transitions were a known challenge and that more work was needed in secondary schools to minimise gaps in support. Sarah clarified that while the strategy focused on autism, which aligned with a national autism strategy, many of its actions supported the wider neurodivergent community. Sarah welcomed the suggestion to involve VCSE organisations in employment support and confirmed that this would be explored further.

21.11 Carolyn Fair, Director of Children's Services, acknowledged that primary schools, due to their size, provided more opportunities to support inclusion, but noted that national inclusion efforts were underway in secondary schools and that a forthcoming government white paper was expected to outline key policy changes in this area.

21.12 Veronica Kirwan offered to connect Sarah with the Voluntary Action Alliance to support the employment strand of the strategy.

21.13 Mark Stainton described the strategy as critical for many residents and families noting that it encompassed 'all age' and 'all agency' across sectors, including education, business, health, and care, and was informed by autistic people. The support of the HWB was valued, and progress updates would be included on the work programme. Mark agreed with the importance of aligning communication and ensuring that all agencies were pointing in the same direction to raise awareness of autism, and to signpost to support. Mark requested that the HWB support the strategy and action plan and agree to receive an update in 12 months' time.

21.14 The Chair noted the importance of this work and emphasised the HWB's role in supporting this where needed.

21.15 The Board RESOLVED to:

1. acknowledge the development of the East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan and the priorities within it which were identified through significant engagement and consultation with local autistic people and stakeholders (section 2 and Appendix 1);
2. agree the proposal for an annual report to be presented to the East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board to update on progress (paragraph 2.6); and
3. note the progress made to deliver year 1 priorities during the five months since the Action Plan was launched (section 3).

22. WORK PROGRAMME

22.1 Mark Stainton introduced the work programme, noting a full agenda for the December meeting. Mark confirmed that the next deep dive session would focus on mental health and the development of the new planning framework.

22.2 The Chair thanked members for their contributions and reflected on the breadth and complexity of the reports presented and acknowledged the challenges ahead.

23. ANY OTHER ITEMS PREVIOUSLY NOTIFIED UNDER AGENDA ITEM 4

The meeting ended at 3.33 pm.

Councillor Keith Glazier, OBE (Chair)

Report to: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 9 December 2025

By: Director of Joint Commissioning and Integrated Community Teams Development (East Sussex), NHS Sussex and Director of Adult Social Care and Health, East Sussex County Council

Title: Integration programme update

Purpose of Report: To provide an update of progress with the East Sussex priorities in the Sussex Shared Delivery Plan in quarter 2 25/26, and an update on our collaboration and integrated working to develop neighbourhood health.

Recommendations:

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) is recommended to:

1. **Note** the progress in quarter 2 for the East Sussex HWB Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) priorities and plans in 25/26 as set out in **Appendix 1**;
2. **Endorse** the early initiation work that has taken place as part of the Government's National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, focussed on Hastings and Rother;
3. **Note** the expected content of the new neighbourhood health plan that will be developed under the leadership of HWBs for 26/27, and that guidance is awaited from the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC); and
4. **Note and endorse** revised Better Care Fund (BCF) metrics that reflect updated impacts and plans to support delivery of the SDP as set out in **Appendix 2**.

1. Background

1.1 The Government's new [10 Year Health Plan for England: fit for the future](#) (10YHP) was published in July 25. It set out plans to reinvent the NHS based on three shifts as the core components of a new care model:

- from hospital to community
- from analogue to digital
- from treating sickness to prevention

1.2 The shift from hospital to community care is driving the development of a 'neighbourhood health service', which aims to bring care into local communities, organise professionals into patient-centred teams, and reduce fragmentation. In Sussex, this is being implemented through Integrated Community Teams (ICTs), with East Sussex ICTs aligned to our five borough and district boundaries.

1.3 To support a whole health and care system approach to neighbourhood health, the 10YHP introduced an expectation that a new 'neighbourhood health plan' will be drawn up under the leadership of the HWB. East Sussex has also been successful in applying to participate in the first wave of the National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme (NNHIP) - focussed on Hastings and Rother - to support delivery of the shift from hospital to community.

1.4 These national developments align with our joint vision for a healthier Sussex, as outlined in the 5-year [Sussex Integrated Care Strategy Improving Lives Together \(2022\)](#), including the goal of more integrated community working through ICTs. Building on the [East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board Strategy Healthy Lives, Healthy People \(2022 – 2027\)](#) and insights from the East Sussex [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) a 5-year [Shared Delivery Plan](#) (SDP) was agreed by partners in June 2023 and is updated annually to support this vision.

1.5 Our wider context involves major system change. The 10YHP reforms the NHS operating model, including changes to Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) and a new national ICB blueprint. As reported at the last meeting of the HWB, NHS Sussex ICB is clustering with NHS Surrey ICB ahead of a planned merger in April 2026. In line with the national mandate, the merged ICB will have roughly 50% fewer staff, and will cover a larger area and focusing on strategic commissioning to improve population health.

1.6 This report provides a brief update on our Place delivery plans, and shares progress on our collaborative work in East Sussex to support the development of neighbourhood health.

2 Supporting information

East Sussex HWB SDP progress in 25/26

2.1 A brief summary of our progress with our year 3 East Sussex HWB SDP objectives during quarter 2 (1 July – 30 September 25) is summarised in **Appendix 1**. It covers the following areas of collaboration:

- **Health outcomes improvement** – implementing whole-system health action plans covering cardiovascular and respiratory disease, healthy ageing, frailty, and mental health.
- **Strengthening the role and vision of the HWB** and our East Sussex Health and Care partnership across East Sussex by aligning partnerships, focusing on shared priorities, and deepening understanding of population health needs.
- **Children and young people** - enhancing support for families to ensure the best start in life and effectively implement service improvements to boost the health, wellbeing, and life chances of children and young people.
- **Mental health** - improving community mental health services through developing Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams and expanding early support for adults and people with dementia.
- **Integrated Community Teams (ICTs) and neighbourhood health** - developing and delivering neighbourhood health and care through Integrated Community Teams focused on proactive, joined-up care for complex and vulnerable people.
- **Improving hospital discharge** - enhancing hospital discharge processes using digital tools, improved planning, and long-term funding arrangements
- **Health, housing and care** - creating a partnership Housing Strategy linking housing, health, and care, and strengthening collaboration across East Sussex.

2.2 A summary of the last HWB development session was shared in September, and all session briefings to date are now published on the JSNA website [JSNA: Health and Wellbeing Board briefing notes 2025](#). The penultimate session on Mental Health and Wellbeing was postponed to enable attendance from subject matter experts across our system. It is now being planned for 7 January 2026 to enable it to take place before the final scheduled session on 12 February 2026. If in the event we are unable to successfully re-schedule the session in January we will plan in a further final development session in the March – April time frame.

Integrated Community Teams (ICTs) and Neighbourhood Health

2.3 We have continued to develop the infrastructure to support shared leadership of

neighbourhood health and care in our 5 ICT footprints (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes district, Rother and Wealden):

- All five ICT leadership groups **have met face-to-face every two months since January 2025**, under agreed terms of reference focused on joint planning based on local needs. Despite some capacity-related variability, overall engagement and attendance has been good across all system partners
- **All groups have now nominated local Chairs**, with some using a co-chair model. ICT Chairs are now invited to the East Sussex Place Delivery Board to support alignment with our shared health and care system priorities.
- Each group is **co-producing a joint work plan** that sets out opportunities for local collaboration in relation to local population health and care challenges and alignment with system priorities.
- Hastings and Rother have shifted to **monthly meetings** to support the move from planning to delivery as part of the national programme, and the other groups are also considering this. Each group also uses a dedicated Teams channel for communication between meetings.
- Each group completed a **self-assessment using an NHS England Southeast maturity matrix** to identify development needs. A Sussex organisational development support offer has been created to aid multi-agency leadership team development, with sessions being planned for the new year.

2.4 A key focus is implementing multi-disciplinary teams (MDTs) working at neighbourhood level within our ICT footprints, to deliver more proactive care for people with high and ongoing complex health and social care needs, initially focussed on older and frail people and those with multiple long term health conditions aged over-65. The first step is using a risk stratification tool to identify groups of people with similar needs where we can have the greatest impact through a better coordinated proactive approach. The aim is then to establish more holistic closer multi-disciplinary team-working around these groups.

2.5 Improved outcomes for individuals include greater independence, better quality of life, reduced unnecessary hospital stays, and a better experience of integrated care and end of life support. Over time, through delivering more coordinated proactive care it is expected that this will lead to less reliance on urgent and unplanned care, and more specialist services.

2.6 Use of the risk stratification tool is now live. Work in the coming weeks will focus on increasing a shared understanding of the people on the lists generated by the tool and starting to shape a more integrated and proactive care offer across primary, community health and social care and other partners. The learning from this initial phase, will be used to progress to those with multiple long-term health conditions and rising risks across wider age-groups.

National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme (NNHIP)

2.7 As reported at the September HWB meeting, East Sussex is now part of the first wave of participants in the new [National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme](#) (NNHIP). This is focussed on Hastings and Rother where we have some of our largest gaps in health outcomes and an ageing population in coastal and rural communities. In summary, to accelerate the implementation and learning needed to shift to a neighbourhood focused health and care model nationwide, the national programme concentrates on three key areas:

- Building capacity and leadership for Neighbourhood Health across local communities
- Shaping the policy and strategy for what Neighbourhood Health looks like in England
- Supporting rapid scale and spread of the NHS and social care working together in a more integrated Neighbourhood Health model. There is flexibility for local areas to design the 'how' to avoid a 'one size fits all' approach

2.8 The first wave of the national programme will focus on multiple health conditions and rising

risks, and is expected to be delivered within existing system resources with much of the work taking place at the local level.

2.9 The initial work in Hastings and Rother has focused on onboarding local partners to the programme, leveraging our existing ICT leadership governance (see paragraph 2.3, above). The national programme coach has attended the local ICT leadership meetings, and participants are engaging with learning opportunities, including national webinars, a peer-to-peer knowledge hub, and a regional workshop held in November.

2.10 We will use the national programme opportunity to build on our early ICT work and accelerate our system plans in Hastings and Rother, establishing MDT working and a proactive care model across GPs, community nurses, hospital doctors, pharmacists, social care, and local voluntary organisations. The initial focus will be on supporting people with multiple conditions and complex needs to reduce hospital visits, prevent complications, and simplify access to care.

Neighbourhood Health Plan development

2.11 As reported at the last HWB meeting, the national 10YHP outlines Place's role in delivering neighbourhood health through developing a local Neighbourhood Health and supporting place-based delivery plans. Led by the HWB, local government, the NHS, and partners - including public health, social care, and the VCSE sector - will collaborate to design and deliver neighbourhood health services.

2.12 At the time of writing, national guidance for developing these plans is still awaited. However, recognising that neighbourhood health involves the NHS, Local Government, and wider partners (including the VCSE) in improving local health and wellbeing, early indications suggest a strategic plan would address the following areas:

- Agreement about neighbourhood footprints aligned to natural communities
- Priority outcomes for places and neighbourhoods (for example including NHS-mandated and locally agreed, BCF,) and services in scope
- Agreement on the development of integrated neighbourhood teams (MDTs) and defined leadership and accountability for delivery

2.13 An operational plan would then outline partnership arrangements for delivery, a timetable for aligning services around neighbourhoods (e.g. PCNs) and implementing integrated teams, and how collective resources are allocated and managed. It would also include plans for developing sustainable leadership of neighbourhood health.

2.14 Once the Guidance is issued, we will develop the East Sussex Neighbourhood Health plan based on existing plans for ICTs in *Improving Lives Together* and our SDP, and the new plans co-produced by the five ICT leadership groups. The recent NHS Sussex ICB commissioning intentions for 2026/27 and the pan-Sussex ICT and neighbourhood health framework will also inform the plan.

2.15 Looking ahead to 2026/27, this may shape other Place delivery plans, our SDP, and the refresh of the HWB Strategy. We are also reviewing East Sussex Health and Care Partnership governance to align better with expectations in the 10YHP and the national neighbourhood health programme. This will support delivery of a new neighbourhood health and care model at the same time as taking into account wider system changes, including ICB reforms and the creation of NHS Surrey and Sussex ICB in April 2026.

Updates to Better Care Fund (BCF) metrics

2.16 The East Sussex BCF provides for a range of services that underpin proactive and preventative care to keep people well, avoiding admissions to hospital and long-term residential care where possible, and to improve discharge and overall system flow within the East Sussex health and care system. Our current BCF plan was approved by the HWB at the meeting in July.

2.17 As reported to the HWB in July, when we agreed our BCF plan at the start of the year we

decided to keep the 24/25 performance targets at their current levels, with the intention of carrying out further work during the year to set and approve more ambitious local improvement goals. NHS England granted conditional approval for our BCF plan, stating that they expected a more ambitious approach to improving performance, given how East Sussex - and Sussex as a whole - currently benchmarks on avoidable admissions and discharge delays. As part of this, they asked us to review and revise our metric targets for quarters 3 and 4 of this year's BCF plan.

2.18 The review has now been undertaken. The revised metrics that reflect updated plans and impacts, in support of delivering our broader SDP objectives for avoidable admissions and discharge delays, are set out in **Appendix 2** for the HWB to note and endorse.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 We are progressing well with our year 3 (25/26) HWB SDP Place delivery plans, including establishing the core leadership infrastructure across East Sussex's five ICTs and developing frontline multidisciplinary teams for proactive care as the foundation for neighbourhood health in East Sussex. Over time, this will help reduce reliance on more costly services and support a sustainable, neighbourhood-based model of integrated care. Our updated BCF plan metrics will also support delivery of our broader SDP objectives for reducing avoidable hospital admissions and delays to discharge.

3.2 Added to this, by taking part in the national neighbourhood health programme and continuing our work in 25/26 to strengthen the HWB's vision and strategic leadership and the role of our East Sussex Health and Care Partnership, we are well-placed to develop a Neighbourhood Health Plan. This plan will support a more joined-up approach to health, care and wellbeing in our communities by better aligning our vision, ambitions and resources for our population.

ASHLEY SCARFF

Director of Joint Commissioning and Integrated Community Teams Development (East Sussex),
NHS Sussex

MARK STANTON

Director of Adult Social Care and Health, East Sussex County Council

Contact Officer

Email: Vicky.smith@eastsussex.gov.uk

Tel: 07827 841063

Appendix 1: Draft progress summary East Sussex HWB high level SDP quarter 2 (25/26)

Appendix 2: BCF Plan excerpt setting out revised BCF metrics

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Appendix 1

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) Shared Delivery Plan (SDP)

Draft progress summary quarter 2 25/26 (1 July – 30 September 2025)

Background

The 5-year Sussex [SDP](#) sets out short-, medium-, and long-term improvement priorities, including Place-based delivery goals for each of the three Health and Wellbeing Boards. Its delivery is supported through joint work between the County Council, the local NHS, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations, Healthwatch, and Borough and District councils - together known as the East Sussex Health and Care Partnership - aimed at improving services and outcomes for the East Sussex population.

Our joint Place delivery priorities for East Sussex have been refreshed for 2025/26 (year 3 of the SDP), and were endorsed by the HWB in July 25. The refreshed priorities align with the national NHS planning guidance for 25/26, and existing pan-Sussex SDP priorities and work aimed at improving health and care outcomes.

This paper provides a brief summary of our progress with delivering shared priorities in quarter 2 of 2025/26 (1 July – 30 September 2025).

1) Health outcomes improvement

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
<p>We will continue to deliver our agreed whole system action plans on cardiovascular disease (CVD), Chronic Respiratory Disease (CRD), healthy ageing and frailty and mental health prevention, and monitor progress on a quarterly basis through the Health Outcomes Improvement Oversight Board, with a deep dive into one priority area each quarter.</p> <p>We will ensure that the health outcomes improvement and learning are used to inform ICT implementation and address variation in outcomes.</p>	March 26	Improved outcomes for the population
<p>Q2 progress summary</p> <p>All major projects within the Health Outcomes Improvement Programme remain on track to meet year-end milestones. Key activity during Quarter 2 includes:</p> <p>Falls Prevention Campaign - the <i>Stay Strong, Stay Steady, Stay Independent</i> campaign launched during Falls Awareness Week in mid-September. More than 300 adults took part in five events across Hastings, Bexhill and Etchingham. A total of 312 participants received anti-slip slippers along with brief advice on physical activity, strength and balance, and practical tips to reduce the risk of falls.</p> <p>Age-Friendly Communities - collaborative work with Hastings Borough Council and Rother District Council has led to the appointment of new leads to develop their Age Friendly Communities programmes.</p> <p>Respiratory Health Support - funding has been secured to maintain and expand pulmonary maintenance support for Eastbourne Breathe Easy and Bexhill Breathers. This includes two</p>		

additional classes per week. Significant planning has also been completed for respiratory winter-readiness events scheduled for October and November 2025.

Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Prevention - work continues to update the East Sussex CVD prevention plan, with wider input now being gathered from system partners.

Mental Health Peer Support - ongoing work is strengthening the evidence base for peer-support approaches for people experiencing mental health challenges in East Sussex. This includes reviewing the effectiveness of peer-support interventions and engaging with stakeholders to better understand existing peer-support offers across a range of local settings.

2) Role and vision of the Health and Wellbeing Board

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
<p>We will continue to strengthen the strategic stewardship role and vision of the Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) through completing our programme of development sessions aimed at growing a deeper shared understanding of our population health and care needs and strengths, and understanding how well we are working together as a system to improve outcomes.</p> <p>Building on the work on system stewardship in 24/25, we will ensure our East Sussex Health and Care Partnership is operating effectively across our system at Place, with accountability to the HWB for our strategic planning and operational collaboration in our local communities.</p>	March 26	A clear focus and approach across all partners.
<p>Q2 progress summary</p> <p>The fifth informal HWB development session, held on 25 September, focused on reducing health inequalities and assessing impact using the East Sussex Shared Outcomes Framework. During the session, a pilot report covering 28 outcome measures was presented. These indicators and measures have since been updated to support an initial report based on the most recent reporting period.</p> <p>A summary briefing from the session is available on East Sussex in Figures – Data Observatory – JSNA – JSNA: Health and Wellbeing Board briefing notes</p> <p>Progress on the planned review of Place-based Partnership governance has been affected by wider Integrated Care Board (ICB) staffing reductions and a delay to the restructure aligned with the model blueprint, due to concerns about in-year costs. In the interim, work has focused on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the national 10-Year Health Plan, published in July, to clarify expectations for the role of Place and HWBs • Successfully securing a place in the National Neighbourhood Health Programme • Providing a comprehensive response to the ICB's 2026/27 commissioning intentions consultation <p>The review and redesign of our Place-based health and care governance will now take place during 2026/27 to ensure it remains fit for purpose, with implementation planned to begin from January 2026.</p>		

3) Children and young people

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
We will continue to enhance support to parents and carers and families to enable the best start in life and ensure service improvements, including pathway and service redesign, are effectively implemented to improve the health and wellbeing and life chances of children and young people.	March 26	Improved experience and increased opportunities to support our most vulnerable families.
Q2 progress summary <p>All milestones remain on track to meet objectives by year-end, and key activity during Quarter 2 includes:</p> <p>Neurodevelopmental Pathways - A pilot is being developed of a streamlined approach to assessing ADHD and autism, aimed at improving assessments. This complements work with families and stakeholders to co-produce the Support Whilst Waiting information, to ensure children and young people have access to helpful guidance while they await assessments.</p> <p>Children's Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health - Efforts are underway to standardise information, advice, and guidance (IAG) to help young people and their families access the right support while waiting for services. Additionally, the Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) are being evaluated to understand their impact and identify ways to improve service delivery.</p> <p>Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) - implementing improvements identified in the ASEND inspection and progressing SEND reforms so that children with additional needs receive timely, coordinated, and high-quality support across education and health services.</p> <p>Children in Care and Care Leavers - delivering an action plan that reviews current health services for children in care and care leavers and identifies gaps in provision, to ensure that vulnerable young people have equitable access to the health support they need.</p> <p>Physical Health - our physical health priorities use the Core20plus5 approach for children and young people to target key areas such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, oral health, and mental health. The current focus includes early years (0-3 age-group) dental access, including prevention pilots and the supervised toothbrushing project, alongside efforts to raise awareness and promote these initiatives across services.</p>		

4) Mental health

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
We will implement integrated delivery of community mental health services and a wider range of earlier mental health support for adults of all ages and people with dementia, through delivering functional Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams (NMHTs) and ensuring their alignment with emerging Integrated Community Teams, in line with the Sussex-wide approach, as well as improving access and outcomes in supported accommodation and capitalising on opportunities presented by the planned opening of the new Coombe Valley Hospital.	March 26	Reduced reliance on specialist services and improved population health and wellbeing
Q2 progress summary		

Neighbourhood Mental Health Teams (NMHTs) - staff training has started to enable use of the shared patient record system, which is planned to go live in Q3. This will be supported by a Standard Operating Procedure which has been developed and agreed, outlining team and individual responsibilities for achieving clinical and system outcomes within the new multi-disciplinary teams working at neighbourhood level.

Housing - KPIs are being developed, including benchmarking against neighbouring local authorities, to better understand how collaboration between clinicians and supported housing providers can reduce placement breakdowns.

Mental Health and Prevention - work is underway to implement recommendations of our report into preventing trauma-related mental health difficulties and impacts in East Sussex, including developing a Trauma-Informed Framework in partnership with key leads working across Sussex.

Evidence is being gathered to clarify the role and contribution of peer support in the prevention or worsening of mental health problems, and recovery.

Older People's Mental Health - Evidence reviews on risk factors, dementia prevention, carers, care homes, and mental health literacy have been completed, and a survey of primary care providers is underway to inform improvements to assessment and support pathways for older people's mental health.

5) Integrated community teams (ICTs)

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
We will support the move to a neighbourhood health service that delivers more care at or closer to home through our five Integrated Community Teams (ICTs) across East Sussex. In line with ICTs across Sussex, this will focus on providing proactive, joined-up care for people who require support from multiple services and organisations; improved access to local health and care services and, improving the health and wellbeing of our population through an asset-based approach.	March 26	In year plan delivered.
<p>Q2 progress summary</p> <p>East Sussex was successful in coordinating a multi-agency collaborative bid to join wave 1 of National Neighbourhood Health Implementation Programme, an opportunity launched in July 2025 following publication of the Government's 10 Year Health Plan. The programme is initially focussed on Hastings and Rother.</p> <p>Our joint ICT Management & Planning Groups have continued to meet bi-monthly across our 5 ICT footprints, to grow our capacity to support shared day-to-day management, planning and coordination of our system resources at ICT level, with good attendance from across system partners. Discussions have enabled a better shared understanding of the ICB commissioning intentions for 26/27 which were published in August 2026, and the potential role and contribution of ICTs, as well as developing their joint work plans focussed on improving access, prevention and MDT-working</p> <p>Working with the Sussex NHS Neighbourhood Alliance - which brings together East Sussex Healthcare NHST Trust, Sussex Community NHS Foundation Trust, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust and the Sussex Primary Care Provider Collaborative - we've supported the initial work to implement multi-disciplinary working for people with more complex health and care needs in East Sussex.</p> <p>This aims to provide better coordinated and joined-up care to those identified by a risk stratification tool as having a high risk of unplanned hospital admission and establishing MDT-</p>		

working at a neighbourhood level to provide a more holistic and proactive care offer over the winter period.

6) Improving hospital discharge

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
We will continue to embed efficiency and process learning from transformation programmes into 'business as usual' to further strengthen efficient hospital discharge processes, supported by digital automation, with a long-term funding plan for discharge capacity	March 26	More people will be able to be discharged safely to a community setting.
Q2 progress summary <p>The system has continued to work together to make hospital discharges smoother and reduce the number of patients staying in our acute hospital beds longer than needed, due to having complex onward health and care needs. Funding for improvements to hospital discharge is now fully a part of the Better Care Fund, supporting Home First pathways and Discharge to Assess beds, with a small portion set aside to maintain flexibility, particularly during winter.</p> <p>For the first half of 2025/26, initiatives have included support to keep patients more active in hospital, creating care coordination hubs, deploying Social Work Teams to support discharge pathways, and providing dedicated support for people who pay for their own care. These collaborative efforts have successfully reduced the number of patients staying in hospital unnecessarily. Continued success will depend on having enough community beds, suitable post-hospital support, and managing seasonal pressures like winter illnesses.</p>		

7) Housing, health and care

East Sussex HWB SDP priority	Date	What we will achieve
We will finalise, agree and implement our shared vision for the housing sector in East Sussex set out in the East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy and mobilisation plan, with a strong focus on health, housing and care as part of a strategic partnership framework that complements the borough and district housing authority strategies.	March 26	A clear ambition for all partners
Q2 progress summary <p>Work is ongoing to finalise the East Sussex Housing Partnership Strategy, which was publicly consulted on during July - August 2025 via an online survey. The strategy aligns local housing authority plans and aims to strengthen partnership working amid devolution and local government reorganisation. The recent public sector spending review announced support for affordable housing, improved standards, and homelessness prevention, with local funding details expected in autumn.</p> <p>The Housing Partnership has reviewed feedback from the public engagement on the draft strategy over the summer. In summary stakeholders broadly support increasing affordable housing, particularly smaller units, and ensuring commitments are met, alongside bringing empty properties back into use and including green spaces in new developments. Concerns focus on infrastructure capacity, impacts on greenfield land, local authority ability to manage standards, and the need for consistent housing quality. There is strong support for homelessness prevention,</p>		

and ensuring people can keep their existing homes, and for better coordination between homelessness, mental health, and substance dependency services.

A Housing Partnership response has also been coordinated and submitted to the national consultation on a reformed decent homes standard for social and privately rented homes, social rent convergence and minimum energy performance standards.

Appendix 2

Excerpt from the BCF plan setting out revised BCF metrics

1) Emergency admissions to hospital for people aged over 65 per 100,000 population

Our current performance target is 1,421 improving to 1,292 admissions per 100,000 of the population for people aged over 65, this equates to an average of 1,958 admissions a month. The revised metric target reflects the measures agreed within the Sussex health and care system Winter Plan to reduce avoidable admissions through proactive care and MDT coordination. We have submitted to NHSE a monthly average of 2,047 improving to 1,861 admissions per 100,000 which equates to an average of 1,919 admissions a month, a 2% improvement.

The review of this metric has been undertaken in line with national guidance and reflects the Sussex winter plan. The plan includes delivering alternatives to hospital admission, such as redirection into community-based care, and senior decision-making at the 'front door'. This supports the Shared Delivery Plan priority of reducing A&E attendances and improving demand management.

The revisions reflect the plan objectives that include supporting our population to stay well and ensure we have proactive care in place for those most at risk through the following action:

- Improving vaccination rates, including health care professionals
- Proactive identification and care planning for patients with highest needs (including care/nursing home residents)
- Proactive approach to support patients at risk of respiratory illness
- Improving Flow through intermediate care services
- Increased utilisation of virtual health solutions.

There is work in progress towards a higher-level ambition and improving trajectory through further improvements sought for 2026/27.

2) Average length of discharge delay

Our current target is 81.6% of patients are discharged on their 'discharge ready date' (DRD). For patients with a delayed discharge this will be an average of 10.37 days giving an overall average for all patients of 1.91 days average length of discharge delay. Our revised metric target submitted to NHSE is 81.7% of patients are discharged on their DRD. For patients with a delayed discharge this will be an average of 10.0 days giving an overall average for all patients of 1.83 days average length of discharge delay. This improvement reflects the East Sussex health and care system, and Sussex system partners' agreed plans to improve discharge performance for the benefit of all patients through 2025/26.

Sussex health and care organisations have been part of the national NHS England (NHSE) and Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) Discharge oversight since early 2023. This initiative has involved regular meetings with the Discharge Admissions Group (DAG) to review progress, discuss improvements, and explore learnings from other areas. This review has provided us with critical challenge to our approach, and improvement plans that were presented are reflected in the revised trajectories shown.

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Report to: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 9 December 2025

By: Detective Chief Superintendent Richard McDonagh, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police Service, East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Chair and Delegated Safeguarding Partner

Title: East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024/25

Purpose of Report: To advise East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board members of the multi-agency arrangements in place to safeguard children in East Sussex

Recommendations:

East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to receive and consider the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report for 2024-25.

1. Background

- 1.1 [Working Together to Safeguard Children](#) 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 In response to Working Together 2023, the Lead Safeguarding Partners (LSPs), Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), and partnership members developed, and subsequently updated, the [ESSCP Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements \(MASA December 2024\)](#).
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 The 2024/25 ESSCP Annual Report focuses on partnership leadership, learning, oversight and assurance.

2. Supporting information

- 2.1 The ESSCP Annual Report 2024/25 outlines the work undertaken by the partnership, highlighting key learning and achievements in section 2, which includes:
 - Two multi-agency Rapid Reviews conducted in response to serious incidents; two Rapid Review briefings published and 'Learning from Serious Safeguarding Incidents' sessions held. One Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR) published. Three completed LCSPRs awaiting publication due to pending family engagement and Home Office sign-off.
 - 694 multi-agency staff attended 49 training courses. 100% of evaluations returned rated courses as Excellent or Good. During Safeguarding Fortnight in November 2024, an additional 250 multi-agency staff members attended across 7 learning sessions.

- Three multi-agency audits held, which focussed on the quality and robustness of response to children presenting at A&E due to deliberate self-harm; intra-familial child sexual abuse and a regular case file audit of recent safeguarding cases.
 - Significant development of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements with the education and voluntary sector.
 - Additional safeguarding projects covering topics such as information sharing, online safety, and social care transformation.
- 2.2 Section 5 of the annual report sets out how the partnership's collaborative leadership and clear accountability have enabled effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements that:
- Ensure that there are arrangements in place for effective independent scrutiny.
 - Develop and deliver local business plan priorities.
 - Address and escalate strategic and operational multi-agency barriers.
 - Promote and embed a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge.
 - Ensure all relevant local agencies are engaged with the partnership and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.
- 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 details the oversight and assurance of the ESSCP to ensure the effectiveness of safeguarding practice, which it does through evidence-based auditing, performance management, and self-analysis.
- 2.5 The ESSCP Annual Report 2024/25 and an Executive Summary has been published on the [ESSCP website](#), and a copy of the published report shared with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Unit (DfE) as per 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 East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board is requested to receive and consider the ESSCP Annual Report 2024/25 and to note the partnership arrangements in place and the continuing agreed 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.

Contact Officer

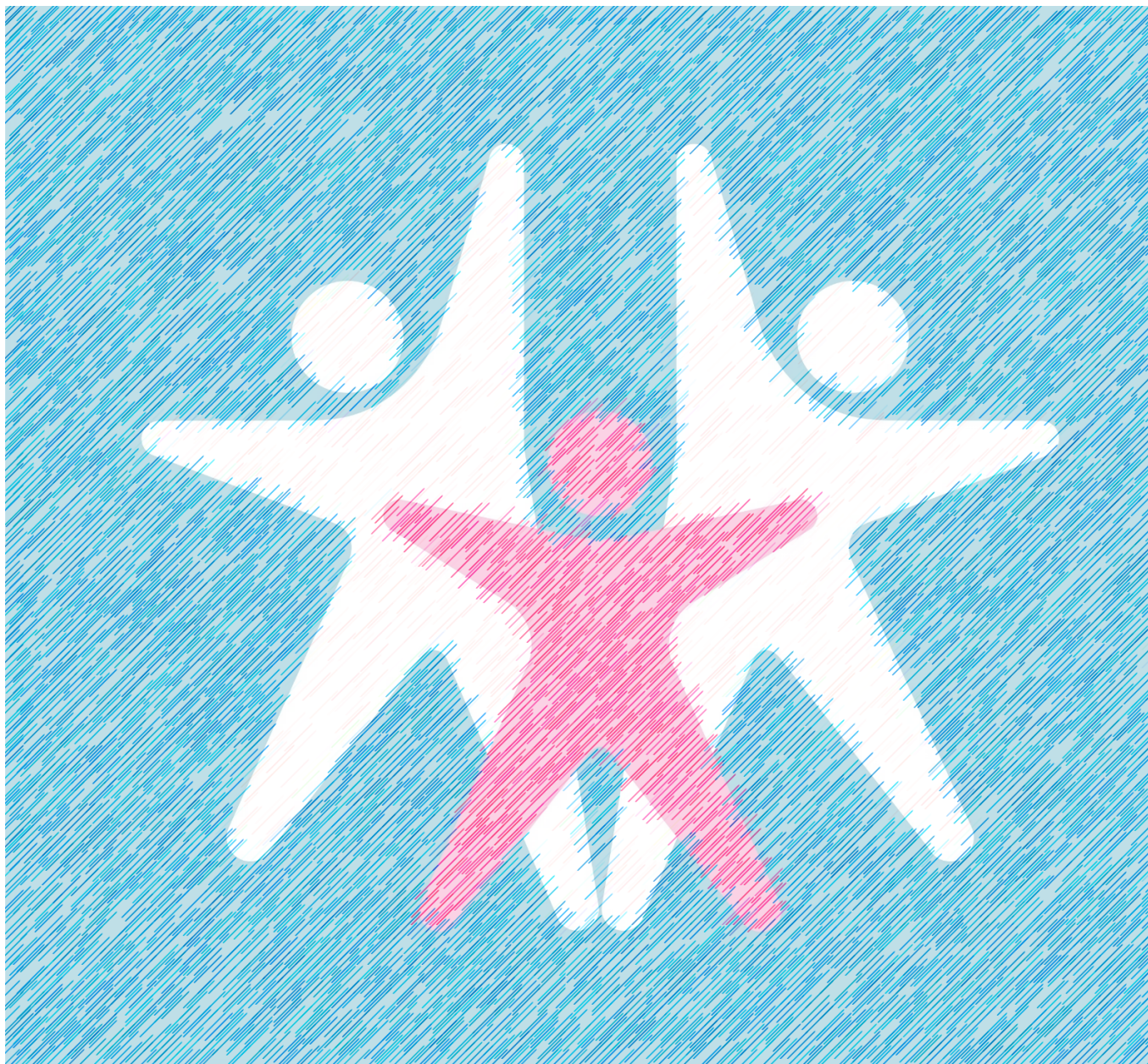
Louise MacQuire-Plows, ESSCP Manager

Email: louise.macquire-plows@eastsussex.gov.uk

Appendix 1: ESSCP Annual Report 2024-25

Appendix 2: ESSCP Annual Report 2024-25 Executive Summary

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East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership Annual Report 2024-2025

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Foreword

We are delighted to present the 2024-25 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, the challenges the children's safeguarding system faces 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.

Through promoting professional curiosity across the multi-agency workforce and ensuring the lived experience of the child is recognised, we strive to keep children at the centre of our thinking and delivery at all levels.

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

**Chief Executive Officer, NHS
Sussex (Sussex Integrated Care
Board)**



Chief Constable Jo Shiner

Sussex Police

1. Introduction

Welcome to the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership 2024-25 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.

Since we published our revised pan Sussex and local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, in response to Working Together 2023, we have developed and strengthened several areas of the partnership. Education partners are now fully embedded in the partnership, and robust risk analysis and decision making at the right levels are effective in identifying emerging challenges and responding as a multi-agency group.

The partnership delivers and supports extensive activities to meet statutory requirements and support positive outcomes for children. Throughout this report you will see the evidence and impact of these endeavours.

In 2025-26 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, with the use of ‘Young Scrutineers’. We are also actively developing our engagement with Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise organisations.

A priority for the remainder of 2025 is to respond to challenges of the Sussex Integrated Care Board reconfiguration, how local partners will support the implementation of national reforms, and the further development of our scrutiny programme.

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**



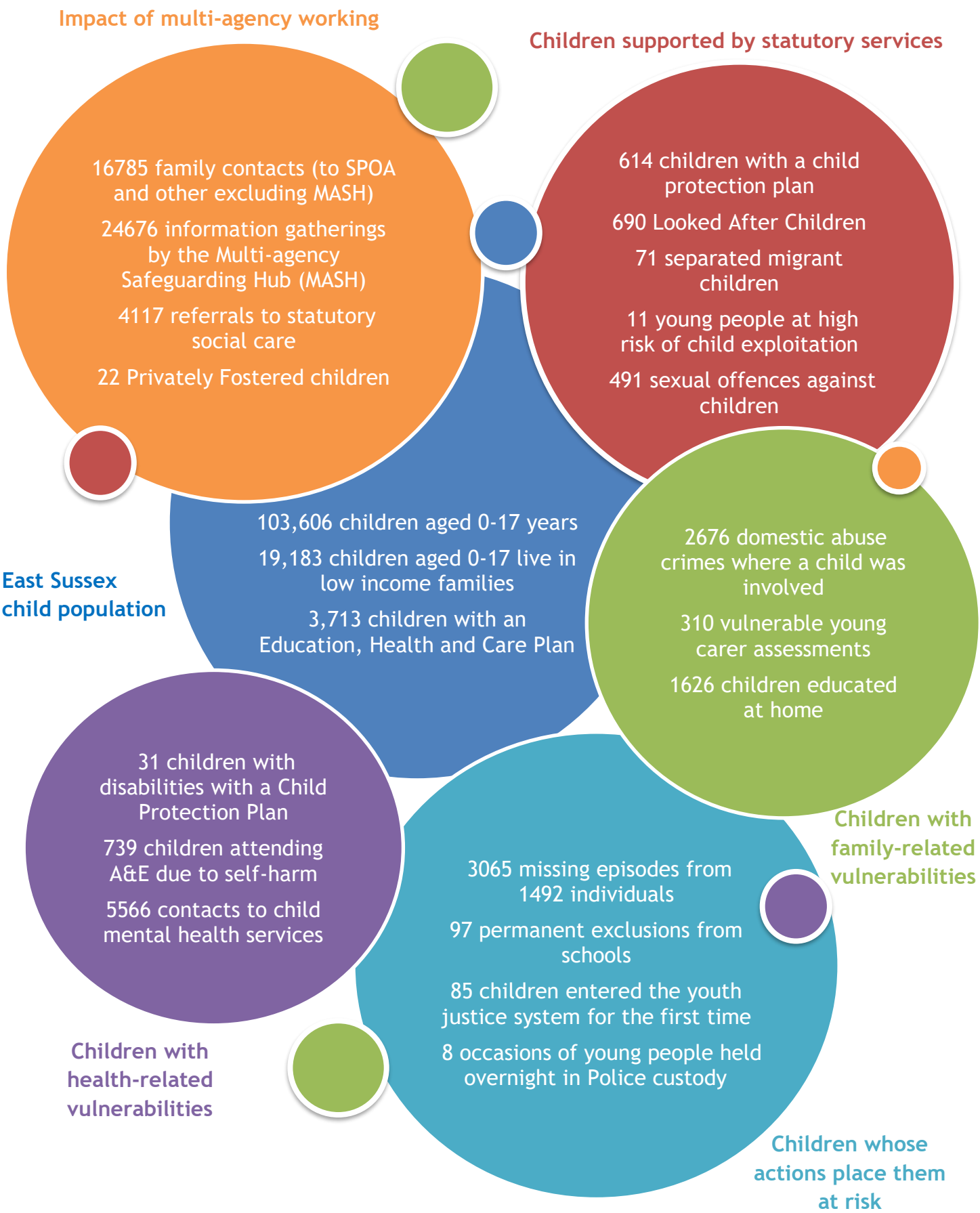
Richard McDonagh

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

2. Key Learning & Achievements 2024-25



3a. Safeguarding Context 2024-25



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

3b. Safeguarding Context - Rapid Reviews 2020-2025

March 2020 to
March 2025:
22 Rapid Reviews
undertaken
9 LCSPRs initiated

A total of 39 children are the
subjects of the 22 Rapid
Reviews.

56% male, 44% female.

Under 2-year-olds represent
28% of all children.

Primary types of abuse recorded in
Rapid Reviews:

non-accidental infant injuries
(fractures and/or head trauma)
featured in 8 of the cases,
followed by;

- neglect (4)
- domestic violence (3)
- suicide (3)
- sexual abuse (2)
- criminal and/or sexual exploitation (2)

**Safeguarding Learning
themes:**

Parental conflict
Poor parental mental
health
Parental substance misuse
Hard to reach families

System Learning themes:

Lack of whole family
approach
Procedures not followed
Professional curiosity
Information sharing
Private proceedings

**Safeguarding Learning
themes:**

Hidden children (EHE and
children missing education)
Mental health
Sexual harm
Child to parent abuse/violence
Non-accidental injury
Cumulative risk of harm -
neglect and domestic violence

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

From September 2024 the statutory safeguarding partners across Sussex (NHS Sussex ICB, Sussex Police, West Sussex County Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, and East Sussex County Council) agreed a partnership structure with the following components:

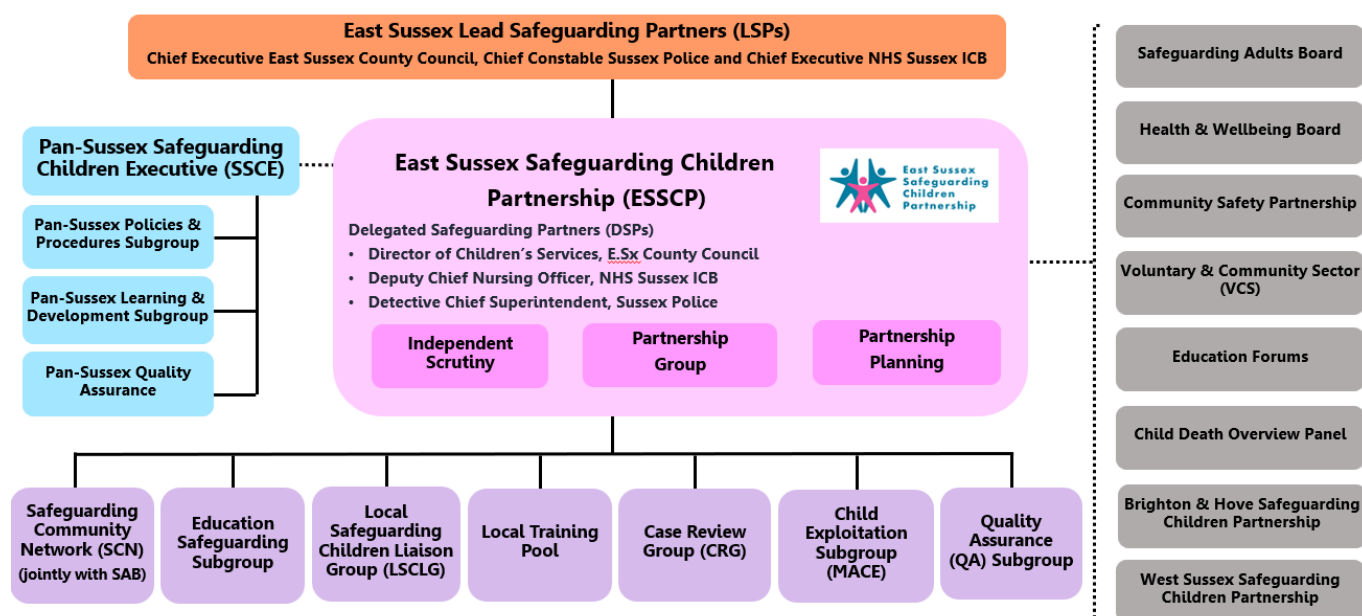
- (i) **A single Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE)** responsible for determining multi-agency safeguarding strategy and agreeing models for multi-agency working to safeguard children and young people. The Executive meets at least twice yearly and includes the Delegated Safeguarding Partners from across Sussex. The SSCE determines the regional strategic approach to all issues requiring multi-agency safeguarding action, including responses to reports published by the child safeguarding practice review panel (National Panel). The SSCE can request assurance from partners agencies, if required, that resource allocation meets the needs of children and secures effective discharge of their statutory duties.
- (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 Groups. Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs) report annually to the Sussex Lead Safeguarding Partners, meeting together as a group to review the effectiveness of arrangements across Sussex. The relevant DSP is the formal Partnership Chair.
- (iii) **Three local area Partnership Groups** which support the work of each LSCP, chaired by the Partnership Chair. These groups replaced the Boards and Steering Groups held under previous arrangements. The broad membership of the Partnership Groups is consistent across Sussex comprising representatives of local statutory, education, voluntary and community sector organisations.

More details on multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (MASA) across Sussex can be found in the ESSCP published arrangements here: [ESSCP Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements](#)

East Sussex arrangements

The ESSCP's area-based core partnership functions are: providing **leadership** to all safeguarding partners by promoting a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge; promoting and embedding a culture of continuous **learning** which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice; and providing **oversight & assurance** on single agency and multi-agency safeguarding practice.

The below structure sets out how the ESSCP supports the delivery of these key functions:



Partnership Group is chaired by the Partnership Chair, who for 2024/25, is the Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police. The Partnership Group meets twice a year and includes the Delegated Safeguarding Partners (DSPs), the ESSCP Lay Members and relevant agencies (full list of board members is included in Appendix B). The Partnership Group provides a forum to support and enable local agencies and organisations to work together in a system where:

- There is a shared understanding of safeguarding practice in East Sussex
- Safeguarding assurance is promoted at single agency and multi-agency levels
- Learning and improvement is promoted through a reflective approach to bring change

Partnership Planning is also chaired by the Partnership Chair and meets twice a year. The Planning Planning'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. The DSPs (and their representatives), Education Safeguarding subgroup Chairs, Case Review Group Chair and Business Managers attend Partnership Planning.

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. New subgroups for 2024/25 are the Education Safeguarding Subgroup and Safeguarding Community Network joint group with the Safeguarding Adults Board.

Until September 2024 the ESSCP had an Independent Chair that delivered '**independent scrutiny**' for the partnership. Between March - July 2024, in partnership with the ESSCP business unit, the Independent Chair consulted with partnership agencies on what independent scrutiny should look like in the new MASA from September 2024. Further details on ESSCP independent scrutiny can be found in Chapter 5 (Leadership).

Development in the East Sussex multi-agency safeguarding arrangements in 2024/25 include:

- establishment of Education Safeguarding Subgroup to maximise the voice of education partners
- merger of the Safeguarding Adults Board Safeguarding Community Network group with ESSCP Voluntary, Charity, Social Enterprise representatives to form an 'all age' group
- development of the pan Sussex Learning & Development and Quality Assurance functions
- development of Lay Members - establishing Lay Member network across Sussex
- pan Sussex section 11 scrutiny completed by independent scrutineer

Further development in 2025/26 to include:

- strengthen both local and pan Sussex Quality Assurance arrangements
- strengthen independent scrutiny - including the appointment of young scrutineers
- embedding the 'all age' Safeguarding Community Network group

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.

When the MASA arrangements were initially published in September 2024, and then the final version in December 2024, there was agreement from the LSPs and DSPs that they will be reviewed annually and take in to account any future updates to Working Together to Safeguard Children.

A pan Sussex evaluation of the pan Sussex and local MASA's will take place in quarter four 2025/26. This evaluation will be undertaken by an external scrutineer, and the partnership Lay Members, with the intention of using the Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding (MACS) Evaluation Framework developed by The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP). This framework provides a method of structured self-reflection on the effectiveness of LSCP operations across:

- Leadership

- Accountability
- Participation
- Collaboration
- Culture

The ESSCP MASA will be refreshed with the outcome of the evaluation and reported in the 2025/06 Annual Report.

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.

More information about the current priorities can be found in Chapter 5 (Leadership).

Looking forward, the DSPs and wider ESSCP partner agencies, will continue to work collaboratively to focus on the complexities of transformation in relation to government reforms. A priority will be to consider the risks and opportunities brought by significant national changes, including NHS reform, Families First Partnership Programme, Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, SEND reform and Devolution.

The ESSCP will focus on building on the stable children's safeguarding system in East Sussex to respond to the changes required, whilst maintaining a robust service to local children and families. Extensive multi-agency work has already been undertaken on a transformation plan to ensure that the development and implementation of transformation in East Sussex is a shared endeavour that's makes a positive difference to children and families. DSPs monitor the progress of this work via the ESSCP Risk Register and pan Sussex oversight is provided via the Pan-Sussex Strategic Transformation Group.

4.5 Pan Sussex Working

Following the introduction of the pan Sussex Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA 2024) local Learning & Development subgroups were replaced in September 2024 by the **pan Sussex Learning and Development (L&D) subgroup**. This regional subgroup provides strategic oversight to enable us to work collectively across Sussex to maximise our wide-ranging expertise and resources to best safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and families.

The subgroup monitors multi-agency training and encourages a learning culture to support multi-agency local services to reflect, respond and implement changes to practice. The subgroup is currently chaired by the ICB Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children and is accountable to the Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE). Each local Partnership is still required to provide high quality, up to date safeguarding training to enable practitioners to keep safeguarding at the centre of their work.

Activity from the pan Sussex Learning & Development subgroup in 2024/25 include:

- Development of a pan Sussex Learning & Development Strategy and Delegation of Task process.
- Increase in the pan Sussex training offer, multi-agency conferences and briefings to share learning across the Sussex footprint and gain resource efficiencies.
- Adopting a joint training charging policy to ensure equity and accessibility across Sussex for both statutory and non-statutory organisations.
- Refresh of the safer sleep campaign from 2023, with a follow up 'Every sleep must be a safer sleep' campaign in summer 2024. Safer Sleep courses are available throughout the year for practitioners as a part of the pan Sussex Learning & Development Programme.
- Support for public health messaging, including; Sea/water safety, Beach safety and safer bathtimes with reminders of the risks of drowning, scalds and poisoning.

Further development in 2025/26 to include:

- Develop an approach to evidence impact of training on practice through evaluation
- Consider the value of a pan Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership website to optimise efficiency and consistence
- Develop local and Sussex wide communication campaigns and align with national campaigns including seasonal campaigns and public health messaging

The Pan-Sussex Procedures subgroup 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. The subgroup is currently chaired by the Brighton & Hove Local Authority Head of Safeguarding and is accountable to the Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive (SSCE). The group is well attended, with all participants engaging proactively and meaningfully with policy reviews. Where possible the policy authors/practitioners are invited to the meeting to demonstrate the value and impact of working together across the Sussex footprint. The webpage is publicly accessible [Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures](#)

Since March 2024 several new policies were developed to enhance safeguarding practice in response to local child protection issues. These policies include:

- Contextual Safeguarding of Children and Young People
- Pan Sussex Complaints Procedure
- Pan Sussex Escalation Procedure

Over 50 policies and procedures were reviewed, including the in-depth review of 6 chapters, to ensure they remain current and effective for practitioners across the multi-agency safeguarding partnership. During 2024/25 the group prepared and implemented a new website provider to host the Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures. Initial

feedback on the new platform is positive. We currently benefit from a jointly funded position to co-ordinate the procedures - recruitment for this role would be particularly challenging if it were to become vacant, as the success of our initiatives heavily relies on this post. Although limited analytics show visit statistics to the procedures website, assessing the actual impact on safeguarding practice remains challenging. To gather qualitative insights from practitioners on the impact of policies and procedures, the group plans a user survey at 6 months post new website implementation.

As part of the Sussex MASA, East Sussex SCP take a lead on **Pan Sussex Quality Assurance**, including the collation and analysis of data relevant to multi-agency safeguarding responsibilities, the delivery of the Sussex wide Section 11 audit how agencies are fulfilling their duties in relation safeguarding and child protection, and additional Sussex wide audit activity, as directed by the SSCE. During 2024-25, activity led by the ESSCP business unit has included:

- Leading the coordination of a Pan Sussex Information Sharing Agreement, which has been signed by the key statutory and relevant agencies, represented on the three Sussex SCPs.
- Coordinating the 2024 Pan Sussex Section 11 self-assessment which was completed by all agencies who are represented on more than one of the Sussex SCPs. In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual 'challenge' conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. This process was supported by the introduction of a 'staff survey' for front-line staff and managers about their perception of safeguarding practice in their organisation. More information about the section 11 process can be found in the Assurance section of this report.
- Engagement with all Sussex Quality Assurance subgroups on how best to take a Sussex wide approach to audit and data analysis. There was strong support for local QA subgroups to continue to oversee local audit and performance dashboards, to ensure that QA robustly held up the 'mirror to safeguarding practice', and that any pan Sussex QA should clearly add value to existing work. DSPs agreed to trial a pan Sussex audit in 2025-26, aligned to future JTAI themes and to develop a core dataset relating to shared Pan Sussex priorities and/or themes raised by the national Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel.
- A priority for 2025-26 will be to explore the options for developing a Sussex system to better support the tracking of action plans and analysis of data arising from rapid reviews and LCSPRs. This could be used to help inform Pan Sussex learning and development and improve understanding of agency performance.

Coordination of work between partnerships and subgroups is managed effectively via workplans, action logs and delegation of task requests. Partnership members across Sussex are encouraged to propose agenda items, suggest learning themes or initiate policy reviews, in response to local issues, audit findings, and Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews. The majority of these requests are initiated by local Child Protection Liaison Groups/Child Safeguarding Liaison Groups and Case Review Groups, reinforcing the pan Sussex subgroup's alignment with frontline operational needs and regional safeguarding priorities.

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 2024-2026. 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 C.

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 **Child Death Review Partnership (CDRP) Annual Report** was presented to the SSCE in January 2025. Pan Sussex Local Authorities and Integrated Care Boards (NHS Sussex ICB) hold legal responsibility for reviewing child deaths in Sussex as set out by the Children Act 2004, amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017. The Panel conducts statutory reviews on behalf of the Partners to provide independent multi-agency scrutiny for the deaths of all children living in Sussex. The reviews take place once all other child death processes, including coronial inquests and local child safeguarding practice reviews (LCSPR), have concluded. [CDOP - 7 Minute Briefing](#).

The key learning and actions arising from child deaths in 2024-25 relate to: information sharing, safeguarding, sudden unexpected deaths in infancy (SUDI) and unsafe sleeping, road safety, asthma, and bereavement support. More information is available as part of the CDOP Annual Report 2024-25 is available at: [Pan-Sussex-CDOP-Annual-Report-2024-25](#). Action undertaken in response to the CDOP Annual Report include activity by the Learning & Development subgroup to share communications on water safety and suicide prevention, and embedding the learning from the 'out of routine' report on sudden unexpected deaths in infancy into the training programme.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP offered events on a range of relevant safeguarding subjects outside of the 'core' programme. Free Webinar events were delivered by **SEROCU (Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit)** seeking to reduce criminal computer use in young people and to avoid criminalising them where possible. *'Cyber Choices to help children becoming involved in Cyber Crime'* was delivered in July and August 2024 and *'Cyber Protect Webinars for Parents and Carers and The Digital Dilemma: Keeping your Kids Safe Online'* ran between December 2024 and January 2025.

Through ongoing partnership working with **Adult Social Care (ASC)** and the **Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB)**, the ESSCP have offered free training to the multi-agency audience on the *Mental Capacity Act (MCA)* and *Liberty Protection Safeguards (LPS)*. Additional ESSCP/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’* and *‘Coercion and Control’*.

5. Leadership

Strong, collaborative leadership and clear accountability are crucial for effective multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and the capacity of agencies to identify and address system issues.

This section of the ESSCP Annual Report sets out how the partnership has delivered its core 'leadership' function to:

- Ensure that there are arrangements in place for effective independent scrutiny.
- Develop and deliver local business plan priorities.
- Address and escalate strategic and operational multi-agency barriers.
- Promote and embed a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge.
- Ensure all relevant local agencies are engaged with the partnership and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children.

5.1. Independent Scrutiny

The purpose of independent scrutiny in partnership arrangements is to drive continuous improvement and provide assurance that arrangements are working effectively for children, families, and practitioners. Until September 2024 the ESSCP had an Independent Chair that delivered 'independent scrutiny' for the partnership. Between March - July 2024 in partnership with the ESSCP business unit, the Independent Chair consulted with partnership agencies on what independent scrutiny should look like in the new MASA from September 2024. The following priorities were agreed:

- While the role of the Independent Scrutineer was valued as a critical friend by agencies there was recognition of the need to diversify the scrutiny 'offer' in East Sussex to be more dynamic, evidenced based, and responsive to trends.
- Strengthen the focus of scrutiny on front-line practice with the flexibility to conduct discreet scrutiny projects as agreed by DSPs.
- Strengthen the voice of child / 'experts by experience' as an explicit part of the scrutiny programme. As part of this, the ESSCP should consider the use of 'young scrutineers', providing input of their ideas into projects, gathering feedback from other young people, reviewing partnership documents and policies, and feeding back to senior stakeholders.
- Ensure a balance between scrutiny at a local and pan Sussex level.
- Explore options for alternative scrutiny approaches, such as peer scrutiny, National Safeguarding Facilitators, etc.

DSPs agreed to a revised scrutiny approach in October, utilising the previous Independent Chair budget to deliver a range of flexible and responsible scrutiny. New elements included:

- **Appointment of an independent chair for the Quality Assurance Subgroup**
- **Commissioning an independent scrutineer** to provide scrutiny of Pan Sussex agency's section 11 self-assessment.
- **Appointment of young scrutineers** to work alongside Independent Reviewers on pieces of scrutiny, attend high level meetings, help involve other children in the partnerships work, take the lead on special projects, and design or review partnership communication.

- Commissioning up to **two pieces of independent scrutiny** a year, providing independent challenge, at both strategic and operational levels, and identify recommendations for improvement.
- **Strengthening the role of Lay Members** within and across the partnership by establishing a Sussex Lay Member network, adding lay members as standing members of the QA and Education subgroups, and creating opportunities for direct engagement with children and families, and practitioners, on key safeguarding topics.
- Introduction of a '**best practice in safeguarding conversation**', aligned with WT23 national child protection standards, foster greater awareness of different roles, raise awareness of the partnership with front-line teams and staff, and provide solid best practice examples of multi-agency working.

5.2. Delivery of business plan priorities

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. Towards the end of 2025-26 the partnership will consider priorities going forward.

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

Safeguarding in Education

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 partners, 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 is a continued focus on effective joint working between local agencies and education settings, strategically and at a setting level. Key areas of practice, highlighted in the last annual report, remain for educational establishments: School attendance, mental health and emotional wellbeing and harmful sexual behaviours. The impact of the COVID-19 national lockdowns is still evident within education settings, with 'School Readiness' a priority for the Education Division. In the last year, 3 reception aged children were permanently excluded from their schools, the first time this has happened with children of that age in East Sussex. The exclusions were linked to the children's behaviour and dysregulation.

The focus of the partnership in this priority is to:

- Provide **multi-agency expertise and support** to education settings to effectively respond to safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure that all educational settings have the **right information** to support their pupils.
- There is a **multi-agency informed preventative curriculum** available for education settings 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 education.**
- **Education settings effectively respond to learning identified by the Partnership.**

The ESSCP works closely with the Education Safeguarding Team to use evidence to deliver safeguarding in education, via:

(i) Reviews in schools

85 Reviews were undertaken by the Education Safeguarding Team in maintained primary and secondary schools from September 2024 to April 2025: 11 in state-funded special schools and 14 in Independent non-maintained special schools.

Undertaking comprehensive reviews in all maintained primary and secondary schools over the past 2 years has created a baseline for positive practice. The new Quality Assurance Support visits offer a very useful intervention for schools to seek reassurance and/or development points with a focus on specific areas and provide challenge and support.

New commissioning arrangements for academic year 25-26: The Primary and Secondary Improvement Boards have commissioned the Education Safeguarding Team to complete a focused Quality Assurance visit to every primary and secondary school (including maintained and academies).

All state-funded specials and 15 identified INMS schools will also receive a focused Quality Assurance and support visit in the next academic year.

(ii) Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) Network meetings

In the last academic year, the DSL Networks were revamped to link directly with the new ESSCP Education Safeguarding subgroup to provide improved communication /feedback mechanisms. Topics for discussion and review have included Social Care Transformation Programme, Single View, Operation Encompass.

New Early Years DSL networks have been established for all settings. 60 settings attended each network which is a positive new development.

(iii) The Schools' Annual Safeguarding Audit

98% of school self-evaluation audits across all school types have been returned to date (DRAFT-TBC)

Many areas of strength identified were identified, and key issues identified as needing further development include: capacity of the DSL Team, dealing with on-line harms, records of restrictive physical intervention, plans for risk assessments such as for Harmful Sexual behaviour are reviewed and updated, co-produced with parents. Schools identified the need for Managing Allegations training.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- Establishment of the ESSCP Education Safeguarding Subgroup (see 5.5. Engagement of relevant agencies for further details).

- The Schools' Safeguarding Conference (October 2024) had specific input on 'safeguarding for the under 6s, and the Early Years Safeguarding Conference (February 2025) included newly developed guidance on attendance (which is non-statutory at that age). This content was programmed in response to an East Sussex Rapid Review involving a pre-school aged child with irregular attendance at nursery. Both conferences also included content on online safety.
- All 23 state-funded secondary schools, along with 3 special schools, had a funded Theatre in Education performance for year 9 students (approximately 4800 students across the 26 schools). The performance addressed healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours and online safety, and were accompanied by lesson resources and a briefing for staff. This was funded and facilitated by Public Health in partnership with the Education Safeguarding Team and PSHE Hubs.
- New multi-agency support programmes were developed in response to critical incidents and suspected suicides of young people. These included using the Unexpected Death Toolkit and suicide prevention training. Loss and Bereavement training was delivered to 28 schools.
- The East Sussex Early Years Improvement Team supported the roll out of Operation Encompass to Early Years Settings. Settings and Childminders are now included within Police processes for notifying attendance at an incident of domestic violence or abuse where children (over the age of two) are present or normally resident.
- In response to feedback from schools, the Education Safeguarding Team worked with colleagues from the Attendance Team, SPOA and Early Help to establish a guidance document "Children not in regular attendance at school". This promotes understanding across teams/agencies/schools as to the need, frequency and purpose of completing 'welfare checks' for children who have unexplained absences from school for extended periods.

Safeguarding Adolescents

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. For many young people adolescence can also 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 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; ensure a **coordinated multi-agency response when child suicides** occur, which also identifies any at risk children within the wider network; and develop a **Transition to Adulthood protocol** that outlines key principles for joint working across agencies when supporting vulnerable young adults.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- Children's services successfully applied for **Youth Endowment Funding** to deliver a placed based whole systems approach to tackling exploitation and serious youth violence. As part of the project significant focus was made on earlier intervention, recognising the transition from primary to secondary school as a risk area for children. A targeted PHSE curriculum was delivered in four primary schools supported by a drama production, and partnership with voluntary sector agency Fellowship at Saint Nicolas to deliver a positive activity programme. Over 140 children and families have been supported through the project in just over a year. The project is currently being externally evaluated by John Moores Liverpool University. Early reports from the evaluation evidence that it was impactful in reducing incidences of serious youth violence and exploitation and in improved emotional well-being and confidence in the families engaged.
- Between April and October 2024 Sussex Police (East Sussex Division) piloted a '**Discovery Child**' team co-located with the youth justice team, focused on early identification, rapid intervention, and disruption of child exploitation. An evaluation of the project, in November 2024, highlighted a number of key outcomes, including: a significant reduction in time taken from submission of exploitation related intelligence to multi-agency assessment, action and rapid intervention with partners; weekly partnership intelligence meetings also support the earlier identification of victims, perpetrators and locations of exploitation; and there was a proactive approach to disruptions resulting in clear and sustained increases in disruption for child exploitation on the East Division (a total of 85 disruptions were recorded in East Sussex compared to 67 in West Sussex, 42 in West Surrey, and 26 in Brighton & Hove). There were also 59 protect disruptions recorded in East Sussex during 2024-25 compared to 16 in West Sussex and 10 in West Surrey. The evaluation recommended the continuation of Discovery Child co-located with YJS and Exploitation Team and that the model should be adopted across Sussex.
- YMCA Wise **Project SOLAH** accepted over 60 referrals to the service in 2024-25 for children and young people living in East Sussex. Standing for 'Safer Online at Home', SOLAH began in November 2021 as a pathway for the Sussex Police Online Investigation Team to refer children and young people into especially where they were either uploading self-generated images to the internet or sharing indecent images of children between themselves, in person or online. Children and young people who have been identified as being at risk are offered safeguarding advice and online education sessions delivered by specialist staff at YMCA DownsLink Group's WiSE project. As well as an increase of harmful sexual behaviour support needs. YMCA Wise have delivered 15 professional consultations to staff with East Sussex children services creating tailored tool kits for staff to take direct work forward.
- East Sussex, in partnership with Brighton and Hove, continues to be part of the **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** devolved decision making Pilot. Locating decision making about whether a child has been the victim of modern slavery within local safeguarding structures ensures that decisions are more closely aligned with the provision of local needs-based support and law enforcement responses. It has also significantly reduced the time taken to reach decisions. Between April 2024 and March 2025, 35 children were discussed at the local NRM panel, with the average decision-making time being 24 days for Reasonable Grounds decision and 44 days for a Conclusive Grounds decision.

Learning and recommendations from the May 2024 Self-harm attendances at A&E audit were shared with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group. Next steps were aligned to respond to the concerning rise in suspected child suicides, with a multi-agency workshop held in January 2025 to identify immediate and longer term action to reduce serious self-harm and suicide. The workshop made six recommendations for multi-agency action to prevent serious self-harm and suicide:

- **Recommendation 1: System Response to Risk** Explore the benefits and feasibility of implementing a Multi-Agency Mental Health Education Triage (MAMHET) style approach in East Sussex.
- **Recommendation 2: Mental Health Awareness, Resilience and Safety Planning** Safety planning features in the self-harm toolkit and guidance for schools. The Pan-Sussex Self-harm Learning Network has created a consistent pan-Sussex resource and extensive training has also been provided to schools to support implementation of the guidance.
- **Recommendation 3: Peer Support** The East Sussex Mental Health Prevention Group has agreed to examine the role of peer support in preventing mental health problems and promoting good mental health. The timescales for the draft report are Autumn 2025. The evidence review is underway.
- **Recommendation 4: PSHE Curriculum** The Education Division and Public Health plan to develop a comprehensive suicide prevention package for secondary schools and post-16 Colleges to support them in implementing the new statutory RSE guidance from Sept 2026, as it relates to suicide and self-harm.
- **Recommendation 5: Support for Schools** Undertake a review of the multi-agency support measures available to schools in the medium to long term, following the unexpected death of a child. Including, what additional training might be provided to help schools prepare for bereavement.
- **Recommendation 6: Online Harms** The funding was agreed by Public Health and the University of Brighton to bring together current evidence to gain an understanding of the online lives of young people, including harms and benefits. The project will also gain insight from young people about what would help them to manage their digital lives, and from parents and schools about how we can support them with this issue; and bring together professionals across Sussex to share learning about the digital lives of young people, existing services supporting young people and to develop future plans.

Embedding 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, 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: 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; **training** delivered by the ESSCP is effective, responds to local learning, and is having a measured impact on safeguarding practice; the ESSCP is able to evidence that **ESSCP learning is impacting on safeguarding practice** and is making a positive impact on outcomes for children; the ESSCP promotes a **culture of learning from experience**, including the experience and views of children and parents/carers; 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; and Learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice.

Key achievements in 2024-25 include:

- The ESSCP Business Unit has supported the Case Review Group to develop and publish two learning briefings, which concisely highlight key learning for professionals arising from rapid reviews, and one LCSPR, and one evidencing impact briefings from a previously published LCSPR.
- The business unit has also coordinated multi-agency learning events, on the rapid reviews, and 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.
- **Pan Sussex Safeguarding Fortnight** ran from the 18th to the 29th November. The ESSCP led a series of taster/Brief Bytes sessions across seven subject areas. 250 practitioners attended across a range of agencies.


East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership


Safeguarding Fortnight (18 – 29 November 2024)

The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership is excited to announce its FREE multi-agency SAFEGUARDING FORTNIGHT range of taster learning events.

We have organised 8 one-hour-long taster learning events, between Monday 18th and Friday 29th November 2024, on a range of safeguarding topics from 'child to parent abuse' to a deep dive into 'extreme misogyny'. The events are open to all professionals working with children and families, are free to attend, and are all online.

To sign up all you need to do is click on the below links to register your details.

 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Introduction to Child and Adolescent to Parent Abuse and Violence (CAPAV) – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Monday 18th (10am)</p>	 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: How to make a referral for neglect – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Tuesday 19th (9am)</p>
 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Working with the Gypsy Roma Traveller community – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Wednesday 20th (12 noon)</p>	 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Safeguarding Infants - Learning from local and national safeguarding reviews – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Thursday 21st (2pm)</p>
 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Professional Curiosity and Professional Challenge within a Safeguarding Context – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Tuesday 26th (10am)</p>	 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Harmful Sexual Behaviours – A Multi-Agency Briefing – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Wednesday 27th (9.30am)</p>
 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Safeguarding electively home educated children – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Thursday 28th (9.30am)</p>	 <p>Select tickets – Safeguarding Fortnight: Incels - A Deep Dive into Extreme Misogyny – MS Teams (tickettailor.com) Friday 29th (9.30am)</p>



LEARNING FROM SERIOUS SAFEGUARDING INCIDENTS IN EAST SUSSEX
TUESDAY 18 MARCH 2025 (3-4 PM) & MONDAY 24 MARCH 2025 (1-2 PM)


When a child dies or is seriously harmed, as a result of abuse or neglect, a review may be conducted to identify ways that professionals and organisations can improve the way they work together to safeguard children and prevent similar incidents from occurring.

This one hour briefing sessions will be delivered by colleagues from the ESSCP Case Review Group. The event will cover the themes and learning from three 'rapid reviews' that were conducted in 2024, following serious safeguarding incidents in East Sussex. The reviews featured a three week old baby, a four year old child, and a sixteen year old child.

It is really important that you know about these reviews, and the learning from them, so that the service improvements identified become embedded in to practice.

This event is FREE to attend.

To register your place at the learning briefing session go to the below link:
<https://buytickets.at/eastsussexsafeguardingchildrenpartnership>


East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership

- **Impact evaluations** are being developed pan Sussex, with a pilot being undertaken in 2025/26 in relation to neglect resources and training.
- The ESSCP Business Unit has continued to ensure that learning regarding the **safeguarding of infants** is embedded into practice. Examples have included:
 - Presentations on local and national learning regarding safeguarding infants during Safeguarding Fortnight and senior social worker forum.
 - Updating the section 11 self-assessment audit tool to provide assurance that agencies are robustly delivering on learning regarding safeguarding infants.
 - Supporting the delivery of three briefing sessions on safer sleeping, in particular in out of routine situations, over the past year.
 - Coordinating East Sussex 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.

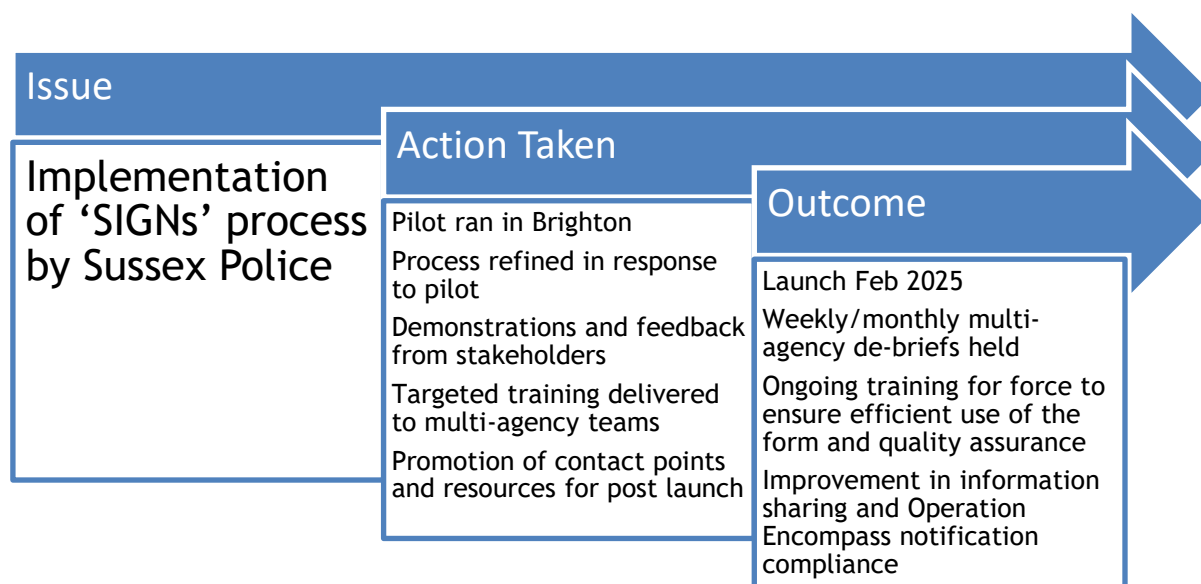
5.3. Escalating and addressing risks & issues

The ESSCP holds a Risk and Issues Register, which is reviewed regularly by the Business Unit and DSPs. Partnership members can request for risks and issues to be added to the log, however most additions are escalated via subgroup chairs and from discussions held at Partnership and Planning Group meetings.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP has monitored risks in relation to the ESSCP budget contributions and the transition to a new Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provider from April 2025.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP has monitored issues in relation to:

- Levels of children subject to child Protection plans
- Capacity of multi-agency staffing in MASH
- Staffing in midwifery services
- Implementation of 'SIGNs' process by Sussex Police:



From January 2025 the Business Unit introduced a monthly briefing for DSPs. This efficient approach allows the Business Unit to escalate emerging issues and barriers in progressing partnership work areas to the DSPs for a swift response. The monthly briefing is RAG rated with items for decision, action or for information. This has allowed the Business Unit to maintain the flow of work within the partnership and keep a record of decisions made by the DSPs.

5.4. Critical thinking and professional challenge

Critical thinking and professional challenge are essential to securing good outcomes for children. It requires safeguarding leaders to model effective multiagency leadership, ensuring that the right and necessary capacity and resources are in place. Leaders need to demonstrate, through engagement with practitioners, children, and families, that they have good knowledge about the quality of multiagency practice and its impact on children. They also need to be assured that practitioners have access to high quality supervision with managers providing robust oversight, good support and challenge.

However, safeguarding practice reviews nationally and locally continue to identify that good ‘professional curiosity’ and critical thinking is not always underpinning work with children and families, resulting in assessments and interventions that are not as robust and effectively focused on potential risks of harm to children as they need to be. Previous national panel reports have also highlighted a lack of challenge between professionals and an apparent reluctance to escalate concerns.

ESSCP 2024 Rapid Review for Child 5 (as detailed in the Learning section of this report) highlighted learning locally about the importance of convening complex case meetings to address escalating and enduring risks where current service provisions are unable to reduce risk and support continuity of service delivery. Senior Managers directly involved in complex or long-standing cases at the right time can help in progressing necessary action by addressing any blockages and supporting practitioners who may need additional assistance. The visible involvement of senior leaders in complex practice dilemmas and decision making can be of real benefit and impact. By modelling reflective and analytic thinking when making complex decisions in high-risk situations, organisational leaders can demonstrate their support of practitioners.

Critical thinking and professional challenge examples in 2024-25 include:

- In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual ‘challenge’ conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. The scrutiny of the Section 11 returns, when triangulated with challenge conversations and staff survey findings, provided an overall **high level of assurance** for the capacity to critically evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. A high level of assurance was observed in standards such as senior management commitment to safeguarding, the availability of clear organisational responsibilities, and effective safer recruitment practices. However, areas requiring further improvement included the need to integrate the perspectives of children and families from strategic to the frontline.
- Professional challenge training is offered as part of the core offer and was included as a bite-size session within Safeguarding Fortnight.

- In collaboration with the Safer Communities Team and the East Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board, the **Professional Curiosity Resource Pack** was updated and republished. 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.
- In March 2025 Sussex Police implemented a 'partnership escalations' inbox so that partners are able to escalate issues more directly with divisional teams and staff, via divisional command, so that there is an appreciation with respect the type and volume of escalations being received. This inbox will be monitored by divisional secretariat who will receive and distribute messages appropriately across the division.
- The Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group (LSCLG) is a multi-agency subgroup of the partnership that meets on a quarterly basis. The group act as a forum for multi-agency discussion to explore any learning or potential improvements to multi-agency work, such as procedural and practice development, across the children's safeguarding system.

Next steps in 2025-26 include:

- Celebrate good practice - through annual best practice in safeguarding awards. Publicise examples where professional challenge led to better outcomes for children to reinforce the desired culture.
- Better integration of learning regarding critical thinking and professional challenge - this should include the use of the partnership's communication networks and tools to reinforce value of respectful challenge and critical thinking.

5.5. Engagement of relevant agencies

Relevant agencies are those organisations and agencies whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider are required to safeguard and promote the welfare of local children. When the ESSCP published its new MASA all relevant agencies, who were previously members of the ESSCP, continued to be included as critical members in delivering a strong and effective partnership which can respond to existing and emerging needs.

Through the partnership induction programme, all relevant agencies have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children locally, including:

- How they will coordinate with safeguarding partners to improve, implement, and monitor effectiveness of the local safeguarding arrangements (engagement in MASA)
- sharing information and data about safeguarding issues and concerns affecting the children involved in their organisation to contribute to local priorities (Pan Sussex Information Sharing Agreement)
- ensure local multi-agency safeguarding arrangements are fully understood, and rigorously applied within their organisation (section 11 self-assessment)

Examples of how the ESSCP has strengthened engagement of relevant agencies during 2024-25 includes:

NEW! Education Safeguarding Subgroup

The ESSCP has benefited from solid engagement with education partners including independent settings, special schools, maintained settings and Elective Home Education services. To further embed this the ESSCP undertook a Safeguarding Planning Workshop for education partners in October 2024, attended by representatives from all areas of education and facilitated by the DFE National Safeguarding Education Facilitator. Following recommendations from this group, DSPs agreed the local approach to achieving the effective engagement and contribution of education providers through the initiation of an Education Safeguarding Subgroup.

The first Education Safeguarding Subgroup was held in January 2025, again facilitated by the DFE National Safeguarding Education Facilitator, to develop and agree the group's terms of reference and to start considering the priority areas to address. Education partners and DSPs are firmly committed to embracing the active role of education partners in engagement and decision making at an operational and strategic level within the partnership. This new subgroup provides a communication and engagement channel between the partnership and wider education partner networks, including local Designated Safeguarding Leads, Head Teacher forums, Governors etc.

Co-Chairs: Executive Primary Headteacher and Strategic Lead - Safeguarding and Emotional Wellbeing, Education Division, Children's Services Department

Membership: includes representatives from Early Years, Primary, Secondary, Further Education, Independent, Special, Multi Academy Trust, Alternative Provision, Governors, Lay Member, Local Authority, including: Safeguarding Education, Early Years, Elective Home Education, Virtual School for Children in Care.

Purpose (from ToR): *'Alongside their core purpose of teaching and learning, educational providers, from Early Years to Further Education, play a pivotal role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. By uniting the collective voice of education across all settings we proactively work collaboratively to solve safeguarding challenges, ensure authentic education perspectives are heard throughout the safeguarding partnership, and actively contribute to forward thinking strategic decisions that enhance the safety and well-being of every child.'*

Priority areas for 2025/26 were defined by the group to be aligned with Working Together to Safeguarding Children 2023 Expectations.

NEW! Safeguarding Community Network Subgroup

WT2023 highlights that VCSE organisations play an important role in building relationships, identifying concerns, and providing direct support to children. They can often be the first trusted adult to whom a child reports abuse. Therefore, many of these organisations will have a crucial role to play in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

Through further development of a recent Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review action to improve voluntary sector agencies in the multi-agency safeguarding processes, East Sussex are exploring options to collaborate with the Safeguarding Adults Board to expand the VCSE network group and develop resources in collaboration with VCSE organisations:

Chair: Healthwatch

Membership: Originally a subgroup of the Safeguarding Adults Board (SAB), the membership has been expanded to 'all age' so the subgroup will reach across both the SAB and the ESSCP. Members are from Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise organisations.

Purpose: The group's terms of reference were discussed at a workshop in June 2025 and will be finalised in September 2025.

Priority areas of work for 2025/26 include: Embedding the voice of lived experience, including children and families, case discussions, addressing emerging risks and issues, promotion of learning from reviews and sharing of good practice.

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 2024-25.

6.1 Learning from Rapid Reviews and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

Case Review Activity 2024/25

In 2024-25 the ESSCP undertook two Rapid Reviews following serious safeguarding incidents, where a child had died or been seriously injured, and where abuse or neglect was known or suspected. Neither Rapid Reviews led to Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs) as the Case Review Group (CRG) recommendation to DSPs was that LCSPRs were unlikely to provide any significant additional learning. The Rapid Reviews had sufficiently drawn out the learning from the cases, with clear areas of multi-agency improvement and appropriate learning themes and actions provided through single agency returns.

In these two cases, learning was shared via learning briefings and two multi agency events in March 2025, alongside multi and single agency action plans monitored by CRG.

Child 4 Rapid Review	Child 5 Rapid Review
Learning Briefing - Child 4 (esscp.org.uk)	Learning Briefing - Child 5 (esscp.org.uk)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Convening a multi-agency strategy meeting when significant events or new disclosures occur.✓ Risks assessed at the pre-birth to be reviewed regularly, in particular for premature babies.✓ Support for isolated single carers of vulnerable premature babies to transition from a highly supportive hospital environment to the home environment.✓ Appropriate and equal consideration to be given to fathers when considering the benefits of utilising parent and baby assessment placements.✓ Multi agency awareness and understanding of how Family and Criminal court parallel processes interplay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Balancing the view of the child, regarding their preference to work with a specific gender practitioner, with the professional view of continuity of case management.✓ Professionals to ensure they have clarity on the child’s ethnicity and culture, and that this is considered in their approach to practice.✓ GP engagement and information in strategy meetings and section 47 enquiries to gain a holistic view of the child’s lived experience.✓ Moving placements in and out of county disrupted the continuity of care and relationships for child 5 impacting on her engagement and wellbeing.✓ Convening a complex case meeting to address escalating and enduring risks where current service provisions are unable to reduce risk.✓ Ensuring that appropriate language is used by the multi-agency system in exploitation cases

✓ Importance of parents/carers receiving ICON materials, and in particular appropriate ICON materials for prem babies.	to ensure victims are not recorded as putting themselves at risk through their choices and behaviours, rather than the responsibility being placed on those doing the exploiting.
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There was one additional Serious Incident Notification made in summer 2024 in relation to the death of a Looked After Child, in accordance with Working Together 2023. At postmortem the pathologist gave a natural cause of death. The CRG reviewed the available information and agreed that they were satisfied that the case did not require a Rapid Review and would be most appropriately reviewed through the statutory Child Death Review processes, which was reported to the National Panel.

During 2024/25 the ESSCP published one LCSPR:

Child Z (delay in publication was due to gaining parent input into the review and criminal proceedings, with sentencing in late July 2024)

[ESSCP Child Z LCSPR Report 13.03.25](#)

[ESSCP Child Z LCSPR Partnership Response - Feb 2025](#)

[Child Z Learning Briefing 2022 \(esscp.org.uk\)](#)

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

Unpublished LCSPRs:

Three completed LCSPRs awaiting publication due to pending family engagement and Home Office sign-off.

Family D: Joint LCSPR and Domestic Homicide Review (DHR). 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 report is with the Home Office awaiting Quality Assurance.

Child E: final report anticipated August 2025 following completion of private law proceedings. Report to be shared with family prior to publication, anticipated in Autumn 2025.

Child F: Report complete and with family for review, anticipated publication Autumn 2025.

For all three reviews, action plans are in place and learning themes will be shared in advance of publication.

6.2 Learning from National Reviews

How the ESSCP responds to the learning from national reviews has become an integral part of the partnership's scrutiny programme. Generally, the ESSCP business unit and CRG are the leads to ensuring that the learning from national reviews is disseminated, that the learning and recommendations are considered in the context of safeguarding in East Sussex, and that appropriate actions are identified and taken forward. In response to national reviews published in 2024-25 the ESSCP:

- [Safeguarding children in Elective Home Education - Panel Briefing 3](#) tasked the 'education' lead in the CRG to undertake a desktop analysis of the effectiveness of local systems regarding safeguarding practice for children electively home educated, which was reviewed by CRG. Strengths and gaps were highlighted and shared with DSPs.
- [The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel - I wanted them all to notice](#). CRG reviewed the learning and recommendations, noting similar learning identified through the local Child E and Child F LCSPRs. The ESSCP agreed to coordinate a Pan Sussex Workshop to explore national learning, learning from local reviews, and consider a pan Sussex approach to the recommendations. The workshop was held in June 2025 with recommendations for action to be shared at the at Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive in July 2025.
- ["It's Silent": Race, racism and safeguarding children - Panel Briefing 4](#) was published in March 2025. The report was considered by CRG in May 2025 and later agreement was taken by the Sussex DSPs to take a similar approach to the Sussex response to the national panel's report on CSA. CRG have also commissioned the QA Subgroup to undertake an analysis of the impact of race, culture and ethnicity in the context of safeguarding in East Sussex.

6.3 Quality Assurance Audits

The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2024-25: an audit on the quality and robustness of responses to children who present at A&E due to deliberate self-harm; and audit on intra-familial child sexual abuse, with a particular focus on testing if learning from the Child Y LCSPR (published in 2023) has been embedded in to practice; and an audit on the quality and effectiveness of s47 strategy discussions.

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 with the Learning & Development Subgroup and Local Safeguarding Children 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:

- That there are strong systems and multi-agency working in place to deal with the immediate needs, and safeguarding concerns, of children presenting at A&E due to self-harm.
- learning points from Child Y had been successfully embedded into practice: procedures were followed; relevant agencies were invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings; there was clarity in the plan regarding how the child's needs were to be addressed; and ABE interviews are appropriately documented
- The explicit reason for a child not undertaking a Health Needs Assessment should be documented. This should include how the individual's sexual health needs have been, or will be, met by other means.
- The timing of a sexual abuse incident should not prevent the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) from being involved. Regardless of whether the incident happened recently or a long time ago, a referral should still be considered.
- More social workers need to be trained to participate in Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interviews. Currently, there are limited spaces available per year for social workers to attend ABE interview training. This is impacting on the availability of social workers to support and attend ABE interviews. From the cases audited there are examples of this impacting on the timeliness of ABE interviews and the focus on interviews being child centred.
- As a 'window on the system' there were concerns that in two-thirds of strategy meetings held, in the cases audited in the 'Regular Case File' audit, were held without input from general practice. This highlights learning for multi-agency practice regarding improved coordination and information sharing in particular from general practice.

Further details on the ESSCP QA audits in 2024/25 can be found in the **Assurance** section of this report.

6.4 ESSCP Training Programme

The ESSCP has continued to offer both classroom-based training courses as well as virtual sessions for multi-agency practitioners. This mixed mode of delivery is 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 2024 and 31st March 2025, 49 training courses ran from the 'core' ESSCP programme (courses advertised via the East Sussex Learning Portal, ESLP) with 694 participants from a range of agencies.

The rate of evaluation returns from the 694 participants during 2024/25, spread over 49 courses where evaluation data is available is 69% (436 returns). The majority of participants continue to rate courses as either Excellent (66%) or Good (34%). Continued analyses of the more in-depth narrative helps the ESSCP Learning & Development Consultant to understand some of the

impact of training and where necessary to follow up with members of the training 'pool' to improve the training offer.

Five new ESSCP courses were introduced from April 2024.

- In April a new short briefing session on Harmful Sexual Behaviours was launched with support from the Education Safeguarding team, which highlighted the locally produced sexual behaviour screening resource and intervention programmes for children and young people.
- Also, in April '*Understanding Self-harm in Children and Young People and the East Sussex Toolkit*' was relaunched with support from the Mental Health Support Team, will become embedded in the ESSCP training programme.
- In July, following the relaunch of the updated Neglect Toolkit and Matrix, a new neglect training course was launched.
- In November '*Adult Mental Health and Suicide Risk Management*' was launched, which replaces the Parental Mental Health and the Impact on Children offer.
- From April 2022 the Government offered grants to Local Authorities to encourage Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) focussed practice into local services for children and families. A rolling programme of workshops on RPC delivered to Children's Services was extended to include the wider SCP audience, and between April 2024 and March 2025, 71 people attended from across a range of agencies.

Collaborative working with Brighton & Hove and West Sussex continues with pan Sussex 'Improving Outcomes for Looked After Children', 'Suicide Prevention' and 'Safer Sleeping' training embedded into all SCP programmes. All three partnerships have reciprocal arrangements for shared learning, where certain courses are commissioned by one, but co-funded across the three. Other subjects offered on a pan Sussex basis include: Adultification, Equalities: Exploring Inclusive Practice - Racial, Ethnic and Religious Diversity, and LGBTQ+(B&H) and 'Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spirit Possession'.

Pan Sussex Safeguarding Fortnight ran from the 18th to the 29th November. The ESSCP led a series of taster/Brief Bytes sessions across seven subject areas. 250 practitioners attended across a range of agencies: Education 69(28%), Health 68(27%), Children's Services 55(22%), Police 16(6%) and Other 42(17%) charities and other organisations.

The ESSCP training pool of practitioner is an exemplary committed group of people, going above and beyond their professional roles to bring a huge amount of knowledge, skill and experience to the partnership's safeguarding training courses.

ESSCP trauma informed training multi agency training is co designed and delivered with people who have lived experience of trauma, recovery and involvement of services.

The inclusion of lived experience in training in person, through video, research and discussion, as well as up to date theory and practice guidance about trauma informed working is important to ensure that content is relevant, informed and meaningfully supports practitioners to integrate learning from the training into their work.

It is of vital importance that the sharing of lived experience is purposeful to promote learning and development of participants and to achieve changes in practice positively. To ensure this, the emotional safety of those sharing lived experience, confidentiality and learning agreements are crucial.

A lived experience contributor to the training shared their view:

'I share my experiences in the hope that it will benefit even one child, foster carer or social work professional. What a great privilege that is for me to do, it has given me understanding and gratitude for the hard life that I have lived. My trauma has become my strength. I believe through love and continued work to understand each side of this field of work, the future of Looked After Children and those affected by trauma will be better for it.'

I get so much from doing training work, firstly how powerful it is as a Looked After Child to see how much effort is being put into improving practice. The mistakes of the past are being learned from and that fact should be known, the voiceless are being given a voice! I am hoping that my contribution will support workers to help families and children to recovery from intergenerational trauma and to support organisations and workers to become more trauma informed.'

I feel very supported by the facilitator, we sometimes laugh about her mothering and fussing about me. But we are running a trauma informed training course so it is important that I am supported, my well-being has always been the main focus and I feel in control. I have done so much spiritual work (and I continue to work hard with recovery work!) to arrive at the emotional stability to be able to give what I do in this work, and I appreciate the importance of looking after myself and each other.'

Annually, representatives from the Children in Care Council (CiCC) attend the Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Group (LSCLG) to share updates on activities they have undertaken, provide feedback from children and have an opportunity to raise issues with members of the children's workforce.

In November 2024, two representatives attended, and several areas were discussed by the group:

Children/young people should always be asked if they would like an advocate and/or Independent Visitor, this should be encouraged by workers, even if the initial response is a no

Rather than just focussing on one issue, such as mental health, it is important to consider all issues and how they link

The importance of joint working across services and young people's negative experiences of when this doesn't happen

Young people want a child centred approach, with professionals passing on only relevant information to others and ensuring they chase up / follow through with what has been agreed

The CiCC has a monthly newsletter for children in care, and CiCC members can be contacted directly by young people/children who want to comment/contribute, or via their social worker.

Other areas of work the CiCC have been involved in include:

- Improving Lives: Young People's Annual Conversation with NHS Sussex
- Junior Consultation with 7-11 year old children in care
- A National Voice
- East Sussex Youth Voice

7. Oversight and assurance

7.1 ESSCP oversight and 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. From September 2025 the QA subgroup will be chaired by an Independent Scrutineer.

Examples of assurance undertaken by the ESSCP during 2024-25 include:

- The Partnership had an **ESSCP Independent Chair** between April 2024 and August 2024. The function of the Independent Chair was to provide challenge and scrutiny on 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 Chair acted as a constructive critical friend to promote reflection and continuous improvement and to provide support to that improvement. This included:
 - Scrutinising the learning and action plans arising from the three rapid reviews that were conducted in early 2024-25 and endorsing the recommendations to not conduct Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (LCSPRs). As part of this process they provided support and challenge to the National Safeguarding Panel on the rationale for local decision in one of the rapid reviews.
 - 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 partnership's development of independent scrutiny arrangements post the implementation of new MASA arrangements from September 2024. The scrutiny plan also provided 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.
- In addition to the Independent Chair, the **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 Case Review Group (CRG), and Lay Members are panel members for all LCSPRs. During 2024-25 Lay Members have also become formal members of the QA Subgroup and the newly established Education Subgroup. Their role has been critical at CRG, via the rapid review process and subsequent LCSPR process, in advocating the voice of the child.

- During 2024-25 the ESSCP established a Sussex Lay Member network with membership from the three lay members of the ESSCP and other lay members from the Brighton & Hove and West Sussex SCPs and three safeguarding adult boards. The network has provided peer support, a forum to share experiences and ideas on how to develop the lay member role, developed a consistent 'offer of support' to lay members from the safeguarding partnership business teams, and enabled better understanding of lay members roles and responsibilities.

I have been a lay member of the ESSCP for a number of years. The Partnership continues to impress me. Professionals remain committed despite the reduction in resources. They are willing to challenge each other and collaborate well. I am a member of the Case Review Group and discussions there are open, honest and detailed which leads to relevant and comprehensive learning. This year I, and one of the Partnership Managers, took part in workshops run by Research in Practice on behalf of the National Panel to consider safeguarding practice reviews. This was a good opportunity to hear how other authorities manage the process and confirmed that East Sussex does this better than most.

This year saw changes to the organisation of the Partnership in response to Working Together (2023). The partnership no longer has an independent chair and so no longer has someone who can take the role of independent scrutineer. The Lay Members and Partnership Managers have been considering ways in which we could increase our role in scrutinising the work of the Partnership. We are already critical friends, and members of working groups, but are keen to expand the scope of our involvement and to focus more on representing the voices of the public, particularly those of children and young people.

Harriet Martin

I am privileged to have represented the voice of children, families, and the general public in my role as a Lay Member on the Partnership for a further year. Over the last year I have been actively involved with the Education Sub-group and have attended the Early Years Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSL) network meetings. The Education Sub-group grows in strength and already demonstrates how committed and proactive our education partners are to being an integral element of the wider partnership. The Early Years DSL network, albeit newly formed, is an excellent example of the knowledge and value that practitioners provide.

The increased engagement with the Voluntary, Charity and Social Enterprise organisations is another exciting development for the Partnership, and once again shows how forward thinking and progressive the Partnership is.

Nick Porter

When Working Together to Safeguard Children was published in December 2023, extensive work was undertaken to shape future partnership arrangements. The team has since worked hard to meet the requirements set out in the report.

Earlier this year, I was invited to join the Quality Assurance subgroup who have been involved in a range of projects - for example, in February 2024 the group undertook a 'deep dive' audit involving front line professionals working with specific children and their families. They found that Child Protection Plans were in place, they were appropriate, robust, and supported the family to reduce risk demonstrating the high standard of work undertaken across the county.

What makes the work of the ESSCP so effective however, is the members themselves who, coming from a range of professional backgrounds bring a high level of expertise which is generously shared at meetings to ensure that safeguarding children is explored from a range of angles. There is an emphasis on proactivity, transparency and information sharing. In addition, a range of high-level learning opportunities have been developed which allow us all to remain current and informed.

It has been a privilege to be a Lay Member of the ESSCP to date and I look forward to continuing to support the work of the partnership knowing the high level of commitment and professionalism that shines through at every meeting.

Anne Moynihan

- In summer 2024 the ESSCP, along with Brighton & Hove SCP and West Sussex SCP, made requests to all pan-Sussex agencies to complete the updated '**section 11' self-assessment audit**. The purpose of the audit is to provide evidence of how they comply with s11, of the Children Act 2004, when carrying out their day-to-day business and provides an indication of how well organisations are working to keep children safe. Minor amendments were made to 'Standard 9' (recognition and response to risk) in the 2024 tool, in response to recent local learning from safeguarding reviews. Agencies were encouraged to be reflective and open about areas of safeguarding policy and practice that could be improved.

In spring 2025 an Independent Scrutineer, commissioned by the Sussex DSPs, held individual 'challenge' conversations with thirteen pan Sussex agencies who had completed their section 11 self-assessments. This scrutiny process included an initial review of agency's self-assessment by the Independent Scrutineer - highlighting measures where ratings might be over-optimistic, making requests for documentary evidence, identifying challenge questions for consideration - and triangulating information to responses provided in a 'staff survey' of front-line staff and managers about their perception of safeguarding practice in their organisation. This was followed up by individual conversations with agencies to review the information.

In their final report to DSPs, the Independent Scrutineer found the section 11 returns, when triangulated with challenge conversations and staff survey findings, provided DSPs with a:

- **Medium level of assurance** for the delivery of statutory duties.
- **High level of assurance** for the capacity to critically evaluate strengths and areas for improvement. A high level of assurance was observed in standards such as senior management commitment to safeguarding, the availability of clear organisational responsibilities, and effective safer recruitment practices. However, areas requiring

further improvement included the need to integrate the perspectives of children and families from strategic to the frontline.

Additional challenges were identified in supporting practitioners through reflective supervision and in understanding the impact of their decisions on children and families. The final report will be shared with DSPs in July 2025 for agreement on next steps.

- The QA subgroup held **three audits** during 2024-25:

The QA subgroup held an audit in May 2024 on the quality and robustness of safeguarding response on six cases of **children's attendance at A&E due to deliberate self-harm**, where there were known safeguarding concerns. The audit was agreed following the QA subgroup's monitoring of the attendance data on the ESSCP dashboard, noting the 34% increase over the previous year.

Of the cases audited, many of the children had attended A&E due to self-harm multiple times. Reasons for attendance included cutting to arms and legs and overdosing on insulin (as a form of self-harm). Two of the children arrived at A&E via ambulance.

Overall, the auditors were satisfied that there were strong systems in place to deal with the immediate needs of children presenting at A&E due to self-harm. The audit found that there was good working multi-agency working to respond to safeguarding concerns, particularly between ESHT, Social Care, the school and CAHMS. The audit also identified strong professional curiosity by staff in A&E, leading to timely and appropriate referrals.

Further work was identified to provide assurance that care plans are shared with relevant agencies on discharge, in particular schools and general practice, as this could not be evidenced in all cases that were audited.

It was also not clear from the audit what could have been done to prevent the young person from self-harming or if there was a more appropriate place for a child's mental health needs to be addressed. The chair recommended the audit findings were shared with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group to discuss further work required on identifying how self-harm can be prevented.

The QA audit group held an audit on six cases of **intrafamilial child sexual abuse** in December 2024. The audit theme was chosen to provide assurance that learning and recommendations highlighted in the [ESSCP Child Y Safeguarding Practice Review](#), published in 2022, had been effectively embedded into local practice. The audit focused on the following key questions:

- Were procedures followed?
- Were relevant agencies, such as SWIFT and cSARC invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings?
- Was there clarity in the plan regarding how the children's needs are to be addressed?
- Was the Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview carefully planned and appropriately documented?

The cases selected included children aged between six and 17 years old at the time of reporting the abuse. All the cases featured multi-agency involvement, a strategy discussion, and an ABE interview had taken place. The perpetrators of abuse in the cases audited included a biological father, stepfather, a parent's ex-partner and a family friend. Many of the children had also experienced self-harm, neglect, physical abuse and parental mental health issues. Two cases were Child in Need, and one was a Looked After Child.

The audit highlighted that the learning points from Child Y had been successfully embedded into practice: in all six cases procedures were followed; relevant agencies were invited to attend or contribute to multi-agency meetings; there was clarity in the plan regarding how the child's needs were to be addressed; and in five cases the ABE interviews were carefully planned and appropriately documented

The audit identified learning around recording and follow up of health needs, when a health needs assessment was not undertaken and issues with securing ABE trained social workers. The auditors also reflected on the challenges of supporting children and families when there are lengthy police investigations, noting that in two of the six cases audited police investigations had been ongoing for over a year.

The **QA subgroup recommended** that issues raised in the audit regarding ABE interviews were escalated to delegated safeguarding partners, and to request assurance on the plan for increasing the number of social workers trained. The audit also recommended that the ESSCP closely monitor the provision for holistic health assessments in the newly commissioned SARC service (from April 2025), and that the ESSCP seek assurance on the quality and robustness of multi-agency working in cases where there are lengthy police investigations or decisions to take no further police action.

The QA subgroup held a **regular case file audit** of six recent cases where a Section 47 enquiry had been initiated and/or a Strategy Discussion had been held, in February 2025. The ESSCP try to undertake a regular case file audit once a year as a 'window on the safeguarding system'.

The cases selected were children aged 4-15 years old at the time considered in this audit. The children had experienced domestic abuse, poor parental mental health, neglect and sexual abuse. Five children were on a Child Protection plan when the cases were selected, with one case open to the children's disability service.

The audit found that in all six cases there was timely and appropriate identification of risk, good collaboration and communication between partner agencies, and effective strategy discussions and section 47 enquiries. There were examples of excellent practice in individual cases, such as persistent and creative engagement of father and child in one case, use of professional networks, and examples of innovative engagement with children, particularly those with complex needs.

As a 'window on the system' the audit group were concerned that two-thirds of strategy meetings held, in the cases audited, were held without 'input' from general practice. This highlighted learning for multi-agency practice regarding improved coordination and information sharing in particular from general practice

- 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 (up to September 2024). Examples of indicators focused on by the QA subgroup in 2024-25 included:
 - Continued focus on self-harm and suicide. Indicator 42 (Attendances at A&E due to deliberate self-harm) was escalated to the ESSCP Steering Group to consider the significant increase in attendances by children to East Sussex A&E departments due to deliberate self-harm. An audit was held in May 2024 to review the quality and robustness of safeguarding response to these children. Learning and recommendations from the audit were shared with the with the East Sussex Children and Young People Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing Partnership Group to discuss further work required on identifying how self-harm can be prevented. Next steps were aligned to respond to the significant rise in suspected child suicides, with a multi-agency workshop held in January 2025 to identify immediate and longer-term action to reduce serious self-harm and suicide.
 - At the start of 2024-25 agreement was made with Sussex Police to expand the range of data supplied for the ESSCP dashboard. New information included more detailed breakdown of sexual offences against children (including the age of the suspected perpetrator - which has helped with the partnership’s understanding of harmful sexual behaviour); improved data on domestic abuse crimes where children are involved (previously the QA subgroup had relied on MARAC information); and more detailed information about exploitation, use of custody, and diversion activity.
 - The subgroup has closely monitored the number of children with child protection plans over the past year in light of children social care’s plans to safely reduce the numbers following the previous period of unsustainable high levels. The QA subgroup has challenged children’s social care colleagues on the robustness of plans, the impact on re-referrals, and repeat child protection plans. In addition, the QA subgroup has overseen the introduction of new performance measures regarding quoracy and participation by multi-agency partners at child protection conferences.
- 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.

7.2 Lansdowne Secure Children's Home

Lansdowne secure children's home is within the Partnership's local area. The unit underwent an extensive review and redesign of the staffing structure during a closure period from February 2023. The home reopened in February 2024.

It is a statutory requirement of the partnership to undertake a review of the use of restraint within Lansdowne. Regulation 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2015 defines 'restraint' means using force or restricting liberty of movement. Therefore, a review should consider the use of physical restraint along with other practices, such as the use of 'single separation' (where children are locked into an area) and 'managing away' (locked into an area with staff).

For 2024/25 the partnership reviewed the Lansdowne Restraint Dashboard, Managing Away Report, Action Plan and the Ofsted reports for inspections undertaken in 2024/25. The Restraint Dashboard detailed the number of restraint incidents (for individuals or as a unit), the reason for the restraint, the restraint holds used, and the location and duration of the restraint. The Managing Away report detailed the number of Managing Away incidents (for individuals or as a unit) and the duration of Managed Away. Lansdowne's action planning detailed extensive actions in relation to staff training, support and wellbeing, including observational practice supervision, significant incident debriefs, reflective and trauma informed practice and through record keeping.

From the reports provided by both the unit and the external scrutiny of Ofsted, the DSPs considered the unit's approaches to managing behaviour, episodes of single separation and use of restraint. The effective relationships between staff and the children were evident, with well-informed staff able to use support strategies in response to incidents. The partnership was encouraged to see that the manager and leadership team promote learning and development of the team, supporting staff to develop and grow, which includes attendance at ESSCP training programmes.

A full Ofsted inspection was undertaken in September 2024, with a follow up monitoring visit in March 2025. The full inspection in 2024 found the secure children's home provides effective services that met the requirements for **good**. Ofsted observed:

'Children told inspectors that they feel safe and always have someone that they can talk to if they are worried about something.'

Staff complete the mandatory training required by the organisation. They also receive bespoke training that is tailored to the needs of the children. Staff discuss safeguarding issues in team and one-to-one meetings. This provides opportunities for staff to discuss and reflect further about specific safeguarding issues. As a result, training is focused on care, support and the safeguarding needs of children.

*Incidents where **physical restraint** is used are closely scrutinised to ensure that the measure was appropriate and proportionate. Children are seen by a nurse at the earliest opportunity*

following an incident to ensure they are well supported. The manager and the leadership team scrutinise records closely and provide robust oversight. A debrief and evaluation takes place to consider how to prevent recurrence. As a result, learning and reflection ensure that staff practice is safe and that children are cared for.

The multidisciplinary ‘Safeguarding Huddle’ meetings provide an opportunity for leaders, managers, health team members and staff to regularly assess the care and risks that exist for each child. These discussions inform each child’s individual risk assessments and safety plans. This helps to ensure that staff are aware of each child’s vulnerabilities and what they need to do to help keep children safe. As a result, children have their individual needs met in a way that best helps to keep them and staff supporting them safe.

***Single separation** (where children are locked in an area when they meet the legal criteria of being a significant risk to themselves or others) and **managing away** (where children are with staff but are kept apart from their peers due to risk) are used minimally and appropriately. Children receive the support and care they need from staff during and following these times. When a restriction is used, there is clear rationale for the decision-making. There is robust management oversight and regular review to ensure appropriate practice, and the least amount of time is used.*

When safeguarding incidents or concerns occur, these are reported swiftly to the appropriate professionals, including the local authority designated officer. Records are comprehensively completed, and management oversight is robust with clear communication, expectations and learning outcomes. This helps to safeguard children and protect them from future harm.’

The Ofsted monitoring visit in March 2025 did not identify any concerns in relation to the use of restraint within Lansdowne.

Following helpful feedback in July 2025 from Ofsted, the ESSCP will be improving its practice with regards to the review of restraint practices at Lansdowne. For 2025/26 and ongoing, the LADO will be undertaking quarterly visits to Lansdowne to review reports and recordings from incidents to determine a view of practice and safeguarding. These regular visits will be accumulated to inform a ESSCP annual review for ESSCP Independent Quality Assurance Chair and Lay Member scrutiny.

8. ESSCP Budget and value for money

8.1 Actual Income and Expenditure 2024/25:

ESSCP BUDGET REPORT 2024/25	2024/25 Expenditure
Independent Scrutiny	£12,703
Business Managers and Administrator	£112,370
Learning & Development Consultant	£64,295
Administration	£1,300
Partnership Meetings/Events and Training Programme	£9,410
QA and Data Support	£18,000
Pan Sussex Procedures	£7,707
IT Software and Hardware	£1,316
Safeguarding Practice Reviews	£18,513
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£245,614

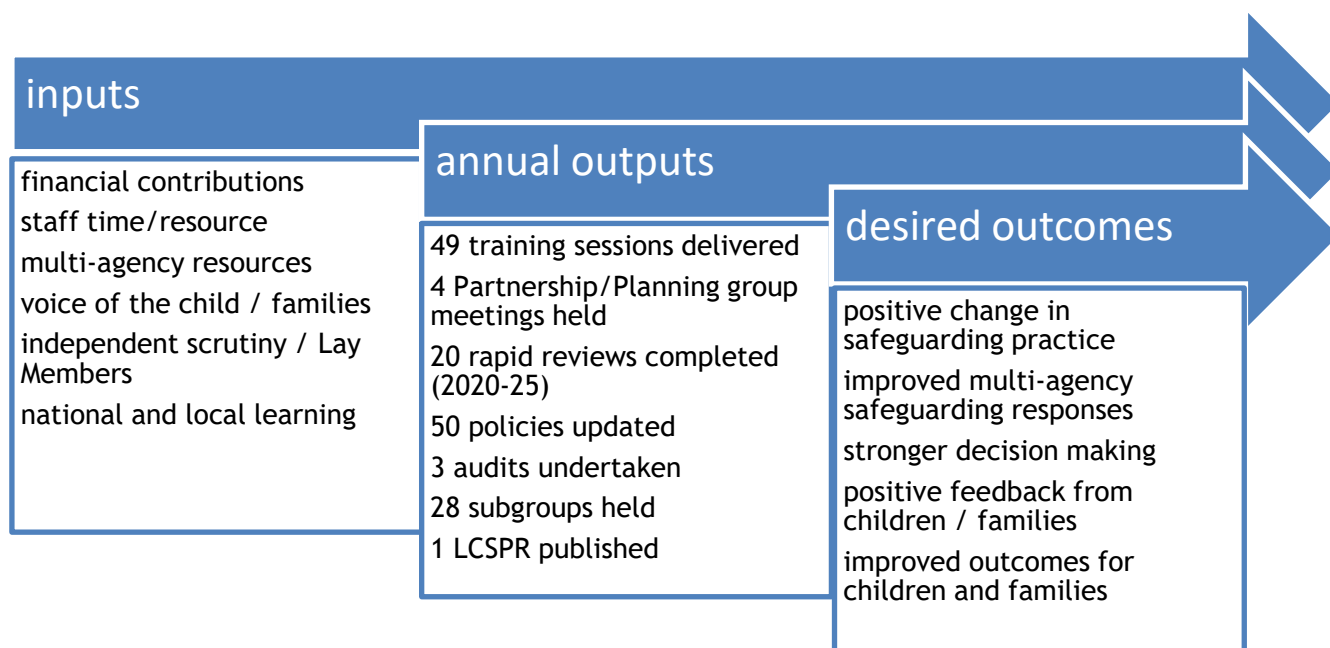
FUNDING BY SOURCE 2024/25	2024/25 Income
ESCC base budget	£139,600
ICB Sussex (NHS)	£53,987
Sussex Police	£36,750
Training income (cc3033)	£6,458
C/forward income - 23/24	£28,146
TOTAL INCOME	£264,941

NET (OVER) / UNDER*	£19,327
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* 2024/25 confirmed underspend of £19,327. This is largely due to unspent independent scrutiny funds post the Independent Chair's resignation, as well as efficiencies with venue sourcing and administration costs.

8.2 Evaluating value for money

Evaluating the value for money (VfM) of the ESSCP involves assessing whether the support to partnership arrangements are effective in a way that is *economically efficient*, *efficient in delivery*, and *produces impact*. The table below details the inputs, outputs and desired outcomes for the ESSCP:



In 2025/26 the ESSCP will be undertaking a full evaluation of the partnership arrangements, which will include an element of value for money, in particular for the learning & development function. This will be fully reported in the 2025/26 Annual Report.

Prior to this, by considering East Sussex's statistical neighbours (as per the table below), it is possible to compare broad indicators of value for money:

- East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership spend is £2.72 per child. Amongst statistical neighbours this is mid-range, with Northumberland being the highest at £6.25 and Essex the lowest at £1.20.
- East Sussex deprivation is moderate, and the county has a higher rate of children subject to a Child Protection Plan and rate of children looked after than many statistical neighbours. This combination suggests East Sussex is not a 'high spender' in terms of safeguarding children's partnership funding compared with neighbours, but has high levels of statutory intervention.
- Serious incident notifications are mid-high per capita: SI notifications per 10k are around 1.45 for East Sussex – not the highest, but above several neighbours. This can be interpreted two ways: a greater propensity to report/notify which is positive for safeguarding culture, or a higher incidence of serious incidents. This would require further work to determine, however the conversion rate from SI's to Local Safeguarding Practice Review is considered appropriate by the National Panel review of Rapid Review outcomes.

	0-17 year old population (ONS mid-year estimates 2023)	IDACI average score in 2019	Rate of children subject to CPP per 10,000 at end of March 2024	Rate of children looked after per 10,000 at end of March 2024	Serious incident notifications in 2022-2025	SCP spend 2023-24
East Sussex	103606	0.161	66.1	63.4	15	£282,251
Bury	43965	0.169	74.7	59.3	8	£262,280

Dorset	66022	0.121	50.7	56.3	7	£303,140
Devon	147313	0.123	36.0	58.6	26	£280,807
Essex	322812	0.144	31.8	67.8	6	£388,544
Kent	348332	0.158	44.8	35.6	43	£430,522
Cornwall	105686	0.164	19.4	78.2	15	£278,000
Norfolk	169965	0.155	34.8	67.6	13	£516,994
Northumberland	58812	0.174	28.5	50.6	4	£367,730
West Sussex	179008	0.110	65.3	74.1	20	£344,500
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	74285	0.147	36.0	73.5	6	£303,140

9. Appendices

9.A Safeguarding Context 2024-25

Impact of multi-agency working		
Family contacts (to SPOA and other excluding MASH)	↓	The total number of contacts was lower than in previous years (16,785 compared to last year figure of 17,855 and 2022-23 figure of 17,798).
Information gatherings by Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	↑	The number of multi-agency information gathering (MIG's) increased by 8.7% (24,676 compared to 22,699), continuing the year on year increase (between 2023-24 MIGs increased by 7%, the previous year by 8%)
Referrals to statutory social care	↓	The number of referrals to statutory social care decreased between 2024-25 and 2023-24 (4117 compared to 4400).
Privately Fostered children	↓	Following a peak of 50 in summer 2024, the number of Privately Fostered children fell to 22 at the end of 2024-25. Generally, the number of privately fostered children is lower than previous years.
Children supported by statutory services		
Children with a child protection plan	↓	The number of CP plans has steadily fallen throughout 2024-25 to a low of 614 at the end of March 2025. This figure was 11% lower than the March 2024 total of 688 plans and is the lowest monthly figure for over two years, from a peak of 766 at the end of February 2024.
Looked After Children	↑	The number of Looked After Children increased by 5% in 2024-24 compared to the previous year (690 compared to 655 across the year in 2023-24). The number peaked in October 2024 at 709, the highest figure in over two years.
Looked after Children who are Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as UASC)	↔	The number of Looked after Children who are Separated Migrant Children (formerly known as UASC) remained relatively stable across 2024-25 and to a similar level as 2023-24. The end of year figure of 71 was similar to the end of year 2024 figure of 69.
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 12 children rated 'red' in 2024-25 compared to 14 in 2023-24. Overall, the number of 'red' and 'amber' cases held at SAFER has decreased by 30% (21 at the end of 2024-25 compared to 30 in March 2024).

Sexual offences against children	N/A	There were 491 sexual offences against children recorded by Sussex Police in 2024/25: 267 where the suspect was an adult (59 rape, 208 other sexual offence); and 224 where suspect was aged 0-17 (79 rape, 145 other sexual offence).
Children with family related vulnerabilities		
Domestic abuse crimes where children were involved	N/A	There were a total of 2676 domestic abuse crimes recorded in East Sussex during 2024-25 year where children were involved. On average, children are involved in 44.1% of all domestic abuse crimes reported to the police.
Vulnerable young carers	↓	There were 310 children's social care assessments completed in 2023/24 where a young carer was identified as a factor, this is an decrease compared to 380 in the previous year.
Children educated at home	↓	The number of children school age children recorded as being electively home educated at the end of March 2025 is lower than the March 2024 figure (1626 compared to 1820). However, this still represents a 30% increase on the March 2023 figure of 1262. In November 2024 there was a two year high of 1958 children being electively home educated.
Children with health related vulnerabilities		
Children with disabilities with a Child Protection Plan	↑	At the end of March 2025 there were 31 children with disabilities with a child protection plan and increase of 47% on the previous end of year figure of 21. On average, the number of children with a CPP was 34 per month compared to 24 in 2023-24.
Children attending A&E due to self-harm	↓	739 children in 2024-25 attended A&E in East Sussex hospitals due to deliberate self-harm, a decrease from the 786 who attended in 2023-24 (however this still represents an increase from 692 in 2022/23 and 612 in 2021/22). There was a peak of 76 attendances in September 2024.
Contacts to SPOA CAMHS	↓	A total of 5566 contacts were made to the CAMHS 'front door' (SPOA) in 2024-25. This is a slight decrease from the previous year high of 5963.
Children whose actions place them at risk		
Missing episodes	↑	There were a total of 3065 missing episodes in 2024-25, a 29% increase on the 2023-24 figure of 2373.
Number of permanent exclusions from school	↓	There were a total of 97 permanent exclusions from school across the 2024-25 financial year, compared to 125 in the previous year. The 2024-25 figure has fallen back in line with the 2022-23 levels.

Young people entering the youth justice system	↓	79 young people entered the youth justice system for the first time in 2024-25 compared to 85 in 2023-24. The rate of FTE per 100,000 0-17-year-olds is still well below the target rate (50 per 100,000 compared to a target of 75)
Young people held overnight in Police custody	↓	There were 8 occasions of young people being held overnight in Police custody in 2024-25, slightly higher than in 2023-24, but lower than in previous years (11 in 2022/23 and 2021/22)

9.B: Partnership Group Membership - as at March 2025

NAME	TITLE, ORGANISATION
Carolyn Fair	Director of Children's Services, East Sussex County Council
Naomi Ellis	Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, NHS Sussex
Richard McDonagh (CHAIR)	Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police Service

Anne Moynihan	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Deborah Jenkin	Senior Business Administrator
Giovanna Simpson	Training & Development Consultant, East Sussex SCP
Harriet Martin	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Louise MacQuire-Plows	Manager, East Sussex SCP
Nick Porter	Lay Member, East Sussex SCP
Victoria Jones	Manager, East Sussex SCP

Alix Hews (AH)	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children - East Sussex, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Alison Sheta / Stacy Pettit	SARC - Mountain Healthcare
Gail Gowland	Head of Safeguarding (Adults and Children), East Sussex Healthcare Trust
Gareth Knowles	SECamb Trust Safeguarding Lead, Clinical Supervisor
Gemma Brown	Named Nurse Safeguarding Children, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
Jackie Dyer / Lynne Torpey	NHS England and NHS Improvement - South
Jo Tomlinson	Head of Safeguarding and Looked After Children, NHS Sussex
Joe Nhemachena	Deputy Director of Clinical Standards & Safeguarding, NHS Sussex
Judith Sakala	Named GP for Child Safeguarding, NHS Sussex
Michael Brown	Head of Safeguarding Children & Looked After Children, SPFT
Sally Pullen	Head Of Service, East Sussex School Health, Children's Integrated Therapies and Equipment Services Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust
Sergio Lopez-Gutierrez	Designated Nurse Safeguarding Children for NHS Sussex
Tracey Ward (Deputy Chair)	Designated Doctor Safeguarding Children, NHS Sussex
Vicky Ashby	General Manager, East Sussex CAMHS, Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust
Vikki Carruth	Director of Nursing, East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust

David Kemp	Head of Community Safety, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
Eleanor Gregory	Interim Head of East Sussex Probation Delivery Unit
Kate Adams	Service Manager, Sussex Children & Family Court Advisory Support Service CAFCASS
Kate Lawrence	Chief Executive Lotus Families East Sussex
Kyra Siddall-Ward	Executive Primary Headteacher, Cavendish Education Trust

Amanda Glover	Operations Manager, Adults Services, ESCC
Bob Bowdler, Cllr	Lead Member for Children and Families
Catherine Dooley	Senior Manager - Education Division, ESCC
Deborah Ennis	Assistant Director, Transformation and Commissioning, Children's Services
Douglas Sinclair	Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance, Children's Services
Emma King	Consultant, Public Health, ESCC
Justine Armstrong - Smith	Safer Communities Manager, ESCC
Kathy Marriott	Assistant Director (Early Help & Social Care), Children's Services
Magdalena Kaiser	ESCC Children's Services - Safeguarding Unit Operations Manager
Rachel Doran	Legal & Coroner Services Manager, ESCC
Sam Harman	Safeguarding Adults Board Development Manager
Star Pswarayi	Head of Safeguarding Adults, ESCC
Vicky Finnemore	Head of Specialist Services, Children's Services

Charlotte O'Callaghan	Senior Policy Officer, Wealden District Council
David Plank	Director, Child + Adult Safeguarding, Wealden District Council
Peter Hill	Senior Policy Officer, Wealden District Council, Wealden District Council
Richard Parker-Harding	Head of Environmental Health, Rother District Council
Seanne Sweaney	Community Services Lead, Lewes District & Eastbourne Borough Councils
Verna Connolly	Head of People and Business Support, Hastings Borough Council

9.C Links to other documents

[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 24-28](#)

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

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

[East Sussex Youth Cabinet](#)

[West Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

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

9.D Acronyms

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ALWSPA	Abuse Linked to Accusations of Witchcraft and Spiritual Possession
AMH	Adult Mental Health
B&H	Brighton & Hove
CACE	Collaboration Against Child Exploitation
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CDOP	Child Death Overview Panel
CDRP	Child Death Review Panel
CME	Children Missing Education
CNB	Child Not Brought
CPP	Child Protection Plan
CQC	Care Quality Commission
CRG	Case Review Subgroup
CSARC	Children's Sexual Assault Referral Centre
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
CYPT	Children and Young People Trust
DA	Domestic Abuse
DAT	Duty and Assessment Team
DfE	Department for Education
DHR	Domestic Homicide Review
DSP	Delegated Safeguarding Partner
DSVA	Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse
EET	Education, Employment, or Training
EHE	Electively Home Educated
ES	East Sussex
ESFRS	East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
ESHT	East Sussex Health Trust
ESSCP	East Sussex Safeguarding Children's Partnership
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HSB	Harmful Sexual Behaviour
ICB	Integrated Care Board
JTAI	Joint Targeted Area Inspection
LAC	Looked After Children
LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
LCSPR	Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
LGBTQ	Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender queer
LPS	Liberty Protection Safeguards
LSCLG	Local Safeguarding Children Liaison Groups
LSCP	Local Safeguarding Children's Partnership
LSP	Lead Safeguarding Partner
MACE	Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group
MACS	Multi-Agency Child Safeguarding
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASA	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
MCA	Mental Capacity Assessment
NAI	Non Accidental Injury
NPS	National Probation Service
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PG	Partnership Group
PP	Perplexing Presentations
PSHE	Personal Social Health and Economic
QA	Quality Assurance

RPC	Reducing Parental Conflict
SAB	Safeguarding Adults Board
SAFER	Situation, Assessment & Actions, Family, Expected Response, Referral & Recording
SAR	Safeguarding Adult Review
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
SCARF	Single Combined Agency Report Form
SCP	Safeguarding Children Partnership
SCR	Serious Case Reviews
SECamb	South East Coast Ambulance
SEND	Special Education Needs and Disabilities
SEROCU	Southeast Regional Organised Crime Unit
SLES	Standards and Learning Effectiveness Service
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based
SOLAH	Safer Online at Home
SPFT	Sussex Partnership Foundation Trust
SPOA	Single Point of Advice
SSCE	Sussex Safeguarding Children Executive
STP	Sustainability and Transformation Plan
SUDI	Sudden Unexpected Death in Infancy
SWIFT	Specialist Family Services
TASP	The Associate of Safeguarding Partners
TOR	Terms of Reference
VCSE	Voluntary Charity Social Enterprise
VFM	Value for money
WS	West Sussex
YOT	Youth Offending Team

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**East Sussex
Safeguarding
Children
Partnership**

Annual Report 2024-25 Executive Summary

Introduction:

We are delighted to present the 2024-25 annual report on behalf of the three statutory partners of the East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP). The full report can be found on the partnership's website here: [ESSCP Annual Report - ESSCP](#)

We hope you find this executive summary useful in understanding the partnership's work, the challenges the children's safeguarding system faces 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.

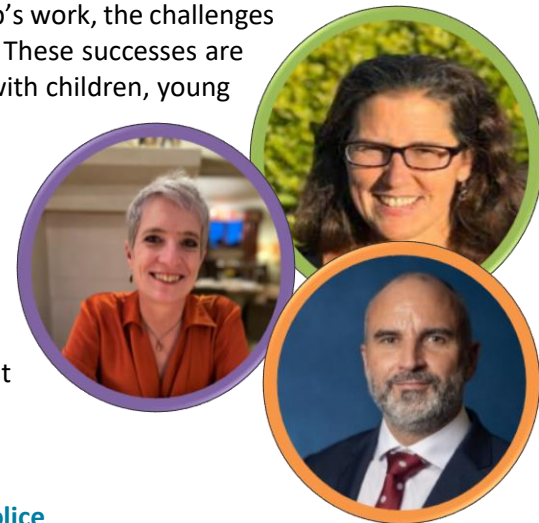
Through promoting professional curiosity across the multi-agency workforce and ensuring the lived experience of the child is recognised, we strive to keep children at the centre of our thinking and delivery at all levels.

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.

Carolyn Fair - Director of Children's Services, East Sussex County Council

Richard McDonagh - Chief Superintendent, Head of Public Protection, Sussex Police

Naomi Ellis - Deputy Chief Nursing Officer, Director of Patient Experience & Involvement, NHS Sussex



Partnership Arrangements

The purpose of the partnership is to ensure that agencies work effectively together to safeguard and protect children, ensuring children receive the right help when needed by the right people. The ESSCP works closely with the safeguarding partnerships in West Sussex and Brighton & Hove to avoid duplication and share best practice.

Richard McDonagh is the ESSCP Chair. The ESSCP's core partnership functions are:

- providing **leadership** to all agencies by promoting a culture that supports critical thinking and professional challenge;
- promoting and embedding a culture of continuous **learning** which supports local services to become more reflective and implement changes to practice; and
- providing **oversight & assurance** on single agency and multi-agency safeguarding practice.

More information about what we do can be found in this [3-minute video](#)

Key learning & Achievements 2024-25:

- Two multi-agency Rapid Reviews conducted in response to serious incidents.
- Rapid review briefings published and two 'Learning from Serious Safeguarding Incidents' sessions held.
- One LCSPR published. Three completed LCSPRs awaiting publication due to pending family engagement and Home Office sign-off.

- Launch of pan Sussex and local Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, in response to Working together 2023, in September 2024.
- Significant development of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements with education and voluntary sector.

- 694 multi-agency staff attended 49 core ESSCP training courses.
- 100% of evaluations rated course as Excellent or Good.
- 250 multi-agency staff attended across 7 learning sessions during Safeguarding Fortnight in November 2024.
- 5 new courses introduced into the training offer.

Learning from case reviews

Partnership development

ESSCP Learning & Achievements 2024-25

Training

Safeguarding projects

Business Priorities 2024/25

Case File Audits

- Task & Finish Groups / Project Activities:
 - Pan Sussex Information Sharing
 - Online Safety
 - SingleView
 - Social Care Transformation

- Safeguarding children in schools
- Safeguarding adolescents
- Embedding learning

Three multi-agency audits held:

- Quality and robustness of response to children presenting at A&E due to deliberate self-harm.
- Intra-familial child sexual abuse
- Regular case file audit of recent safeguarding cases.

Leadership:

The ESSCP emphasised strong, collaborative leadership to deliver effective multi-agency safeguarding across agencies. Key developments in 2024-25 included:

- **Independent scrutiny:** Transition from an Independent Chair to a more flexible scrutiny model, with plans for young scrutineers to be appointed in 2025 and flexibility to conduct in depth scrutiny reviews, to strengthen focus on frontline practice and the child's voice .
- **Delivering our Strategic priorities (2023–26):** Safeguarding in education (including strengthening focus on children not in regular school attendance, establishing an Education Subgroup, and funding a Theatre in Education programme focusing on healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviours, and online safety); safeguarding adolescents (including tackling exploitation and serious youth violence, preventing self-harm and suicide, and safe transition to adulthood); and embedding learning from audits and reviews (including a focus on safeguarding infants).
- **Escalating and addressing risks and issues:** Ongoing oversight of budget pressures, service capacity issues, and the police "SIGNS" process to improve information sharing.
- **Culture of critical thinking and professional challenge:** Leaders promoted critical thinking and visible senior management involvement in complex cases, while acknowledging that professional curiosity and inter-agency challenge still require strengthening
- **Engagement of relevant stakeholders:** Creating a new Education Subgroup to ensure that education partners are fully engaged and contributing to safeguarding developments; joining the adult safeguarding board to expand the Safeguarding Community Network to include VCSE groups working with children and families.

Learning:

The Partnership is committed to creating and promoting a learning culture across all agencies, so that professionals across all levels are able to learn, improve, challenge each other, and evaluate our effectiveness. Activity in 2024-25 included:

- **Undertaking two rapid reviews** following serious safeguarding incidents.

Child 4 Rapid Review	Child 5 Rapid Review
Learning Briefing - Child 4 (esscp.org.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Convening a multi-agency strategy meeting when significant events or new disclosures occur. ✓ Risks assessed at the pre-birth to be reviewed regularly, in particular for premature babies. ✓ Support for isolated single carers of vulnerable premature babies to transition from a highly supportive hospital environment to the home environment. ✓ Appropriate and equal consideration to be given to fathers when considering the benefits of utilising parent and baby assessment placements. ✓ Multi agency awareness and understanding of how Family and Criminal court parallel processes interplay. ✓ Importance of parents/carers receiving ICON materials, and in particular appropriate ICON materials for prem babies. 	Learning Briefing - Child 5 (esscp.org.uk) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Professionals to ensure they have clarity on the child's ethnicity and culture, and that this is considered in their approach to practice. ✓ GP engagement in strategy meetings and section 47 enquiries to gain a holistic view of the child's lived experience. ✓ Convening a complex case meeting to address escalating and enduring risks where current service provisions are unable to reduce risk. ✓ Ensuring that appropriate language is used by the multi-agency system in exploitation cases to ensure victims are not recorded as putting themselves at risk through their choices and behaviours, rather than the responsibility being placed on those doing the exploiting.

- **Publishing the Child Z safeguarding practice review:** <https://www.esscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/ESSCP-Child-Z-LCSPR-Report-FINAL-13.03.25.docx>

- **Undertaking three audits** on the quality and robustness of responses to children who present at A&E due to deliberate self-harm; intra-familial child sexual abuse, with a particular focus on testing if learning from the Child Y LCSPP (published in 2023) had been embedded into practice; and an audit on the quality and effectiveness of s47 strategy discussions. A preventing suicide and self-harm workshop in December 2024 produced six recommendations, including system-wide responses, peer support, curriculum development, and research into online harms.
- **Training and workforce development:** 694 staff attended 49 courses, with 100% of evaluations rating the course excellent or good; five new courses were added to the ESSCP programme, including a revised 'Neglect' training course, harmful sexual behaviours, and adult mental health and suicide risk management. The ESSCP 'trauma informed' training was co-designed and delivered with people who have lived experience of trauma, recovery and involvement of services.

Oversight & Assurance:

The ESSCP continued to scrutinise the effectiveness of child protection and safeguarding practice through evidence-based auditing, performance management and independent challenge. Key assurance mechanisms in 2024-25 included:

- **Use of an Independent Chair and Lay Members** to act as 'critical friends' and provide independent challenge and scrutiny of the work of the partnership and agency practice.
- **The Section 11 self-assessment** conducted in summer 2024 provided evidence of how well agencies keep children safe. An independent scrutineer, who held 'challenge conversations' with agencies on their return provided a high level of assurance for the capacity of agencies to critically evaluate strengths and areas for improvements. A high level of assurance was observed in standards such as senior management commitment to safeguarding. However, areas requiring further improvement included the need to integrate the perspectives of children and families better in agency's strategic decision making.
- The **Quality Assurance (QA) Subgroup** held three audits of practice regarding the response to vulnerable children who present at A&E due to deliberate self-harm, how agencies work together to support a child and family where sexual abuse is reported, and an audit of six random safeguarding cases to provide a 'window on the safeguarding system'. The QA subgroup also scrutinise performance data and other safeguarding reports.

Useful resources:

- The East Sussex Safeguarding Children Partnership (ESSCP) provides a thriving training programme with a wide range of courses to ensure professionals who work with children and families stay up-to-date with current local and national safeguarding practice. And from September 2025 all our training is free to attend! To see the full range of courses go to the East Sussex Learning Portal: [East Sussex CC: Log in to the site](#)
- When was the last time you used the Pan Sussex Child Protection and Procedures Manual? [Contents – Sussex Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Procedures Resource](#)
- All of our learning briefings following rapid reviews and safeguarding practice reviews can be found on our website here: [Safeguarding Practice Reviews \(previously Serious Case Reviews\) - ESSCP](#)

Report to: East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

Date of meeting: 9 December 2025

By: Darrell Gale, Director of Public Health

Title: East Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) Update

Purposes: To present to the Health and Wellbeing Board an update on the JSNA for East Sussex.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is recommended to approve the JSNA priorities and workplan for 2026.

1. Background

1.1 The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) programme was established in 2007 and reports on the health and wellbeing needs of the people of East Sussex. It brings together detailed information on local health and wellbeing needs to inform decisions about how we design, commission, and deliver services to improve and protect health and reduce health inequalities. The JSNA is an ongoing, iterative process, led by Public Health within the County Council.

1.2 [Statutory guidance](#) for Joint Strategic Needs Assessments states that the responsibility for overseeing JSNAs lies with the Health and Wellbeing Board and this has been reiterated in [guidance](#) on health and wellbeing boards published in November 2022. In East Sussex, this process has been led by Public Health on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

1.3 Since January 2012, all JSNA work and resources have been placed on the East Sussex JSNA website. These resources have now been transferred to the [East Sussex in Figures \(ESiF\)](#) website where the JSNA has been integrated into one platform for accessing data and intelligence for East Sussex in one central location.

1.4 JSNA resources include local needs assessments, local briefings on specific topics, direct links to national tools containing local data, Director of Public Health Annual Reports, and signposts to other useful resources.

2. JSNA developments since the last report to HWB

There have been many updates to the JSNA since last December. Here are just a few highlights:

- [2024/25 Annual Report of the Director of Public Health is titled Postcards from the Coast. Coastal Communities in East Sussex, their health, wellbeing, and assets](#)
- [Health Inequalities Strategic Summary](#)
- [Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment](#)
- [Multiple Compound Needs - Needs Assessment](#)
- [Sexual Health Rapid Needs Assessment](#)
- [Substance misuse assessment of need update](#)
- [Alcohol Care Team evaluation](#)
- [My Health My School survey results 2023-2024](#)

3. East Sussex in Figures (ESiF).

3.1 The new [ESiF website](#) went live on 8 August 2024. This was a joint project undertaken by the Performance, Research and Intelligence team and the Public Health Intelligence team at ESCC. As set out in the report to the HWB last December, the resources from the main JSNA website were transferred to ESiF in 2025 and the pages went live in October 2025.

4. Health and Wellbeing Board workshop sessions

4.1 At the time of preparing this report, there have been three further deep dive sessions in 2025 covering the JSNA priorities of Building Blocks of Good Health, Life course approach, and Reducing health Inequalities. [Health and Wellbeing Board briefing notes](#) summarise the data and evidence presented in the sessions and subsequent discussions about approaches to meet the challenges faced by our county.

5. Priorities for the system based on JSNA work to date.

5.1 A [summary of the JSNA priorities](#), which were agreed at the December 2024 Health and Wellbeing Board, is available on the JSNA site. This is an infographic summary of key data pertaining to the five JSNA priorities for East Sussex based on work.

5.2 This year we have included “Healthy Environment” with the Building Blocks of Health priority.

5.3 If the board agree to recommend these priorities for 2026, we will update the JSNA summary on the website with the most recent data available.

Figure: East Sussex JSNA priorities



6. Workplan for 2026

6.1 The governance for the JSNA remains the same as reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board in December 2024. The JSNA working group feeds into the East Sussex Health and Care Intelligence group and receives suggestions from this group in the planning and development of JSNA resources (seen at appendix 1). This will be reviewed during the year if there are changes to the East Sussex Health and Care Partnership and programme governance.

6.2 The proposed workplan below sets out the key pieces of work to be undertaken during 2026. This list is not comprehensive and there will be the need to respond to requests as priorities emerge throughout the year. Where appropriate, the work will consider the whole life course.

Work plan for 2026.

- Needs Assessment on the Mental Health of Older People in East Sussex
- Needs Assessment - Healthy Weight in Secondary Care
- Needs Assessment for Children aged under 5
- Needs Assessment for End of Life care (Sussex-wide)
- Needs Assessment for TB (Sussex-wide)
- Director of Public Health Annual Report 2025/26
- Integrated Community Teams (ICT) – Supporting the data and intelligence needs as ICTs develop

7. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

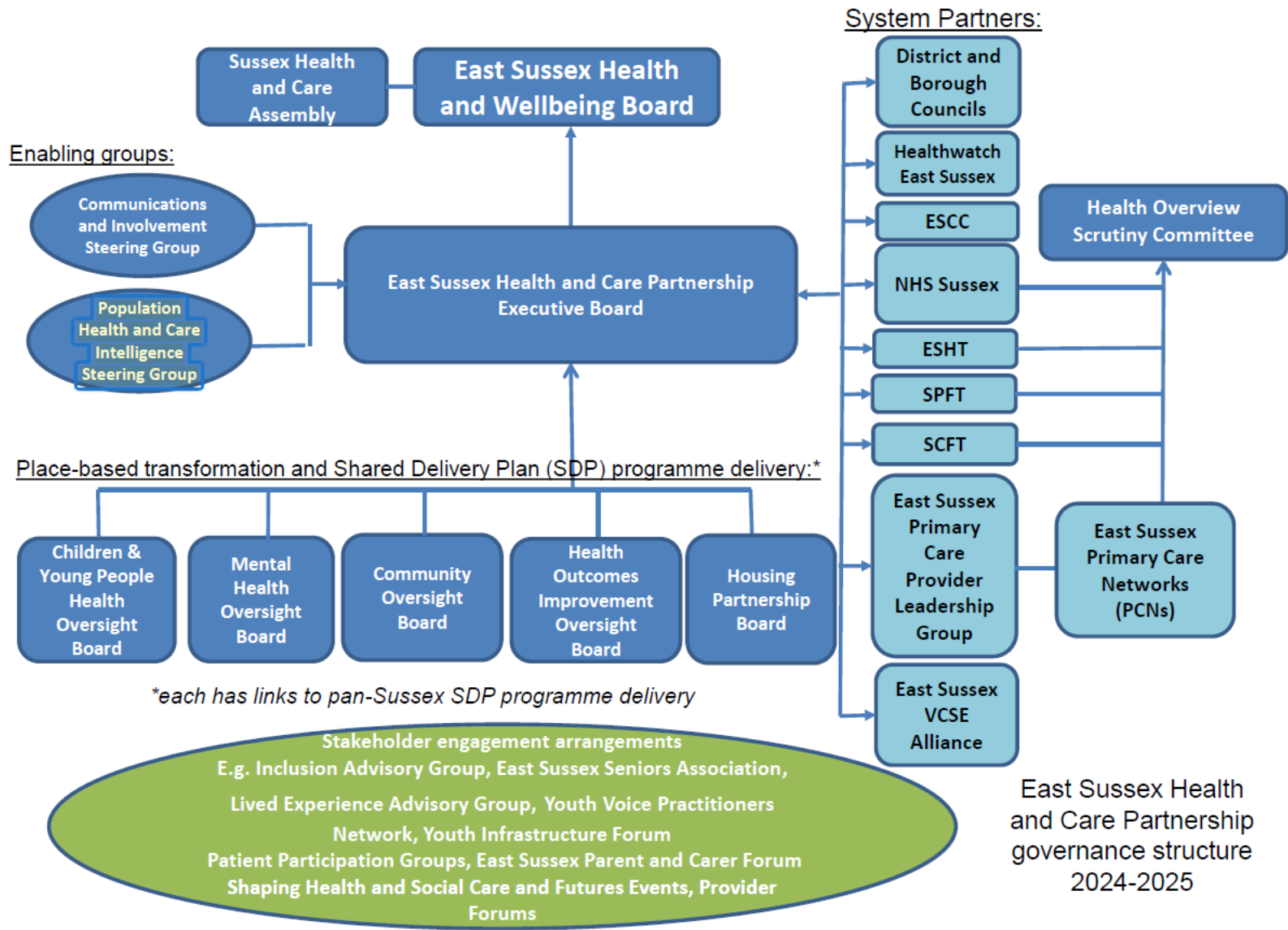
7.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to approve the JSNA Priorities and workplan for 2026.

DARRELL GALE
Director of Public Health

Contact officer: Graham Evans, Head of Public Health Intelligence
Email: graham.evans@eastsussex.gov.uk

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APPENDIX 1 – East Sussex Health and Care Partnership and programme governance



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East Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board Work Programme

Date of Meeting	Report
10 March 2026	East Sussex Health and Social Care Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) Programme - update report
	East Sussex Climate Change Health Impact assessment
21 July 2026	East Sussex Health and Social Care Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) Programme - update report
29 September 2026	East Sussex Health and Social Care Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) Programme - update report
	East Sussex All Age Autism Action Plan

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