



**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.

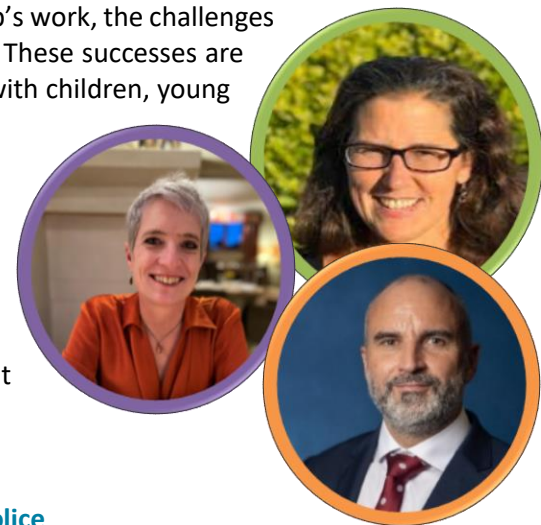
Through promoting professional curiosity across the multi-agency workforce and ensuring the lived experience of the child is recognised, we strive to keep children at the centre of our thinking and delivery at all levels.

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) ✓ 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) ✓ 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 LCSPR (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](#)