

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

2023-2024



E S S E X
Safeguarding
Children
B O A R D

Foreword

All staff and volunteers continue to do an incredible job going above and beyond to ensure children and families in Essex receive the help and support they need. The long-term impact of the Covid lockdown period continues to be felt for many families, and combined with the cost of living crisis, we know times are tough for many. The new ways of working which were adapted during Covid continue to work well in many areas; coupled with traditional services and resources, our partners remain in a strong position to respond effectively to support families in Essex.

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1. Introduction

There are many agencies in Essex supporting children and young people, and it is very important that they all work together as a partnership to ensure they are keeping children safe.

The way these agencies work together to keep children safe is set out in government guidance Working Together 2018.

In Essex there are five organisations who are jointly responsible by law for the partnership arrangements for keeping children safe:

- Essex County Council
- Essex Police
- Three Integrated Care Boards covering the county of Essex

These are known as the Statutory Partners and they have identified relevant agencies which are legally required to cooperate with local safeguarding arrangements (listed in the Appendix).

These partnership arrangements are referred to as the Essex Safeguarding Children Board (ESCB) and this Plan sets out the detail of how the ESCB operates.

At the heart of the arrangements is a commitment from all agencies to work together to keep children safe and to continuously improve and learn how to best do this.



Helen Lincoln
Executive Director
Children, Families & Education
Essex County Council



Kevin Baldwin
Assistant Chief Constable
Public Protection & Criminal Justice
Essex Police



Lisa Nobes
Director of Nursing & Clinical Quality
Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care
Board



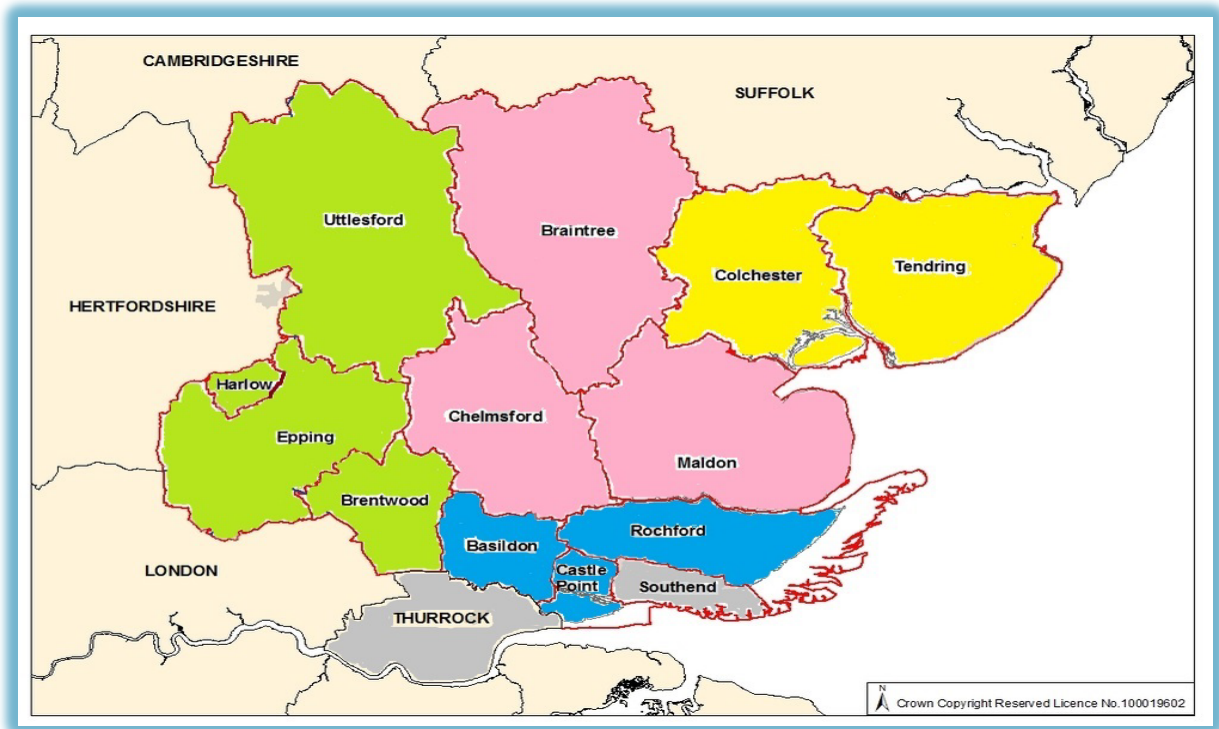
Linda Moncur
Executive Director of Nursing & Quality
Mid and South Essex Integrated Care
Board

Natalie Hammond
Director of Nursing & Quality
Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care
Board

Background

Essex has a complex set of partnership arrangements to support a population of 1.47 million, of which 311 thousand are children and young people under the age of 18. It has one of the largest local authorities in the UK, plus twelve district and borough councils and three Integrated Care Boards (ICBs), two of which overlap with other counties.

In addition, within the geographical county of Essex there are two unitary authorities (Southend and Thurrock).



2. Child safeguarding arrangements in Essex

The ESCB operates in line with the requirements of the statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018' and covers the same geographical area of Essex, as defined by the local authority boundaries.

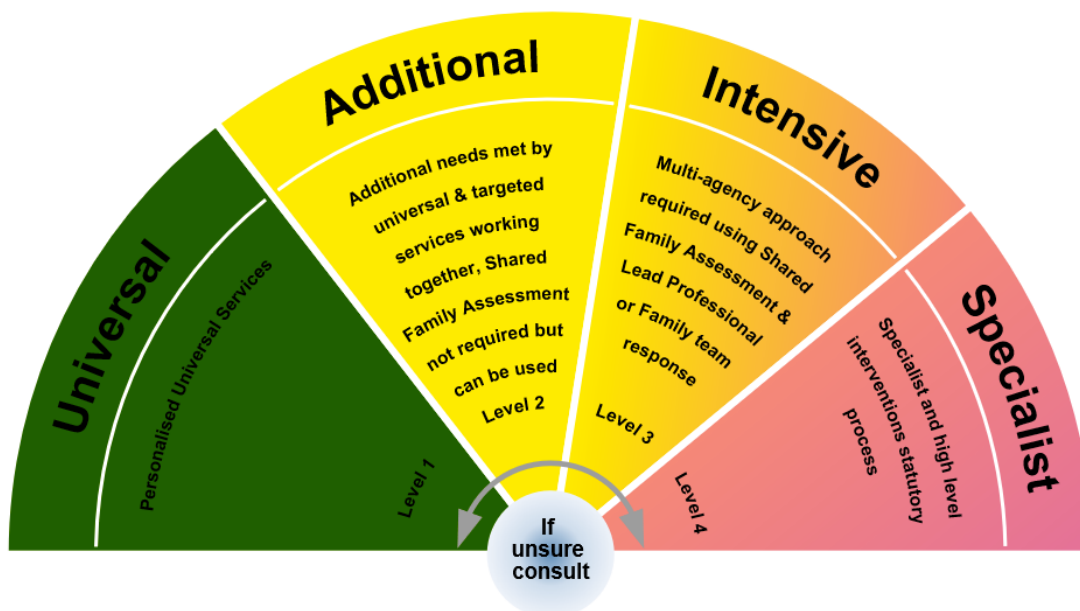
The safeguarding partners and relevant agencies included in these arrangements will fulfil their statutory duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children from Essex who live or are placed outside of our local authority area.

The seven local safeguarding partners jointly leading the Partnership Arrangements are:

- Essex County Council: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the Director of Children's Services
- Essex Police: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the Assistant Chief Constable for Local Policing
- Three Integrated Care Boards: represented on the ESCB Executive Board by the three Directors of Nursing covering the local sustainability and transformation partnerships across Mid and South, North East and West Essex.

Thresholds and levels of need

The Board oversees the multi-agency safeguarding of children with a range of levels of need, as shown by our local threshold document [Effective Support for Children and Families in Essex](#)



(The Essex Effective Support Windscreen)

This forms an integral part of Essex's approach to supporting children, ensuring the right support is provided by the right agency, based on the child's level of need. The approach

also promotes earlier support for families to address issues before they escalate to crisis point and ensure that children are kept safe from harm.

3. Essex vision and values

Vision

The ESCB's vision is that multi-agency child safeguarding arrangements in Essex are of the highest quality, with the child at their heart; and that practice continuously improves and evolves across all agencies to reflect changing needs and circumstances.

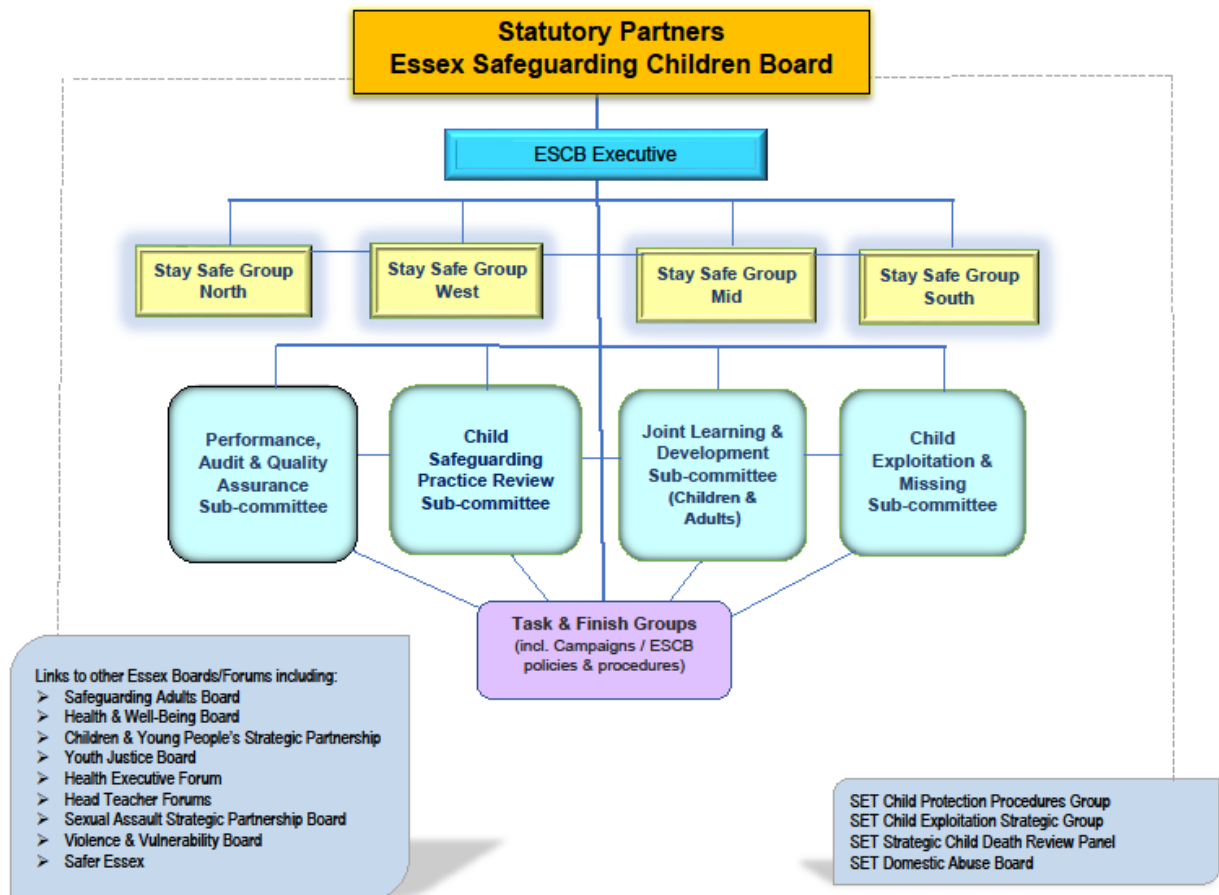
Values

Safeguarding partners in Essex are committed to delivering their vision according to a set of agreed values and principles, and these govern the work of the whole partnership:

- The child is at the heart of everything we do
- Sharing information between partners, and operating with trust and openness
- Continuous learning and the flexibility to evolve the partnership
- Ensuring everyone has a voice, including children and families
- Partners taking ownership and responsibility
- Strong communication and engagement within partners, with clear roles and responsibilities
- Excellent integration between adults and children's safeguarding
- Ensuring a balance of respect for individual organisations and appropriate challenge
- Ensuring alignment, connection and learning across the partners - a golden thread from the Strategic Board, through the Sub-Committees to the front line
- Ensuring involvement and focus on front line practitioners
- Keeping a preventative mind-set and adopting a 'Think Family' approach
- Joint priority setting across partner agencies

4. Structure of the ESCB

There are a number of Sub-Committees reporting to the ESCB that are strongly focussed on improving practice and ensuring an emphasis on learning, enabling a feedback loop across partner agencies and the front line.



Statutory Partners

The Statutory Partners (the decision makers) elected for the ESCB Executive Board to be chaired by an Independent Chair Facilitator and appointed David Archibald in 2019. Whilst his role does not hold any statutory responsibilities he provides a strong independent voice, ensuring that the ESCB operates effectively in promoting the safeguarding, wellbeing and interests of children and young people in Essex.

The Vice Chair role is covered by the statutory partner for health. In addition, each of the Statutory Partners lead on specific priority work areas and have the option of rotating annually (refer to Appendix).

The Statutory Partners supported by the Independent Chair Facilitator meet regularly in advance of each ESCB Executive Board meeting to assure themselves that the work of the partnership is heading in the right direction and agree the draft agenda of the next Executive Board meeting.

Executive Board

The Executive Board is chaired by the Independent Chair Facilitator and membership includes the Statutory Partners along with representatives from Education, Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS), District, City & Borough Councils, Office of Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner and The Probation Service. It meets four times a year with meetings themed around ESCB Business Plan priorities, national safeguarding priorities and areas identified through data and performance, to provide a learning model that is focussed on outcomes.

- **Stay Safe Groups** x 4 across Mid, South, West and North quadrants (chaired by various representatives from across the partnership).
Coordinates and leads the local safeguarding agenda focusing on improving local outcomes and highlighting emerging issues and risks so that they can be appropriately addressed at operational level. They also act as learning hubs to ensure effective sharing of learning and practice and a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children. They provide quarterly updates to the ESCB Executive via a combined report.
- **Performance, Audit, and Quality Assurance Sub-Committee**
Monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of what is done by the ESCB partners (including findings from multi-agency case audits) to inform the Board of relevant trends and any emerging risks, who can then in turn agree appropriate strategies and actions on ways to improve.
- **Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee**
Oversees and monitors the review of serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to Essex with a focus on identifying learning to help organisations to change and become environments in which both the systems and practice can be safely challenged and improved.
- **Child Exploitation & Missing Sub-Committee**
Delivers the SET Child Sexual Exploitation Strategy in Essex by, coordinating partnership work, sharing learning and evaluating the impact of the work carried out by the partnership and individual agencies.
- **Joint Learning and Development Sub-Committee (Children & Adults)**
Identifies multi-agency safeguarding learning needs that require addressing to ensure partner agencies develop their workforces to a high-quality standard and are keeping children / adults safe.

- **Task and Finish Groups** e.g. Communications/campaigns (Children & Adults), Essex focused learning and development working group.

5. Relevant agencies involved

The strength of local partnership working is dependent on safeguarding partners working collaboratively together with relevant agencies, whose involvement the safeguarding partners consider is required to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

In addition to the three main statutory safeguarding partners, a number of other relevant agencies are also required to work with the ESCB. Specific relevant agencies have a representative member on the ESCB Executive Board. In addition, some of these members may sit on ESCB Sub-Committees or be part of Stay Safe Groups.

Schools – with 551 (as at 11 January 2023) settings, Essex schools are vital safeguarding partners. Schools are engaged as part of the ESCB Executive and Sub-Committees to ensure joint working to safeguard children within a multi-agency shared approach. Schools have Headteacher representatives from, Primary, Special Education and Secondary education. In addition, the Essex County Council Director for Education sits on the ESCB Executive Board. Other members (including those from colleges) may sit on ESCB Sub-Committees or be part of Stay Safe Groups.

Early Years Settings – with approximately 1743 settings in Essex which includes Ofsted registered settings, private and voluntary sector providers, childminders, breakfast and after school clubs, this is a large and important sector. Settings are engaged through the Stay Safe Groups to ensure effective sharing of learning and practice and a multi-agency approach to safeguarding children.

Probation – The Probation Service is a key partner and designated as a relevant agency and contributing to the ESCB Executive Board, Sub-Committees and Assembly.

District councils – Essex as a two-tier authority, has 12 city, district, city and borough councils who are crucial for delivery of services to families within the county as they have many more responsibilities than just community safety including housing which is of interest to us. Each is designated as a Relevant Agency of the ESCB. The Chelmsford City Council Chief Executive sits on the ESCB Executive Board as their representative. Other members are part of the Stay Safe Groups and may sit on ESCB Sub-Committees.

NHS Trusts and Providers

Key partners contribute to the ESCB Executive Board, Sub-Committees.

Other providers of commissioned services to Essex County Council Children, Families & Education and Integrated Care Boards - representatives from these services are invited to contribute via Stay Safe Groups where relevant.

Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex – is a key partner as the lead agency for coordinating community safety across Essex and a senior OPFC representative contributes to the Board through the ESCB Executive Board.

Voluntary and Community Sector – are involved with the partnership arrangements and a senior representative from Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) is invited to the ESCB Executive Board. In addition, there is voluntary sector representation on the local Stay Safe Groups through ECVYS members.

Joint work across Southend, Essex and Thurrock:

Whilst Southend, Essex and Thurrock (referred to as SET) each maintain its own independent multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, they have strong collaborative working arrangements, supporting those areas of safeguarding that can be tackled most effectively and have the greatest impact on practice and services for children across the SET area.

They also have areas of cooperation for business planning when developing their individual plans and prioritise which are the key areas of a focus for the planning period.

SET Groups (identified as good practice):

- SET Strategic Child Death Overview Panel
- SET Child Protection Procedures Working Group
- SET Child Exploitation Strategic Group
- SET Domestic Abuse Board

6. Local safeguarding practice reviews and embedding learning

The responsibility for how the system learns lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents lies at a national level with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and at a local level with the safeguarding partners via the ESCB Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee.

The three safeguarding partners have made arrangements to:

- identify serious child safeguarding cases which raise issues of importance in relation to the area,
- ratify the decision making of the ESCB Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee,
- commission and oversee the review of those cases, where they consider it appropriate for a review to be undertaken.

There is an ongoing commitment to continuous learning and improvement leading to enhanced practice, improved outcomes and experiences. Safeguarding partners continue to take account of the findings from all local and national reviews with a view to considering how identified improvements should be implemented locally. This includes the way in which organisations and agencies work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We look at using different methods including appreciative enquiry to undertake and learn from these reviews of practice. Findings from the local reviews undertaken in Essex are shared with relevant parties locally through the Stay Safe Groups and there is regular monitoring to ascertain progress on the implementation of recommended improvements.

The Stay Safe Groups are frontline learning hubs which aim to improve local safeguarding practice and are linked via two-way feedback loop between front line practitioners and the ESCB Executive Board, ensuring learning on priority local issues is shared and acted on at all levels in a timely way.

7. Multi-agency learning and development

The partnership in Essex work together to develop and commission a comprehensive multi-agency learning and development programme.

The learning and development programme is informed by the Board priorities and takes into account practice issues arising from for example local safeguarding practice reviews, multi-agency case audits, inspections, local and national priorities, section 11 audits, feedback from the partnership and emerging issues.

The method of delivery of multi-agency training is based on what is most appropriate and effective and includes e-learning, face to face training, virtual training, conferences, case studies and action learning activities via the local Stay Safe Groups. The ESCB will continue to be creative and innovative in developing learning interventions.

This is evaluated in a variety of ways as set out in the [ESCB monitoring and evaluation toolkit](#) and includes feedback from practitioners, practice audits, supervision and examples of practice changes as set out in individual action plans.

Impact of learning is monitored under the wider performance framework of the ESCB and the findings reported back to the ESCB Executive annually.

8. Independent scrutiny arrangements

Ultimately, we believe that children and young people are our independent scrutiny and the ESCB has a reinvigorated scrutiny plan to ensure that we bring together the wealth of valuable information from various young people's groups in Essex to help raise new and important questions to enable the ESCB to understand what we are doing well and what we need to do better through the lens of young people.

This forms part of our multi systems approach to the independent scrutiny of the effectiveness of our local safeguarding arrangements and comprises a number of functions which also includes scrutiny through learning from:

- parent's views involved in Child Protection Conferences,

- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews, Multi-Agency Case Audits,
- inspections and Peer Learning Reviews across the statutory agencies,
- a stocktake of what we know already and what agencies' independent Inspections have already told us,
- peer reviews (for example across the ESCB Stay Safe Groups as well as external MASA peer reviews with comparable counterparts in the Eastern region),
- best practice as identified via The Association of Safeguarding Partners (TASP).

These functions aim to:

- consider how effectively the arrangements are working for children and families as well as for practitioners,
- ensure the Statutory Partners are providing strong leadership,
- provide reports to the Statutory Partners on relevant areas of safeguarding,
- review the ESCB Annual Scrutiny Report before publication,
- promote an effective strategic safeguarding challenge and reflection to drive continuous improvement.

9. Voice of children and families

The voice of the child is at the heart of our multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. Involving children and families is essential to safeguarding in Essex both in contributing to delivering the ESCB's vision and in helping to scrutinise and review the partnership arrangements themselves.

The ESCB aims to make use of the many existing arrangements in place across Essex to regularly involve children and families in its work and hear their voices. These include:

- Multi-agency case audits
- School councils, youth groups, support groups
- Service user panels

This is supported from information directly from data sources such as:

- The Children & Young People's Involvement Team (Essex County Council)
- Performance teams across the partnership
- Commissioning

10. Dispute resolution and escalation process

Transparency, openness, and a willingness to understand and respect individual and agency views are a core aspect of multi-agency / inter-agency working. However, there may be occasions where individuals / agencies working with children and families disagree on how best to keep children safe and promote their welfare, and therefore all partner agencies have

a responsibility to resolve any professional disagreement between them promptly and amicably in accordance with the SET Child Protection & Safeguarding Procedures.

In the unlikely event that a disagreement cannot be resolved at local level by senior managers within the respective agencies, it can be escalated to the three ESCB Statutory Partners.

11. Funding and business support

The work of the ESCB is supported by a business unit hosted by Essex County Council.

The safeguarding partners are committed to equitable and proportionate funding of this business support and the work of the ESCB as a whole. Contributions from relevant agencies to support the local arrangements have therefore been agreed for 2023-24 and will ensure that the funding is split equally across the three statutory partners with additional contributions from other relevant agencies.

This funding will also include the cost of child safeguarding practice reviews.

Appendix

Designated Relevant Agencies in Essex

The Safeguarding Partners have selected those agencies in Essex which are to be relevant agencies and members involved in the new safeguarding arrangements as shown below. These have been determined as those partners who have regular contact with children or have responsibility for services to them in the local area. (Local Safeguarding Partners Relevant Agencies Regulations 2018):

- All Primary Education Establishments including maintained nursery schools
- All Secondary Education Establishments
- All Special Schools
- All Pupil Referral Units and Alternative Provision Providers
- All Further Education Colleges
- Early Years Settings
- Voluntary Sector
- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Local Authority Housing
- District, City & Borough Councils
- Youth Offending Service
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS)
- Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service
- NHS England
- Mid and South Essex Integrated Care Board
- Suffolk and North Essex Integrated Care Board
- Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board
- Basildon & Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (BTUH)
- Mid Essex Hospital Services NHS Trust (MEHT)
- Southend Hospital University NHS Foundation Trust (SHUFT)
- East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT)
- North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT)
- Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH)
- Southend, Essex and Thurrock Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (SET CAMHS)
- Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT)
- East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust (EEAST)
- Essex Wellbeing Service
- National Probation Service
- Essex Police
- Essex Fire and Rescue Services

Statutory Partners lead areas (with the option of rotating annually):

1. Integrated Care Board lead covers the ESCB Executive Vice Chair role.
2. Assistant Chief Constable for Essex Police ratifies the decision making of the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Sub-Committee.
3. Dispute resolution and escalation process is overseen by the Integrated Care Board leads to determine a way forward.
4. The Executive Director of Children's Services oversees the development of the independent scrutiny arrangements.