



PFCC Decision Report

Please ensure all sections below are completed

<p>Report reference number: 098 - 21</p>
<p>Classification Official</p>
<p>Title of report: SET Local Safeguarding Children Partnership Funding Contributions</p>
<p>Area of county / stakeholders affected: Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships</p>
<p>Report by Megan Hiscock</p> <p>Date of report: 28/10/2021</p> <p>Enquiries to: PS 75588 Moira Kennedy /Megan Hiscock</p>

1. Purpose of the report

The purpose of this paper is to set out current arrangements and to seek agreement regarding the funding from Essex Police towards the Southend Safeguarding Children's Partnership (SSCP), Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB).

2. Recommendations

It is recommended that Essex Police, as a statutory partner of the SSCP, LSCP and ESAB contribute to an 'equitable' funding distribution approach to each of the respective arrangements by adopting the preferred proposal option providing a one third funding contribution of £182,415 for the current year (this is in addition to the existing funding of £98,558 currently funded by the PFCC). The proposal is that for this year alone the additional funding will come from the Police underspend budget

3. Benefits of the proposal

The partnership arrangements are a key enabler to support the Force's priorities around protecting children and vulnerable people from harm.

The value of the three partnership arrangements is realised through the Force's ability to proactively engage and form part of the decision making in each of the respective collaborative functions by:

- contributing to the strategic planning of children's services.
- commissioning and publishing local child safeguarding practice and learning reviews.
- collecting and analysing information about child deaths.
- identifying and analysing new safeguarding issues and emerging threats.
- developing multi-agency policies and procedures.
- effectively sharing information to enable more accurate and timely decision making for children and families.
- communicating the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children to professionals and the public,
- engaging in multi-agency training and development of staff; and,
- ensuring learning is promoted and embedded to implement changes to practice, enabling continuous improvement and ensuring a coordinated multi-agency response.

Working in this manner, with a common purpose, prevents agencies from working in isolation, enabling improved joint decision making and a more coordinated response to ensure the best possible outcomes for children. This is achieved through increased sharing of information and resources, by working with key services to explore areas in which collectively agencies can more effectively respond to issues surrounding children.

The recent Working Together 2018 guidance makes it clear that statutory partners have equal responsibility for safeguarding children and therefore, arguably, the contribution and financial responsibility to the partnership effort ought to be more closely aligned and shared in such a way that a disproportionate burden does not fall on any one particular agency.

Proceeding with the proposal will bring the Force in line with the legislative and national guidance position, ensuring "*equitable and proportionate*" funding and facilitating fair and balanced partnership arrangements across the county.

Moving to a more equitable funding distribution arrangement will enable Essex Police to increasingly hold to account the effectiveness of partner agencies regarding their delivery of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.

4. Background and proposal

National Context

The Wood report, published in March 2016, set out a new framework for improving the organisation and delivery of multi-agency arrangements to protect and safeguard children. The report made recommendations for fundamental change and reform to the Local Safeguarding Children Board arrangements at the time.

Pertinent to this paper, The Wood report found that the cost of the arrangements at that time to key agencies were not sustainable, identifying that *“resources, time and money should be focused on front line service delivery and not the bureaucracy of meeting structures”*.

In legislation, under Section 13 of the Children Act 2004, amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, there is a requirement for each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCP) for their area and specifies the organisations and individuals that should be represented as a Board partner, this includes, *“the chief officer of police for a police area any part of which falls within the area of the authority”*.

The statutory objectives of LSCPs, set out in Section 14 of the Children Act 2004, are to:

- a. *coordinate what is done by each person or body represented on the Board for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children; and*
- b. *ensure the effectiveness of what is done by each such person or body for those purposes.*

In respect of the funding arrangements, Section 15 of the Children Act 2004, specifies that any Board partners *“may make payments towards expenditure incurred... and may provide staff, goods, services, accommodation or other resources”* for the purpose of fulfilling local multi-agency arrangements for safeguarding and promoting welfare of children.

The national Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance, published in July 2018, brings together the framework and legislative requirements for the three statutory local safeguarding partners (the local authority; a clinical commissioning group (CCG) for an area; and the chief officer of police for a police area) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance sets out that safeguarding partners should, *“agree the level of funding secured from each partner, which should be equitable and proportionate... to support the local arrangements”*.

Regional arrangements vary significantly with Forces all reporting different funding arrangements that have originated through local legacy agreements rather than through any formula. Independent Chairs of Safeguarding Boards are now seeking to address the equitable funding arrangements across a number of Forces.

Local Arrangements

Within Essex there are three individual multi-agency children’s safeguarding arrangements: Southend Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships (SSCP), Essex Safeguarding Children’s Board (ESCB) and Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (LSCP).

The SSCP, LSCP and ESAB are statutory multi-agency arrangements which play a role in the scrutiny, quality assurance and challenge of agencies.

The purpose is to enable agencies to work together in collaboration and co-ordinate the work with the aim of improving outcomes for children, by protecting them from harm, safeguarding and promoting their welfare and safety, and, ensuring the effectiveness of that work.

Southend Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships (SSCP), Thurrock Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (LSCP) and Essex Safeguarding Children’s Board (ESCB) have all incited discussions regarding the equal funding contributions to the safeguarding boards with the request to equalise the statutory agency funding cost pressure.

Current Funding Contributions

Currently each partnership board receives funding from the commissioning budget of the Office of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner, however, the funding distribution is not currently ‘equitable’ across the three safeguarding arrangements in Southend, Essex and Thurrock, in essence perceived not to align with the Working Together principles.

The table below sets out the total costs of the partnership arrangements and the 2019/20 and 2020/21 contributions by Essex Police based on current contribution division.

Children’s Safeguarding Board	Total Board costs 2019/20	2019/20 EP Contribution (% of Total Board's costs)	Total Board costs 2020/21	2020/21 Current EP Contribution (% of Total Board's costs)
Essex	£449,900	£66,426 (15%)	£410,531 ^[1]	£66,426 (16%)
Southend	£284,956	£14,355 (5%)	£284,956	£14,355 (5%)
Thurrock	£177,895	£17,777 (10%)	£234,505	£17,777 (8%)
Total	£912,751	£98,558	£929,992	£98,558

^[1] Reduction in Essex board cost for 2020/21 due to NHS funding the Child Death Review Manager Post.

Proposal

It is recommended that Essex Police, as a statutory partner of the SSCP, LSCP and ESAB should move to a fully aligned funding model contributing to an ‘equal’ funding distribution approach to each of the respective arrangements.

Preferred Option

The preferred option is to adopt a one third funding contribution by statutory partners.

The impact of adopting a one third funding contribution by Essex Police to each of the three children’s safeguarding partnerships, will result in an increase of an additional anticipated £182,415 cost pressure. Increasing the total costs of the contributions by Essex Police from £98,558 in 2020/21 to £280,973^[1] in 2021/22.

Children's Safeguarding Board	Total Board costs 2020/21	2020/21 Current EP Contribution	Total Board costs 2021/22	2021/22 Proposed 1/3 EP Statutory Partners Contribution	2021/22 Variance to current 2020/21 contribution
Essex	£410,531	£66,426 (16%)	£420,555	£122,195 (33.3%)	+ £55,769
Southend	£284,956	£14,355 (5%)	£265,336 ^[2]	£87,779 (33.3%)	+ £73,424
Thurrock	£234,505	£17,777 (8%)	£234,505 ^[3]	£70,999 (33.3%)	+ £53,222
Total	£929,992	£98,558	£920,396	£280,973	+ £182,415

^[1] Assuming the total board costs do not increase.

^[2] £265,336 is the total Southend Safeguarding Partnership (SSP) budget which combines a single budget that supports the Adults and Children's Partnerships. SSP advised the only way calculate the proportion / value of the Children's budget from the total is to split the total board costs 50/50. SSP advised there are only two significant costs that differ between Children's and Adults: case reviews and time spent by the independent advisor - these are not currently quantifiable. NB, SSP advised, if, the Children's budget is agreed and the Adult's not, the Children's partnership might not be able to deliver all planned work.

^[3] Budget figure based on 2020/21 data in the absence of 2021/22 data being shared

5. Alternative options considered and rejected

Whilst the national guidance sets out that funding contributions "*should be equitable and proportionate*", it does not expressly state how the funding contributions should be divided. Taking a practical approach to interpreting the meaning of this direction, using the Oxford English Dictionary definition, 'equitable' is defined as "*fair and reasonable; treating everyone in an equal way*", and, 'proportionate', defined as "*increasing or decreasing in size, amount or degree according to changes in something else*".

Three alternative options have been considered, set out as follows:

Option 2

There may be an option to maintaining the overall budget, however, adopt a funding position weighted towards the local authorities, i.e., 50/25/25 for the three statutory partners, to better reflect the relative size of the overall budgets yet continue to move the partnership toward a more equitable position.

The table below sets out a 25% funding contribution from Essex Police. The variance in financial contribution to each organisation is also highlighted.

Moving to this model, will increase the contributions of Essex Police by £113, 184 to £211,742.

Children's Safeguarding Board	Total Board costs 2021/22	2020/21 Current EP Contribution	2021/22 Proposed 25% EP Contribution	Variance to current 2020/21 contribution
Essex	£420,555	£66,426 (16%)	£92,658 (25%)	+ £26,232

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Southend	£265,336	£14,355 (5%)	£65,834 (25%)	+ £51,479
Thurrock	£234,505	£17,777 (8%)	£53,250 (25%)	+ £35,473
Total	£920,396	£98,558	£211,742	+ £113,184

Whilst the national guidance sets out that funding contributions “*should be equitable and proportionate*”, it does not expressly state how the funding contributions should be divided.

Using the Oxford English Dictionary definition to interpret the meaning of this guidance, whilst this option may enable a ‘*proportionate*^[1]’, contribution to be made, this option would not be deemed to be an ‘*equitable*^[2]’ division of funding.

On the basis of the legislative and national guidance position and the requests from both Southend Safeguarding Children’s Partnerships (SSCP) and Essex Safeguarding Children’s Board (ESCB) to equalise the statutory agency funding from each key partner agency, this option is not being proposed.

Option 3

An alternative option would be to adopt a one third funding contribution however by way of a phased incremental approach to deliver the new funding position over the next two financial years. Equalising the contributions to each of the partnership arrangements to 15% in year 1, 2021/22, moving to a one third funding contribution in year 2, 2022/23.

Any change to the funding position has an impact on the financial contributions of Essex Police as well as savings afforded to Essex County Council. Moving to a new funding distribution over two financial years, 2021/22 and 2022/23, alleviates the immediate impact of these changes.

As a result, this would increase the contributions of Essex Police in year 1, 2021/22, by £27,879 to £126,427, with a further increase in year 2, 2022/23, of £154,536 to reach the one third funding contribution of £280,973.

Children’s Safeguarding Board	Total Board costs 2021/22	2021/21 15% EP Contribution	2022/23 1/3 EP Contribution
Essex	£420,555	£54,988 (15%)	£122,195 (33.3%)
Southend	£265,336	£39,500 (15%)	£87,779 (33.3%)
Thurrock	£234,505	£31,949 (15%)	£70,999 (33.3%)
Total	£920,396	£126,437	£280,973
Variance from current 2020/21 contribution		+£27,879	+ £182,415

On the basis of the legislative and national guidance position and requests from all three partnerships over recent years to equalise the statutory agency funding from each key partner agency, this option is not being proposed.

Option 4

The final option would be to reject the propositions from the Southend Safeguarding Children's Partnerships (SSCP), Thurrock Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSCP) and Essex Safeguarding Children's Board (ESCB) and maintain the current funding arrangements. Providing a cost neutral position.

However, on the basis of the legislative framework and in the spirit of the Working Together principles this option is not being proposed and would be contested by partners.

^[1] "increasing or decreasing in size, amount or degree according to changes in something else", [Oxford University Press, Learner's Dictionaries](#)

^[2] "fair and reasonable; treating everyone in an equal way", [Oxford University Press, Learner's Dictionaries](#)

6. Police and Crime Plan

Continuing to contribute, on a more equitable basis, to the three safeguarding children's partnership arrangements is relevant due to the commitment within the:

- Police and Crime Plan Extension 2020/21 – A key priority of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner is to 'Protect children and vulnerable people from harm', specifically setting out they will work with the safeguarding partners and boards to keep children safe from harm and abuse.
- Essex Police Force Plan 2020/21 – The Chief Constable has made a commitment by the Force to support and protect children as a priority, with one of the Force's main efforts focussed on vulnerability, specifying that we will work with partners to build trust and confidence and clarify our purpose and role.

7. Financial implications

If agreed, there will be a requirement for Essex Police to increase their financial contributions to the three children's partnership arrangements. Current funding contributions are made from the Commissioning Budget of the Police Fire and Crime Commissioner. Essex Police would be responsible for the additional funding contribution.

8. Legal implications

No legal advice has been sought in the formation of this paper.

9. Staffing implications

No Essex Police staff are directly impacted in the decision of the proposal.

10. Equality and Diversity implications

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 1 states that a child: “*means every human being below the age of eighteen years...*” This is reinforced by the Children Act 1989, Section 105, definition of a child as: “*a person under the age of 18*”.

The Working Together guidance also defines a child as, “*anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday*”, this definition aligns with the definition set out by the Force in its Child Abuse Investigations procedure.

A child is classified as vulnerable by virtue of their age, supported through provisions in legislation, namely the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999, and the Victims Code of Practice.

The close working partnership arrangements will continue to better facilitate a common ethos and co-ordinated approach to innovate, drive change and address issues effecting children across Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

The proposal to equalise funding contributions across all three children’s safeguarding partnership arrangements will enable Essex Police to increasingly standardise the process for working with partners to safeguard and protect vulnerable children.

Adopting a one third funding contribution for each of the partnership arrangements will support the advancement of equality of opportunity in each of the respective local authority areas in the county for children.

Essex Police will do everything we can working with partners to reduce any opportunity for harm, including protecting and safeguarding vulnerable children.

11. Risks

The commitment to increase the funding, whilst pertinent to the current year only, implies an intention to continue funding at an increased amount in future years. If it is not possible to identify a budget from which to fund this increase in future years this could result in reputational damage and could impact partnership working.

The perceived risk of not moving to an increasingly aligned funding model places the opportunity of achieving an increasingly balanced, equitable and fully effective partnership at stake.

It is worthy of note that discussion regarding the position and contributions of the CCGs has not been explored as part of these proposals. Whilst any willingness, or otherwise, of the CCGs to increase their contributions will not directly affect Essex Police, in the spirit of the Working Together principles, an equitable distribution across all three statutory partners, may wish to be further explored.

12. Governance Boards

The meetings that have contributed to the formation of this proposal whereby the equalisation of funding contributions has been discussed are as follows:

- Essex Safeguarding Children's Board

The proposal was also discussed at the PFCC for Essex Strategic Board in June 2021, where it agreed that a decision report should be submitted recommending to the PFCC the preferred option of adopting a one third funding contribution by statutory partners for the current year, with the PFCC continuing to fund at the same level as the previous year, and Essex Police funding the difference to total a one third contribution.

13. Background papers

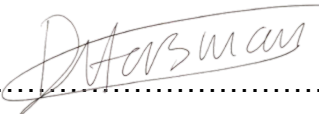
In preparation of this report, the following documents have been used to inform the content:

- [The Wood Report](#)
- [The Children Act 2004](#)
- [Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018](#)
- 'Safeguarding Southend Resource Plan Detail for Essex OPFCC', September 2019
- 'Future funding options for the ESCB', January 2020, Author: ACC Andy Prophet

Report Approval

The report will be signed off by the OPFCC Chief Executive and Treasurer prior to review and sign off by the PFCC / DPFCC.


Chief Executive / M.O.

Sign: 

Print: Darren Horsman - Deputy MO

Date: 30.12.2021

Chief Finance Officer / Treasurer

Sign: 

Print: Julia Berry

Date: 25 February 2022

Publication

Is the report for publication?

YES

NO

If 'NO', please give reasons for non-publication *(Where relevant, cite the security classification of the document(s). State 'None' if applicable)*

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If the report is not for publication, the Chief Executive will decide if and how the public can be informed of the decision.

Redaction

If the report is for publication, is redaction required:

1. Of Decision Sheet?

2. Of Appendix?

NO

NO

Treasurer / Chief Executive Sign Off – for Redactions only

If redaction is required, the Treasurer or Chief Executive is to sign off that redaction has been completed.

Sign:

Print:

Chief Executive/Treasurer

Decision and Final Sign Off

I agree the recommendations to this report:

Sign: 

Print: Roger Hirst

PFCC

Date signed: 2 March 2022

I do not agree the recommendations to this report because:

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