

## **Essex** Child and Family Wellbeing Service

### Family Hub (Children's Centre) Advisory Board

### Terms of Reference (dated April 2018)

Essex County Council commissioned Pre-Birth to 19 years services

## 1. Primary purpose

1. Family Hub (Children's Centre) Advisory Boards are a key component of the government's commitment to:
  - Give every child the best start in life,
  - Improve outcomes for all children, but particularly the most vulnerable members of the community,
  - Provide opportunities and support for parents,
  - Develop stronger and safer communities.

## 2. Objectives of an Advisory Board

2. The main aim of an Advisory Board is to work with Family Hub staff and partners to advise and make recommendations about the development and running of the Family Hub on the following areas:
  - a) To maintain the focus of improving outcomes for all children and closing the gap between the most disadvantaged children and others,
  - b) To provide support and challenge to provider agencies working in the Family Hub,
  - c) To ensure that the local community and families are engaged in the planning, shaping, implementation and ongoing development of services and promote local decision making,
  - d) To provide targeted support for issues identified in the Hub Self Evaluation, possibly through the creation of a task and finish sub group,
  - e) To promote equal opportunity and redress inequality by promoting access to Family Hubs for all members of society especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and their families,
  - f) To promote awareness and engagement with Family Hub services by all members of the local community and relevant partner agencies/organisations,
  - g) To develop a communication plan to ensure information is shared appropriately and effectively with parents and stakeholders,
  - h) To ensure there is consistent, accessible and up to date information, advice and guidance for parents,
  - i) To facilitate and encourage integrated working with all relevant agencies/organisations, promoting understanding and ownership of a common vision, including services required by the local community beyond the Family Hub's offer,
  - j) To feed into the annual review process and support with the implementation and review of an action plan,
  - k) To facilitate and encourage the collaboration and/or integration of services to improve accessibility to families, particularly those in greatest need,
  - l) To support Essex County Council, Virgin Care, Barnardo's and key partners in securing and protecting provision for the satisfactory delivery of Family Hub services,
  - m) To actively participate in Ofsted, CQC or other inspections or reviews if required, to ensure that the work of the Family Hub is recognised and valued by the inspectors and that feedback is constructively processed and implemented,
  - n) To ensure a joint working approach and a collaborative relationship with the Local Childrens partnership board supported by appropriate and agreed exception reporting.

### 3. Accountability lines

3. The advisory board is not a legal entity however, the expectation is that there will be clear lines of communication to ensure relevant information is shared with the local Children's Partnership Boards and fed in as part of the formal contract management process.

### 4. Whistle Blowing

4. If issues are raised at advisory board meetings or flagged to board members that give concerns around safeguarding of children and families or the wellbeing of staff, Virgin Care's Whistle Blowing policy procedures should be followed to ensure appropriate actions take place and that support is provided.

[Whistleblowing policy is available as a PDF here.](#)

### 5. Quorum membership

5. At least three groups to be represented in order for each meeting to run.

### 6. Frequency of meetings

6. The frequency of meetings will be discussed and agreed locally. There should be a minimum of three meetings per calendar year which will be planned to coincide with the local Children's partnership meetings.

### 7. Decision-making and delegation

7. Decisions are made in formal meetings.
8. Advisory Boards may delegate a sub-group of members to explore issues or carry-out time-limited activities, between Advisory Board meetings. Where the Advisory Board has given these groups the right to advise on behalf of the board, they have the status of committees.
9. Committees are required to:
  - Carry out tasks specifically given to them by the Advisory Board;
  - Aid the work of the Family Hub and report back to the Advisory Board.

### 8. Membership of Advisory Boards

10. The Advisory Board will comprise up to a maximum of 15 voting members with representation as below, endeavouring to maintain a balance between represented groups regardless of the actual numbers;
  - Parent/carer members: Where their attendance is not possible, consultation with parents that will take place before the meeting is tabled and their feedback will be presented by a member of ECFWS,
  - Members representing a range of statutory/multi-agency services,

- Members representing a range of non-statutory and community services e.g. private, voluntary and faith groups,
- Invited guests when specific topics are to be discussed,
- Staff working in the Family Hub can be associate members but will not have voting rights.

### **Suggested membership**

Sure Start guidance recommends that Advisory Board membership should include representation by all stakeholders, including parents and the local community. Membership could include representation from :

- Parents/carers
- Voluntary sector
- Local elected members
- ECC (Early Years, Local Partnership Delivery Lead)
- Essex Child and family wellbeing Service Quadrant Manager
- Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Services Practitioners and commissioned partners.
- Education – primary and secondary and colleges
- Social Care and family Solutions
- Non ECFWS health (S&L, Midwifery, GP practice managers, mental health, peri-natal mental health)
- Library service
- Adult Community Learning
- Jobcentre Plus
- Early Years providers (pre-school, day nursery, childminder)
- Local businesses
- Local faith groups

## **9. Terms in office**

11. All Advisory Board members will service for a maximum of three years, at which point they can stand for re-election.

## **10. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

12. At the inaugural meeting of the Advisory Board (and at annual meetings thereafter) a Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected for 12 months in accordance with the voting process set out in these Terms of Reference and can only be re-elected once thereafter unless otherwise agreed by a majority of the Advisory Board. The lead provider (and any of its sub-contracted partners) of services delivered from the Family Hub or any ECC Officer is not eligible to be put forward for either of these positions.

## **11. Roles and Responsibilities**

13. All members of the advisory board will represent their organisation or peer group and will seek input prior to meetings and will feed back following meetings.

## **12. Role of Chair**

14. The key role of the Chair is to ensure that the Advisory Board meetings are run effectively, focusing on the key priorities and making the best use of time available and ensuring that all members have an equal opportunity to participate in discussion and decision-making. The Chair will be expected to have clear lines of communication with the Healthy Family Team Leaders, Hub Coordinators and any partner agencies.

15. The Chair should:

- Meet with quadrant lead (or representative) to plan the agenda in time for circulation prior to the meeting,
- Ensure all members of the board have the opportunity to speak and be heard by all board members,
- Represent the board at the local Children's Partnership if required.

16. If the Chair is absent for any meeting, the Vice-Chair shall chair that meeting and shall be entitled to exercise the Chair's casting vote if required.

- **Vice Chair**
  - Carry out the role as described above when the chair is not available
- **Board members**
  - Represent their organisation, service users or peer group, seeking input from and feeding back as appropriate
  - Work as part of a task and finish group as themes are identified.
  - Contribute to discussions at advisory board meetings.
  - Read reports and documentation that is circulated for discussion prior to meetings

### **13. Conflicts of interest**

17. From time to time, the Advisory Board may be asked to consider an issue or make a decision concerning projects or services where a member of the Advisory Board has a direct or indirect financial or professional interest in the outcome.

18. Advisory Board members (including the Chair and Vice Chair) are required to declare any such interest(s) in advance of the relevant meeting or immediately upon becoming aware of such interest. Essex County Council (facilitated by the Essex County Council Contract Manager) will determine if the relevant member should be excluded from any discussions and/or from any meeting in relation to the issue or decision and the relevant member shall comply with any such determination and shall as instructed abstain from involvement in any discussions, not attend any meeting or part of a meeting and shall not be entitled to vote in relation to the issue.

### **14. Conflict resolution**

19. Members must recognise that each person will bring different views and ideas and there is a need to allow space for creative thinking and discussion.

20. Disputes or differences in views are expected to arise between members and the board will collectively take all reasonable steps within their powers to resolve them. However, where a matter cannot be resolved at Board, the next step would be for it to be raised through the Local Authority as follows:

- Director of Children, Young People and Learning Dept. Essex County Council

## **15. Agenda and administration support**

11. An Advisory Board agenda format will be agreed locally and Advisory Board members will be asked to contribute items to the agenda.
12. Each Family Hub will provide the Chair of the Advisory Board with administration support, including the booking of meetings, issuing invitations and minute-taking.
13. The agenda and papers will be sent out at least a week in advance of the meeting.
14. Only in exceptional cases will papers be tabled on the day of the meeting.
15. All members are required to have read papers prior to the meeting.

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