

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Meeting Programme 2019

Police and Crime Plan Priority Deep Dive Reporting

Report to: the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex

Deep Dive Title:	Domestic Abuse Deep Dive: Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Violence
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1.0 Purpose of Report

This paper is a deep-dive assessment of domestic abuse response, investigation and safeguarding. It sets out long term trends, demand, resourcing, partnership working and future challenges.

2.0 Recommendations

In addition to the content of this report the Board is asked to note the fact the force is currently reviewing the amount of resource allocated to key investigative functions, including domestic abuse, as part of normal planning cycle and in relation to year 1 allocation of additional officers (135) within the national 20,000 uplift.

3.0 Executive Summary

Headlines:

- There is an increase in DA offences reported, this is a result of both a genuine increase in crime, combined with better Crime Data Accuracy and changes to Home Office Counting Rules (mainly in relation to Stalking & Harassment).
- As of the 1st September 2019, 14% (3,710 of 26,494) of DA crimes resulted in a positive outcome.
- The level of resourcing dedicated to DA response, investigation and safeguarding has been relative static for the 4 years. Resourcing will need to be appreciably increased if the force is to maintain and improve performance in this important and risky area of business.
- There are a number of new national and local initiatives being progressed, and planned, to tackle DA. Effective collaboration and information sharing with partners is vital particularly in terms of the safeguarding of DA victims.
- DA and the effectiveness with which it is responded to by the police and local agencies is a significant driver of victim satisfaction and public confidence.

Definition:

Domestic Abuse is defined as, '*Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional*'.

Victim / suspect relationship data shows the largest increase by grouping of the domestic abuse victim to the suspect as the partner and family groups. This may be attributed to the change in the counting rules for stalking and harassment. However, proportionately partner related domestic abuse has remained relatively stable with 68.8% in the 12 months to July 2016 and 67.7% in the 12 months to July 2019.

Volume:

In summer 2019, the Force experienced the highest levels of crime on record. Historically, an increase in demand (All Crime) in Essex Police has led to a reduction in the number of priority and scheduled incidents attended and the numbers of arrests.

In the 12 months to August 2019 compared to the 12 months to August 2018:

- The Force experienced a 36.7% rise in DA offences reported. It has been estimated that there was a 9.6% *genuine* increase (2,002 additional offences), with the additional 27.1% increase (5,648 additional offences) as a result of a combination of better Crime Data Accuracy and changes to Home Office Counting Rules (namely in relation to Stalking & Harassment).

- While the number of offences solved has increased by 106 offences, a 3.4% increase (3,201 solved outcomes), the Domestic Abuse solved rate decreased by 3.6% points to 11.2% during the same period.

Resources:

In Essex Police, the primary responsibility for managing and responding to initial response to DA, along with primary risk assessing and safeguarding victims sits with the Local Policing Teams.

Following which, standard risk case investigations are retained by LPT and the Domestic Abuse Investigation Teams (DAIT) assume responsibility for the investigation of all high and medium risk DA crimes. Safeguarding activity for medium risk DA victims remains with DAIT, with the Central Referral Unit (CRU) responsible for the safeguarding of high risk victims of DA.

Powers:

In response to DA incidents, the first priority is to make people safe. Often this will result in Police Officers making an arrest, however, where circumstances arise where an arrest or charge is not possible, other powers should be utilised to ensure victim safety. In this scenario, the key tool available to enable officers to provide immediate safeguarding to victims of DA is via an application for Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs & DVPOs). In addition, the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), "Clare's Law", enables the police to disclose information to an applicant about previous violent offending by a new or existing partner. In Essex, every DA STORM incident is assessed by the Crime and Public Protection Commands Operations Centre Assessment Team to establish whether a 'Right to Know' Disclosure under Clare's Law is required.

Partnership:

Essex Police cannot effectively respond to and manage DA singlehandedly. In order to effectively support and safeguard victims and manage offenders, the Force continues to work collaboratively and share information with partner agencies to determine the most appropriate response. Collaboratively working with partners at the county's MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings and Essex Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service are key components of this work.

Policy and Procedure:

Essex Police has detailed DA Policy and subsequent related procedures which set out the minimum standards expected when grading, attending, investigating and safeguarding incidents of DA. The documents outline how the Force will approach the investigation of domestic abuse incidents and safeguarding of the victims and family, including a proactive approach to bring the perpetrators to justice, drawing on national legislation, best practice and guidance.

Qualitative assessment:

In the HMICFRS's fifth PEEL (police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy) assessment of Essex Police in 2018/19, the Force were graded as good. With regards to DA, the report specifically commented that: *"The force has improved the way it uses legal powers to safeguard domestic abuse victims"*, along with recognition that, *"...the force still prioritises certain types of crime, for example domestic abuse, during these times of peak demand"*.

4.0 Deep Dive

4.1 Police Resources

Primary responsibility for managing and responding to DA falls across a number of areas in the Force as follows:

Local Policing Teams (LPT):

Undertake the initial response to all reported and 'live' incidents of DA. LPT attend the scene, ascertain whether the incident is to be recorded as a crime or non-crime and conduct initial investigative actions, where possible identifying and arresting suspect(s). Attending officers conduct a primary DASH risk assessment to determine the immediate level of risk to the victim and undertake initial safeguarding actions. Standard risk case investigations are retained by LPT.

The DA perpetrator cohort is produced every two weeks by Force analysts and provided to the LPAs. The cohort data provides an overview of the most prolific DA offenders in their areas, to enable LPAs to make best available use of the information available to focus on and target offenders.

The resource uplift of LPT by 53 officers enables more officers to respond to, safeguard and investigate DA. This resource uplift was effective from the 1st October 2019 and will hopefully have a positive impact in the coming months.

Domestic Abuse Investigation Teams (DAIT):

Are geographically based dedicated teams aligned to the three Local Policing Areas (LPAs). They are responsible for the management and investigation of all high and medium risk DA crimes and undertake safeguarding activity for medium risk DA victims. The DAIT Detective Sergeants conduct secondary risk assessments of all DA crime where initial DASH risk assessment indicates medium or high risk.

The resource uplift of 21 DAIT investigators across the county supports enhanced capacity to manage DA related investigations. Current establishment across the county includes 5 Inspectors, 21 Sergeants and 127 constables with the addition of 13 support staff. There is currently a 9.6% variance rate equating to vacancies of 15.22 across Sergeant and Constable ranks within DAIT. This number has increased in recent months as a result of a movement of investigators into a critical area of shortfall, namely child abuse investigation. The resultant gaps in DAIT will be managed and closed via the Force Resource Board over the next 3 months.

Central Referral Unit (CRU):

Are a centralised function based in the Operations Centre within the Crime and Public Protection Command. The primary purpose is the safeguarding of high risk victims of DA. The CRU and other associated Ops Centre team functions that respond to DA includes: incident support to frontline and investigating officers where required, managing timely and appropriate data-sharing with partner agencies in respect of MARAC and MAPPA meetings, administration of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS), and, support to the Acute Victim Cohort.

Within the CRU, the most acute victims that feature on the cohort are allocated a Safeguarding Officer who will review their safeguarding and provide more tailored safeguarding around the victims needs and where necessary arrange a multi-agency strategy meeting. The CRU also feed in to the local tasking process, providing information on selected victims based on their position in the cohort as well as officer knowledge.

Current establishment across the county includes 1 multi-agency Inspector, 3 Sergeants and 28.02 Constables. CRU current strength shows a -4.1 variance in respect of Constables. This current level of resourcing within the CRU is not deemed to be impacting effectiveness in safeguarding at this time.

Plans are underway to merge the staff currently based at the CRU Operations Centre at HQ with the Essex MARAC at Essex County Council offices in County Hall by February 2020. This will increase resilience and to enable more effective working with partner organisations in terms of MARAC and safeguarding of victims. This should provide efficiencies, however with increased demand through the increase of 3rd party referrals these efficiencies are unlikely to be realised. An excellent opportunity exists to create more proactive intelligence-led capability in this area.

MASH and MARAT:

Essex Police form part of the Essex County Council and Southend Borough Council areas Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Teams (MARAT), along with being part of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) at Thurrock Council.

The Force is responsible for researching the family in preparation for the respective meetings, with a primary focus to safeguard the adult victim, children and any other family members.

Given the complex set-up of SET, increased capacity at the Inspector rank would enable greater service reliability and improved partnership working, along with an ability to evaluate the arrangements and encourage shared learning across the three local authorities as well as capacity to identify best practice from outside of Essex. Currently the Force has 1 multi-agency DI.

An uplift with the MASH and MARAT is expected to be required based on the prediction that the necessity for partnership working will continue to increase requiring increased resourcing over the next 3 years.

Additional Resources:

These teams are also supported by resources, 2 FTE, 1 within the Crime and Public Protection and 1 Criminal Justice Command, providing strategic capacity and capability through coordination of improvement activity and initiatives aimed at continuously improving the level of service to victims in line with statutory requirements.

4.2 Impact on Performance

Domestic Abuse is identified as a Force priority, highlighted on the Force Plan, with the key aim of protecting vulnerable victims, keeping them safe and catching criminals. Essex Police recognises the complex nature of Domestic Abuse and the significant harm it can cause to victims. The Force is committed in bringing offenders to justice whilst providing an effective and consistent response and support to victims. As well as being a priority set out within the Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2016-2020, to break the cycle of Domestic Abuse.

National External Influencers:

In April 2018, a new rule was added to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) so that stalking and harassment in all cases should be recorded in addition to the most serious additional victim based offence involving the same victim-offender relationship. Prior to April 2018, only the most serious victim based offence was recorded. This change to the HOCR has resulted in an increase in the number of stalking and harassment crimes being recorded from April 2018.

Following on from which, in May 2018, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) in conjunction with the CPS introduced a package of measures to improve the way in which the criminal justice system recognises and responds to stalking and harassment. Followed by new advice and guidance published by the College of Policing in May 2019 to ensure an effective response to reports of stalking and harassment.

This change to the HOCR has resulted in Force-wide training which is to be delivered to officers and staff who may encounter members of the public at risk of stalking and harassment in their day to day role. This is to include all frontline officers, Force Control Room (FCR), Crime Bureau, C&PP Operations Centre, Operational Support Group (OSG) such as traffic officers and dog handlers, and Operational Policing Command (OPC).

Contact management call takers received training between May and August 2019, with further training sessions planned for early 2020.

The training will be adapted for front line officers who will be trained by a dedicated SPOC (Sgt/Insp) during allocated training days once the new shift pattern has been implemented post October 2019.

In addition, as of May 2019, a direction was given for Police Information Notices (PINs), also known as harassment warnings, to no longer be used by the Police Service. Officers should instead carry out a full and thorough investigation into

offences of stalking and harassment, carrying out a detailed risk assessment and ensuring safeguarding is put in place.

As the result of a HMIC AFI in 2017; *'Essex Police to introduce domestic abuse surveys to capture how victims of domestic abuse perceive the service provided to them by the police and share the learning with partner agencies. Also, following implementation of domestic abuse surveys, Essex Police will introduce a review mechanism to act on feedback provided by victims, incorporating changes in to policy, practice, learning and development'*; in February 2019 the Force launched a new telephone survey with victims of domestic abuse crimes to understand more about their experiences with Essex Police, and to continue to improve and deliver the best possible police response. As the volume of victims' responses increases the insight will for the first time provide the Force with a better understanding of its response and service and can be used to inform its domestic abuse plan.

Police Resources:

The ability to deploy LPTs to respond swiftly and undertake quick time assessments and safeguarding is paramount, engaging with victims at the earliest opportunity around the time of the offence.

In terms of emergency response that arrived on target, from December 2015 the figure fluctuated around 75%. However, in June and July 2019, a sudden and sharp decrease has been experienced to below 65%, this decline was also mirrored in non-domestic abuse emergency response.

Available data also suggests a correlation in outcomes based on the time elapsed between when the offence was committed and when it was recorded. Data shows that, 81% (3013 of 3,710) of offences which resulted in a positive outcome were recorded within 7 days. However, only 6% (86 of 1,352) of offences recorded after one year resulted in a positive outcome. This is likely due to evidential difficulties with historical offences.

The role of DAIT and the skill and knowledge required by officers in investigating medium and high risk DA matters effectively is key. Inadequately accredited, trained and deployable staff will impact the quality of investigations and safeguarding of vulnerable DA victims. Where DAIT investigative capacity is reached, CID will be requested to investigate high and medium risk cases.

Partnership:

Essex Police cannot effectively respond to and manage DA singlehandedly, in order to effectively support and safeguard victims and manage offenders, the Force continues to work collaboratively and share information with partner agencies to determine the most appropriate response.

The Force are a key partner agency forming part of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB). Through which a number of key initiatives are agreed and progressed each year. In September 2019, SETDAB launched a Stalking Campaign which has resulted in considerable media activity on the Force's social media accounts. As part of the campaign, the Force have released a different stalking related video and image each day, highlighting the behaviours

and signposting victims to the SETDAB website and pathways to specialist DA services.

In August 2019, the average length of time to finalise a Domestic Abuse investigation increased by 21.04 days, to 43.77 days. This sharp rise was experienced across all LPAs. This increase may be attributed to a change in the service provided by the CPS regarding charging decision amendments relating to DA. The CPS no longer offer charging advice over the telephone unless there is a remand application. This was due to summer demand. As yet there is no indication as to whether or when this service might be resumed. The turnaround time for CPS (paper based) charging advice is estimated to be taking between 3-6 weeks for simpler Magistrates Court cases. Should further enquires be required by officers it is estimated resubmission is taking an additional 5 weeks. For more serious, indictable only, offences the current paper-based turnaround time is 8-9 weeks. The day to day quality and timeliness of file quality (including advice files to CPS) is managed by the File Quality Board (chaired by ACC Wells). The impact of the removal of CPS telephone charging advice should be subject of ongoing conversation and review at the ECJB.

Key initiatives, activities and What Works:

In terms of the percentage of repeat domestic abuse incidents, available data highlights this has been steadily increasing from 41.85% in July 2016 to 46.28% in July 2019. Effective approaches to DA, particularly those that focus on repeat or future victimisation and offending will have a positive impact on demand by negating future behaviour.

Different approaches used by Essex Police to target DA, by addressing the behaviour of the perpetrator and focussing on the safeguarding of vulnerable victims include:

- 1. MARAC**
- 2. IDVA**
- 3. BWV**
- 4. DVPN / DVPO**

MARAC:

Essex Police are a key partner in the MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference), a risk management meeting where professionals, from statutory and voluntary agencies, share information concerning high risk cases of DA. MARAC is central in order to produce a co-ordinated action plan to improve timely risk identification and safety planning for victims and their families. All high-risk cases are referred to the MARAC by the Crime and Public Protection Command's Central Referral Unit (CRU).

There is a conscious effort by all agencies to increase the number of referrals in to MARAC and therefore it is predicted that demand will continue to increase, i.e., Essex MARAC Jan 18-Jun 18 there were 115 non-police referrals, Jan 19-Jun 19

there were 186, a 61% increase. Since February 2019, CRU have recorded 280 high risk cases referred to MARAC.

Southend, Essex and Thurrock MARAC will all now also focus on perpetrator actions, as well as victims. With Southend and Essex creating dedicated perpetrator caseworkers to progress referrals and contact suitable candidates for behaviour change support. As a result, the Force can now be tasked at MARAC to conduct additional disruption activities in suitable cases.

This two-prong MARAC approach supports the priorities set out in the Force Plan, along with the PFCC's Crime Plan by working with partners using intelligence to protect vulnerable victims and tackle offending behaviour to break the cycle of domestic abuse.

IDVAs:

Police referrals are made for high risk victims of DA to IDVAs if they are linked to police incidents.

The IDVA's have a base at Essex Police HQ, in the Operations Centre, aimed to promote increased partnership working to better serve victim's needs and improve safeguarding opportunities and support with the criminal justice process. Working effectively with the IDVA service supports the Force Plan and PFCC's Crime Plan by ensuring vulnerable victims can access the right support and are enabled to feel safe.

It is estimated that 85% of High Risk DA's are referred, since February this would equate to 1246 referrals.

BWV:

The Force Plan identifies that we shall ensure officers are skilled, equipped and enabled to use technology. Supported by the PFCC in providing significant investment over recent years to ensure access to all frontline officers to BWV cameras to enable the Force to bring more perpetrators to justice.

A slight downward trend has been observed in the number of DA cases where body worn video was used was identified. As a result, in September 2019, a mandated requirement was set by ACC Andy Prophet that, when interviewing a prisoner arrested for a domestic abuse (DA), the interviewing officer must view the footage in advance and consider showing it in interview. Alongside which, presenting the fuller picture to local decision-makers and the CPS could make all the difference in a charge or NFA.

A recent review of all interviews involving DA prisoners interviewed in custody in August clearly illustrated that, where BWV was shown, there was a 20% increase in the positive outcome rate for prisoner disposal (charge/caution).

In July 2019 the force reviewed 60 BWV pieces of footage to support the ongoing development of officers attending DA incidents. A number of themes were identified including ensuring that response officers were not too quick in taking negative

statements from victims who were concerned about whether to press charges. Evidence clearly suggests they may need time and space to make the right decision and positive encouragement and support from the attending officers is of paramount importance. Remedial advice has been given via commands to all responding officers and the force will dip-sample another 60 pieces of footage in November/December.

DVPN / DVPO:

It is also important to note, where an arrest or charge is not possible, officers can utilise powers available through the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs & DVPOs) placing emergency provisions upon perpetrators who have used or threatened violence towards the victim, for example, banning them from entering a house or harassing a victim. Utilising alternative powers can enable the Force to ensure that vulnerable victims feel safe and supported as set out in the PFCC's Crime Plan.

Overall, DVPOs have decreased from an average of 16.5 per month in the 12 months to July 2016 to 15.9 per month in the 12 months to July 2019.

Due to identified reduction in use across Essex, Op CONSIDER has been implemented. This is an Operational officer toolbox for assessment against all domestic incidents attended by police. The aim being to enhance protection for DA victims through effective use of DVPN/DVPOs. A review of current local practices and procedures will also ensue. The next phase involves the monitoring of any breaches and enforcement with anticipated increase in DVPO demand.

The force has also issued clear direction through LPA commands that the focus on the use of DVPO and DVPNs needs to be redoubled. A dip sample of DA investigations in November will specifically consider whether appropriate opportunities have been taken.

5.0 Performance

The performance data that follows sets out the Force position in respect of:

- 1. Crime types**
- 2. Arrests**
- 3. Outcomes**
- 4. ONS**

Crime Types:

The chart below shows the number of domestic abuse related crimes and domestic abuse related incidents (that are not crimes).

As illustrated below, from August 2015 until May 2017 there were more non-crime domestic abuse incidents. However, from April 2017 onwards crime slowly increased

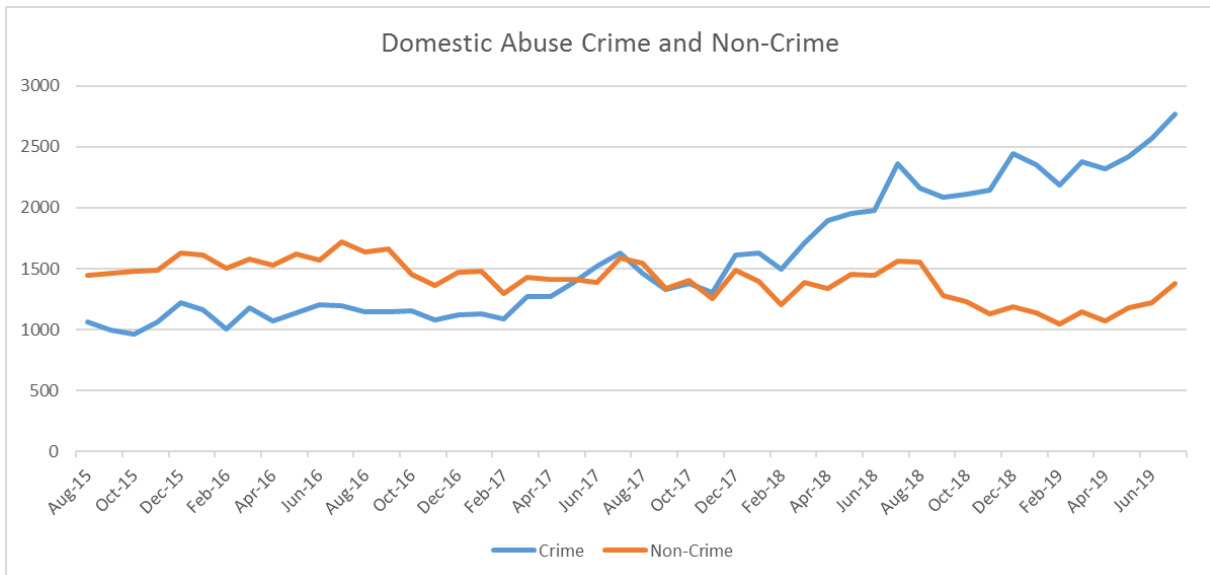
and from December 2017 onwards crime far exceeded incidents with a significant increase again in April 2018.

Overall, domestic abuse related crime has increased by 110.3% whilst domestic abuse related non-crime fell by 21.8% in the 12 months to July 2016 versus the 12 months to July 2019.

Similarly the proportion of domestic abuse related crime to all domestic abuse related incidents (crime and non-crime) has increased from 41.6% to 54.5%.

There could be several reasons for this: increased focus on crime data accuracy; the new counting rules concerning Stalking and Harassment; Coercion and Control was introduced into legislation as a crime in December 2015; and, a genuine increase in domestic abuse related crime.

In order for the Force to respond effectively to DA, an understanding of the resource required to address the genuine increase in DA related crime is a necessity, particularly should projected demand continue on the same trajectory.



The chart below shows domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment. The chart closely follows the increase seen in the previous chart, i.e., there was a significant change in April 2018 when the changes to the counting rules occurred.



The table below shows domestic abuse offences, solved outcomes and solved rate by risk levels. A true understanding of the number of offences classified by risk levels is key to ensure that resourcing is suitably positioned in order to be able to respond to, investigate and safeguard DA victims effectively.

There has been a large decrease in high and medium risk whilst standard risk has increased. This could be attributed to officers being less risk adverse and instead of always assigning high or medium risk to cases they are confident to assess the risk as standard (where appropriate).

Victim Based: Under Reported Crime Type	Offences						Solved Outcomes						Solved Rates %		
	12m Jul 16	12m Jul 19	# diff.	% diff.	% All 2016	% All 2019	12m Jul 16	12m Jul 19	# diff.	% diff.	% All 2016	% All 2019	12m Jul 17	12m Jul 19	% pt. diff.
Domestic Abuse	13239	27754	14515	109.6	11.6	16.9	4024	3212	-812	-20.2	16.3	13.6	30.4	11.6	-18.8
- High Risk Domestic Abuse	3667	2521	-1146	-31.3	3.2	1.5	1592	805	-787	-49.4	6.5	3.4	43.4	31.9	-11.5
- Medium Risk Domestic Abuse	7293	4887	-2406	-33.0	6.4	3.0	2006	1030	-976	-48.7	8.1	4.4	27.5	21.1	-6.4
- Standard Risk Domestic Abuse	2025	18475	16450	812.3	1.8	11.2	332	1175	843	253.9	1.3	5.0	16.4	6.4	-10.0

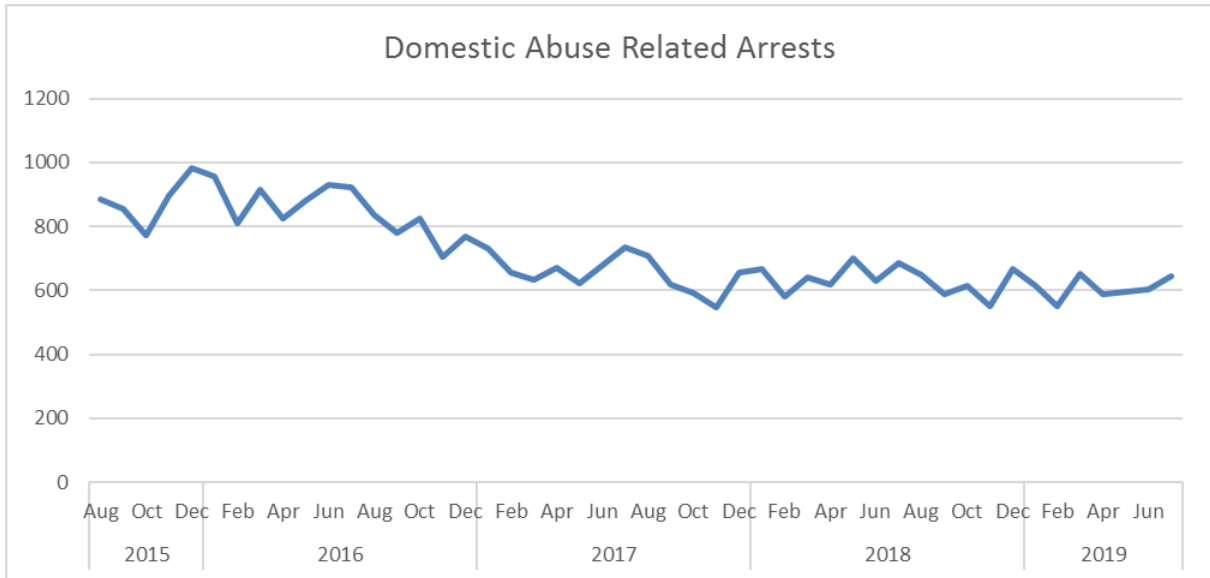
Arrests:

The chart below shows the number of domestic abuse related arrests.

There were an average of 886 arrests in the 12 months to July 2016 compared to 610 arrests in the 12 months to July 2019.

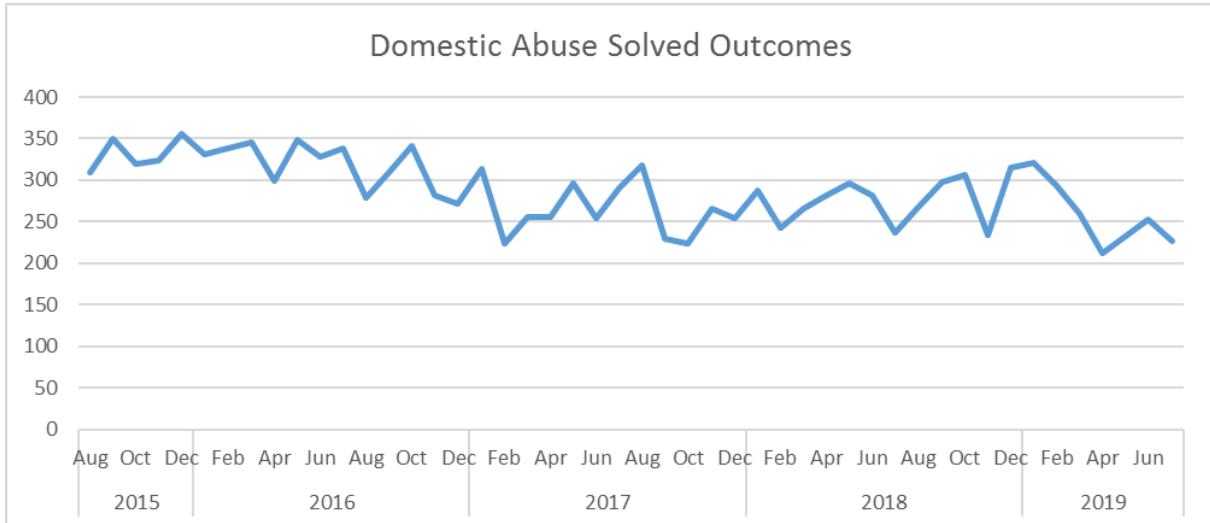
The number of monthly arrests has stabilised to around 600 in 2019.

The Force will need to review more closely the reasons behind why arrest rates have declined and yet domestic abuse offences increased and domestic abuse related non-crime declined. Attention should be focussed on the structure, capacity and resourcing of the LPA in responding to initial reports of DA, to ensure arrests increase in the future in line with domestic abuse related crime reports.



Outcomes (Inc. 14 & 16):

The chart below highlights the number of domestic abuse solved outcomes have fallen from an average of 332 per month in the 12 months to July 2016 to 268 per month in the 12 months to July 2019; this is despite offences increasing.



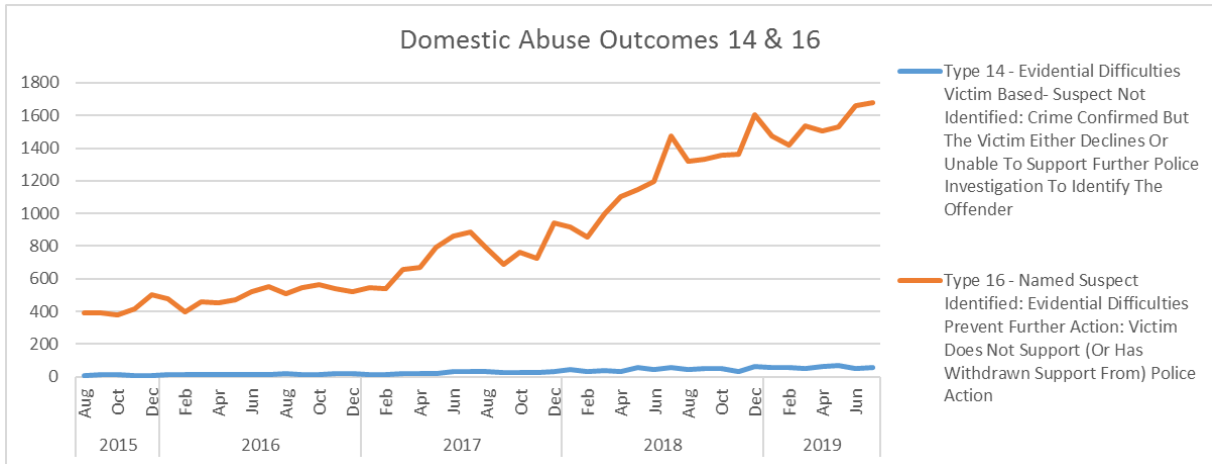
More specifically, the graph that follows shows domestic abuse outcomes 14 & 16 (where the victim does not support prosecution).

Outcome 16 has been identified as continuing to be the most likely outcome. The data highlights that outcome 16 has steadily increased from 400 in August 2015 to over 1600 in June 2019.

When outcome 16 was correlated with all domestic abuse crime, there was a very strong correlation that outcome 16 rose proportionally to domestic abuse related

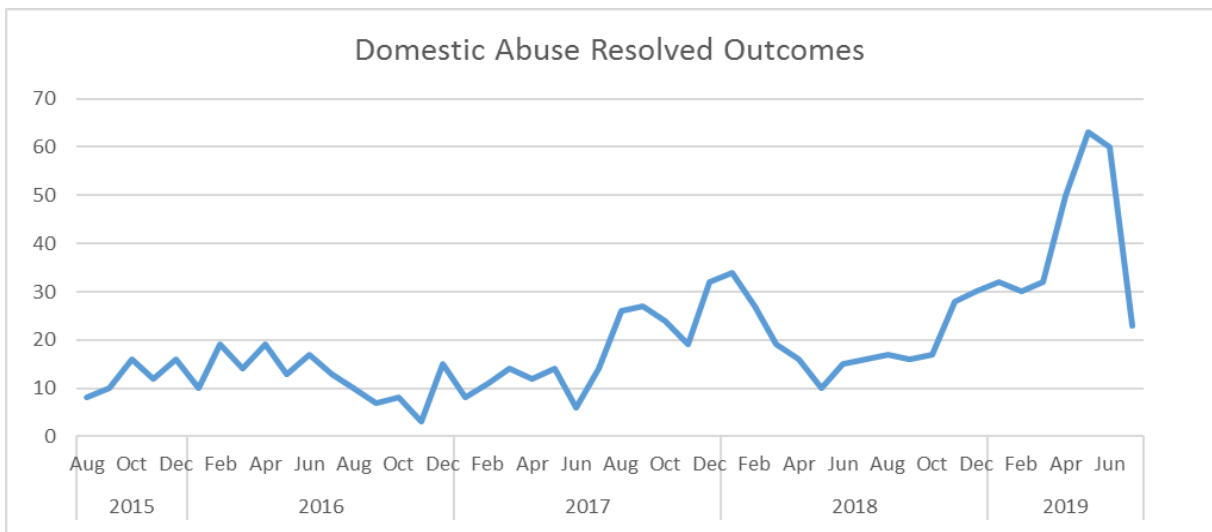
crime. Whilst a proportionate increase has been identified, the Force needs to ensure victims are suitably supported to proceed through the CJ System.

One explanation for this outcome may be the length of time taken for a DA matter to proceed to Court. Should reporting, arrests and prosecutions increase in the future, the ability and capacity of the Courts to hear cases in a timely manner may be affected, as a result victim cooperation may decline.



The chart below shows domestic abuse outcomes that are considered to have been resolved (outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20, 21, 22) but do not contribute to a 'solved' outcome.

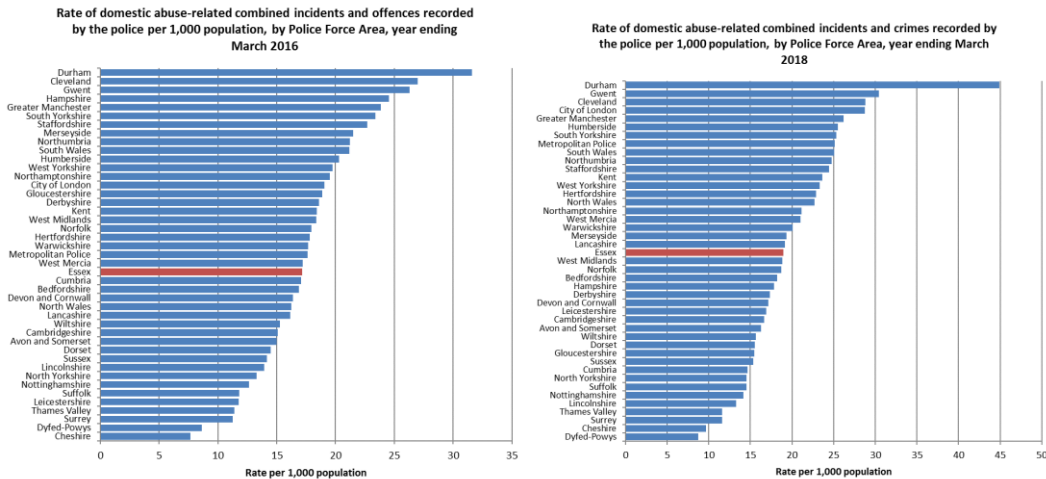
There has been a general increase with April and May 2019 being exceptionally high, returning in June 2019. Overall, resolved outcomes have increased by 138.3% from 167 in the 12 months to July 2016 to 398 in the 12 months to July 2019.



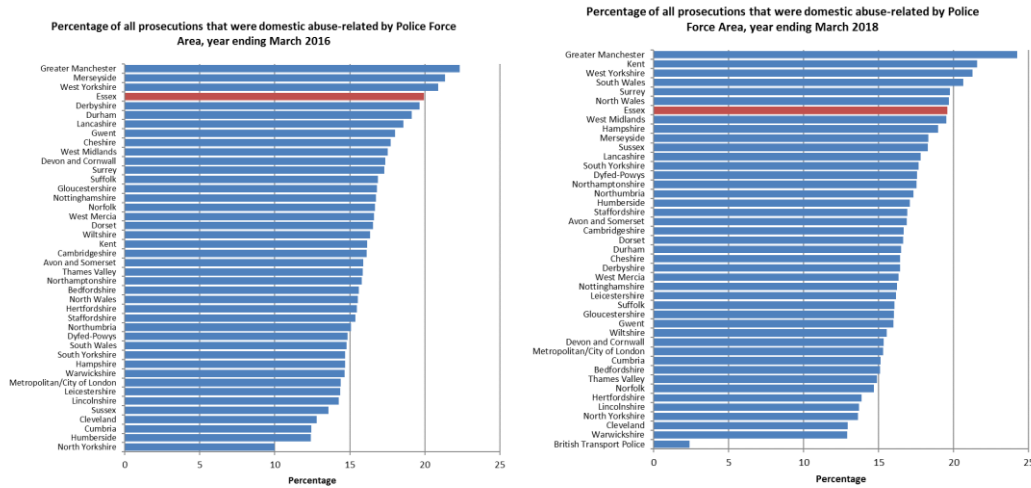
The Force are working with the CPS to explore the reasons behind a higher percentage of reports to the police but declining volumes of referrals to the CPS.

National Picture (ONS):

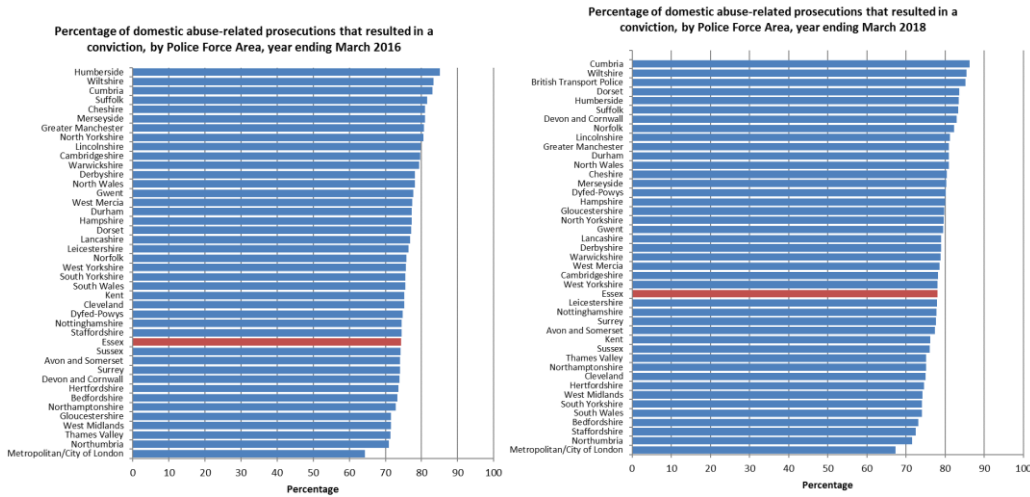
Below is a chart taken from the ONS (Office for National Statistics) website and shows where Essex (coloured red) lies nationally for the prevalence of domestic abuse per 1,000 population. In both 2016 and 2018 Essex was placed in mid-table.



The chart below shows the percentage of domestic abuse related prosecutions. As can be seen Essex is seventh highest in March 2018 from fourth in March 2016.



The chart below shows the percentage of domestic abuse related prosecutions that result in a conviction. As shown, even though Essex was seventh highest for prosecutions they fall to the middle nationally for convictions in March 2018 (which is a slight improvement over 2016).



The Force need to ensure increased engagement with criminal justice partner agencies, specifically CPS and HMCTS in order to establish if there are any improvements that can be made in the gathering and presentation of evidence at court to increase the number of convictions.

6.0 Future Work/Development, Expected Outcome and Actions for Improvement

Nationally:

The Domestic Abuse Bill, introduced in Parliament in July 2019, indicates a significant transformation to the response to DA, in respect of supporting victims and bringing perpetrators to justice. The bill would end the cross-examination of victims by their abusers in the family courts and allow police and courts to intervene earlier where abuse is suspected.

Between the draft Domestic Abuse bill and its consultation response, the government made 120 commitments to tackle domestic abuse, whilst a number of these are non-legislative and not specifically police related, measures in the Bill seek to:

- promote awareness - to put abuse at the top of everyone’s agenda, including by legislating for the first time for a statutory definition of domestic abuse,
- protect and support victims, including by introducing a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order,
- transform the justice response, including by helping victims to give their best evidence in the criminal courts through the use of video evidence, screens and other special measures, and ensuring that victims of abuse do not suffer further trauma in family court proceedings by being cross-examined by their abuser,
- improve performance – the new Domestic Abuse Commissioner will help drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas and agencies.

Government legislation and subsequent public discussion and media attention is likely to impact on recorded Domestic Abuse, by engaging more victims with the criminal justice system as they feel more supported.

Partnership meetings commenced in 2018 to discuss the National Roll-Out of the Cross Criminal Justice System (CJS) Domestic Abuse (DA) Best Practice Framework whereby partnership working is required to develop the DA Best Practice Implementation Plan. The National Roll-Out of the DA Best Practice Framework will transform the Criminal Justice response to DA and enhance the level of support available to victims and their families, work continues to progress in this area.

These developments will have a significant impact on the manner in which the Force responds to, investigates and manages DA matters.

Locally:

Technology is increasingly seen in domestic abuse cases and will be a key factor in the future of perpetrator abuse, particularly where stalking is involved. Essex Police are promoting to victims the use of the Bright Sky APP and online digital safety advice, details of which are also now included in the Safety Advice to Victims Leaflet. The Force have a responsibility to ensure its officers and staff are suitably skilled, equipped and enabled to identify and investigate DA taking place utilising technological advances.

The Force are also engaged in the Essex Domestic Abuse Data Project, the development of a new predictive analytics model to enable early identification of DA through a multi-agency understanding of the risk factors associated with DA. The tool will help inform early intervention commissioning around vulnerable groups at risk of domestic abuse, as well as enabling services to allocate resources to emerging areas of need.

Ongoing DAIT specialist training, comprising of a week-long CPD course at EPC, that all officers on DAIT will attend, are being scheduled. This will improve the Essex Police response to domestic abuse by upskilling domestic abuse specialist investigators. Developments within this CPD event now includes specialist input from the CPS DA specialist, Michelle Brown.

In addition, force-wide DASH training is currently being developed by Essex Police College. This supports the Domestic Abuse Action Plan 2018-2020 to ensure that officers and staff are suitably trained to identify and respond appropriately to risks associated with Domestic Abuse.

In order to further support children following police attendance at an incident of Domestic Abuse at the child's home, Operation Encompass an initiative designed to support children and improve communication between the police and schools is being launched. Information is shared by the police with a trained, designated 'key adult' at the child's school to ensure they are better equipped to understand the child's needs and behaviours. It is anticipated this improved multi-agency information sharing approach will reduce the impact on children through the provision of early support and care following a Domestic Abuse incident. Work is progressing in order to establish the information sharing pathway from police to schools, arrange designated 'key adult' training sessions and confirm details in respect of the pilot commencement date.

7.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are three identified risks on the Force Risk Register linked, directly and indirectly, to DA:

1606 – Resourcing: *Failure to adequately resource LPA and Crime and Public Protection teams with appropriately accredited, trained and deployable staff will lead to less than optimum performance and workforce related tensions.*

It has been identified that there is a clear risk that inadequate resourcing within front line uniform and investigative teams would lead to an inability to respond to calls for service, investigate crime and safeguard vulnerable victims. This will result in damage to public confidence and potentially risk to life.

This risk continues to be mitigated by investment of the uplift in officers, ensuring the Force make the best of officers in investigation teams that are on restricted / limited duties, LPT will maintain an overall deployable staffing level of 90% of established numbers, and working towards ensuring non-deployable staff working in the LPAs occupy suitable evaluated established posts, whilst ensuring an improved number of appropriately skilled response drivers and skilled tutors.

There has been improvement registered across key areas. Establishment v strength rates have risen to above 92% in all LPAs (considering all areas) and deployable rates have risen by between 3 and 5%. The elevated summer demand period has passed and generally speaking teams are parading more officers. Pressures do still exist in certain LPTs and within the LPA detective cohort as support is provided to C&PP. Tutor numbers have risen steadily over the last quarter across the LPAs - although more needs to be done to recruit as sizeable probationer intakes arise. Detective accreditation rates are stable.

1907 – Domestic Abuse and Associated Harm: *Failure to ensure this area is properly managed will leave vulnerable people at risk, and likely result in a drop in public confidence.*

Essex Police need to ensure a clear end to end understanding of risk associated with Domestic Abuse, Violence and Harm. It is vital there is a clear consistent process across the force in relation to initial risk assessments, referrals to partners, attendance, investigation, outcomes, victim contact and partnership engagement.

This risk continues to be mitigated by reviewing contact management processes and first contact to ensure consistency, a partnership action plan being developed to ensure clear governance, a DAIT review being conducted to ensure the right configurations and training for the teams, ensure a consistent framework is in place to respond to the outstanding level of DA suspects, reviewing DVPN enforcement to ensuring consistency Force-wide, ensuring compliance with the use of BWV in DA cases, reviewing training provision for LPT regarding DA investigation and conducting 3rd sector party mapping.

1909 - Quality of Investigations and Victim care: *The quality of investigations is paramount to the effectiveness and efficiency of all policing activity within local policing and crime and public protection. Failure to deliver an effective service to victims of crime in accordance with the Victims Code of Practice.*

The risk of an ineffective and inefficient investigation could have a significant and severe impact on victims, safeguarding to all people involved, reduction in public and partner confidence and a detrimental impact to our reputation.

This risk continues to be mitigated by developing a strategic plan to address the quality of investigations, renewing the allocations policy in line with College of Policing PIP guidance, reviewing the supervision model and issuing new guidance in respect of supervisors responsibilities, developing a communications and training plan to reach all LPA supervisors and developing an audit and review process to enable continual review and a feedback loop to monitor themes and progress.

8.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

None.

9.0 Health and Safety Implications

None.