

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2020/2021

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

Title of Report:	Deep dive into Police and Crime Plan Priority: <i>Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse</i>
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1.0 Purpose of Report

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

It is intended to provide a further update to the Domestic Abuse Deep Dive report submitted to the Performance and Resource Scrutiny Board in October 2019.

2.0 Recommendations

There are no specific recommendations within this report but the board are invited to note the key areas of demand, progress and performance highlighted.

3.0 Executive Summary

3.1. Headlines:

- Since the COVID-19 outbreak and the March 2020 lockdown in the UK, the number of domestic abuse crimes remained at similar levels to pre-COVID-19 and lockdown.

- In the 12 months to September 2020, 11.6% (3,499 of 30,067) of DA crimes resulted in a solved outcome.
- There are a number of new national and local initiatives being progressed, and planned, to tackle domestic abuse. Working effectively with partners is vital particularly in terms of the safeguarding of DA victims.

3.2. 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 clearly highlights that the largest proportion of domestic abuse crime suspect to victim relationship link is ex-partner. Data also shows a continued increasing upward trend in the number of domestic abuse crimes where the suspect to victim relationship link is partner and family groups. From March 2020, there has been month-on-month increase in volume for intimate partner and familial groups with a sudden decrease in September 2020.

3.3. Volume:

In the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019, there is almost no change in the total volume (179 less) domestic abuse crime and non-crimes. However, the ratio recorded as crime is increasing.

In the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019:

- Domestic abuse crime increased by 3.9% to 30,067 crimes (1,141 more crimes).
- Whilst domestic abuse non-crime fell by 9.3% (1,320 less non-crimes).
- Domestic abuse crimes now account for 70.1% of the total volume, an increase of 2.9%.

3.4. Police Resources:

Responsibility for managing and responding to domestic abuse continues to cut across a number of areas in the Force. 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, in the 12 months to September 2020 this averaged 76.5% compared to 69.4% in the 12 months to September 2019. With the highest recorded response on target achieved in April 2020 and May 2020, with 85.02% and 84.24% respectively.

3.5. Powers:

In response to domestic abuse, the Force's key priorities are clearly set out within the Force Plan, to help people, keep people safe and catch criminals, specifically to prevent, investigate and tackle domestic abuse.

Whilst where appropriate Officers will make and arrest and pursue a charge and prosecution through the criminal justice system, in circumstances where this is not possible, the Force are increasingly focussed on alternative opportunities to improve the safeguarding of victims through use of alternative powers, including Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs and DVPOs) and the application of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) "Clare's Law". Alongside the development of perpetrator focussed initiatives to tackle offending.

3.6. Partnership:

The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Policing Vision 2025 recognises, "*the police service faces both new and evolving crime challenges. Police... are now dealing with significant increases in... domestic abuse. These "high harm" crimes are complex in nature, staff intensive and police officers dealing with them are rightly subject to high levels of personal accountability and public scrutiny*".

In order to respond to and manage domestic abuse, the Force must work increasingly collaboratively and share information with partner agencies to support and safeguard victims and manage offenders, this includes working effectively with partners at the county's MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference) meetings and with the Essex Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service.

All CRU high risk DA cases are referred to MARAC, this process is automatic regardless of the level of engagement from the victim. In terms of police referrals for high risk victims of DA to IDVAs, referrals are made to Changing Pathways¹ and Next Chapter² to ensure vulnerable victims can access the right support and are enabled to feel safe.

3.7. Policy and Procedure:

The Force domestic abuse policy and associated procedures draw on national legislation, best practice and guidance whilst incorporating local nuances which set out for officers and staff the Force approach to grading, attending, investigating and safeguarding incidents of domestic abuse, including the minimum standards expected for safeguarding victims and and bringing offenders to justice.

3.8. Qualitative Assessment:

In June 2020, Essex Police were specifically mentioned at the Domestic Abuse Bill (Fifth and Sixth sitting) by The Joint Committee due to the Force being an outlier regarding the high number of DVPNs and DVPOs secured. With Jessica Phillips MP stating, "*If everybody was like Essex police force, I would be jumping for joy. I do not hope for this, but maybe*

¹ Changing Pathways cover: Southend, Rochford, Castle Point, Basildon, Thurrock, Brentwood, Harlow and Epping.

² Next Chapter cover: Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford.

one day somebody will perpetrate a crime against me in Essex and I will see how brilliant the force is at orders...”.

4.0 Deep dive

4.1. Police Resources³:

In October 2019, it was announced that Essex Police were to be allocated funding for 135 additional officers to be recruited by March 2021. Alongside a local precept increase in 2020/21 enabling the Force to grow and do more to deliver against both the Force Plan and the Police and Crime Plan to help people, keep people safe and catch criminals.

Resources to support the Force’s response to Domestic Abuse are comprised as follows:

4.1.1. Local Policing Teams (LPT)

LPT continue undertake the initial response to all reported and ‘live’ incidents of DA, attending the scene, conducting initial investigative actions, identifying and arresting suspect(s) where possible.

LPT conduct a primary DASH risk assessment to determine the immediate level of risk to the victim and undertake initial safeguarding, retaining standard risk investigations.

4.1.2. Domestic Abuse Investigations Teams (DAIT)

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

Within DAIT dedicated offender management teams enable targeted activity to reduce re-offending and safeguard victims by focussing on the management of outstanding domestic abuse offenders, locating and apprehending outstanding suspects posing the greatest risk.

Current DAIT countywide establishment is 155.15 FTE officers, this includes Inspectors, Sergeants and Constables. There is currently a 6.92% variance rate equating to vacancies of 10.74 across Inspectors to Constable ranks. This is an improved position compared to September 2019 when there was a 12.87% vacancy rate equating to 20.22 vacancies.

In addition, the current establishment of DAIT police staff is 13 FTE countywide, there is currently 3.01% variance rate equating to 0.39 FTE vacancies. This is similar to September 2019 when there was a 1.92% vacancy rate equating to 0.25 vacancies.

4.1.3. Central Referral Unit (CRU)

The CRU continue to be based within Crime and Public Protection Command and provide specialist safeguarding countywide to victims of High-Risk Domestic Abuse and Honour Based Abuse in support of DAIT.

³ Data provided as at 20th November 2020, and comparing to 30th September 2019

CRU current establishment is 31.02 FTE officers. There is currently 17.74% variance rate equating to vacancies of 5.50. This is an improved position compared to September 2019 when there was a 10.01% vacancy rate equating to 3.10 vacancies.

Plans to co-locate the CRU with the Essex MARAC at Essex County Council offices in County Hall by Spring 2020 has been postponed due to COVID-19. Whilst the lease, costs and legal agreements were finalised in December 2019, this joint-partnership embedded working remains on-hold until all operational services return to a state of normality. The aim is to maximise collaborative opportunities between services, to enable greater efficiencies in time-management and enhance current approaches and opportunities to increase our capabilities in tackling High-Risk Domestic Abuse and hidden harm.

4.1.4. **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 MARAC meetings, with a primary focus to safeguard the adult victim, children and any other family members.

4.1.5. **Additional Resources**

These teams are also supported by resources, 2 FTE, 1 Operational Development Support Officer within the Crime and Public Protection Strategic Centre and 1 DA Champion within the Criminal Justice Command Witness Care Unit.

The purpose of the Strategic Centre is to provide additional strategic capacity and capability for C&PP command. The Strategic Centre are responsible for making sure the Force policies and procedures around vulnerability are up to date, engaging with other forces and agencies to scope, share and support the implementation of best practice. A core function of the Strategic Centre is coordinating improvement activity, sharing learning and best practice through training and communication with staff, aimed at continuously improving the service to victims. Alongside working with partners to facilitate strong working relationships and inform local multi-agency process developments and improvements. The Strategic Centre are also responsible for responding to local and national reporting requirements.

The Domestic Abuse Champion post is responsible for co-ordinating activities on behalf of the Force in order to ensure that the multi-agency approach to domestic abuse victims meets statutory requirements. This includes working closely with IDVAs, CPS and HMCTS to operate as part of a seamless and efficient service to ensure DA victims who find themselves going through the CJ system receive the right information at the right time, focussing efforts on reducing ineffective trials due to victims retractions, refusal to engage in the CJS process or non-attendance at court and enhancing opportunities to utilise evidence-led prosecutions.

4.2. Key initiatives and activities:

An effective approach to domestic abuse focussing on repeat or future victimisation and offending will have a positive impact on demand by negating future behaviour.

Overall the percentage of repeat incidents shows an increase from 46.28% in the 12 months to July 2019 to 48.9% in the 12 months to September 2020. With the volume of repeat DA incidents⁴ decreasing by 1.2% (236 less repeat DA incidents) in the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019.

Data also shows in terms of the percentage of repeat domestic victims⁵, a small decrease in the volume of repeat victims of DA (13 less repeat victims) in the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019.

Domestic Abuse continues to be an identified Force priority, highlighted on the Force Plan, with the key aim of protecting vulnerable victims, keeping them safe and catching criminals. As well as being a priority set out within the Essex Police Fire and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan Extension 2020/21, to break the cycle of Domestic Abuse.

As such a range of key activities and initiatives have been progressed and launched in 2020 in order to continually drive to bring more offenders to justice whilst providing an effective and consistent response and support to victims.

4.2.1. Op Consider

Op Consider was designed to increase officers practical knowledge and awareness of 'considering' the use of Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPN/O) when responding to any incident of Domestic Abuse.

Since March 2020 DVPN usage tripled monthly compared with the same period the previous year. An internal and external media campaign was launched in June 2020 to support the results achieved since Op Consider training was delivered in Essex in February 2020. The training provided to officers, the Legal Department and HMCTS and resulting impact regarding DVPN/Os has received vast endorsement and positive feedback. In particular, the Force were specifically mentioned at the DA Bill (Fifth and Sixth sitting) in June 2020, with The Joint Committee noting, "*Numbers ranged from three DVPNs and three DVPOs... to 229 DVPNs and 199 DVPOs in Essex. Bravo to Essex! The majority of forces submitted figures between 10 and 100*".

Fantastic progress continues safeguarding domestic abuse victims through this approach with continuing evidence of an increase in Essex of officers utilising this protection power. The Central Referral Unit now maintain contact with all associated victims and support each District in respect of breach notifications. As a result of effective DVPN/O monitoring and breach management, there has been a significant increase in resulting prison sentences.

⁴ Number of Incidents in which the victim of DA incidents has also been a victim of a previous DA incident in last 12 months

⁵ Individuals who have been the victim of two or more DA incidents in the previous 12 months

Force-wide virtual 'flex' training re-commenced in September 2020, with a supporting training video link made available for all front-line officers and a bespoke C&PP intranet page created as a central resource providing 1-minute fact sheets, relevant information, guides and captures good news/usage progress and results.

The Force also featured in a recent circulation from the NPCC Lead for Domestic Abuse and College of Policing Crime and Criminal Justice Lead around Innovative DA practice captured nationwide, highlighting the Force's continued efforts to protect victims through the use of DVPN/Os and our response to breaches.

4.2.2. **Op Encompass**

The Op Encompass pilot launched 2nd January 2020 in Thurrock, creating a referral pathway for officers to directly inform the relevant school that a child has been present, or ordinarily resides at an address, where a medium risk domestic abuse incident occurred.

The Encompass referral is made directly to a trained 'key safeguarding adult' at the child's school to enable silent or overt support dependant on the needs and wishes of the child. The aim is to reduce the harmful adverse impact of domestic abuse on children and their emotional wellbeing. Providing schools with a greater understanding about why a child may presenting in a particular way, allowing them to provide early support and care or apply reasonable adjustments for children in the aftermath of domestic abuse incidents.

The testimonial from a Headteacher at a Thurrock school as part of the pilot demonstrates the value of Encompass: *"We received an Op Encompass report in a very timely manner and ... establish the appropriate level of welfare support for the child and also confirm this with information previously received about the child at a Social Care meeting."*

The pilot provided significant learning for the Force and following agreement with the Southend, Essex, Thurrock children's boards, social services and education partners, it was agreed Op Encompass would be extended countywide from 2nd December 2020.

4.2.3. **Op Enforce**

Op Enforce is police participation within Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) to identify intelligence opportunities to target high-risk repeat perpetrators and maximise victim safeguarding. The CRU develop the intelligence and task proactive DA teams across the Force to target those offenders. If an offender is outstanding and the victim is growing concerned, this can prompt a request to the proactive DA teams to prioritise that offender, providing reassurance to the victim.

Disruption opportunities focus on an 'Achilles heel' approach to targeting the criminality/life-style forming part of the domestic abuse. The key outcomes achieved as a result of the enhanced focus is in respect of implementing disruption interventions at an earlier opportunity and enhancing victim safeguarding whilst not compromising victim confidentiality or safety through appropriate use of the information obtained.

Following a successful trial, CRU and MARAC processes have been streamlined to minimise duplication and maximise appropriate use of information sharing in safeguarding

victims of DA and tackling perpetrators. This has led to greater efficiency in terms of officer time, MARAC consistency and information accuracy. Historically, this has been a labour-intensive exercise, taking an estimated 2-4 hours to complete by the Essex MARAC, the new automated process takes on average 15 – 20 minutes. The DA feed utilised is an Athena run product filtered on the basis of factors such as risk grading, district, pregnancy markers or whether children are linked to involved parties. It is then shared with partner agencies to enable those agencies to implement their own safeguarding procedures.

4.2.4. Secondary DASH risk assessment central repository pilot

A pilot has been approved whereby the CRU have become the centrally depository for all high-risk DA secondary DASH risk assessments for the North LPA, the intention is to improve consistency and timeliness of the secondary risk DASH assessments countywide, reducing delays and enabling faster safeguarding measures to be applied.

The two-month pilot commenced October 2020 with CRU Supervisors proactively monitoring the quality and collecting data to form the basis of a review at the end of the 2-month pilot. If successful, the process will be extended to the rest of the county.

4.2.5. Strategic and Tactical Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) meetings

The Force has a statutory obligation to engage in local Domestic Homicide Reviews⁶. The Force form part of the membership group of the SETDAB DHR multi-agency core group to share and examine information to establish agency contact and inform the recommendations of the group regarding whether to commission a DHR⁷ or not. The general purpose of DHRs is to determine what relevant agencies involved in the case might have done differently that could have prevented harm or death. This is so improvements can be identified and lessons learnt to reduce and prevent similar future harm.

In 2020, C&PP Command established quarterly Strategic and monthly Tactical level DHR Review meetings to enhance senior officer oversight and governance in respect of the general volume of new and on-going DHRs, improved grip regarding review, acceptance and allocation of Individual Management Review (IMR) and final overview report recommendations, tracking progress and agreeing for closure and signoff and referring any risks / issues to the ACC for C&PP. Initiating a Gold Group if required and engaging with the Force Media Department regarding the publication of any DHR Overview Reports.

4.2.6. Stay Safe at Home campaign

The Stay Safe at Home launched in April 2020, with organisations across Essex coming together to help keep residents safe while they spent more time at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Stay Safe at Home campaign, focused on five risks to people during the early challenging days of lockdown, with one of the key areas of focus being domestic abuse.

⁶ DHRs are intended to be held in circumstances whereby the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by: a person to whom he was related or with whom he was or had been in an intimate personal relationship; a member of the same household as himself; or, where a victim took their own life (suicide) and the circumstances give rise to concern that there was coercive controlling behaviour in the relationship.

⁷ DHR levels range from level 1 a full multi-agency review, to level 3 a single or twin agency review.

The campaign was developed by the Essex Resilience Forum, which brings together public sector organisations across Essex including Police, to form a coordinated countywide response in times of crisis.

With the aim of ensuring for those victims living with domestic abuse feeling even more isolated and at risk to remember there is help available. Whilst also focussing on perpetrators of DA encouraging them to recognise the signs and to seek help to change their behaviour.

The Stay Safe at Home campaign featured in a recent circulation from the NPCC Lead for Domestic Abuse and College of Policing Crime and Criminal Justice Lead around Innovative DA practice captured nationwide in response to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

4.3. Key internal and external influencers:

4.3.1. SETDAB 2020 social media campaign

To coincide with International Day of the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25th November 2020, SETDA partners launched a DA social media campaign highlighting different elements of the partnerships work and priorities.

The campaign aims to raise awareness about DA, educating people on how to spot the signs, promoting help and support for victims, identifying ways in which perpetrators can help to change their behaviour, alongside featuring stalking and highlighting how DA affects young people and children and of domestic abuse.

Following on from the campaign 250,000 leaflets will be distributed into 360 supermarkets across Essex, Southend and Thurrock which have been produced by Essex Police. The leaflet will contain useful information to signpost the public for help, advice and support.

4.3.2. Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DABPF)

Forces were informed in July 2018 that the national Domestic Abuse Best Practice Framework (DABPF) implementation plan was approved by the National Criminal Justice Board for local multi-agency groups to deliver. Essex Police chair the local Essex group with the aim of responding more effectively to DA cases and supporting victims.

The CPS National DA Best Practice Delivery group monitor implementation of the national framework plan which consists of four components:

- A clear multiagency/community approach which addresses risk management and safeguarding procedures;
- Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Support;
- Trained and consistently deployed staff across all agencies (including robust judges);
- In court services: proactive witness services/pre-trial familiarisation visits/appropriate use of special measures.

The Essex multi-agency group attendees position and returns set out that Essex was already achieving much of the framework, however, the local group and implementation plan provided a means to bring the partners together and document the work taking place.

Forces were invited to a national conference in November 2020 to receive an update on framework implementation and better understand national intentions for how the framework will develop, however, due to COVID-19 the national conference was postponed. Until the national of requirements and future intentions are clearer, the group will continue to meet quarterly to progress any issues / actions required around this agenda.

4.3.3. Domestic Abuse Commissioner

In September 2019, the Government announced the UK's first Domestic Abuse Commissioner, to lead on driving improvements on the response to domestic abuse in the UK, championing victims and making recommendations on what more should be done to better protect victims and bring more offenders to justice.

As part of the Domestic Abuse Bill (see section 6.2.1) developments, the Bill will establish in law the office of the Domestic Abuse Commissioner, to provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues and play a key role in overseeing and monitoring the provision of domestic abuse services in England and Wales.

The Independent Office of Domestic Abuse Commissioner will be tasked with encouraging good practice in preventing domestic abuse; identifying both those at risk of abuse as well as those perpetrating it and improving the protection and provision of support to those affected by domestic abuse. They will also be able to publish reports that hold statutory agencies and the government to account.

4.3.4. Stalking Protection Orders

In January 2020, Stalking Protection Orders which can be used in cases of intimate, non-intimate and stranger stalking were brought into effect through the Stalking Protection Act 2019 (SPA) legislation. These were quickly implemented by the Force with process development being overseen by the stalking lead. These new civil orders enable early police intervention to manage an alleged perpetrator to address stalking behaviours and protect victims from more serious harm.

Essex Police Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT) Detectives have been provided with guidance, advice and support around the introduction of Stalking Protection Orders, resulting in Essex Police securing the first orders in the Eastern Region and provided best practice to neighbouring forces. From January – August 2020, five interim and seven full⁸ orders were secured.

5.0 Performance

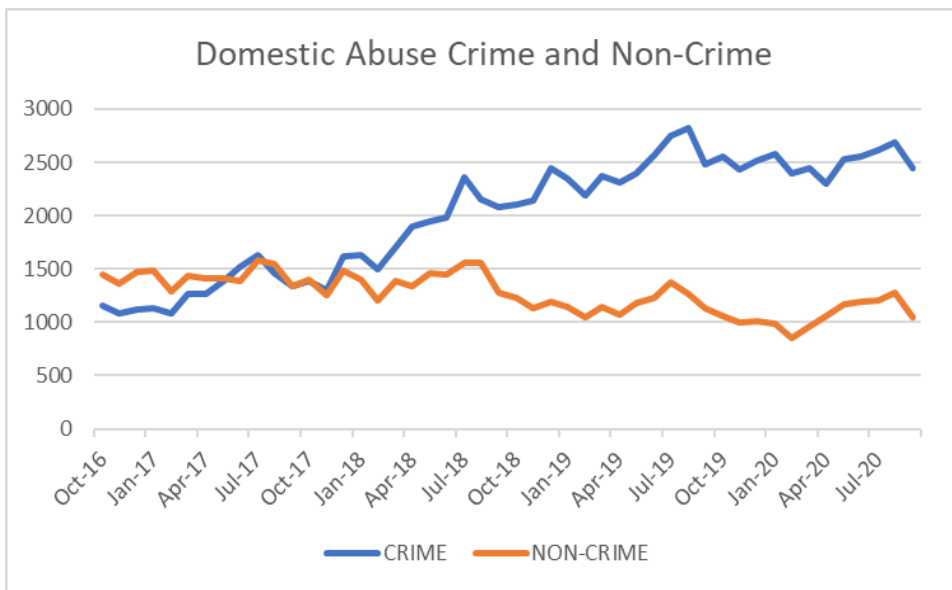
The Force recognises the complex nature of domestic abuse and understands the importance of working with our criminal justice and other statutory and 3rd sector partners to protect and safeguard the most vulnerable and reduce any opportunity for harm. Utilising and

⁸ Three of the full orders relate to cases where interim orders were made.

understanding data and management information helps identify gaps and areas for improvement in the Force’s response to domestic abuse.

5.1. Crime Types:

The chart below shows the number of domestic abuse related crimes and non-crimes. As illustrated, until May 2017 there were more non-crime domestic abuse incidents. From July 2018 until August 2019, domestic abuse crimes have followed an upward trend. From September 2019, domestic abuse crimes remain above 2,200 crimes per month, not exceeding 2,700. The average number of crimes per month in the 12 months to September 2020 is 2,506, compared to 2,411 in the 12 months to September 2019.



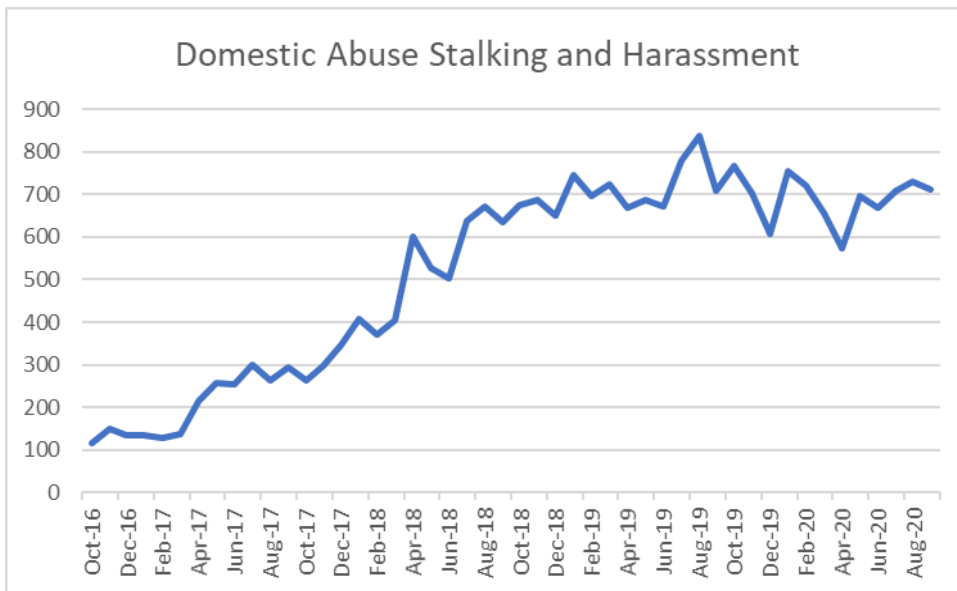
In the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019, there is almost no change in the total volume of DA crime and non-crimes. However, the ratio recorded as crime is increasing, DA crimes now account for 70.1% of the total volume in the 12 months to September 2020 compared to 67.2% in the 12 months to September 2019.

Overall, there were 179 less total DA crimes and non-crimes, 0.4% decrease, in the 12 months to September 2020 when compared to the 12 months to September 2019. Domestic abuse crime increased by 3.9%, to 30,067 crimes, (1,141 more crimes than the 12 months to September 2019). Whilst domestic abuse non-crime fell by 9.3% (1,320 less non-crimes than the 12 months to September 2019) in the 12 months to September 2020. Some of this is likely to be due to COVID-19, the rest may be attributable to a plateau following earlier improvements in crime data accuracy.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak and the lockdown in the UK at the end of March 2020, the number of domestic abuse crimes remained at similar levels prior to COVID-19 and lockdown. It could be argued that this may be due to victims being unable to report offences where they live with the perpetrator.

Domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment accounted for 19.4% of all domestic abuse (crime and non-crime) in the 12 months to September 2020. Overall, domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment accounts for nearly one fifth of all domestic abuse (crime and non-crime). There has been a 0.5% decrease compared to the 12 months to September 2019.

The chart below shows domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment and closely follows the trend seen in the previous chart. August 2019 recorded the highest number of domestic related Stalking and Harassment crimes to date, at 838. Between September 2019 and April 2020, domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment seemed to be on an overall downward trend, with slight increases in October 2019 and January 2020 and February 2020. From May 2020, the numbers are on a rise again. September 2020 recorded 713 domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment crimes, similar to September 2019, where 708 domestic abuse related Stalking and Harassment crimes were recorded.



The table below shows domestic abuse offences, solved outcomes and solved rate by risk levels, extracted from Force Crime Tree data in the 12 months to September 2020.

Victim Based: Under Reported Crime Type	Offences					Solved Outcomes					Solved Rates %		
	2019	2020	# diff.	% diff.	% All 2020	2019	2020	# diff.	% diff.	% All 2020	2019	2020	% pt. diff.
Domestic Abuse	28930	30043	1113	3.8	18.9	3127	3499	372	11.9	14.5	10.8	11.6	0.8
- High Risk Domestic Abuse	2521	2682	161	6.4	1.7	776	755	-21	-2.7	3.1	30.8	28.2	-2.6
- Medium Risk Domestic Abuse	5049	4224	-825	-16.3	2.7	1017	956	-61	-6.0	4.0	20.1	22.6	2.5
- Standard Risk Domestic Abuse	19470	21607	2137	11.0	13.6	1121	1605	484	43.2	6.7	5.8	7.4	1.7

In terms of volume of the offences, there has been a substantial decrease in medium risk whilst high risk has seen a slight increase and standard risk has seen a large increase.

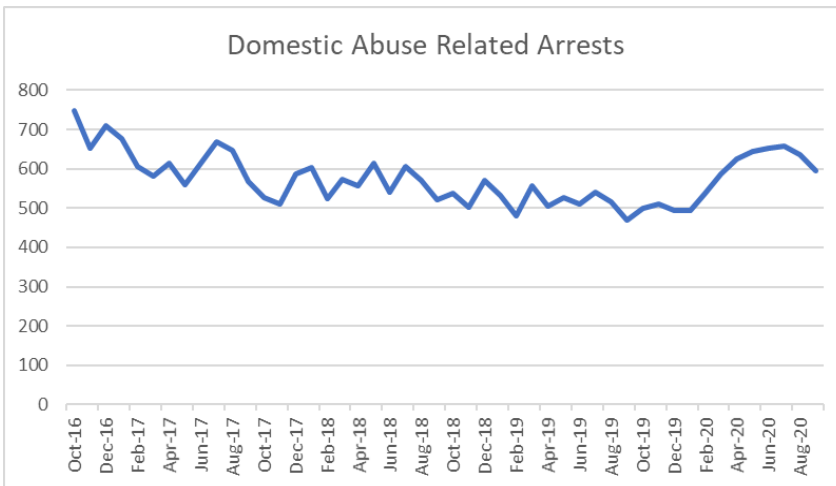
Overall, there has been an increase in the solved domestic abuse outcomes in the 12 months to September 2020 when compared to 12 months to September 2019. In terms of volume of the solved outcomes, high risk and medium risk have seen fewer offences solved

in the 12 months to September 2020, compared to 12 months to September 2019, compared to standard risk, where 484 more offences were solved.

5.2. Arrests:

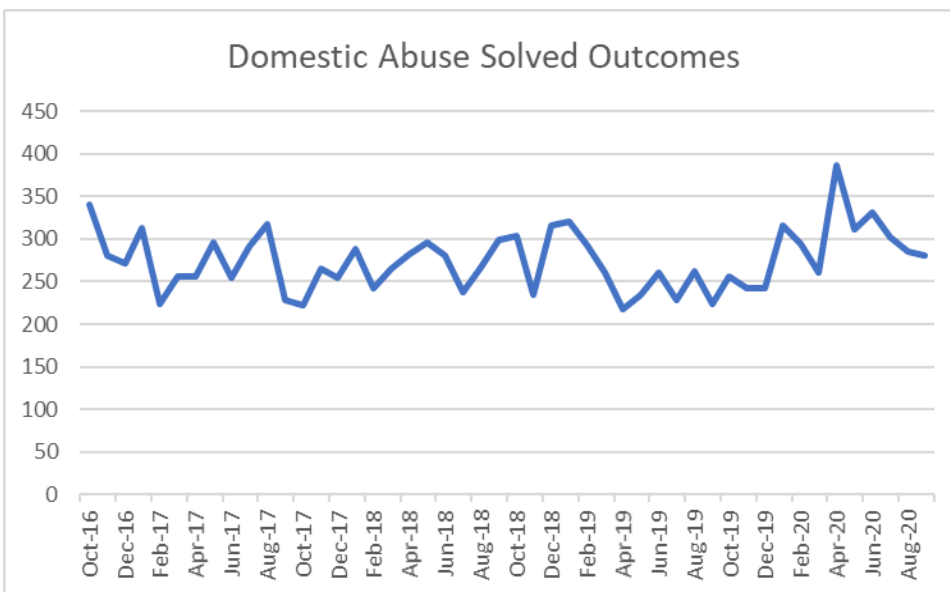
The chart below shows the number of domestic abuse related arrests. Overall, after long term decline in volume, 2020 has seen arrest volumes increasing.

There were an average of 520 arrests per month in the 12 months to September 2019 compared to 578 arrests in the 12 months to September 2020. Domestic abuse related arrests have increased by 11.0% in 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019.



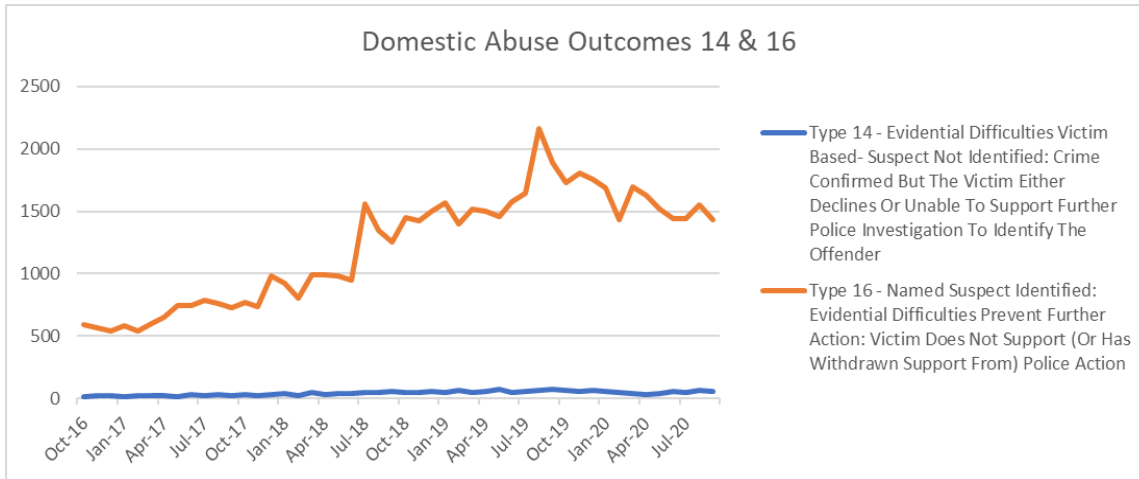
5.3. Outcomes (Inc. 14 and 16):

The chart below highlights the number of domestic abuse solved outcomes have risen from an average of 263 per month in the 12 months to September 2019 to 292 per month in the 12 months to September 2020.



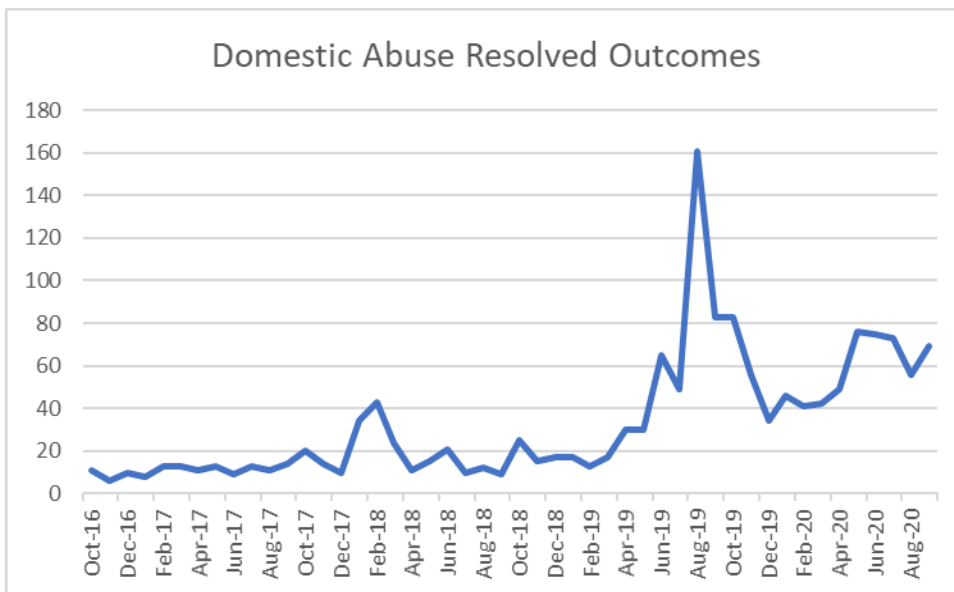
The graph that follows shows domestic abuse outcomes 14 and 16 (where the victim does not support prosecution). The data highlights that, outcome 16 has steadily increased from 593 in October 2016 to 1,436 by September 2020. However, it should be noted there has been a sharp, steady and consistent decline since April and we expect this trend to continue.

August 2019 saw a spike in domestic abuse offences finalised as outcome 16 (2,167), since which time after a long period of increasing numbers of outcomes 14 and 16, volumes decreased and are remaining fairly consistent. This seems to coincide with the slowing of the rate of increase for DA.

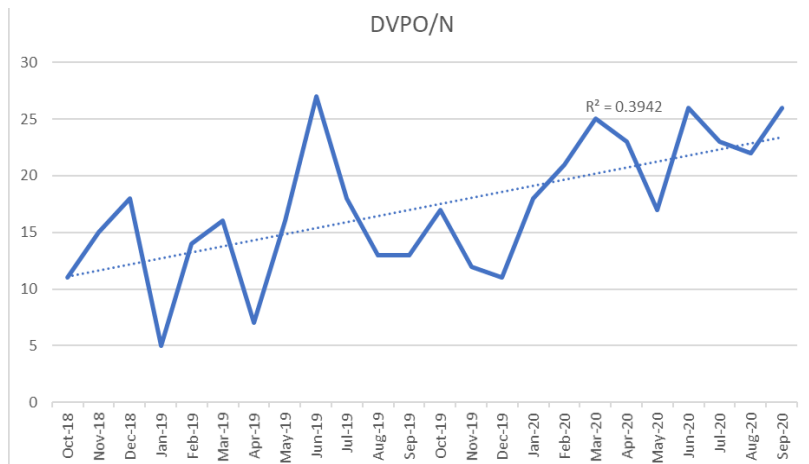


The chart below shows domestic abuse outcomes that are considered to have been resolved (outcomes 5, 9, 10, 20, 21, 22) but do not contribute to a 'solved' outcome.

The number of resolved outcomes started to increase in June 2019 (65), peaking significantly in August 2019 (161). Since May 2020 through to September 2020, there were an average of 70 resolved outcomes per month. Resolved outcomes have increased (34.1%) from 522 in the 12 months to September 2019 to 700 in the 12 months to September 2020.



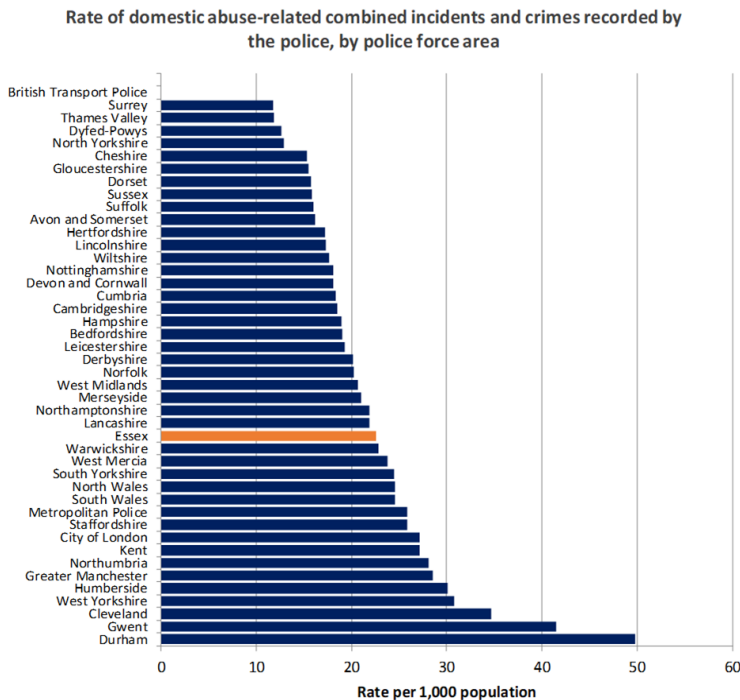
The below chart shows an upward trend of DVPN/O usage. There was a 39.3% increase (68 more) in Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN) and Protection Orders (DVPO) in the 12 months to September 2020 compared to the 12 months to September 2019.



In Q2, July – September 2020 alone, 80 DVPOs were granted, an increase of 32 (66.6%) DVPOs compared to same quarter the previous year. Equally important to highlight is the successful conversion rate from DVPN to DVPO supported and authorised by the Courts, which for Q2 equated to a conversion rate of 94.1%.

5.4. 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 population⁹.

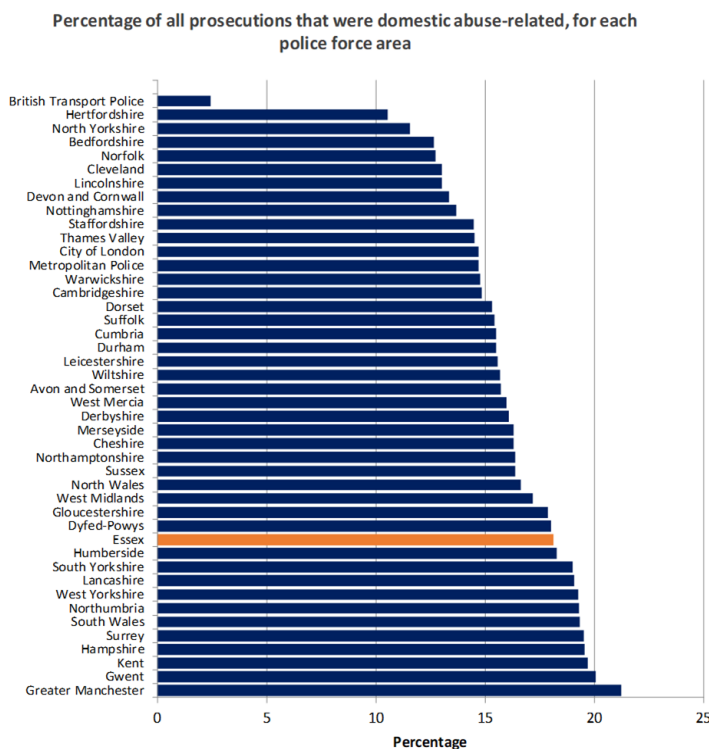


⁹ The latest data available on ONS is to March 2019.

In Essex, 41,398 domestic abuse-related incidents and crimes were recorded in the year ending March 2019. This was equivalent to 23 incidents and crimes for every 1,000 people in the population.

Further to the 2016 and 2018 ONS data in the October 2019 Deep Dive, it is evident from the ONS data that Essex continues to be placed mid-table and is not an outlier in comparison to some other counties.

The chart below shows the percentage of domestic abuse related prosecutions to year ending March 2019. In Essex, 2,334 domestic abuse-related prosecutions took place in the year ending March 2019. This equates to 18% of all prosecutions in this area during this period. Moving Essex from seventh highest in March 2018 to twelfth in March 2019.

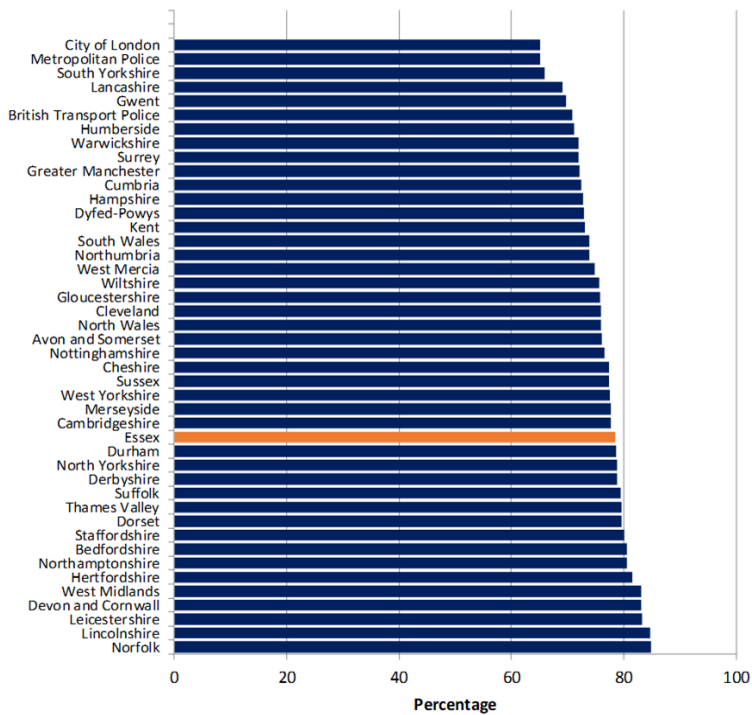


National ONS data also available for year ending March 2019, also highlights the number of cases referred to the CPS for a pre-charge decision that were legal decisions, the number of domestic abuse-related charges, and the percentage of legal decisions that resulted in a charge in the year ending March 2019.

In Essex, there were a total of 2,692 domestic abuse-related legal decisions made by the CPS in the year ending March 2019. In the same period, there were 2,114 domestic abuse-related charges, which equates to 79% conversion rate of referrals resulting in a charge.

Set out in the chart below shows the percentage of domestic abuse related legal decisions resulting in a charge. Placed sixteenth highest in March 2019.

Percentage of domestic abuse-related legal decisions that resulted in a charge, by police force area



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

6.1. Local:

6.1.1. Victim Feedback Panel

Led by Crime and Public Protection Command, the first Victim Feedback Panel is scheduled to sit in January 2021, utilising victim commissioned services within rape crisis, domestic abuse and witness care to provide bespoke feedback to frontline teams, capturing the victims voice and identifying recurring themes to enable the Force to learn and shape future services.

6.1.2. DA Problem Solving Team

New Essex Police Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams are in the process of being recruited, this will consist of police officers, working alongside DAIT to identify and support repeat and vulnerable victims to take positive action to break the cycle of domestic abuse. The teams will undertake victim focussed activity to support, build confidence and empower victims of to assist them to take positive action. Key elements of the role will include the creation of victim support plans, providing enhanced victim liaison throughout the investigation and criminal justice process, supporting victims at court and establishing links with partner agencies to ensure victims receive the support they need, alongside identifying opportunities for enforcement activity against perpetrators.

6.1.3. TecSOS App

TecSOS, a charitable trust whose services are provided on a not for profit basis, provides a mobile solution that provides immediate connection to the Police for vulnerable victims at the touch of a button 24/7.

The Force have a longstanding contract utilising TecSOS handsets for DA victims, through the CRU.

The user can activate a call to 999 using a side button on the phone so can do this whilst it is in their pocket if under threat and the call operator will know it is a vulnerable person calling as the TecSOS number is linked to the Command and Control system. The TecSOS device has the added benefit of also providing GPS tracking information every 7 days, which is updated every minute when the 999 call is activated.

TecSOS have also now developed an app which users can download on to their own mobile phones, this has been trialled through the CRU for DA victims. Police enable the app through registration of a user for an app licence and can de-register the users app licence at any time.

Use of the TecSOS app will enable the Force to provide an additional layer of safeguarding and support to DA victims.

6.1.4. Force Domestic Abuse Strategy and Problem Profile

The Force Domestic Abuse Strategy is currently in draft, awaiting approval and sharing. The strategy recognises the complex nature of domestic abuse and specifically describes how Essex Police will respond with our criminal justice and other statutory and 3rd sector partners to protect and safeguard the most vulnerable and reduce any opportunity for harm. Utilising data and management information to help gaps and areas for improvement in the Force's response to domestic abuse.

An updated Force Domestic Abuse Problem Profile will also be produced by Force analysts in 2021, aiming to set out the nature and scale of DA in Essex, including work being undertaken by the Force, including with local communities and partners. The DA Problem Profile will as a result set out actions and recommendations to support and inform operational and policy decision-making. The purpose of which is to ensure a coordinated approach and enable the Force to continually improve our response.

6.2. National:

6.2.1. Domestic Abuse Bill

In spring 2018, the Government conducted a public consultation on Transforming the Response to Domestic Abuse. Following a draft Domestic Abuse Bill published in January 2019 and pre-legislative scrutiny by a Joint Committee, the Domestic Abuse Bill completed its House of Commons stages in July 2020.

The Government response set out 123 commitments, both legislative and non-legislative, designed to promote awareness of domestic abuse; protect and support victims and their

families; transform the justice process to prioritise victim safety and provide an effective response to perpetrators; and to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all local areas, agencies and sectors.

Amongst a number of key implementations to be made by the Bill, some key aspects of the Domestic Abuse Bill impacting on policing are as follows:

- Creating of a statutory definition of domestic abuse, this will include recognising children as victims if they witness abuse
- Establishing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner to monitor statutory agencies and hold them to account in tackling domestic abuse
- Providing new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders to prevent perpetrators from contacting their victims and take positive steps to change their behaviour
- Placing the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (“Clare’s law”) on a statutory footing

The Domestic Abuse Governance Board (DAGB) has explored the current draft Bill identifying opportunities to get ahead of any issues (of which there are few). Early changes to minimise its impact are being managed through the board.

6.2.2. College of Policing

Part of the College of Policing Business Plan for 2020/21 sets out its wider programme of work with one of their key nine deliverables includes a focus on domestic abuse. Specifically one of the deliverables states to: *“Assess the testing of the domestic abuse risk assessment tool and decide whether it should be rolled out to more forces”*.

A decision by the College of Policing to roll out the domestic abuse risk assessment tool would require a review of current practices, policies, procedures and process guidance, alongside a review of training requirements to ensure appropriate usage.

6.2.3. National Funding

In November 2020, Government Ministers announced significant funding, including for victims of domestic abuse, in anticipation of the increase in demand over the winter months following the reports from charities regarding a sharp increase in demand during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Government committed circa £11 million towards a range of services offering practical and emotional help, alongside an additional £7 million towards a range of perpetrators programmes to prevent domestic abuse.

Whilst the increase in demand was not experienced by policing during COVID-19 the increasing engagement by victims with charities and support services can ensure our victims are suitably supported and safeguarded and may encourage further reporting.

6.2.4. New Victims Codes

In November 2020, the Ministry of Justice released the revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime, to come into force on 1 April 2021. The Code outlines 12 specific victims’ rights

and sets out the minimum level of services victims can expect from criminal justice agencies. Victims of domestic abuse are eligible for enhanced rights under the Code, enhancements include: being contacted sooner after key decisions, having access to special measures and being offered a referral to a specialist support service. The Force, Witness Care Unit and PFCC are all explicitly set out as being required to deliver the Rights under this Code.

6.2.5. COVID-19 Impact

The on-going and longer-term impact of COVID-19 on (domestic abuse) victims cannot be overlooked. Whilst the prioritisation of domestic abuse and other serious offence cases by the courts during the pandemic has been pledged, supported by an £80 million Government investment in a range of measures to reduce delays and deliver speedier justice for victims, including hiring 1,600 new staff and opening more temporary 'Nightingale Courts', case and trial delays may result in victims becoming disengaged and increasing numbers of cases being discontinued.

7. Risks/Mitigation

There is one management level risk recorded on the force risk register specifically associated to domestic abuse:

7.1. Risk 2326: Domestic Abuse Resourcing: *For some time domestic abuse calls for service have been rising year on year. While problem solving and demand reduction must be a key part of flattening this curve it will not deal with the issue particularly considering predicted population growth. Essex Police DAIT teams have experienced significant growth in demand. They are only able to deal with 'today's challenges', finding real challenges in adequately dealing with 'yesterday's' victims. This causes increase risk to victims, leaves suspects outstanding for longer than should be & will effect victim confidence in the CJ process as a whole. We need to focus far more on prevention.*

Whilst there has been significant progress to address this risk, the risk remains open.

Two mitigating actions have been completed and closed, relating to a review of work allocation to DAIT teams and analysis commissioned to predict future growth in demand to support/negate a growth bid.

Three mitigating actions remain in place:

- 1) The Force DA Governance Board to oversee a resources review of all DAIT teams;
- 2) Recommendation to chief officers regards uplift to DAIT teams force-wide to be considered through future growth plans;
- 3) Explore concept of High Intensity Teams. High Intensity Teams take the most high frequency cases and problem solve them. Using this approach could reduce volume and harm.

The uplift for 2020/21 is currently being recruited to and will focus on problem solving, taking a more holistic approach and working closely with partners. These officers are anticipated to be in place by March 2021 and will provide further mitigation to this risk.

A paper was presented at COG regards DAIT uplift through precept growth. This has been approved from 2020/21 growth as part of the general investigator uplift. The advert for the DAIT uplift for a DA Problem Solving Team went live on SAP on 1st December 2020 with a two-week closing date. Applications are being collated by one DI to ensure coordinated and central oversight.

8.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

None.

9.0 Health and Safety Implications

None.