

Make a Difference Campaign

Final Report on Survey Findings

April 2020



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Introduction

In 2016, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner asked people in Essex what they wanted from Essex Police. Working with police officers and staff, and partners from across Essex, the findings were used to develop the 2016 Police and Crime Plan. A survey was again carried out in order to find out the views of Essex residents to help inform the plan for police funding in 2019/2020.

This set the seven policing priorities to protect Essex, which are:

- ❖ More local, visible and accessible policing.
- ❖ Crack down on anti-social behaviour.
- ❖ Breaking the cycle of domestic abuse.
- ❖ Reverse the trend in serious violence.
- ❖ Tackle gangs and organised crime.
- ❖ Protecting children and vulnerable people.
- ❖ Improve safety on our roads.

Since developing the 2016 Police and Crime plan, Essex Police has funded 368 more officers (by April 2020 compared to 2016). Essex also has the second largest and fastest growing Special Constabulary in the country. Essex Police has worked to bring the numbers of incidents relating to anti-social behaviour, burglary and theft down, and has led the fight against gangs, county lines and violence with the development of a specialist Violence Reduction Unit.

However, the challenges have also continued to change and Essex Police knows they need to do more to tackle violence in our communities and see the reduction achieved in anti-social behaviour, burglary and theft mirrored in violent crime and drugs. Essex Police wants to prevent crime happening in the first place and can achieve this by working with the people in Essex so there is no space for criminals to thrive and ensuring that the most vulnerable people in our communities remain safe.

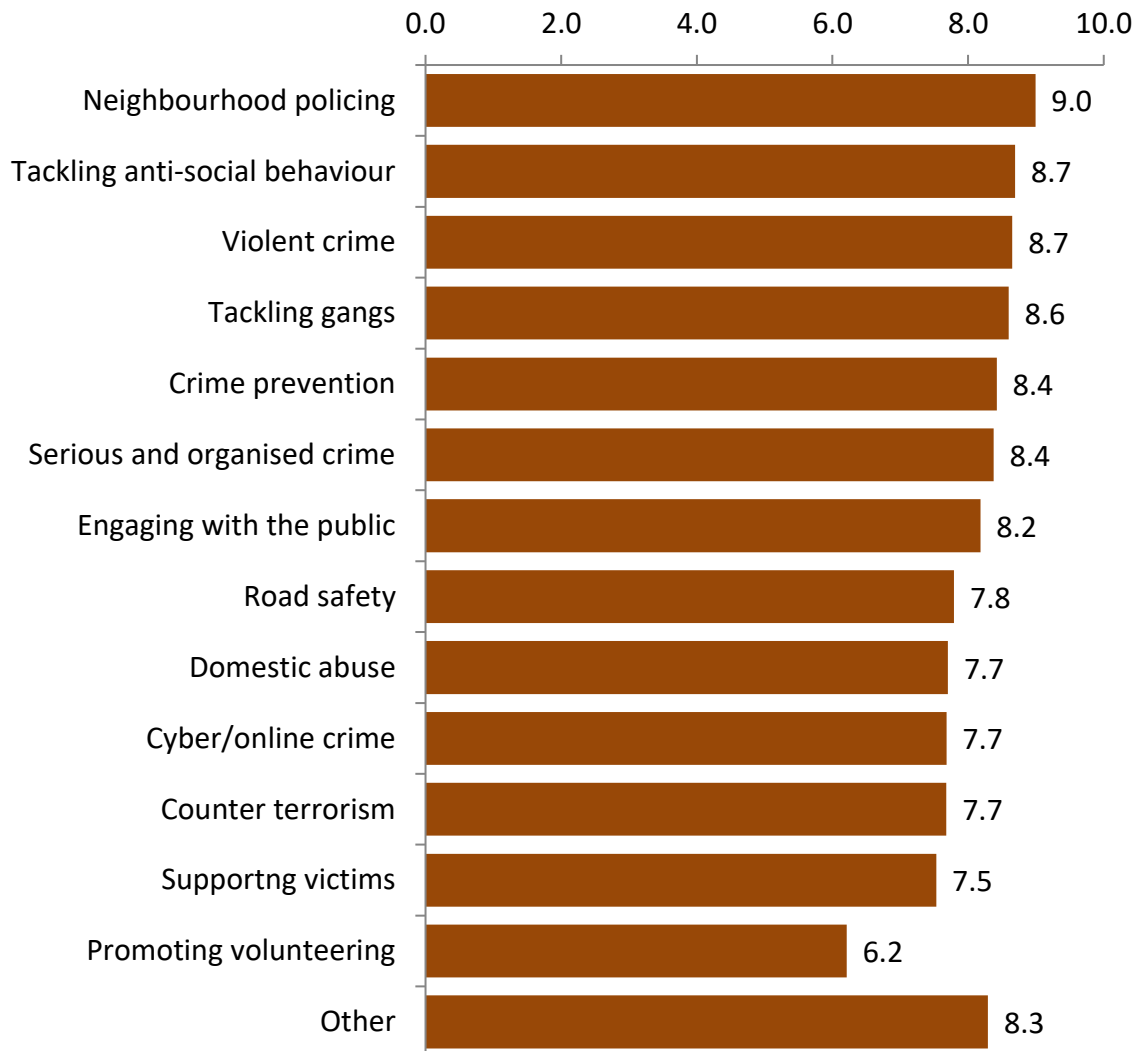
The current Police and Crime Plan ends in 2020 and work will begin soon on preparing the next iteration of the plan, following the next PFCC elections in May 2020. As part of developing the next Plan, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner asked the people of Essex again what they want from their police force via a survey launched in September 2019. This report summarises the findings of the 730 responses received up until 24th April 2020.

A word cloud featuring the words "police" and "crime" in large, red, cursive font. Surrounding these central words are various other terms in smaller, black and brown fonts, including "presence", "response", "drug", "many", "job", "feel", "work", "know", "visible", "need", "time", "streets", "important", "officer", "behaviour", "support", "add", "area", "better", "years", "can", "town", and "additionally". The words are arranged in a roughly circular pattern, with "police" and "crime" being the most prominent.

police
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Findings so far

Respondents were asked how important the issues below are to them, on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is the most important. The issue ranked highest in importance was neighbourhood policing, followed by violent crime, tackling gangs, tackling anti-social behaviour, crime prevention, and serious and organised crime.



156 respondents provided a suggestion for other priorities. 26 people suggested having more police patrolling, greater police visibility or having more police available while 9 wanted police stations to be open and 5 wanted community policing.

“Visible presence. You never know what you have just deterred. Just because you can’t measure it for your stats, doesn’t mean you’re doing nothing!”

“We need a huge increase in fully licensed and empowered officers both on foot and in/on vehicles.”

“Put police on the streets and have background people to do the supporting roles e.g. Victim Support, Crime Prevention, Promoting Volunteering. Take away the burden of these from our police and free them up to do the job.”

“Back to when the local bobby was a child's friend, the phrase 'Go and ask a policeman' showed a trust in the police force.”

11 respondents suggested the protection of vulnerable people and/or prevention activities.

“Investigating crime promptly and offering a safe and effective service to the public.”

Other suggestions made were to tackle...

- Road issues (16 people)
- Drug dealing (14 people)
- Burglaries (14 people)
- Drug use (6 people)
- Car theft (5 people)
- Hare coursing/wildlife/rural crime (8 people)
- Hate crime (4 people)
- Knife crime (2 people)
- Anti-social behaviour, including vandalism (5 people)
- Rough sleeping/begging (4 people)
- Other things, including stalking, shop lifting, door step fraud, dog theft and fly tipping (18 people)

There were also a number of other suggestions, as follows:

- Engagement and /or communication with the public.
- Greater collaboration with the Fire Service.
- More training for support officers and detectives.
- Providing specialist policing rather than increasing the number of 'non' specialists.
- Giving PCSOs all the powers that are allowable.
- Scrapping the lone crewing of officers.
- Integration with the Fire Service.
- Supporting Neighbourhood Watch.
- Investigating crime promptly.
- Giving victims the confidence to press for charges.
- Better recognition of the profits made by drug dealers in their sentencing.
- Clearing roads more quickly after accidents.
- Greater value for money.
- Stop wasting resources on “alleged hate crimes”.

Other comments

When asked if there was anything else respondents would like to say about policing in Essex, a total of 274 people gave a comment. The largest number of comments (28%) were about having greater police visibility or availability.

"I understand there has been an increase in police, and I am reassured by reports on solving many crimes. However, I really feel we need more police to be seen in the area, hopefully to act as a deterrent to out of area thugs! Not knocking the Police, you do a great job, but need to be seen more!"

"People need to see more police on the beat. A visible deterrent will go a long way to preventing anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood crime, and even organised crime/gang culture."

"All of these are important but the crux of everything is visible policing...this can meet many needs e.g. reassurance and support, crime prevention, and detection, problem solving for community issues."

"There is barely any visible policing anymore, our streets and communities need to have police either walking or cycling the beat. It would certainly lead to a beneficial and positive outcome to develop relationships and more respect for the police."

15% of the comments were about the need for more police, with some respondents linking this to the need for a greater police visibility.

"The number of police officers needs to increase to give a higher presence which acts as a deterrent. Burglary is on the increase because offenders will be long gone before a police officer arrives."

"I am sure everybody is aware of the pressures that the Polices forces are under However, there appears to be very little progress in the promised increase in police officers numbers. Less resources only means an increase in all crimes. I am sure that those that are responsible are working towards bringing back a higher police presence but a visible progress on the promises made would be good."

"Promises made re extra policing are bogus. The promises made for an extra 20,000 police officers will simply replace the 30,000 shed under the Home Secretary Teresa May. Colchester Division is often staffed by 2-3 police officers. People are being left to investigate crimes which are not even recorded. The general public are being sold a pup when it comes to policing."

14% of the comments made suggested that neighbourhood policing is key to reducing crime and/or should be brought back, with another 4% suggesting greater engagement with communities or education of young people.

"Local residents need the facility to see local police and engage with them - this isn't happening at the moment. The 'Cops with Coffee' initiative is a good way of introducing the local officers to people but doesn't really create community interaction. People need to speak to a person at the time they have an issue not just at specific times of the month. With a base/office at the Fire Station this could possible provide a more effective policing model."

“Need more 'beat bobbies' - a visible presence, and a bobby who knows his neighbourhood is a good way of pre-empting all forms of anti-social activity.”

“Very disappointed in Essex Police in recent years, particularly in their engagement with the public on a local level allowing a generation of young criminals to proliferate without any checks or balances where the fear of being caught was concerned. I feel that the direction senior management took under the financial pressures imposed by central government were wrong and although this is 2019, a good relationship with communities at street level is vital. Technology might abound, but people are at the root of society and this must not be forgotten again.”

“I'd like to hear of much more engagement in schools. I feel sure that our Junior Neighbourhood Watch sessions got a lot of kids on the Police's side rather than against.”

7% of the comments made related to the need or wish to have police stations open or available: this was linked by some respondents to the other themes above.

“Since closing Pitsea Police station there has been visible rise in crime two or more killed, stabbing, robberies time to reopen the station and put the PC and PCSO back on the street.”

“Police Stations need to be open longer. As I work 9 to 5pm and whenever I attend a police station in Essex they are closed. These are important places in people's lives and we like to rely on police station to be open. They need to be open until at least 7pm.”

“As a rural resident, our local police stations have closed (Great Yeldham, Halstead). It's a place called Stambourne and when we have had burglaries, officers have been sent from Stanway near Colchester or even further away. They don't know the area. That's if they decide to turn up. Stations that are nearer are often unmanned. There isn't local policing any more in this area and I'm appalled by what's been happening.”

Positive comments about the police were received from 18% of respondents.

“My opinion would be that you do a fabulous job in difficult circumstances, there will always be a shortage of staff both uniformed and civilian and there will always be challenges that stretch the police force further each time.”

“My very limited contact with Essex Police Officers has always been positive - officers were polite, used common sense and were good humoured. You should be proud of your front line officers.”

“An impressive police service largely staffed by dedicated and professional officers and support. Long may it continue.”

“I think things have improved greatly over the past couple of years. The Specials have gone a long way to increase police visibility in towns where police stations have closed, have helped stem antisocial behaviour and generally are incredibly good for our town.”

20% of comments were made by respondents wanting police to tackle the following crimes:

- Drugs (31%).
- Anti-social behaviour or low level crime (30%).
- Road issues (28%).
- Burglary (11%)
- Gangs (13%).
- Knife crime (7%).

“The one thing that seems to be missing from the list of priorities is police response to burglary. Burglary, whilst many might consider petty and not worth the dedication of significant police resources, is a crime which devastates lives as it not only involves the loss of irreplaceable personal possessions but leaves emotional scars on victims as a result of having had their homes invaded often leading to them having to move to escape the emotional trauma which involves huge cost as well as upheaval in their lives. The police response is often slow to the point of being virtually pointless and the thieves know it so there is very little deterrent.”

“In Ingatestone there is a lot of vehicle crime and burglary during the night but not a lot is done about it. I've lived in Ingatestone for over 30 years and now don't feel safe in my home at night and worry about my 90 year old mother who also lives there. I also worry about drugs gangs coming out from London and having such an influence on local children.”

“Low level anti social behaviour, littering, graffiti and casual drug taking in public places should be tackled.”

12% of respondents wanted an improved response by police, with many clearly unhappy based on personal experiences.

“Disappointed with Police reaction to the above. Particularly when told that Detectives do not work on Burglary and Theft cases. 6 weeks since our latest theft and no visit or statement taken. We take the trouble of installing and recording CCTV compiling evidence including vehicle registration details which are not acted on.”

“A resident in my village received no response to a 999 call. All 999 calls should receive response, even if it's follow-up phone calls within a short space of time for evaluation and verbal support. Time wasters (e.g. drunken calls) should be pursued with fine and publication.”

“I feel pretty disappointed. Having had a car burglary on my driveway over a year ago which Essex Police investigated and found the person responsible, but CPS are still deciding if they can prosecute. I have numerous emails and letters, nothing conclusive has resulted. We know his name and where he lives and still carrying on committing crimes. It's basic stuff but as a victim it feels like not enough has been done. I personally had to ask police to connect our crime with another local crime on same night which led to the guy being caught. Really frustrating and feels like he isn't being punished at all.”

“The highest priority should be to ensure that appropriate resources are available to respond effectively and quickly to emergency incidents 24/7 365

days. Concentrate on crime and criminality rather than being a surrogate service function.”

5% of comments were from respondents wanting tougher sentences for criminals.

“Increasing incidents of all types of anti social and crime behaviour are of concern to all. The efforts of the police are much appreciated but there is concern that there are insufficient numbers of officers to deal with the ever worsening problem. Blaggards seem unconcerned about the risk of jail, most are not sentenced appropriately to fit the crime and are soon back on the streets. I appreciate that prisons are close to overfill so it is an ongoing worrying scenario.”

4% of comments were made by respondents who felt that the police response to crimes in rural communities, and their presence there, is poor and needs to be improved.

“Living in a rural community our residents would like to see more visibility of police in the area and not just in the main towns. Rural crime is on the increase as we are seen as easy targets. More advice on what we can do as a community would be greatly appreciated and knowledge of how we can get a dedicated Police Officer in our area would be nice.”

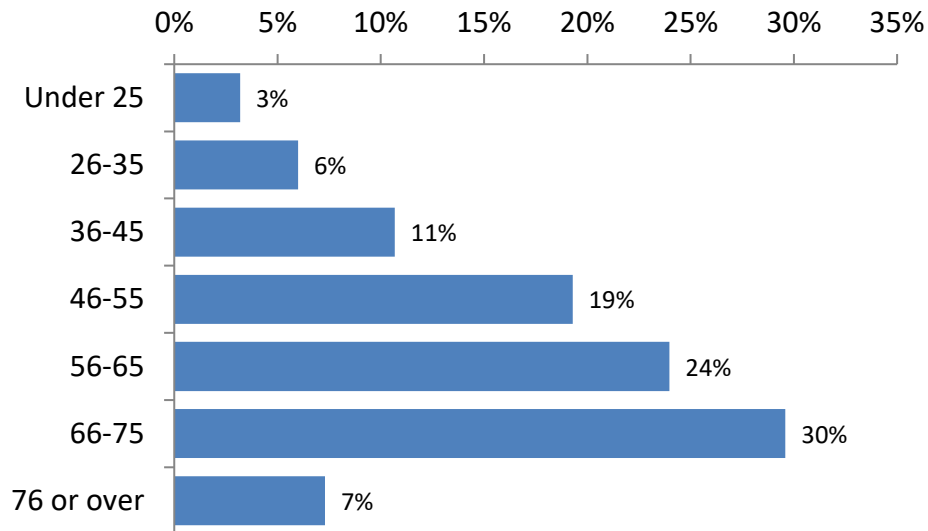
“It is non existent in the villages, where we are neglected and never see the police, as they are concentrating purely on the Town Centre. We never see the police despite the ever growing problem of theft/drugs/ASB in the area. Crimes, such as theft are no longer investigated, even when we have CCTV evidence clearly showing criminals in action. We are badly let down in the villages and are in serious need of more rural police and to be listened to and visited when a theft of a business has occurred. It's shameful and very disappointing to be ignored in this way.”

4% of respondents felt that the police service has reduced in the past years and/or provides a poor service.

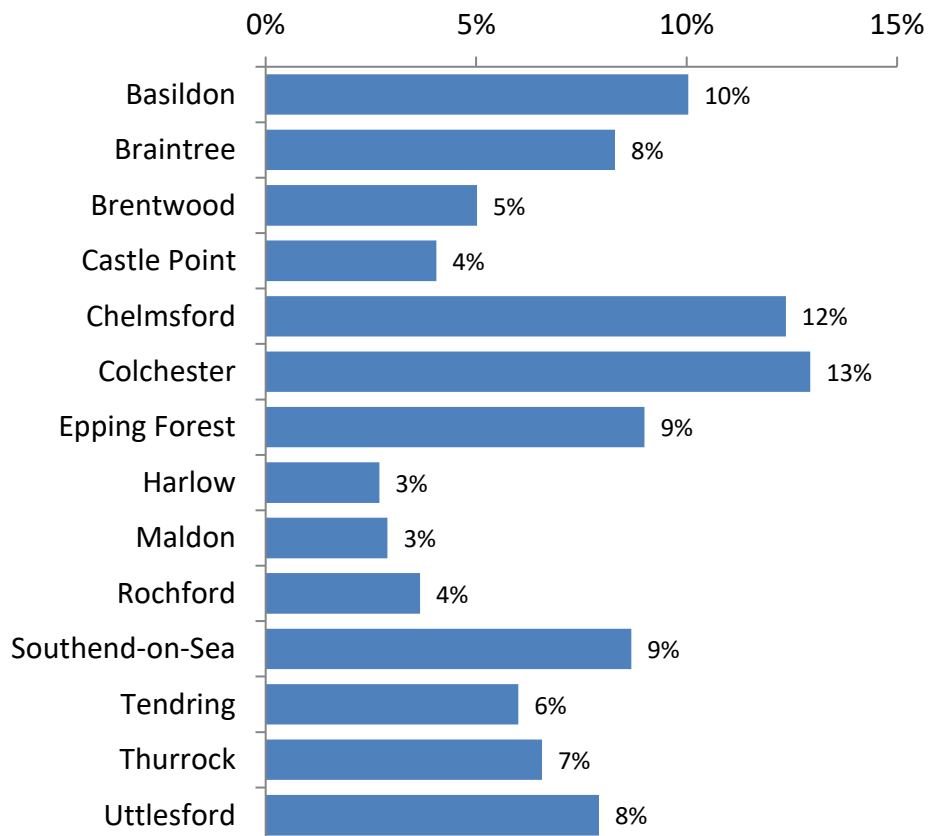
“Despite the claim that more has been achieved I and a lot of my family and friends don't believe it. This despite the police portion of the council tax going up. I see with my eyes what's going on, not what councillors or politicians tell us, and in the last 3 yrs we have seen police stations shut and no police on the beat, shocking, and I don't believe this will improve.”

Who gave their views?

730 people have responded to the survey so far. 57% of respondents were male, 94% were English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British, and the age ranges are shown below.



The responses by home district/unitary authority are shown below.



This report published in April 2020.

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/or made available in alternative formats, on request.