

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2021

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

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1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the PFCC Performance & Scrutiny meeting with an update on Homicide Prevention activity since the last report to the August 2021 meeting.

2.0 Recommendations

The Board to note the report and progress updates.

3.0 Executive Summary

This report provides an update and overview of the analytical position on homicides in Essex, as well providing analysis and performance around key homicide prevention areas such as serious violence, knife enabled crime and domestic abuse.

This report particularly focuses on the activity which is ongoing in Essex to tackle the reduction of serious violence with a view to preventing homicide which is a critical issue for the force. This includes a focus on Serious violence reduction through Op Nightshade, the work of the Serious Violence Unit and new Prevent, Prepare and Protect Team. Updates are also included on Domestic Abuse and Mental Health activity.

Details are also shared of the recent Homicide Summit held by the Policing Minister noting the outcomes and potential future work.

4.0 Introduction/Background

There has been a significant focus on Homicide Prevention in Essex since November 2020 when the Policing Minister visited Essex as one of the six forces with the highest homicide rates (Essex being the 6th highest).

There has been regular reporting to this board around the coordination of Homicide Prevention activity and the provision of a clear Governance structure. Strategic prevention activity continues to be monitored through ACC Pavelin's Homicide Prevention board, quarterly reporting to the Essex Chief Officer Group (COG) and the PFCC Performance and Scrutiny board.

The detailed Homicide Prevention Profile produced in October 2020 provided an analytical assessment of homicide and 'near miss' events, as well as a deep dive into specific homicides over the preceding 3 ½ years. This led to the identification of what were referred to as the 'key drivers' of homicide in Essex during this time period. Following feedback from a recent COG input, particularly acknowledging that referring to Mental Health as a driver was not appropriate, this terminology has now been changed to 'influencing factors'.

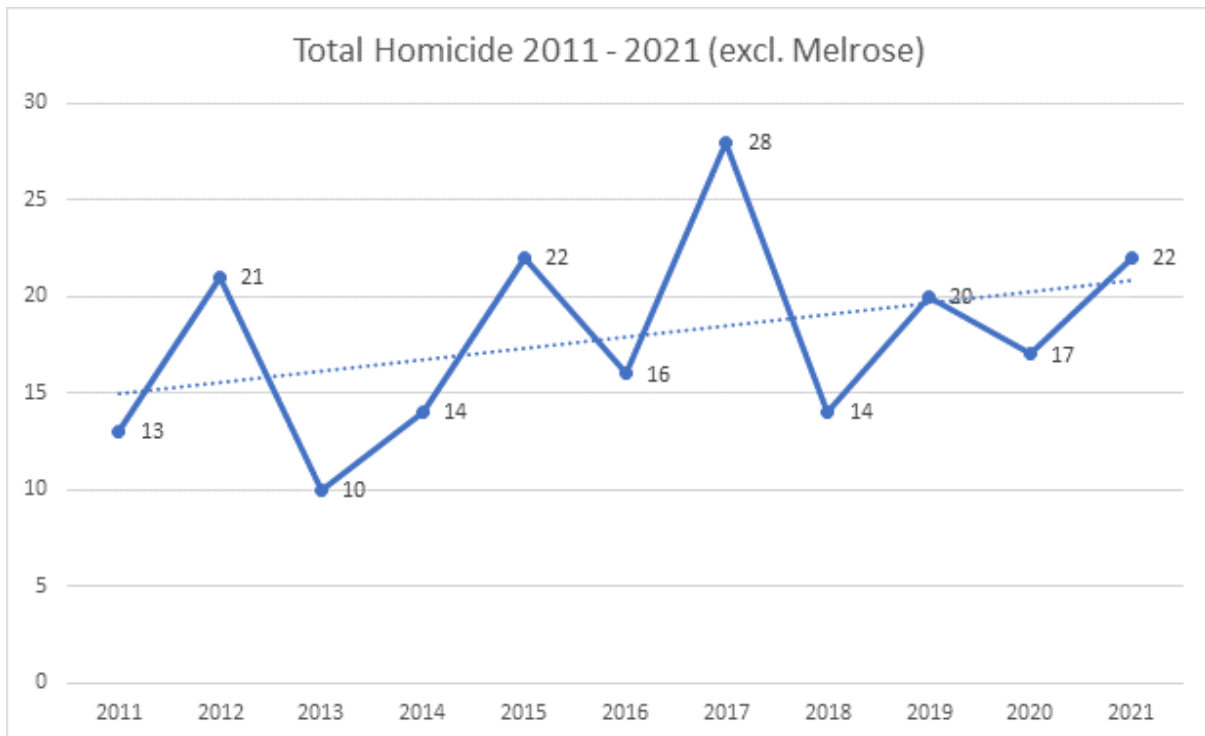
The updated annual homicide prevention profile has been drafted and is under review by the Deputy Head of the Serious Crime Directorate, and it is anticipated that an update of those findings will be available for the next report.

This paper will therefore provide an overview of current homicide analysis and updates on preventative activity in relevant areas.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

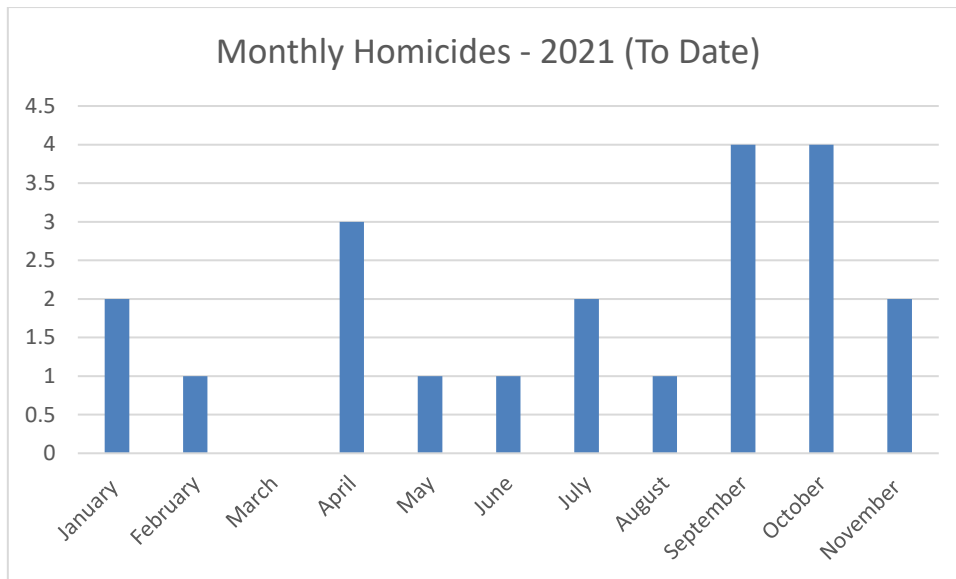
5.1 Overview of Performance Analysis

The homicide rate in Essex has been relatively stable over a number of years, with a degree of fluctuation from 10 at the lowest to 28 at the highest. Previous analysis has found no specific reason for either the upper or lower limits other than annual variation.



The trendline shows an increase in homicide over the last decade. The mean average yearly homicide rate during this 10 year period is 18. The calendar year of 2021 is set to be high with 22 homicides already recorded (1 recorded as a homicide awaits cancellation on receipt of final pathology report to confirm it as non-suspicious). A number of other cases initially recorded as homicides under Crime Data Accuracy have now been cancelled as a result of Additional Verifiable Information (such as pathology reports) confirming that the deaths were non-suspicious. A strong working relationship, and development of a meeting process, between the Crime Registrar and Major Crime has helped ensure more timely cancellations.

The solved rate to date for 2021 is 81%, with only 4 currently unsolved out of the 21 homicides being investigated.



There has been an increase in offences in September and October 2021, with 4 per month against the year-to-date average of less than 2 per month, as shown on the chart above. Projections of total homicides for 2021 range between an upper estimate of 27 homicides if the monthly rate continues at the higher rate of 4 per month, or a lower estimate of 23 if it returns to average levels of around 2 per month. Both outcomes are within the range we have experienced over the last 10 years (as shown on the first chart).

The increase in homicides and levels of serious violence in September/October 2021 across the force has resulted in the Chief Constable declaring a critical incident. The force response is described in the section on Serious Violence below.

5.1.1 National Homicide Summit

On 2nd December the Policing Minister held a Homicide Summit with the 7 forces with the highest homicide rate by volume in England and Wales.

The Home Office provided national trend data which showed the increase in homicide over the last century and in particular the more noticeable rise since 2014. There is a clear national increasing trend in homicide in 2021, not dissimilar to that which has been noted in Essex.

A reduction in female victimisation nationally and disproportionality around ethnicity was seen in the national data which is also mirrored in Essex. Domestic Abuse, Alcohol, Drugs and Mental Health appear common features in homicide nationally.

The Home Office have agreed to share their presentation which will allow a more detailed comparison between the national and local data sets.

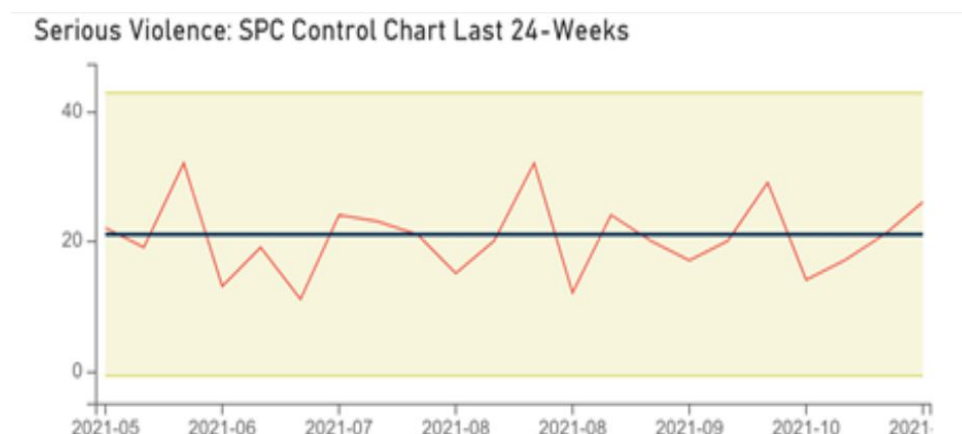
5.1.2 Serious Violence/Public Space Violence Analysis

In early November 2021 the DCC commissioned a Community Violence and Public Space Violence ‘Crime Pattern Analysis’ in response to the increase in serious violence that was being seen across Essex.

Some of the key findings were:

- ABH constituted 67% of Community Violence offences with GBH at 13%
- Hotspots for violence focused on Southend, Colchester, Basildon
- Core times for offences were 18:00 to 02:00 hrs Friday– Monday
- Most offences used no weapon (68%) with 8% using a knife

In addition, recent PAU analysis of community violence has shown that Community Violence levels are returning to normal as of summer 2021, and stable levels are forecast moving forward. Current increases are most significant in North LPA, driven largely by less serious wounding offences (Braintree, Chelmsford, Colchester, Tendring). Within Community Violence, the most serious offences (Attempted murder, GBH) and street robbery are stable



5.1.3 Recent Knife Crime Analysis – November 2021

Knife Enabled Crime: Monthly Trend and Forecast



There has been no significant change in Knife Enabled Crime since 2019, other than falls during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. Recent trends show significant, although small volume, increases in Brentwood and Maldon, and a spike in Southend during the latest month. KEC rates are highest in Southend, Harlow, Basildon and Thurrock

5.1.4 Domestic Abuse Homicide Analysis

A further review of DA homicide was carried out in anticipation of the Policing Minister Homicide Summit on 2nd December 2021.

Essex Police have recorded 7 DA homicides to date in 2021, although one recorded DA homicide is awaiting cancellation as it is now deemed non-suspicious.

6 DA homicides is a slight increase when compared to the previous years' offences (average of 4). Over the last three years, the proportion of homicides in Essex that have been considered domestic related has risen from 7.1% in 2018, 15.8% in 2019, 17.6% in 2020 to 28.6% in 2021. Between 2018 and 2021, 78% could be contextualised as occurring within an intimate relationship, whilst 22% occurred within an inter-familial relationship. 83% of DA homicide victims in the last year were female.

5.1.5 Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG)

A review of the homicides in 2021 has established that 7 out of the 21 homicides so far this year were of female victims, which is higher than in previous years. Of these 7 they can be broken down as follows:

- Four homicides were of female victims in intimate/partner relationships, with three occurring within the home address and one on the roadway just outside.
- One of the intimate/partner DA homicides involved the murder/suicide of an elderly female who was shot by her husband with a legally held firearm, who then went on to fatally shoot himself.
- Two homicides involved inter-familial relationships, where adult children allegedly killed their elderly mothers for whom they had a caring responsibility. There has been reporting through the national Domestic Homicide Project, which was instigated to consider the impact of COVID lockdown on Domestic homicide risk, that an increase in inter-familial homicides of this nature is part of a national trend. The DA strategic lead is closely linked in with the national work to ensure any learning and prevention recommendations are captured locally.
- There are no instances of homicides where females have been attacked by strangers during 2021 to date.

Following feedback from COG, a review has been carried out of all DA homicides in 2021 specifically to ascertain if there had been any previous reporting of stalking and harassment both as pre cursor events or whether the suspect had any history with previous partners.

This research was conducted with a negative result.

5.2 Homicide Prevention activity

5.2.1 Response to Serious Violence - Op Nightshade

Operation Nightshade is the recent Essex Police response to serious violence and has been put in place following the Chief Constable declaring it a critical incident. The aim of Op Nightshade is to co-ordinate and direct policing activity to reduce violence through focused visibility and action, providing high quality service to victims and reassurance to the public.

The identified focus of Op Nightshade is:

- Visible patrol and prevention
- Offender focused
- Developing intelligence to inform policing activity
- Responding promptly to calls for service
- Investigating promptly and effectively to ensure best service to victims
- Working as a team

Key indicators of progress will be:

- Reduction in high harm recorded crime
- Reduction in outstanding high harm suspects outstanding
- Increasing solved high harm crime outcomes

In addition, the Criminal Intelligence Analysts are working on a Recency, Frequency, Gravity cohort of violent offenders to support tasking. The algorithm is currently being written, aiming to have the cohorts in tasking documents for early December 2021. This will populate cohorts of offenders, weighting scores for repeat offending, gravity of offence and links to knife crime, allowing focus on persons causing the greatest Threat, Harm and Risk.

5.2.2 Serious Violence Unit: Prevent, Protect, Prepare Team (PPPT)

The PPPT within the Serious Violence Unit (SVU) has been operational since October 2021. The team is supported by Probation and the Youth Offending Service, as well as the charity Justice and Care.

Since being operational the team have proactively engaging or attempting to engage with 21 individuals (4 still being traced). 17 of the individuals are from the Knife Crime Violence Model (KCVM/Fearless Futures) and 4 are from MAPPA.

26 individuals in total were identified by the running of the KCVM in July 2021. This increased sharply to 147 individuals in November KCVM cohort. A Standard Operating Procedure has now been developed by the PPPT lead that assesses priority of those in the KCVM before individuals are allocated to the team for engagement.

Since their inception, in the first month the PPPT have already submitted 15 intelligence reports relating to individuals connected to Serious violence. Safeguarding has been put in place for a number of those being exploited including National Referral Mechanisms (NRM) referrals, and child safeguarding referrals. In addition, several weapons have been seized including two screwdrivers and a machete.

Examples of PPPT Interventions include two individuals being moved out of Essex due to exploitation by gangs/county lines, assistance with housing and funding provided. Other intervention has included Mental Health support being arranged, educational diversion and alcohol rehabilitation.

Most of those the PPPT are attempting to engage with are complex and heavily entrenched in drugs, gangs or county lines. The uptake to date has been positive, although will be constrained by the capacity of the team depending on the individuals being managed moving forwards.

SVU PPPT have also taken over the responsibility for knife amnesty bins which see hundreds of kilos of knives and weapons (including some firearms) taken off the streets approximately every six months. Developments are in place working on 7 forces collaboration to get the weapons collected and destroyed.

5.2.3 Serious Violence Unit – Gangs/County Lines

The SVU continue to proactively target gangs and county lines with a view to disrupting those causing serious violence across Essex linked to this criminality.

SVU Performance continues to be strong:

	3 Years Prior to June 2020	June 2020 – August 2021
Arrests	429	625
Charges	315	578
% converted arrests to charge	73.4%	92.5
Remand into Custody on day of 1 st Arrest	21%	89%
Average Sentence	14 months	4.9 years

Op Vietnam

Op Vietnam is an example of specific activity responding to the risk of serious violence in South LPA targeting county lines activity.

The investigation teams in the period between 01/02/2021 and 20/10/2021 achieved the following results:

Arrests	Charge & RIC	Charge & Bail	Police Bail	RUI	NFA	Total Sentences	Weapons Seized
164	119	5	0	20	20	+91 years	41

A safeguarding and diversion approach was taken regarding the youths operating within County Lines with a task force having been established chaired by the local SVU Detective Inspector which incorporates key partners in accelerating safeguarding, diversion and enforcement priorities in a multi-agency approach. 12 adults and 12 children have been subject to NRM referrals, with 14 adults and 17 children subject to specialist or statutory safeguarding support.

As a result of a number of serious violence incidents, the SVU applied for gang injunctions against key gang members operating in the South of Essex, resulting in 20 Gang Injunctions being obtained. These injunctions will seriously restrict their activity and ability to carry out further violence. These injunctions were the first applied for by the SVU, and further injunctions will be considered as a proactive tool through tasking processes to tackle the most harmful gangs and county lines.

5.2.4 Domestic Abuse (DA) Prevention Activity

DA Partnership activity

Mature partnership arrangements in place across the county of Essex manage the response to Domestic Abuse, with workstreams coordinated through SETDAB.

All high-risk DA cases are referred to MARAC, regardless of the level of engagement from the victim. Referrals are also made to IDVA services for all high risk victims.

SETDAB partners currently fund a variety of perpetrator interventions across the county, including the work of the Change Hub (outreach work to adults) and the work of the youth service across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) to deliver the Goodman Project and Sisters in Strength to young people exhibiting abusive behaviours. This work was strengthened by the funding awarded by the Home Office through the OPFCC earlier in the summer; some of this funding was specifically to extend The Change Hub Domestic Violence Prevention Order (DVPO) pathway work (enabling officers to make a referral directly to The

Change Hub alongside the Court's decision to grant a DVPO) across SET. Formal evaluation of the commissioned perpetrator programmes is planned for 2022.

The Central Referral Unit (CRU) develops intelligence and links in with our DA Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) across the Force to target offenders. If an offender is outstanding and the victim is growing concerned, this can prompt a request to prioritise that offender, providing reassurance to the victim. There have been 15 referrals into DAPST in the last quarter.

DA: Preventative Orders

Essex Police has a strong track record in the delivery of Preventative Orders and has invested appropriately in legal infrastructure support.

There have been 278 DVPN's and 247 DVPO's issued in the 12 months to October 2021. The conversion rate currently averages at 89%. Essex Police has maintained its DVPN level and conversion rate for the last 4 years, averaging 18 DVPOs per month throughout that period.

11 Stalking Protection Orders (SPO) have been issued in 2021 to date. 31 DVPO breaches have been taken to court over the last 12 months, with 5 sentences of imprisonment and 23 fines.

Future work will ensure all orders are visible to patrolling officers on the Tasking and Briefing App. The new C&PP Orders team will share some responsibility, particularly around coordinating activity, identifying key nominals and promoting take-up.

Essex Police Investment and Initiatives

A total of 77.5 FTE additional posts have been added between 2018 and 2022 from a combination of precept and PUP uplift, into tackling Domestic Abuse, specifically into DAIT, DAPST and Offender Management Teams (OMT).

DAPST and the OMT work alongside DAIT to manage the most prolific DA perpetrators and support the most vulnerable victims. The team has been implemented to provide a continual and sustained problem solving approach, focussing on preventing future harm and reducing repeat victimisation.

Potential future DA development activity includes:

- Improving the DA arrest rate (currently at 27%)
- Renewing the focus around preventative orders
- Prioritising the roll out of the DARA risk assessment model to more accurately assess coercive control (biggest indicator of risk of DA homicide).
- Continue DAPST work with the highest risk perpetrators to reduce repeat victimisation and harm.

- Exploring the possibility of introducing a MATAC model to improve perpetrator management in a multi-agency environment. This would complement the DAPST model and improve information sharing/risk awareness.
- Reviewing training delivery around DA which may include investing in DA Matters training (endorsed by the CoP)

5.2.5 Response to Mental Health

Essex Police has been working with health partners to identify a cohort of Mental Health patients believed to pose the most risk of either committing or being subject of serious violence. A cohort of five names have been shared with the Police with a view to conducting a joint tabletop exercise to consider the support and/or response to each individual. Planning for this event is ongoing.

The 'Myth busting and Leaky Pipe' event was held with partners early in 2021. Findings and recommendations were presented to the Essex Crisis Concordat partnership group meeting in May 2021 with follow up sessions held with those who attended the initial events to review the findings and agree and assign work stream leads to progress the recommendations.

DCI Benjamin from Crime & Public Protection Command leads for Essex Police on review of a homicide, where MH health was a key factor (Op Beaumont). A full multiagency debrief is being prepared to identify good practice, lessons learned and any potential changes that can be made to how we work together.

One key area of preventative activity is the training to medical practitioners around the risks of declining mental health amongst licensed firearms holders

Delivery of the FSEL training to GP colleagues commenced in October 2021. The presentation covers the following areas;

- Overview of what the FSEL do and why Essex Police are delivering the input
- Grants and Renewal processes
- Explanation of the purpose of Medical Screening Reports and Medical Markers
- Overview of Suitability Reviews, including use of the NDM and case study examples
- How the MH of certificate holders impacts on our decision making

The first input took place on 21st October with Thurrock CCG and inputs are planned for delivery every month through until March 2022, after which further dates will be confirmed. Academic analysis will be conducted by Anglia Ruskin University based on feedback of attendees on the benefits of the training. Initial attendance and feedback from the first session have been overwhelmingly positive.

Essex FSEL also have a process in place to conduct welfare visits where relevant when receiving info from GPs regarding MH concerns. A Mental Health leaflet has recently been produced and is now being given to GPs and firearms licence holders regarding what Police do when a Mental Health concern is highlighted to the Police.

5.2.6 Night Time Economy & Alcohol

Sobriety Tags/Bracelets

Sobriety tags were raised during the Policing Minister visit of 6th July as a prevention tool that was being trialled in other force areas. They can be summarised as follows:

- Tags or Bracelets fitted by the Electronic Monitoring Service (EMS) detect the presence of alcohol in perspiration and send an alert if it is present.
- Fitted where a court gives an Alcohol Abstinence Monitoring Requirements (AAMR) as part of a sentence.
- Alcohol has to have been a factor in the offending, but it is not suitable for people with alcohol dependency.
- Requires people to abstain from alcohol for up to 120 days.

Sobriety tags only became available as a sentencing option in April 2021. Between 31/03/2021 and 30/10/2021 a **total of 61 AAMR** have been made in Essex (26 in North Essex courts, 35 in South Essex courts). There are currently **57 active AAMR** in Essex (29 in North Essex, 28 in South Essex).

Sobriety tags were raised at the recent Reducing Reoffending Board and a review of cases since April is ongoing to identify potential and increase awareness with Probation.

The role of the Police will be to ensure that the involvement of alcohol in an offence is clearly included on case papers. The challenge of measuring the throughput from the cases identified as having the potential for use of a sobriety tag, to those actually issued, will be taken forward by ACC Baldwin at the Reducing Reoffending Board.

Ch Supt Simon Anslow is taking a proposal for a new process to the next DA Governance Board, which seeks to highlight the involvement of drugs & alcohol on the DV3 case file form and then any DA case papers. The ambition is to make it easier for CPS and Probation to see where imposing an AAMR might be beneficial.

NTE

Working with licensing and NTE partners, plans are in place across all LPAs to ensure we have an effective policing and partnership plan in place throughout December, in anticipation of Christmas parties and the usual peaks on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve. This includes:

- Additional funding has been allocated through Op Grip (hotspot violence suppression), with £25k allocated to each of the four primary NTE areas to increase visibility in hotspots.
- Op Nightshade brings greater central resource to bear around NTE hotspots and greater capacity to pursue wanted persons connected to NTE offences.
- Development of a spiking prevention strategy for the county, which seeks to put the onus on premises to create a safe environment. To that end Colchester (highest number of drink-spiking incidents) is a good example of a joined up approach between the Council, the trade and other stakeholders to raise awareness and put counter-measures in place across the highest repeat locations.
- New development with Police Crime Prevention Initiatives to bring in a new licensed premises safety accreditation across the county. This gives premises the opportunity to obtain a star rating (displayed in a similar way to hygiene ratings) and identifies gaps in their current arrangements so improvements can be made.

6.0 Implications (Issues) – Scrutiny & Governance

The Policing Minister has reiterated that reducing homicide is one of his key priorities and he will continue to visit forces with high homicide rates with a focus on sharing best practice on tackling homicide and serious violence prevention.

We retain strong internal Governance processes through the bi-monthly Homicide Prevention Board, COG updates and quarterly PFCC reporting.

7.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

7.1 Outcomes from Policing Minister Homicide Summit

The Policing Minister, Kit Malthouse held a Homicide Summit on 2nd December with the 7 forces with the highest volume of homicides in the country, as well as the College of Policing and Home Office.

This is the second event the Minister has held that Essex have been part of as the 6th highest force for homicide. This is based on pure numbers and when compared with population size, Essex is still very much on the national trend line.

Inputs were given from the Home Office around the national data picture and trends show that homicide numbers have been growing nationally which is in keeping with what Essex have experienced locally. They shared data around the distribution of homicide with influencing factors including domestic Abuse, alcohol and drugs and mental health being key features.

Specific presentations around the Domestic Homicide Project were given by AC Louisa Rolfe the NPCC Domestic Abuse lead, and Gangs and County Lines work in London by DAC Graham McNulty, to share best practice and learning.

The Essex attendees – CC BJ Harrington, T/ACC Glen Pavelin, T/DCS Lucy Morris and Ch Supt Tom Simons (Strategic DA lead) contributed to Question and Answer sessions and two workshops specifically around how through the College of Policing can share best practice and ensure the most effective intervention tools are disseminated; and secondly on probation and the impact of re-offending on serious violence and homicide.

Following the successful Summit, the Chief Constable is holding a follow up meeting in early January with key parties linked to Homicide Prevention and the reduction of Serious Violence. The aim of this is to capture best practice that was shared at the Summit and identify activity that can be implemented in Essex. Early ideas include:

- 1) Seeking to review cases of serious violence as they occur and carry out a rapid review to identify potential previous touch points or intervention opportunities to either prevent further violence in that specific case, or other similar cases.
- 2) Applying the County Lines approach and the Op Orochi model, (utilising analysis and tactics including communications data to build a strong evidential case linking individuals to a county lines phone number) to other areas of violence. This may include better use of communications data in Domestic Abuse cases.
- 3) Understanding and maximising the Serious Violence Duty under the new Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill 2021 which will place a 'duty' on partners to work together to develop a strategy to tackle serious violence in a local area. This should assist in bringing partners together around data sharing and interventions:

“The Serious Violence Duty will require local authorities, the police, fire and rescue authorities, specified criminal justice agencies and health authorities to work together to formulate an evidence based analysis of the problems associated with serious violence in a local area, and then produce and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those particular issues. Prisons, youth custody agencies and educational authorities may also need to work with these core partners.”

The Homicide Prevention Action tracker will continue to be used to manage Homicide Prevention activity and track it through ACC Pavelin's Homicide Prevention Board.

7.2 Homicide Data

Improvements have been made around homicide data with Crime Data Accuracy applied both at the point of recording and to cancel homicides correctly once additional verifiable information has been obtained to confirm a death is non-suspicious. Additional processes have been put in place to ensure this is done in a timely manner so that the recorded data better reflects the true position.

Future work will include working with the Home Office to better understand the Homicide Index classifications around key influencing factors to ensure synergy with those being recorded in Essex, so that both data sets can be properly compared.

The Performance Analysis Unit produce a report for the Homicide Prevention Board which is being developed to include weapon used and mode of injury to aid further analysis.

7.3 New Annual Homicide Prevention Profile

The annual Homicide Prevention Profile has now been drafted and is going through the review and checking process before dissemination.

The profile will include a wider set of influencing factors to aid the understanding of what sits behind violent incidents, with 'near misses' focusing on the most serious violence offences. Influencing factors have been applied to the near miss data for the first time.

The profile will also include horizon scanning to compare the Essex position with other forces and ensure all opportunities have been explored that could be adopted locally.

An update on the findings of the Homicide Prevention Profile and new recommendations will be provided in the next reporting period.

8.0 Risks/Mitigation

None identified

9.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

There are no identified impacts on equality, diversity or human rights.

10.0 Health and Safety Implications

None.