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Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2022

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

Title of Report:	Deep Dive on the Police and Crime Plan Priority: <i>Protecting Vulnerable People and Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse</i>
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1.0 Purpose of Report

This paper provides a summary of key updates as regards Essex Police's response to Domestic Abuse which includes an overview of crime and incident levels, resourcing, partnership working and future challenges.

2.0 Recommendations

To note the content of the Deep Dive.

3.0 Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of Domestic Abuse performance, resourcing and innovation. Recent important changes in this area have seen –

- The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 places the definition of Domestic Abuse on a statutory footing, introduces new offences and places additional requirements on Police Forces, notably involving children and victims

- Domestic Abuse crime has fallen by 167 offences, however Essex Police has solved 488 fewer crimes (12 months to October)
- The proportion of Domestic related homicides has increased to 28.6%
- Essex Police continues to treat Domestic Abuse as a key priority, with 77.5FTE being invested directly (into our response) across the last three years and the thematic area now included within the Control Strategy
- Public confidence remains high with Essex Police's response to Domestic Abuse with 83% of victims reporting being satisfied with the Police's response.

4.0 Deep Dive (including performance)

4.1 **The Domestic Abuse Act 2021:**

On 29th April 2021, the Domestic Abuse Act was given Royal assent and signed into law. The Act is in seven parts with sections being introduced and commenced over a lengthy timeframe, not all of the Act is in force at this time. Several measures will impact on policing:

- A statutory definition of Domestic Abuse (see below) enacted on 1st October 2021.
- Placing the guidance supporting the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme ("Clare's law") on a statutory footing, due in January 2022.
- Introduction of new offences – Non-fatal strangulation, being introduced in May 2022 and threats to disclose a private sexual photo/film with intent to cause distress, already introduced on 29th June 2021.
- Providing new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders which will repeal the current Domestic Violence Protection Notices/Orders. These measures will provide alternative application routes to allow victims and 3rd parties to apply. Any breach of a DAPO will be a criminal offence and are intended to provide flexible, longer-term protection for victims. Forces are due to be invited to pilot these orders during 2023.
- Create a statutory presumption that victims of domestic abuse are eligible for special measures in the criminal, civil and family courts
- Establishing what the Domestic Abuse Commissioner may carry out under the Act, including publishing reports, laying before parliament, holding local commissioners, statutory agencies and Government to account – whilst making recommendations on how they can improve.

The Domestic Abuse Governance Board (DAGB) is overseeing a preparedness plan in anticipation of various parts of the act coming into force in order to ensure Essex Police are well placed.

The new statutory definition of Domestic abuse widens the previous guidance to clarify familial relationships, expand financial to economic abuse and formally include controlling and coercive behavior.

There is enhanced emphasis on identifying controlling and coercive behaviour given the strong evidence base linking it as a precursor to the majority of Domestic Homicides.

Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape along with regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish or frighten their victim.

4.2 Volume and Performance

In the 12 months to October 2021 –

- Essex Police recorded 1221 fewer Domestic Abuse incidents equating to a 2.9% reduction in calls for service (42380 to 41159)
- Domestic Abuse crime decreased by 0.6% to 29636 crimes from October 2020 (-167)
- Domestic Abuse non-crime decreased by 8.9% (12577-11454 non-crimes)
- 30% of DA related Crime was a Stalking/Harassment crime type in the 12m to end of Oct 21.
- Domestic Abuse made up 19% of all crime.
- 41% of DA victims were repeat victims (have been a victim of two or more DA incident in the previous 12 months). This was at 38.3% the previous year.

A breakdown of *incident* risk levels shows an increase of 18% in the High-Risk grading, from 3109 to 3675; almost no change in the Standard Risk category with a decrease of just 2.89% (from 32526 to 31587) and a significant decrease of 18% (from 5047 to 4112) in the Medium Risk category.

In terms of volume of *offences*, there has been a substantial decrease in medium risk whilst high risk and standard risk levels have seen a slight increase. The Force remains acutely aware of the impact of high standard risk levels – given operational processes require standard risk cases (in most circumstances) to be investigated by Local Policing Teams (LPT) as opposed to our Domestic Abuse specialist investigation teams (DAIT)

The force has recently launched DA today which provides additional focus and drive in order to ensure that attendance at Domestic Abuse incidents is expedited. The Force aims to attend all Domestic Abuse, where physically possible, within 24 hours of being reported (excluding calls graded as emergency or priority). Over the last 3 months, Essex Police has attended 88% of Domestic Abuse within 24hrs.

There were an average of 737 arrests per month in the 12 months to October 2021 compared to 739 arrests in the 12 months to October 2020. Domestic abuse related arrests have remained static with a difference of only 1% in the 12 months to October 2021 compared to the 12 months to October 2020.

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 October 2021.

Victim Based Crime		Offences				Solved Outcomes				Solved Rates %		
Crime Type	% DA 2021	2020	2021	# diff.	% diff.	2020	2021	# diff.	% diff.	2020	2021	% pt. diff.
Domestic Abuse	100.0	29803	29636	-167	-0.6	3499	3011	-488	-13.9	11.7	10.2	-1.6
- High Risk Domestic Abuse	100.0	2568	2954	386	15.0	738	710	-28	-3.8	28.7	24.0	-4.7
- Medium Risk Domestic Abuse	100.0	4055	3479	-576	-14.2	938	644	-294	-31.3	23.1	18.5	-4.6
- Standard Risk Domestic Abuse	100.0	21684	21967	283	1.3	1641	1506	-135	-8.2	7.6	6.9	-0.7

In a broad sense, it is assessed that the COVID pandemic has resulted in degree of under reporting – however we have seen an increase in high harm/high complexity investigations, many of which have been reported after lockdown restrictions have ended.

Recent discussions at a national level have highlighted the absence of comparison data as regards Domestic Abuse. There is no comparison data set or common metrics that allow Forces to assess progress against each other. Work is underway to establish a performance framework across the Eastern Region.

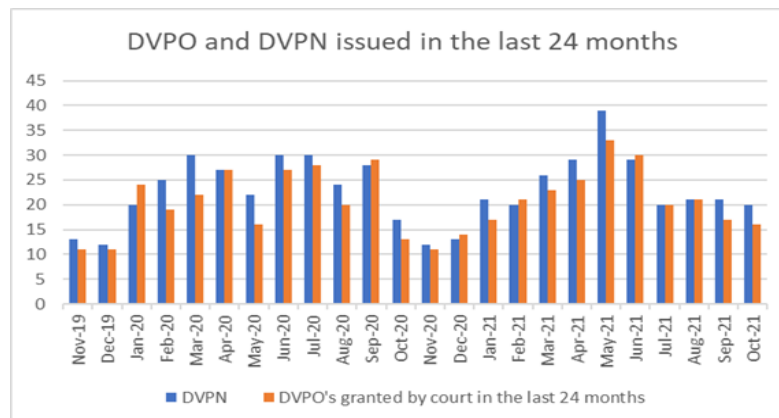
4.3 Protective Orders

Where appropriate, officers will pursue prosecutions through the criminal justice system, in circumstances where this is not possible, the Force increasingly focuses on opportunities to improve the safeguarding of victims through use of alternative powers, including Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs and DVPOs), Stalking Protection Orders (SPOs) and the application of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) “Clare’s Law”.

DVPO and SPO training material has been sent to all front-line police officers via the latest 2021 virtual Domestic Abuse training. This has also been circulated internally to all local policing areas to include any gaps in specialist departments.

Performance in this area has since a decrease with 278 DVPN’s and 214 DVPO’s issued in the 12 months to October 2021 with 278 DVPN’s and 247 DVPO’s issued in the 12 months to October 2020.

The below chart shows peaks and troughs throughout the last 2 years and although it shows a gradual decline towards the latter part of 2021, this is levelled out by the peak in May 2021. This equates to a small decrease of just 1.15% (6 less) in Domestic Violence Protection Notices (DVPN) and Protection Orders (DVPO) in the 12 months to October 2021 compared to the 12 months to October 2020. It is important to highlight the successful conversion rate which currently averages at 77%.



A working group led by D/Supt Bonnie Moore has been established under the DAGB to improve awareness and performance in this area.

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 Enforcement and monitoring of these protective orders, including SPOs are supported by the DAPST teams.

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An SPO training video has been circulated force-wide in the virtual 'flex' training to all LPT Officers with an additional internal message sent to DA specialist teams to capture all departments.

There have been 11 SPO's issued in the last 12 months. Significant work is underway through the Force lead – T/D/Supt Steve Jennings – which is overseen by the Domestic Abuse Governance Board (DAGB). This has been an area of specific focus and is supported by ongoing training and awareness inputs, both through Flex training and on an ad hoc basis.

4.4 Domestic Homicide

Essex Police have recorded 7 DA homicides in 2021 so far (and 14 non DA homicides). Upon cross referencing information held by our Major Investigation Team (MIT) with Athena records, two further offences which would meet the criteria to be considered a DA homicide have been identified. 3 of the DA homicides have been submitted for cancellation which would leave us at 6 DA homicides which is a slight increase when compared to 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 –

- 7.1% in 2018
- 15.8% in 2019
- 17.6% in 2020
- 28.6% (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. 36% (5 of 14) were knife enabled. 83% of DA homicide victims in the last year were female.

Essex Police were invited to be part of a National Homicide Summit in December 2021. Two key issues identified as a result of that discussion are relevant and are outlined below –

- We need to enhance leveraging of partnership data (in an operational context) in order to identify the highest risk perpetrators and victims. It was clear from the meeting, which included a presentation on the presence of contributory factors (such as drug misuse, mental health and alcohol), that we are working with limited data – and we need could do more through SETDAB.
- Similarly we are not considering partnership interventions around perpetrators effectively enough. MARAC manages victims and might occasionally cover some associated perpetrator issues – but nothing structured which looks at a defined partnership cohort. It may be possible to expand and develop MARAC (as was the original intention).

Essex Police continues to oversee progress in this area through the Homicide Prevention Board chaired by T/ACC Pavelin.

4.5 Resources

Local Policing Teams (LPT)

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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.

Domestic Abuse Investigations Teams (DAIT)

DAIT remain geographically based 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 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 156.15 FTE officers, this includes Inspectors, Sergeants, Constables and PSE. A full breakdown of these figures can be found at appendix A

DA Problem Solving Team (DAPST)

The Essex Police Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) were formed in March 2021 and are divided into a victim focused contingent (Problem-Solving officers) and an Offender Management contingent (Offender Management officers). They work alongside DAIT managing the most prolific DA perpetrators and the most vulnerable victims alongside an additional referral pathway that has been established. The team has been implemented to provide a continual and sustained problem-solving approach – focussing on preventing future harm and reducing repeat victimisation.

Current¹ DAPST establishment across local policing totals 80.5FTE. A full breakdown can be found at appendix A

Operations and Strategic Centre (C&PP)

The purpose of the Strategic Centre is to provide additional strategic capacity and capability for C&PP command alongside the wider force. The Strategic Centre are responsible for making sure the Force policies and procedures around vulnerability are up to date, whilst 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 and sharing learning through training and communication with staff, aimed at continuously improving the service to victims. The Strategic Centre are also responsible for responding to local and national reporting requirements.

Within the Operations Centre, The Central Referral Unit (CRU) continues to be based within Crime and Public Protection Command and provides specialist safeguarding countywide to victims of High-Risk Domestic Abuse and Honour Based Abuse. The CRU current establishment is 31.02 FTE officers and also conduct secondary risk assessments on all high risk DA cases.

¹ Data correct as of 5th November 2021

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The Assessment Team is responsible for monitoring all new incoming Domestic Abuse, HBA, Stalking and Harassment, Breach of Injunction and Breach of Bail incidents, as well as other areas of vulnerability, received into the Force Control Room by means of STORM. They will research intelligence in real time and complete checks for live incidents to provide information and risk assessments for the safety of officers and the public attending or present at incidents.

Chief Officers have recently commissioned a review of Crime and Public Protection with all departments under their command, including CRU being in scope.

MASH, MARAT and MARAC

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. The multi-agency establishment figures can be seen at appendix A.

Growth

In October 2019, it was announced that Essex Police were to be allocated funding to enable significant growth through the Police Uplift Programme (PUP). Throughout the course of several phases of investment, which has included council tax precept growth, Essex Police has prioritised its frontline capabilities, 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. Considering Domestic Abuse specifically -

- 2018/19 - (Precept funded) – 21 FTE officers into Op Juno teams.
- 2020/21 – (PUP and precept funded) – 20.5 FTE officers into Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams.
- 2021/22 – (PUP and precept funded) – 22 FTE officers into Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams; 14 FTE officers into DAIT Proactive Teams (now Offender Management Teams – OMT)

Total – 77.5 FTE between 2018 and 2022 (ending) into specific DA related posts.

The above does not include wider growth areas which will also deal with elements of DA demand to a greater or lesser degree, for example and not exclusively, the uplift to ASAIT (total of 23 FTE), LPT (total of 103 FTE) and CID (total of 16 FTE) over those preceding years.

4.6 DA Survey (May-September 2021)

Overall, there has been minimal significant change in the key areas between the last full report (12 months to March 2020) and the current results (May-September 2021). Overall satisfaction levels remain high at 83% (no change compared to last report) and victim's responses about their overall treatment from Essex Police were positive. Lower levels of satisfaction were reported when victims were asked about the updates they received on their case, 65% were satisfied with the updates they received and only 47% received updates within the time frame they were told they would.

4.7 Media and communications

Throughout the pandemic, Essex Police's Campaigns, Events and Partnerships Team engaged with isolated victims to raise awareness of the support available to them during lockdown. They created a leaflet that was distributed in its thousands across the county to highlight the support available to anyone suffering physical or psychological abuse and continued to lead on associated SETDAB communications throughout the pandemic. This awareness-raising exercise continued with the introduction of the '[Silent 55](#)' initiative, with a special video being created and shared on social media and the creation of a dedicated webpage. Elsewhere, the profiles of individuals working within domestic abuse teams were raised through the [officer profiles](#) in the We Value Difference recruitment campaign and videos, and will continue to be promoted with the second phase of the campaign which begins in January 2022.

The Press Office team have continued to publicise significant convictions and sentencings of domestic abuse perpetrators and, where possible, have spoken to victims who have gained justice. This has included intimate partner relationships, like the bravery award for the inspirational [Katie Mills](#), and familial relationships, like the [sentencing of Michael Conreen Jnr](#) for a physical attack on his father. They've also highlighted the creation of our new [Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Team](#) to raise awareness of this new workstream. These pieces were covered in the press and received good engagement on Essex Police social media channels as well.

Commencing on 25th November 2021 and the 16 days after, Essex Police have linked up with the Southend, Essex, Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board, involving many organisations including local councils and the NHS to highlight White Ribbon Day 2021. Campaigning about the end of violence against woman and girls. The focus being on asking men to think carefully and make the White Ribbon Promise to never commit, excuse or remain silent about male violence against women.

In early 2022, Essex Police will be leading the creation and implementation of a new perpetrator-focused campaign in conjunction with The Change Project. This campaign is likely to be similar to the award-winning Reflect campaign of 2018.

4.8 High Risk Sexual Offenders

In addition to the specific updates above about breaking the cycle of domestic abuse, the Police and Crime Priority also includes investment into activity essential to preventing the harm caused by high-risk sexual offenders.

The force has invested in additional resources into the Management of Sexual and Violent Offender Units (MOSOVO) across the County. The most recent Police Uplift Programme saw an additional 14 FTE officers being posted into MOSOVO units across the County. The team now comprises of 38 Detective Constables (or on the Detective Career Pathway) and 14 Investigating officers (Staff) across five areas (Harlow, Chelmsford, Colchester, Basildon, Southend). The MOSOVO team are responsible for management of registered sex-offenders and violent offenders either subject to the Notification requirements under legislation in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 or court orders. Recently the addition of new technology such as a device triage tool has made them even more efficient and effective by identifying offences more quickly. Some officers and staff are trained in the use of Polygraph techniques which helps prevent high harm and

offending and assists in determining risk factors present in sex-offenders. In line with the rise in violence and sexual offences the current number of Essex.

Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs) in the community has increased from 1557 to 1,764 which has been a 13% increase since 2015. Overall, the predicted trajectory of 12.5% predicted in the last few years has been exceeded, however there has only been a 7% increase over the past 12 months due to COVID-19 restrictions. In addition to this a proactive team managed along with the Visor team are based at HQ. This comprises of 1 Detective Sergeant and six Detective Constables and is named the Police Order Enforcement Team (POET). Their responsibility includes creating a database of all orders across the County including orders relating to sexual offences, domestic abuse and honour based abuse. This proactive team is also responsible for proactive enforcement of the order working closely with the Force Legal Team.

The MAPPA process oversees the management of Registered sex offenders. It also oversees management of Violent Offenders (VO) and Dangerous Offenders (DO) cases – many of which are domestic abuse cases. It is recognised that police activity is required to manage the risk they pose and that different departments may be required to participate in the MAPPA process to fully manage the risk. Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams now have an active part in the management of Domestic Abuse offenders in the MAPPA process which alleviates the pressure on MOSOVO teams and ensures more detailed scrutiny in registered sex-offenders whilst domestic abuse offenders are still being managed with the right tactics.

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

5.1 Force Domestic Abuse Strategy and Problem Profile

The Force Domestic Abuse Strategy has been set for 2021. The strategy recognises the complex nature of domestic abuse and specifically describes how Essex Police will work with criminal justice and other statutory and third sector partners to protect and safeguard the most vulnerable and reduce harm. Utilising data and management information this sets out how the Force will identify gaps and areas for improvement in the Force's response to Domestic Abuse.

The Force Domestic Abuse Problem Profile has been produced which sets out the nature and scale of Domestic Abuse in Essex and outlines work being undertaken by the Force and other stakeholders. The DA Problem Profile will, as a result, set out actions and recommendations to support and inform operational and policy decision-making. This will ensure a coordinated approach and enable the Force to continually improve its response.

Domestic Abuse has now been included in the Control strategy (June 2021). This underlines the Forces commitment to prioritise this area and means that operational commanders now have access to additional force wide resourcing and analytical capacity. The DA assessment includes the top 10 LPA Repeat Locations, which identifies where there have been multiple investigations in the previous 28 days. This assists in the allocation of resource, notably the DAPST. The assessment also identifies suspects and victims for prioritisation by our DAPST and DAIT teams and is supported using a Frequency, Recency and Gravity algorithm.

5.2 Domestic Abuse Strategic Domestic Plan (4P plan)

Development and improvement activity is overseen by the DAGB through the use of a DA 4P plan. This includes oversight of several key workstreams – notably training, tactical safeguarding improvement and investigative team development. The biggest issue being explored presently relates to the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA). The College of Policing have approved the roll out of a new risk assessment devised to assist frontline officers in identifying patterns of controlling and coercive behaviour. This is the most harmful form of Domestic Abuse with strong evidence that it is the precursor to the majority of DA Homicides. The Force is currently using the DASH risk Assessment and will be looking to implement the new risk assessment during 2022.

5.3 New Victims Codes

In November 2020, the Ministry of Justice released the revised Code of Practice for Victims of Crime-that came into force on 1st 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. These 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 rights under this Code.

6 Risks/Mitigation

There are no specific current risks for domestic abuse that are being managed under the Domestic Abuse Oversight Board, however the Force recognises that there is a requirement to improve the volume of solved outcomes in this area. Investigative quality is overseen through the Force level Investigations Improvement Board and more locally at LPA based scrutiny panels.

7 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

The development of Essex Police's response to Domestic Abuse is continually reviewed against our organizational responsibilities as regards the Human Rights Act. All structural changes, including the relatively recent investment through Force Growth, is subject of an Equality Impact Assessment which is overseen through the Strategic Change Coordination Board.

8 Health and Safety Implications

None.