

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 December 2021 meeting.

2.0 Recommendations

The Board to note the report and progress updates.

3.0 Executive Summary

This report provides an update and a review of the analytical position on homicides at the conclusion of 2021, as well as an assessment of homicides in Essex in early 2022.

An update on key homicide prevention activity in areas such as serious violence, mental health and domestic abuse is also included.

The delay of the previous report (due to the increase in demand in October, November 2021 resulting in additional analysis), has led to a shorter reporting period for this report.

The report covers an update on the detailed annual Homicide Prevention Profile analytical report and activity since the Homicide Summit held by the Policing Minister on 2nd December 2021.

4.0 Introduction/Background

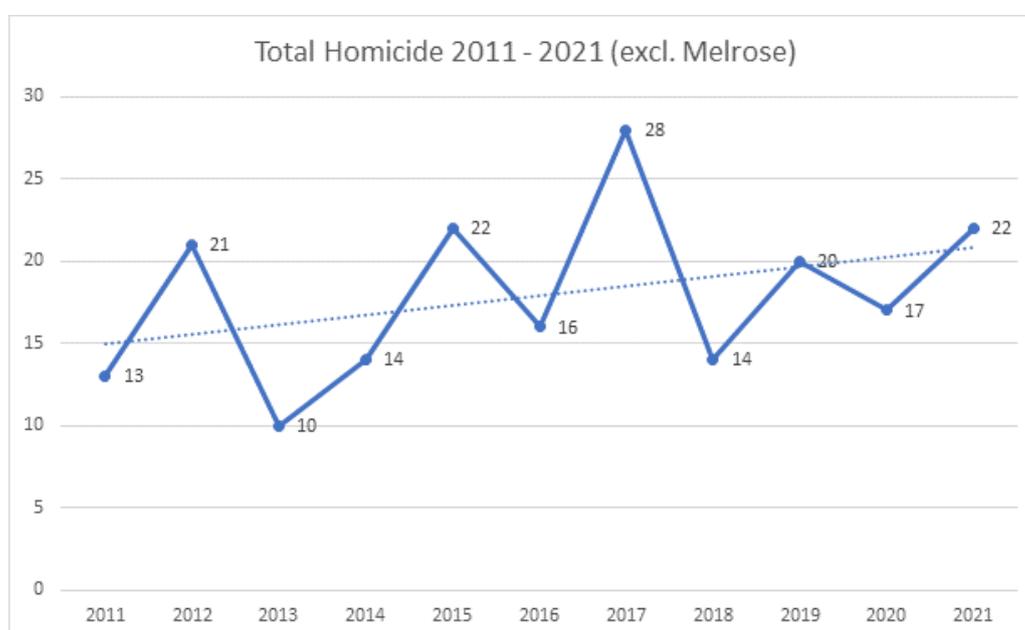
The Policing Minister has continued to focus on those forces with the highest number of homicides by volume, due to his overarching objective to reduce homicide by 20%. The most recent national homicide summit was held virtually on 2nd December 2021 and was attended by Chief Officers and delegates of the 7 highest homicide forces.

Homicide prevention activity, including that identified through the Homicide Summit continues to be driven through ACC Pavelin’s Homicide Prevention board, quarterly reporting to the Essex Chief Officer Group (COG) and the PFCC Performance and Scrutiny board.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Overview of Performance Analysis

The calendar year 2021 concluded with 22 homicides in total, details of which are included in Appendix 1. Whilst this figure is towards the upper range of annual homicides, the chart shows there have been previous years with higher total numbers, but an overall slight upward trend remains.



The peak months of September and October 2021 with 4 homicides each month, were not replicated in November and December with 2 and 1 homicides respectively. The mean homicide rate remains at 18 homicides when taken over the preceding 10 year period.

2022 has seen two homicides to date with one each in January and February (correct as of 2nd February 2022).



The solved rate for 2021 currently sits at 77%, with only 5 currently unsolved out of the 21 homicides recorded. However, with charges anticipated for some of the outstanding cases, this figure is expected to rise.

In Autumn 2021, the Chief Constable declared a critical incident around serious violence, instigating Operation Nightshade as the force response. An update on Op Nightshade performance is included in the body of this report.

5.2 Homicide Prevention Profile

The annual homicide Prevention Profile is the key intelligence analytical product in the area of homicide prevention. In Autumn 2020 the Essex Criminal Analysts (work led by Alison Tipper) devised new methodology to review a vast quantity of 'near miss' offences to help improve the data set around serious violence, to inform a better understanding of homicide data, emerging trends and potential prevention activity. The approach taken by the Essex analysts has been seen as best practice and utilised around the region.

The refreshed Profile for 2021 has now been published and has developed upon the work from 2020, focusing on more relevant near miss offences and broadening the key influencing factors that may sit behind homicide and near miss offences. This allows a more sophisticated and complex picture to be developed and acknowledges the multiple overlapping factors that can contribute to an offence occurring.

5.2.1 Homicide Prevention Profile: Key Findings

The key findings from this year's profile can be summarised as follows:

- The location of homicides are identified as having similar hotspots to other broader violence, namely Southend and Basildon
- The correlation between population and homicide volume is maintained, with Essex remaining on the trendline.
- The majority of homicide victims were Essex residents aged 31-35 years
- The majority of homicide suspects were Essex residents aged 16-20 years.
- The proportion of knife enabled offences across murder, attempted murder and near miss offences is high, and evidences the need for prevention activity around knife carrying. Stabbing was the primary method for male murder victims.

Top 5 MOs and % Proportion of Methods Reported			
	Murder	Attempted Murder	Near Miss
1	Stabbing/Slashing (46%)	Suffocation/Asphyxiation (30%)	Bodily Assault (37%)
2	Bodily Assault (21%)	Stabbing/Slashing (23%)	Stabbing/Slashing (19%)
3	Shooting (8%)	Bodily Assault (20%)	Blunt Force Impact (18%)
4	Suffocation/Asphyxiation (8%)	Drowning (9%)	Vehicular Assault (7%)
5	Vehicular Assault (8%)	Blunt Force Impact (6%)	Suffocation/Asphyxiation (6%)

- Gangs/County Lines were not seen to be as significant influencing factors as might have been anticipated (only in 2 murders, 2 attempt murders and 26 near misses in the review period).
- Mental health remained a key influencing factor, with a third of murder suspects having a PNC marker for being suicidal.
- Domestic Abuse accounts for 29% of homicides in the review period but over half of attempted murders, which may also correlate with a high percentage of suffocation/asphyxiation recorded for attempted murders
- There is no direct link between OCGs and homicide offences in Essex, however drugs dominate the criminality of OCGs in Essex (32 of 45 mapped OCGs in Sept 2021) which has an indirect impact on serious violence through county lines and other street level drug supply
- Night Time Economy offending can often be spontaneous with many victims and offenders unknown to each other.

Influencing Factors and % investigations linked to in each offence category where proportion is over 10%.			
	Murder	Att Murder	Near Miss
Spontaneous Altercation	29%	16%	32%
Domestic Abuse	29%	52%	29%
Alcohol Related	21%	13%	8%
Mental Health	21%	25%	3%
Drugs-General	13%	11%	3%
Monetary/Property Gain	13%	0%	2%
Revenge/Retribution	4%	16%	4%

5.2.2 Homicide Prevention Profile: Next Steps

As a result of this analysis, a number of recommendations have been made, aligned to a 4 P approach (Prevent, Protect, Prepare, Pursue).

Members of the Homicide Prevention board and in particular the strategic leads for the key influencing factors such as Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, NTE and Gangs/County Lines have been tasked with reviewing the Homicide Prevention Profile and associated recommendations. These will be incorporated into the new Strategic Action Plan which is being developed to drive Homicide Prevention and will be tracked and progressed through ACC Pavelin's bi-monthly board.

5.3 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. A number of presentations have now been shared by the Home Office to share best practice following the summit.

The Chief Constable held a debrief meeting in early January to pick up key learning points and identify activity that can be developed for local homicide prevention.

This information has been shared with the key strategic leads through ACC Pavelin's Homicide Prevention board and will be incorporated into the new Strategic Action Plan.

Mark Johnson as Head of Analysis is in contact with the Home Office to better understand Home Office homicide categorisation and establish how they define particularly alcohol and drug related homicides, to enable improved comparison between national and local Essex homicide data.

5.4 Homicide Prevention activity

5.4.1 Response to Serious Violence - Op Nightshade

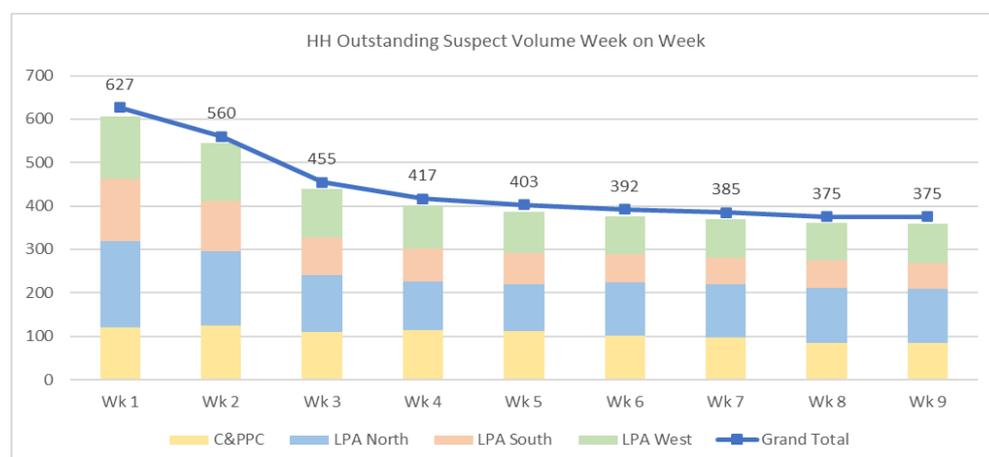
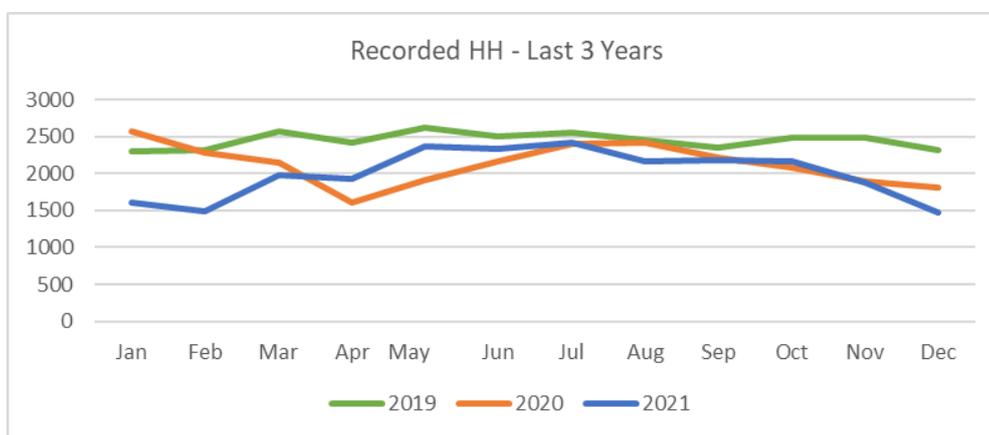
Operation Nightshade is the Essex Police response to serious violence and has been put in place since Autumn 2021 following the Chief Constable’s declaration of a critical incident.

The focus of Op Nightshade is to direct policing activity to reduce violence through visible policing, being offender focused, developing intelligence and responding and investigating promptly to calls to service. By working together across teams, the intention is to ensure best outcomes for victims and seeking to reduce overall violence.

Op Nightshade activity involves:

- A daily tasking process to action requests from commands
- Coordination and allocation of assets for High Harm offences arrests
- ANPR operations (Op Gambler / Op Animal) along the Metropolitan Police borders, often working alongside the Metropolitan Police, targeting OCGs and County Lines

This focused activity has resulted in an overall reduction in High Harm offences being recorded over the course of Op Nightshade, as well as a reduction in outstanding suspects as shown in the tables below.



The Criminal Intelligence Analysts have now delivered a cohort of violent offenders (based on Recency, Frequency, Gravity analysis) to support local tasking processes. This populates 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.

5.4.2 Serious Violence Unit (SVU)

SVU Performance - Gangs/County Lines

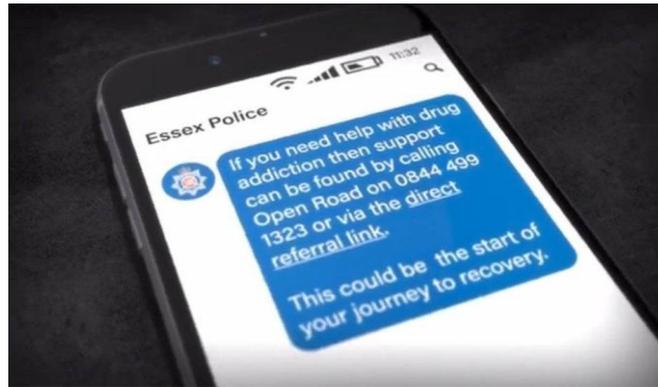
The Performance of the SVU pursue teams continues to be strong. In 2021, over 100 weapons and £569,000 were seized. Safeguarding in the first 48 hrs was completed with 97 individuals. 37 National Referral Mechanism (slavery) referrals were made and 81 other referrals. When comparing other metrics to previous enforcement performance, the Op Raptor teams have improved considerably from previous years as shown in the table below. The conversion between the percentage of suspects remanded on the day of arrest is of particular significance.

	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

The Orochi team (named from a model used in the Metropolitan police) are now well established, focusing on dismantling a whole drugs line utilising the most up to date investigative techniques. Orochi is seen as national best practice and was highlighted through a presentation at the national Homicide Summit in December 2021. The Orochi team develop and identify line holders and produce packages for Raptor teams to enforce against. As of January 2022, they are currently working on 36 evidential packages. The impact of enforcing in this way means low level drug users who often deal to fund their habit are not the primary focus of attention.

SVU continue to support Op Gloss, which is an ongoing operation working with the UKBA, to enforce against seized items with a focus on drugs & knives. During 2021 there were 363 seizures of items destined to Essex addresses, with 50% being prohibited weapons.

In addition, Op Cloud is a further tactic which is used to attempt to reduce demand for drugs. Essex Police will proactively text contacts saved in a seized drug phone, providing contacts for drug support agencies as shown.



SVU 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.

A summary on the output of the PPPT team on December 2021 is included below, demonstrating the investment in the Knife Crime cohort and intervention through 'Fearless Futures' referred to in previous papers:



5.4.3 Domestic Abuse (DA) Prevention Activity

Since the last report a new dedicated Superintendent post has been appointed to take the role of thematic lead for Domestic Abuse and chair the Domestic Abuse Governance Board (Superintendent Matt Cornish). This role was created to align with other thematic leads, and provide the additional capacity needed to provide enhanced focus and drive within the Domestic Abuse arena. Additionally, this role will oversee the implementation of the new Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA) model.

The current risk assessment model being used in Essex and the majority of other forces is the 'DASH' model, however, concerns have been highlighted nationally about its effectiveness. The DARA model was designed through collaborations with the College of Policing, Police practitioners, DA survivors, and academic experts; focussing towards 'stalking' and 'controlling' behaviours which are a known precursor factors for Domestic Homicides. The Forces that have worked with the trial have evidenced a reduction in Domestic Homicides since moving to the DARA model.

Initial scoping indicates structural changes may be required prior to implementation, with pilot forces reporting a significant increase in 'medium risk' DA investigations, which the current Domestic Abuse Investigation Teams (DAIT) set up may not have capacity to manage. A project brief is being prepared for presentation to the Chief Officer Group (COG) in March 2022, this is likely to suggest a 12-18 month timeline for implementation.

Op Puffin is the investigation into a Domestic Homicide which occurred on 1st February 2022 which will be subject to the Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) process. An early internal review through Force Gold is being arranged to establish any immediate internal or multi-agency learning which can be shared from a homicide prevention perspective.

5.4.4 Mental Health Prevention Activity

A new strategic lead is now in place for Mental Health since the previous report, with D/Superintendent Natalia Ross having taken over the portfolio in Crime & Public Protection Command.

D/Supt Ross is in the process of reviewing previous activity and renewing the Mental Health aspects of the Homicide Prevention Strategic Action Plan. This will include an element of child homicide prevention due to a perceived increase in reported Non-Accidental Injuries identified, potentially linked to a lack of face to face services available through the COVID period.

Crime & Public Protection Command have recently set up an Eastern Region Child Death/Serious Injury Board, with representatives from all regional forces and Southend, Essex and Thurrock partners. This is designed to help identify trends and patterns, as well

as share good practice and learning from internal and external audits, inspections and case studies.

A number of other key pieces of work are also being instigated including:

- A review of Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews to pick up on Mental Health predictors of Homicide
- Re-drafting of the Information Sharing Agreement to allow for improved data sharing with EPUT in order to create a cohort of 'High Risk' Mental Health patients.
- Commissioning of academic work to support research into the predictors of homicide in Mental Health and identify a cohort for discussion at a multi-agency meeting.

Following Op Rain, a homicide in January 2022 where Mental Health is believed to be a significant influencing factor, opportunities are being explored around conducting a multi-agency review. A Serious Adult Review (SAR) referral has been made by Essex Police relating to the suspect's Mental Health. However, as the case does not strictly meet the SAR criteria, other review options are being explored including the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework, which can be applied where an alleged perpetrator has been in receipt of care.

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

Delivery of training to GP colleagues is set to continue until March 2022, highlighting the risks of licensed firearms holders and declining Mental Health. 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

5.4.5 Night-Time Economy & Alcohol

NTE

Strong partnership arrangements throughout the Christmas and New Year period resulted in a successful and safe period, with no homicides linked to the Night-Time Economy.

Substantial work has been undertaken to understand the risk and intelligence picture linked to drinks spiking. An increase in reporting has been seen following a national initiative and media coverage (Op Lester). A more detailed Essex 'Crime Pattern Analysis' has been conducted and interventions made where appropriate through licensing to problem premises. The analysis has not identified a significant problem in Essex and there have been no reports linked to secondary offending.

A Multi-agency Night-Time Economy conference is being planned for May 2022 with partners from across the county. Essex County Council and Essex University are carrying out a research project around the local NTE which will allow the partnership to come together through the conference to discuss their findings, with a particular focus on the Violence Against Women and Girls agenda and public space safety.

Sobriety Tags/Bracelets (AAMR – Alcohol Abstinence Monitoring Requirement)

The use of Sobriety tags or 'AAMRs' continues to be pursued where alcohol is a factor in offending. Chief Superintendent Simon Anslow leads from a Police perspective and has agreed with Probation the format for provision of information via Police case files. Police internal communications are being prepared to signpost officers and staff to the benefits of AAMRs and how to highlight potential cases with Probation, both through Intranet articles and LPA internal communications channels.

A review into a number of violence cases where alcohol is a factor has also been carried out where an AAMR was not put in place. This has been shared with Probation so that they can review their internal processes and close any potential gaps.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

6.1 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.

6.2 Our Priorities

It is clear from the Homicide Prevention Profile and the analysis of more recent homicides that the priority areas for Homicide Prevention in Essex are:

- Domestic Abuse
- Mental Health
- Knife Crime
- Effective Criminal Justice processes

Whilst our prevention work around the Night-Time Economy, Gangs and County Lines, and OCGs remain important, the above areas are the most critical to prevention. Given these priority areas, the need for involvement of strategic partners in this work is clear. The Chief Constable will seek to introduce the concept of a 'Diamond Group' to oversee the strategic direction in these areas, bringing strategic partners to the table with emphasis on the collective responsibilities under the Serious Violence Duty.

7.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

7.1 Rapid Review Process - Serious Violence Operational Debrief Pilot

Following the Policing Minister Summit in early December 2021 one area of development that is being explored is a rapid review process to carry out an operational debrief of cases of serious violence that are perceived to be 'near miss' offences. T/DCS Lucy Morris as the strategic lead for Homicide is developing a pilot process to identify key incidents.

A proposal is being developed with the intention of key colleagues being involved in a structured 'quick-time' operational debrief. The aim of the debrief will be to identify key issues in each case which could prevent further violence between the same parties or in similar cases. Practical intervention activity will be tasked and tracked through the process. A paper is being presented to ACC Pavelin to consider with a view to commencing the pilot in February/March 2022.

7.2 Multi-Agency Reviews

Essex Police are supporting a number of multi-agency reviews in relation to specific incidents, including working with partners where Mental Health has been a factor in homicides. The two recent homicides in 2022 give the potential for further reviews which have been requested of partners, to ensure operational learning and prevention opportunities can be maximised.

This will include ensuring partners are complying with requirements of the Serious Violence Duty when it takes effect. The Serious Violence Duty, being introduced through the Police, Crime, Sentencing & Courts Bill 2021, 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.

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