

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 Chief Officer Group and PFCC Performance & Scrutiny meeting with an update on Homicide Prevention activity since the last report to the August 2022 meeting.

2.0 Recommendations

The Board to note the report and progress updates.

3.0 Executive Summary

This report provides an update on Homicides in Essex and includes analysis of Homicide trends as well of an assessment of Homicide prevention activity and investigation performance.

An update on the latest Homicide Prevention work across Essex is provided, as well as references to the national Homicide Prevention Framework and the links to Essex through the highlighting of the Essex Rapid Debrief Process as best practice.

An Essex Homicide Prevention Strategy has now been created and pending final sign off. The strategy works in conjunction with the Force Plan, PFCC Police and Crime Plan, Essex Crime Prevention Strategy, Governments Beating Crime Plan, National Vulnerability Action Plan and the National Homicide Prevention work.

Through the Homicide Prevention Board, we are now progressing our application to the Homicide Prevention Fund 2022/23-23/24. Our bid will include funding to resource support for the Rapid De-brief Process and if funding opportunity allows, an additional bid to secure academic research into high threat domestic abuse perpetrator cohorts.

4.0 Introduction

Homicide Prevention continues to be a clear priority for Essex Police, with the force leading the nationally in terms of its analysis and rapid debrief initiatives.

Our approach is being incorporated into the Homicide Prevention Strategy 2022-26. The overarching aim of strategy is to *“reduce incidents of homicide and serious violence which could lead to homicide”* and is underpinned by four main themes in line with the National NPCC approach:

1. Drugs – including County Lines and drug enabled violence
2. Serious Violence: including Knife Crime, Serious Youth Violence, alcohol related violence and the Night Time Economy
3. Domestic Abuse
4. Vulnerability - including Mental Health and child related homicide

The strategy will articulate the strong Governance arrangements that support our focus on Homicide Prevention and will also signpost the other significant areas of scrutiny and oversight that are linked to the four main themes.

Essex Police have continued to engage with the NPCC and College of Policing around the development of their ‘What Works Toolkit’ and are supporting the launch in October 2022. In advance of this, the NPCC lead presented to Chief Constable’s Council and referenced the ‘exemplary’ work of Essex Police around Homicide Prevention.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Overview of Performance Analysis

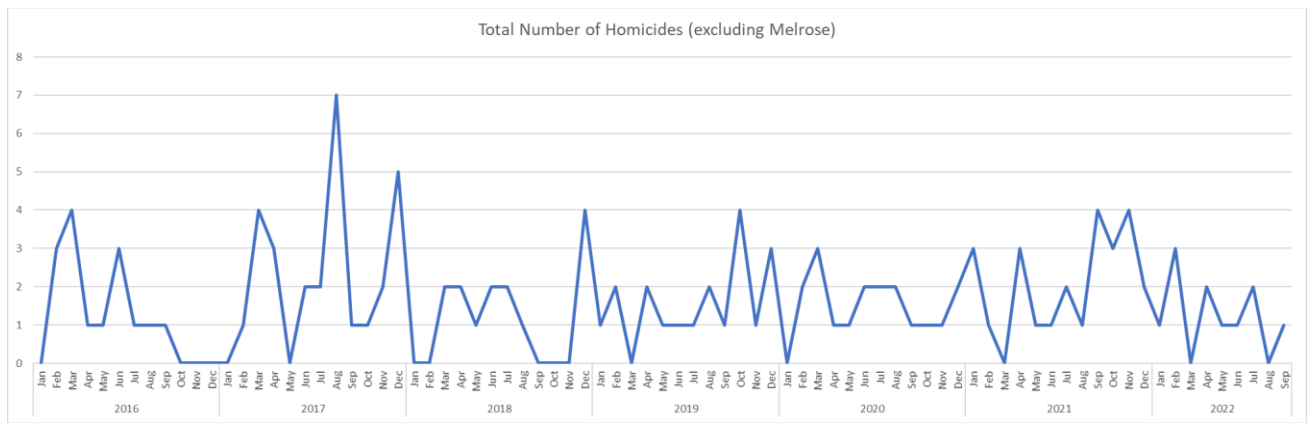
There have been 11 homicides in 2022 at the time of writing (as of 14th October 2022). The trend of a reduction in homicide from 2021 (22 homicides in 2021) has so far continued into the last quarter of 2022 and we are optimistic that the 2022 calendar year will show an overall reduction.

Investigation of homicide remains strong, with defendants pleading guilty to murder in several cases due to the strength of the evidence, thus negating the need for expensive trials and putting families through more turmoil (2 murder cases and 1 manslaughter in the last year). The homicide solved rate for 2021 remains at 77.3% although we have had indications from CPS around charging for one murder and charges for death by careless driving in another case, which should increase the final charge rate to 86%.

Of the 11 homicides so far in 2022, 10 have been charged and are awaiting trial. The final one has some complexities around causation which continue to be investigated. This equates to a solved rate of 91%.

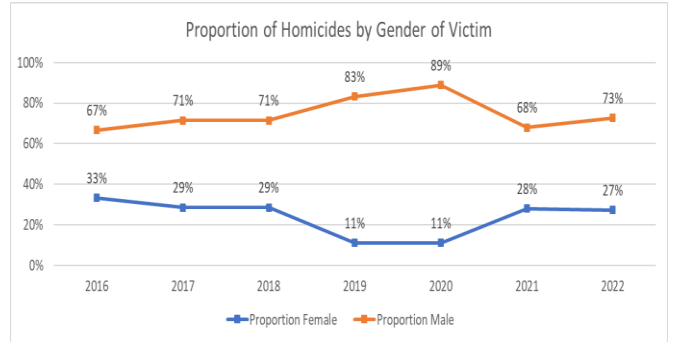
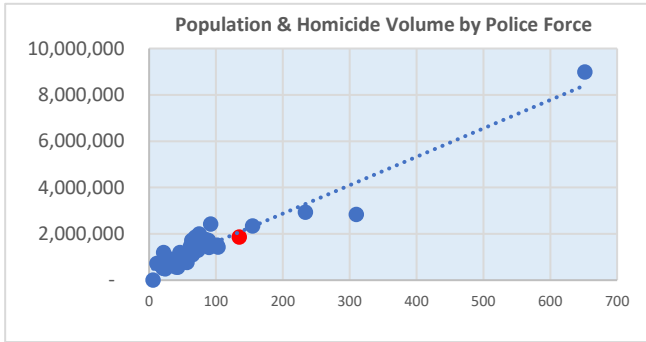
Long-Term Homicide Trends:

The long term homicide trend remains relatively stable with there generally being less than two homicides per month. There have been no peak months that have exceeded that position since the last report, with in fact there being no homicides in August 2022 at all.



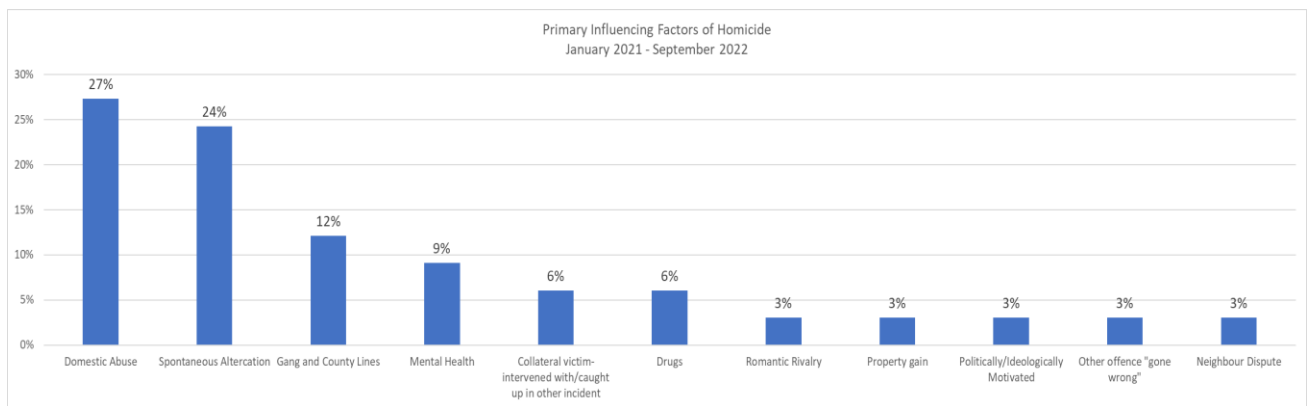
There has been no significant shift in any of the broader analytical measures since the last report. Essex remains very close to the national trend line when comparing number of homicides per thousand population over the last 5 years.

The victim gender picture has remained stable with 73% of victims being defined as male in 2022 which is a return to the more expected breakdown, following the increase in female victimisation seen during COVID caused by a number of inter-familial DA homicides. 27% of homicides in 2022 to date were DA homicides (3 out of 11).



Primary Influencing Factors

In the months between January 2021 to September 2022 the largest influencing factor of Homicide is Domestic Abuse (9 offences), following this is Spontaneous Altercation (8 offences) and Gang & County Lines (4 offences). The three largest influencing factors have not changed since the last report.



The Influencing factors are currently being reviewed by the Intelligence Analyst team with a view to aligning them to the Home Office definitions. This will allow for better comparison against data sets. We will retain the opportunity for investigators to provide additional information about wider factors however that might enhance our local understanding of the causes of homicide.

5.2 Home Office Homicide Data

As part of the Beating Crime Plan measures, Essex is closely reviewing our position against the Home Office outlier criteria*.

The latest data shows Essex as hitting only one of the four criteria, and are therefore not considered an outlier as they have been in previous periods due to the lower homicide rate so far in 2022.

Homicides			
12M April 22	12M June 19	Difference	Outlier Indicator Hit
27	15	12	Y
6M TY	6M LY	Difference	
15	11	4	N
Crimes Per 1000 pop	National Avg	Difference	
0.011	0.011	0.000	N
Crimes Per 1000 pop	MSG Avg	Difference	
0.011	0.009	0.002	N

*(4 criteria: 1) Comparison against a 12 month 2019 baseline, 2) Last 6 months versus same period in previous year, 3) National comparison per thousand population, 4) MSG comparison).

5.3 Essex Police Homicide Prevention Approach

5.3.1 Homicide Prevention Strategy

The Essex Police Homicide Prevention Strategy 2022-26 is now in its final draft, before being presented to Chief Officer Group for formal sign off. The overarching aim of the strategy is to “reduce incidents of homicide and serious violence which could lead to homicide”. The purpose of the strategy is to provide cohesion across these areas by coordinating activity, identifying learning and best practice and having robust monitoring and governance, ensuring the overarching aim is achieved of reducing homicide.

The strategy will work in conjunction with other key plans including the Essex Police Force Plan, PFCC Police and Crime Plan, Essex Crime Prevention Strategy, Governments Beating Crime Plan, National Vulnerability Action Plan, Serious Violence Duty and the NPCC Homicide Prevention Plan.

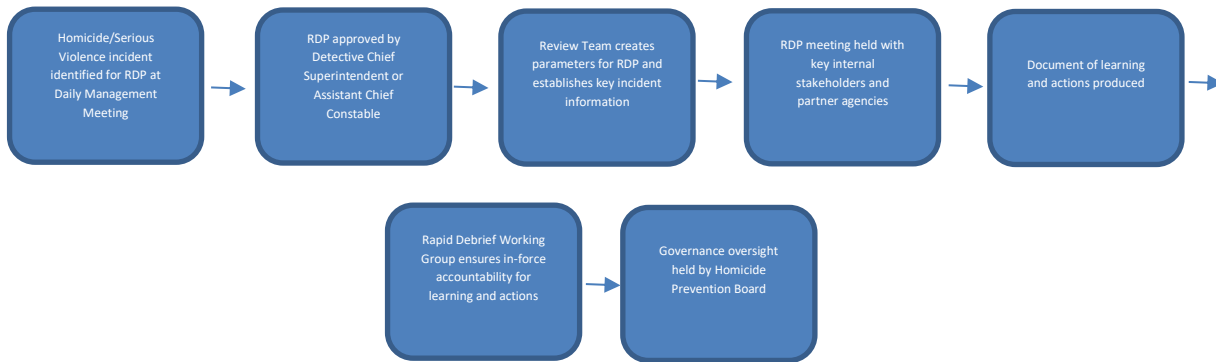
Our strategy is underpinned by the following four core themes, signposting the Governance and scrutiny in each area:

- 1) Domestic Abuse
- 2) Drugs – specifically including **County Lines** related violence and drug fuelled altercations
- 3) Serious Violence – including **Knife Crime**, the **Night Time Economy**, **Gangs** and Youth Violence
- 4) Vulnerability – specifically **Mental Health**

In outlining the Governance arrangements the strategy will also describe the Homicide Prevention Rapid Debrief process and how that fits in to the overall approach.

5.3.2 Homicide Prevention Rapid Debrief Process

The Homicide Prevention Rapid Debrief process has now been in place for a number of months. The diagram below sets out the end to end process to ensure learning is captured and embedded.



There has now been a total of 10 with a further two diarised. Rapid Debriefs conducted around a variety of incident including homicides and near miss events. Gold Commanders are becoming more aware of the process and are requested consideration of an increased number of debriefs. However to ensure continued momentum, plans are in place to present the Homicide Prevention strategy to the Chief Constable's SLT meeting and include a reminder of the debrief process.

There continues to be national focus on this process with NPCC describing it as exemplary at national Chief Constable's Council and using video interviews with Essex Police staff as part of the Whatworks website and their national media launch (https://youtu.be/v3OiN_8KgAs).

In total 66 actions have been raised as part of the debrief process to date, of which 51 have been completed.

Discussions through the Homicide Prevention board have established a need to ensure access to learning documents more broadly across the organisation, potentially through the Virtual Crime Academy.

5.3.3 Homicide Prevention Activity

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) are working with new and improved 'High Threat Domestic Abuse perpetrator' cohorts, identifying those at the highest risk of committing domestic homicide. Essex Police analysts have considered multiple factors, with an identified evidence base relating to both the perpetrator and their current/past relationships. An application via The Homicide Prevention Fund is being considered with a view to seek funding for independent academic research providing an evidence base for this cohort.

A Domestic Abuse '**Joint Operational Improvement Meeting**' (JOIM) has been implemented between Essex Police and the Crown Prosecution Service, to improve joint working. This is the first in the region. The attendees acknowledged that 'Victim withdrawal' is significant factor in DA Case attrition, with over 90% of these occurring pre-charge. To remedy this a pilot has been designed to streamline processes, providing victims with an outcome at a quicker pace by fast-tracking certain cases within the North LPA. It is

envisaged this pilot will adopt 'High' risk cases, alongside any case involving perpetrators from the 'High Threat Cohort', detailed above.

Domestic Abuse '**Flex Training**' has just been rolled out across the Force, with enrolment of Officers from across all departments. The Training focused on equipping officers with knowledge around Victim mindset, effective communication and empathy. There was an emphasis on developing knowledge of Coercive Control, allowing them to identify these offences and effectively support Victims.

Protection Orders continue to play a key role in prevention. There have obtained 181 DVPO in a rolling 12 months from October 2021, as well as successfully obtaining Stalking Protection Orders (SPO) against 10 people so far in 2022. One of these was against a DA perpetrator from the 'High Threat List' where the court imposed the use of a Buddi Tag for 3 months. It is accepted the number of DVPO is lower than last year, however, it is also noted that at the same time DVPO are decreasing the DA solved rate is increasing. It is felt that more emphasises is being placed on 'evidenced led' investigations, with a view to seeking a criminal outcome, where previously a DVPO may have been sought. This will continue to be closely monitored.

Perpetrator focused 'Behaviour Change' Programs. During the first month of the recent #Reflect campaign (targeting perpetrators) the 'Change Hub' had 70 online contact requests and 8 self-referrals for people seeking to change their behaviour. The quarter prior to the campaign saw 'zero' self-referrals, with only 11 in the previous 12 months, demonstrating the positive impact of this campaign.

DAPO Pilot. Essex Police continue to wait for the Home Office to announce forces selected to take part in the pilot. They have been postponed by the Home Office, who have provided an assurance they will be announced as soon as possible.

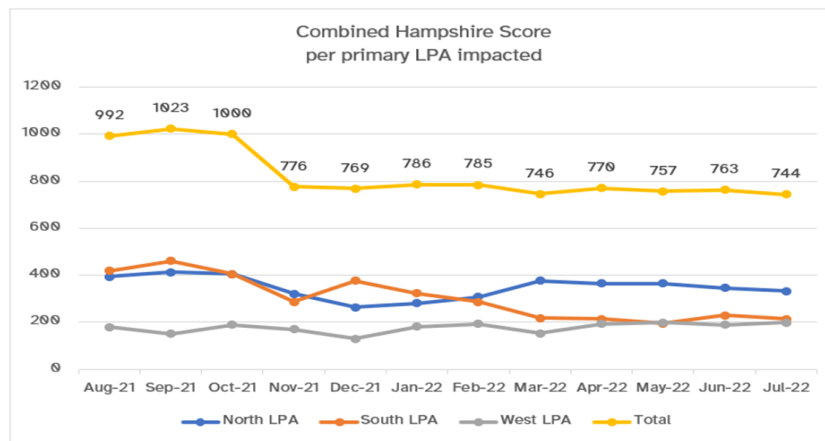
DARA Model. The Force Change Team is considering and evaluating the impact of the move from DASH to DARA including the capacity and capability of the existing teams and opportunities to improve both response and investigations. Due to the scale of the growth alongside the interdependencies with other force critical projects (Contact Management and C&PP review), implementation will be coordinated with a view to DARA going live around August 2023. The force will ensure the PFCC remains fully sighted on any decisions and implications.

Serious Violence

The Serious Violence Unit have continued to proactively tackle serious violence through their Raptor teams with the following results secured between January and September 2022:

SVU Performance (Jan-Sept 2022)	
334	Searches completed
448	Arrests
282	RIC's – (62%)
106	Weapons seized
£280K	Cash seized
54	Vulnerable people safeguarded

In addition, the overall harm score for County Lines activity is shown in the graph below, demonstrating the reduction and stabilisation of harm scores. The intention is now to move from Hampshire towards the use of MoRILE to score the overall harm from Gangs and County Lines, which will bring it in line with the wider SOC System Tasking and allow comparison against OCGs and other threat areas.



The Knife Crime Violence Model pilot has now been completed and assessed by the University of Essex and Head of Analysis, Mark Johnson. It has been deemed a success, with a paper being prepared for COG for consideration of roll-out across the wider force area.

The RUI cohort will now need evaluation, but early indication is that approach has had a positive impact and reduced the number of RUI's for drugs offences (Possession with Intent to Supply).

The Serious Violence Unit will continue to seek development opportunities, with future focus on:

- Continuing to develop processes around missing children to identify criminality and recruitment methods
- Continuing to pursue Project Alpha opportunities (Met Police Gang monitoring unit)
- Working with ERSOU to understand the online drugs market and how that impacts upon Essex

Alcohol & Night Time Economy

The Night Time Economy (NTE) remains a priority for the local policing areas and other commands who provide a support function. The NTE Harm Reduction Group is chaired quarterly by Supt Weaver and currently documents a number of actions. Some of the highlights are as follows:

All Tier 1 Districts (Colchester, Chelmsford, Clacton and Southend) have been tasked to review their NTE deployment plans ahead of the World Cup and Christmas 2022. The focus moving to a more preventative footprint, identifying both persons and areas of vulnerability in addition to identifying possible suspects who may be targeting those vulnerable through drink and/or drugs.

Plain Clothes operations have been undertaken in both Southend and Colchester making use of BDO (Behaviour Detection Officers) within licenced premises who observe concerning behaviours and then call upon uniform colleagues to undertake interventions where appropriate. This has been supported by licensees.

Strong partnership working continues to take place and includes activity such as Town Pastors, Taxi Marshalls, SOS Buses, joint licensing visits with the local councils to name a few.

Provision of education at Freshers weeks by the community policing teams who have a university in their District.

Strong processes are in place to deal with spiking, starting with the initial call, through to attendance, investigation and feedback to victims where their samples have provided certain results.

Colchester CPT/TCT are working with the University to 'walk with females' to show the young women where they may be vulnerable while out in the NTE.

Op Benison checks (licencing checks) are being reinvigorated.

A review is also underway to understand the effects of cocaine in the NTE. This includes funding from POCA for drug wipes.

Vulnerability - Mental Health

A large programme of work continues in respect of the learning that has been identified from Op Beaumont (the homicide of a 12 year old boy in Loughton in 2019 by a male who had previously made threats to police to carry out acts of violence). This work includes;

- Improved custody processes between police and MH teams ensuring all available relevant information is available in order for assessments to be well informed.
- Improved responses within the control room with regards to high intensity service users.
- Improving our data response including the development of cohort lists – this overlaps with the development of High Harm and Domestic Abuse cohorts.

The **Mental Health Risk Management Board (MHRMB)** is now becoming established with the next board due to take place on 31st October 2022. The aim of the board is to identify people living with mental ill health who are showing escalating signs of potential serious

violence towards others in the community and work to reduce that risk. Police have constructed MHRMB referrals from our three cohorts (DA, Violence and Safeguard FCR) who we feel are the highest risk of violence for discussion. There are 10 in total to be discussed. However, there is good engagement from partners where EPUT have also nominated a further two to discuss. In addition to the MHRMB, urgent cases can be discussed outside of this forum if time critical. Staff and officers and external partners now have the ability to raise concerns about people with MH risk to a dedicated email address. These concerns are logged and investigated and raised as necessary to the board.

Other work to improve all-agency response to mental health continues which will indirectly improve Homicide Prevention in the area, including;

- Focus on improved S135/136 provision and the escalation process
- Review of training provision to officers and staff – ensuring officers receive the most appropriate training (i.e. frontline v's staff in the control room),
- Digitalisation of forms to improve information sharing to partners
- Mental health awareness provision to licenced firearms holders and their families
- Continued attendance at key strategic partnership boards and steering groups,
- Review of street triage after an 'all force' recommendation from HMICFRS
- Development of analytics around MH data to improved access and identification of risk

5.4 NPCC Homicide Prevention Framework

Essex Police have been heavily involved in the development of the national framework through sharing our analytical work, rapid debriefs and cohort work. We have been directly involved in the NPCC 'Call for Practice' to collate good practice across forces around Homicide Prevention which has helped to develop the overarching framework.

This has resulted in Essex Police Rapid Debrief process being included in the framework as best practice with both a written guide and video interviews. The framework is due to launch in mid-October 2022 with national media coverage.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

6.1 Scrutiny & Governance

Strong Governance processes remain in place through the Homicide Prevention board and quarterly reporting, and have been bolstered in recent months with the Rapid Debrief working group.

The Homicide Prevention Strategy will set out the wider arrangements and links to other scrutiny and Governance processes. Future reporting will include the completed strategy.

7.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

Future development will ensure the Homicide Prevention Strategy is presented to the relevant Chief Officer and the PFCC boards for sign off.

Homicide Prevention Fund

The Home Office have recently released a new funding stream for 2022/23 and 2023/24 entitled the Homicide Prevention Fund. Forces, PCCs and ROCUs are eligible to bid up to £150 000 to support Homicide Prevention initiatives, based on the following priorities:

- Reduce homicide in areas that receive the funding.
- Support the policing system to improve their response to preventing homicide.
- To improve knowledge and understanding of the drivers of homicide and develop and deliver interventions that will target these drivers.
- Build the evidence base for what works on reducing homicide
- To improve the quality of violent crime data that forces record and share with the Home Office, to ensure we continue to accurately target activity

Essex Police are preparing a bid for a Detective Inspector Homicide Prevention Coordinator and an additional analyst role, to support the continuation of the Rapid Debrief process. This will increase capacity to deliver debriefs, provide coordination of action tracking and ensure delivery of identified interventions and good practice, along with capturing evaluation and assessment of the analytical benefits of the process.

The deadline for bids is 9th November with a view to funding starting by mid December 2022.

8.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are no new risks identified. In the last paper there was reference to the risk that the volume of homicides could continue to fluctuate despite focused efforts on prevention.

The need to ensure sufficient resources to manage the rapid debrief process was also highlighted. A temporary resource to assist in facilitating debriefs and action management has been advertised but has not yet been filled. This will be closely monitored by the Homicide Prevention board.

9.0 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

There are no specific identified impacts on equality, diversity or human rights, however Homicide analysis continues to monitor ethnicity and gender to ascertain any levels of disproportionality on homicide victims.

10.0 Health and Safety Implications

None.