

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2021

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

Title of Report:	Update on Homicide Prevention
Classification of Paper:	Official
Agenda Number:	8.0
Chief Officer:	Lead: T/ACC Glen Pavelin, ACC Andy Pritchard
Date Paper was Written:	18th January 2023
Version Number:	2.0
Report from:	Essex Police
Date of Meeting:	28th February 2023
Author on behalf of Chief Officer:	D/ Ch Supt Lucy Morris, D/Supt Rob Kirby
Date of Approval:	COG – 25th January 2023

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 November 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 is provided on the four key areas of Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Gangs and drugs lines and Serious Violence.

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 signed off by Chief Officers and will be presented for endorsement to the PFCC Strategic board in March 2023. The strategy works in conjunction with the Force Plan, PFCC Police and Crime Plan, Essex Crime Prevention Strategy, Diversity, Equality and Inclusion strategy, Governments Beating Crime Plan, National Vulnerability Action Plan and the National Homicide Prevention work.

Our application to the Homicide Prevention Fund 2022/23-23/24 was unsuccessful. This bid included funding to resource support for the Rapid De-brief Process.

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 *“To reduce homicide in Essex by tackling serious violence and the contributing factors that lead to homicide”* and is underpinned by four main themes in line with the National NPCC approach:

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

The strategy articulates the strong Governance arrangements that support our focus on Homicide Prevention and 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’ which launched 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 was a total of 16 homicides recorded in 2022. This is a reduction in homicide from 2021 where there were 22 homicides. Two of the offences recorded in 2022 occurred in previous years, but recorded in 2022 – bringing the total amount of homicides committed in 2022 to 14 (although Home Office figures will show the official figure of 16).

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

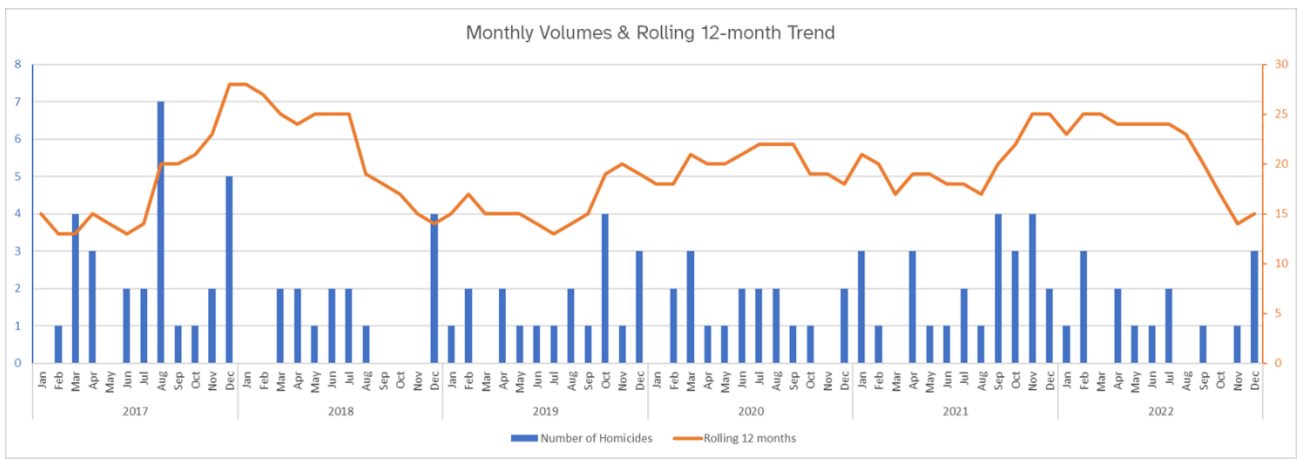
trials and putting families through more turmoil (2 murder cases and 1 manslaughter in the last year).

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%.

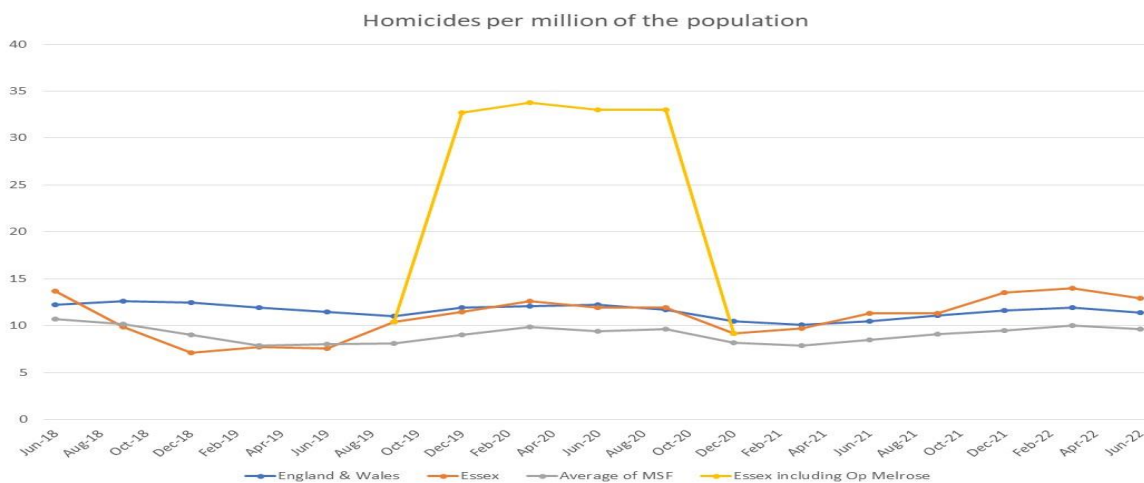
Of the 16 homicides in 2022, 13 have been charged and are awaiting trial. Of the three remaining, one has some complexities around causation which continue to be investigated. The other two are more historic matters which remain under investigation. This equates to a current solved rate of 81%.

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 or October 2022 at all.



The overall rolling 12 mth rate of homicides (orange line) shows a steady decrease in the second half of 2022 to reflect the lower number of recorded homicides in 2022.

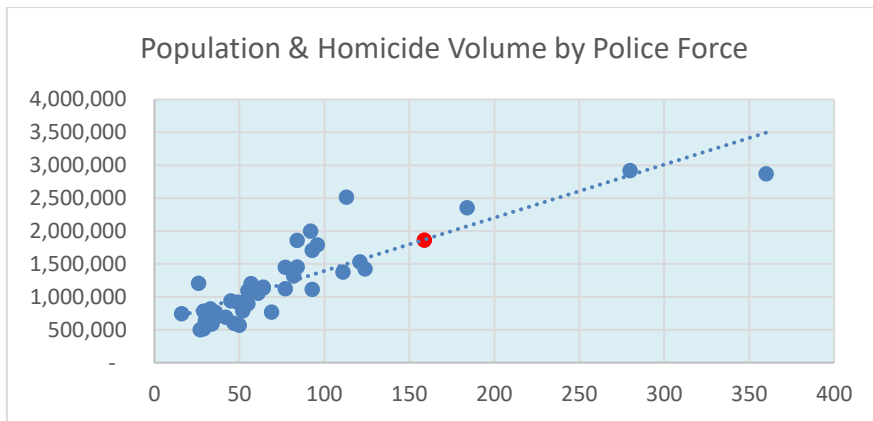


Office National Statics published figures (most recent release Jun 2022)

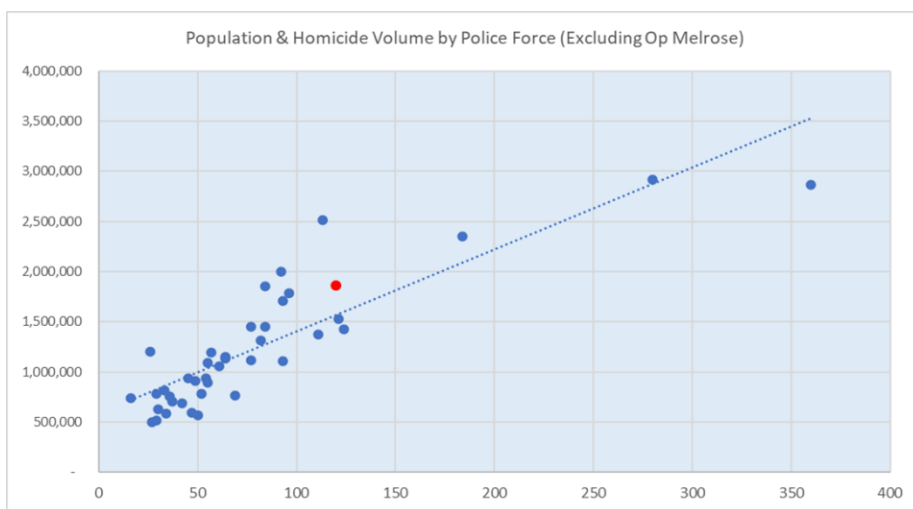
When comparing the 12 month rolling homicide rate with Most similar forces and the national average, it can be seen that since Aug 2019, Essex follows the trend of the most similar force group (not including Op Melrose), but consistency sits above it. However, when compared to the national average, since Oct 2019, Essex has more closely following the national rate.

If the 2022 recorded homicides (16) are converted to rates per million of the population, it reflects the lower rate. This would show Essex has a rate of 8.6 compared to the current published rate of 12.9. This rate would be below both the national rate (11.4) and MSF average (9.6)

Demonstrated in a different way, the two graphs below show population and homicide by force along with the 'average' line of what would be expected depending on population. The first graph shows Essex sitting on the 'expected' line – however this includes Op Melrose figures.

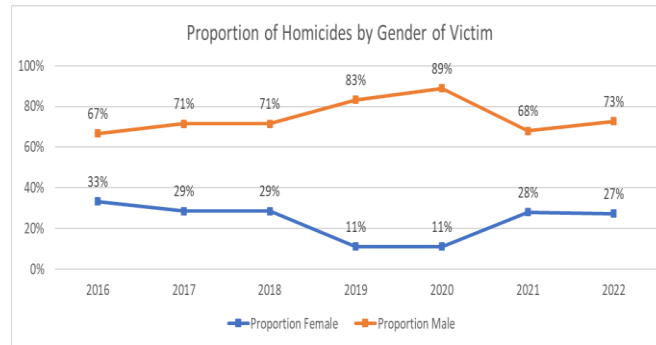


If Op Melrose is excluded, the graph below shows Essex is above the line which indicates a lower amount of homicides compared to the expected average when taking population into account.



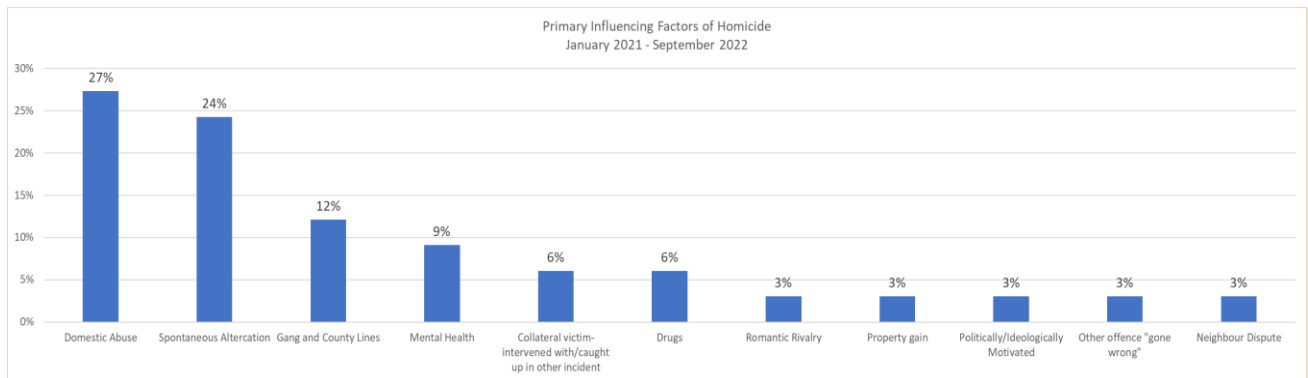
The victim gender picture has remained stable with 73% of victims being defined as male in 2022 which is a return to the more expected breakdown, following the increase in female

victimisation seen during COVID caused by a number of inter-familial DA homicides. 31% of homicides in 2022 to date were DA homicides (5 out of 16).



Primary Influencing Factors

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



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 are not hitting any of the criteria (an improvement since the last report) and are therefore not considered an outlier as they have been in previous periods due to the lower homicide rate in 2022.

Homicides				
12M June 19	12M October 2022	Difference (#)	STD Dev	Outlier Indicator Hit
15	17	2		N
6M LY	6M TY	Difference (#)		
12	5	-7		N
National Avg	Crimes Per 1,000 pop	Difference (#)		
0.009	0.011	0.002	0.005	N
MSG Avg	Crimes Per 1,000 pop	Difference (#)		
0.008	0.011	0.003	0.003	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 approved by Chief Officers and is being presented to the PFCC Strategic board in March 2023 for endorsement.

The overarching aim of the strategy is to “*To reduce homicide in Essex by tackling serious violence and the contributing factors that 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, Diversity, Equality and inclusion strategy, Governments Beating Crime Plan, National Vulnerability Action Plan, Serious Violence Duty and the NPCC Homicide Prevention Plan.

The strategic aims are:

- Focus on four key impact factors in Essex: Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Drug Driven Violence, Serious Violence
- Work with the Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit and other partners to tackle the most dangerous offenders, reducing the risk they pose
- Develop better understanding of the causal and contributory factors to homicide through a data led approach
- Work with National Police Chiefs Council, the College of Policing and Academia to better understand and improve prevention opportunities.
- Develop and implement rapid learning to ensure key prevention activity takes place as soon as possible
- Ensure Force wide governance is in place to link all areas of business into homicide prevention

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 13 with a further two diarised. Rapid Debriefs conducted around a variety of incident including homicides and near miss events. The process for identifying an incident which may be suitable for a de-brief is now well embedded into the daily business. However to ensure continued momentum, plans are in place to present the Homicide Prevention strategy to the Chief Constable's SLT meeting in February 2023 and include a reminder of the debrief process.

There continues to be national focus on this process with various different forces requesting to meet with the review team in order to understand how this process works, how it is embedded with the rest of the force and the structure around it.

In total 97 actions have been raised as part of the debrief process to date, of which 59 have been completed. Of the 38 outstanding, 28 are from two recent de-briefs, leaving only 10 open from the other 11 debriefs. The working group ensures traction and completion of these actions and meets 6-weekly.

Arrangements are now in place for learning summaries to be available for all to view via the through the Virtual Crime Academy.

5.3.3 Homicide Prevention Activity **Domestic Abuse**

Successful Home Office funding has enabled the recruitment of five **Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVA)**. These advisors are able to improve our interactions with victims of domestic abuse, which in turn will enable the DAPST teams to become further perpetrator focused.

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. The third iteration of this cohort list, which is the most sophisticated yet is being progressed through the Ethics committee prior to being adopted. A performance framework monitoring the interventions with perpetrators is also being formalised.

Protection Orders continue to play a key role in prevention. There have obtained 193 DVPO in a rolling 12 months in 2022, as well as successfully obtaining Stalking Protection Orders (SPO) against 15 people in 2022. It is accepted the number of DVPO remains lower than in 2021, 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 continues to be closely monitored.

Whilst not strictly linked to Homicide, the issue of **Domestic Abuse related Suicides** is receiving more attention nationally. Within Essex, guidance to increase awareness of officers attending apparent suicides is being produced to ensure better questioning at the scene provides a more accurate picture of the issue can be identified, enabling measures to be put in place to prevent future deaths.

DARA Model. The move from DASH to DARA risk assessment is still set to going live on 1st August 2023.

Prior to the DARA model going live, there will be the introduction of a **Domestic Abuse Review Team (DART)**. This team will be responsible for completing all secondary risk assessments for 'high' and 'medium' risk cases. As well as providing additional capacity to DAIT Sgts who were completing this function, this method has been highlighted as best practice; providing consistency in grading enabling the most appropriate teams to deal with any perpetrators or suspects in custody.

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.

Serious Violence

The Serious Violence Unit have continued to proactively tackle serious violence through their Raptor teams with the following results secured throughout 2022.

SVU Performance (Jan-Dec 2022)	
400	Searches completed
593	Arrests
374	RIC's – (62%)
125	Weapons seized
£764K	Cash seized
96	Vulnerable people safeguarded

During 2022 the management and risk assessment of the Drugs Lines moved from the Hampshire risk matrix model to the **MoRILE** risk assessment tool. This move is part of the organisations drive to have all 'risks' managed under the same assessment process ensuring that there is consistency across the force. This will also allow comparison against OCGs and other threat areas. Essex Police currently has 25 County Lines scored through the MoRILE process and another 6 waiting. As we transition from one risk assessment model to the other, it is anticipated that the number of lines will increase to reflect the number of lines being actively targeted.

The **Knife Crime Violence Model** pilot has been completed and assessed by the University of Essex and Head of Analysis, Mark Johnson. It has been deemed a success and work is now being conducted to implement a larger pilot covering four districts with higher levels of serious violence. Through the Violence and Vulnerability Board, the pilot will develop to include greater support from partner agencies.

The use of the RUI cohort has been developed for interventions to take place and led to a reduction of those subject of RUI for drug offences. Under the new Bail Act changes, this cohort will be developed to include those that are on bail for drug supply offences. The cohort has developed further and is now assessed by the Prevent, Protect and Prepare Team to look for diversionary and safeguarding opportunities for those involved in criminality.

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

- OP Firefly, a recent implementation of joint working processes with the Missing Person Liaison Officers, seeking to identify those missing persons that are being exploited by Drugs Lines. The initial stages of this process have seen some positive results with the charging of some offenders for Modern Slavery offences.
- On-line offending. The Serious Violence Unit is working with the Metropolitan Police Project Alpha Team, as well as external technology companies to develop our on-line strategy to identify those that supply drugs and exploit children on-line.
- The Serious Violence Unit are working with the London School of Economics to pilot a network analysis solution to identify those within County Lines that cause the greatest threat, in order to support police tactics to reduce serious violence.
- We continue to develop Op Grip, Essex Police's hotspot policing with proactive high visibility patrols in areas of serious violence, designed to reduce criminality.
- Proactive opportunities to target County Lines that cause that greatest harm. A recent example of this is OP Bottle, an 8 month operation that targeted known offenders resulting in the arrest, charge and remand of a significant number of people.

Alcohol and Night Time Economy

The last quarter of 2022 saw the World Cup and Christmas celebrations. A specific operation ran to cover both of these events in conjunction with various partners from the Community Safety Partnerships. Both events were unexceptional in terms of disorder and associated behaviour.

An operation is being developed which will overlap Op Grip zones. Many of these include NTE venues. The focus of the operation will be on recreational drug use within the NTE (mainly Cocaine focused). By incorporating Grip zones, the tactical plan will include plain clothes resources being in grip zones specifically to target drugs, including amongst other things, the use of amnesty bins, drugs dogs, drugs testing kits. These deployments will be predominately on Thursday to Saturday nights.

Other areas of focus in the Night-time economy (NTE) include:

- Epping & Loughton districts are undertaking Op Charlotte which relates to VAWG at tube station during NTE hours. We are working with British Transport Police and the Met Police.
- Op Gerbera is set up where the behavioural detection trained officers (BDO) officers enter licenced premises with a primary purpose of identifying either vulnerable persons or those who are targeting the vulnerable.
- Within Chelmsford, we are working with the City Council who have the Womens Charter as a piece of partnership work. This involves police with partners and females from the University all working together to identify concerns in and around the NTE.
- In the Colchester district in December, Op Sled saw joint patrols with the community policing teams and officers from Public Protection in support of preventing VAWG. This involved patrolling taxi ranks and speaking to females to identify vulnerability.

This was completed every Friday and Saturday and an analysis of its effectiveness is underway.

- The CSP within Southend have purchased a new CCTV van and bottle top protectors which we will use to work in partnership with them on in vulnerability areas.

Vulnerability - Mental Health

There have been two **Mental Health Risk Management Board** (MHRM) meetings with good attendance. The board is now more strategic overseeing risk management in relation to beds RAG assessing, escalation processes, S135 warrant backlogs, children and suicide risk and prevention. It is co-chaired by Police and an Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP) within Essex Social Care with a rotation of co-chair every 12 months. Underneath this board sit aligned subgroups that monitor the completion of actions relation to individual strategy meetings called by a partner agency under the agreed MHRM terms of reference. Both police and partner agencies have been contributing to this process and will ensure individual strategy meetings are well attended by all agencies.

An internal post implementation review into the **Mental Health Street Triage Team** has been commissioned with the review team from January 2023 to comply with the HMIC recommendation. The review will also be working with health to ensure we are sighted on future commissioning processes. We have been working with the PFCC office to present to the CJ and Health Board where the commissioners sit regarding any recommendations for health to further invest in regarding the response to MH.

Information sharing continues to be a key area in being able to identify and address risk. Further training has taken place within the control room to be able to identify risk and submit intelligence reports. An easy to complete referral sheet is being designed for officers and staff to refer those individuals who may not necessarily require sectioning but do require mental health support.

The digitalisation of a **multi-agency mental health referral form** is being developed. This will allow faster and more efficient sharing of information across all relevant agencies. A new **Mental Health Team** within Crime & Public Protection is currently being formed in order to provide better coordination of risk with partners.

A data product has been completed by the Performance Analysis Unit. Amongst other things, this product captures and presents data relating to individuals who may present a risk. This information is drawn from sources such as the control room frequent caller list. The issues of bed availability and the **escalation procedure** continue to be progressed with partners. Awareness of the procedure is being raised internally via escalation cards.

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 has now been launched and initially contains the national strategy, and four examples of good practice.

The Homicide Prevention board now includes a standing agenda item where nationally highlighted best practice can be reviewed by the key strategic leads to understand if this can be adopted into Essex.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

Home office recording and Office National Statistics publication of homicide data is in financial years, whereas traditionally we have reported in calendar years. In order to better align with the national analytical products that are released, we will now report in financial quarters rather than calendar.

6.1 Scrutiny and Governance

The strong Governance processes remain in place through the Homicide Prevention board and quarterly reporting, and has been bolstered 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

In line with the new strategy and national best practice, we will continue to develop our preventative approach to the four key areas (Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, drug driven violence & serious violence). A key part of this will be the continued development of the Rapid Debrief Process including ensuring the process itself is refined and ensuring learning is properly embedded within the force.

8.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are no new risks identified.

The need to ensure sufficient resources to manage the rapid debrief process has previously been highlighted. This remains a concern as the post has still not been filled and a second possible solution utilising home office funding has been unsuccessful. This continues to be closely monitored by the Homicide Prevention board to identify a solution.

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. The new homicide prevention strategy works in conjunction with the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion strategy and will do so and be refreshed in line with the new Census data.

10.0 Health and Safety Implications

None.