

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2023

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 and Scrutiny meeting with an update on Homicide Prevention activity since the last report to the August 2023 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 since the last quarter 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.

This work is completed in conjunction with the Essex Homicide Prevention Strategy

4.0 Introduction

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

Our approach is now incorporated into the Homicide Prevention Strategy 2022-26. The overarching aim of the strategy is “*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 (NTE)

The strategy articulates the strong Governance arrangements that support our focus on Homicide Prevention and 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.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Overview of Performance Analysis

Previous whole year overview (for context) - There were 15 homicides recorded from April 2022 to March 2023. This is a reduction in homicide from 2021/22 where there were 23 recorded (and a reduction from 2020/21 where 17 homicides were recorded). Two of the offences recorded within this timeframe occurred in previous years, bringing the total amount of homicides committed in 2022/23 to 13 (although Home Office figures will show the official figure of 15).

Reporting Quarter Overview (Q2)- In the reporting quarter (July 2023 to September 2023), there were 7 recorded homicides in five separate investigations. In three cases, suspects have been identified and charged. These matters are progressing towards trial, whilst the other two cases remain under investigation with suspects identified.

Calendar Year to Date (Q4, Q1, Q2) – There have been 12 homicides recorded from Jan 2023 - September 2023. The homicide solved rate for 2023 to date is 83% (10 from 12).

Investigation of homicide remains strong and thorough, leading to successful convictions at court. Court results from Q2 (July-September 2023):

Op Fascia – In April 2021, during a disturbance in Jaywick, Michelle Cooper was fatally wounded and died. During the end of 2021 and into 2022, trials led to four convictions for manslaughter. One defendant, Bobby Nethercott successfully appealed his conviction, leading to a re-trial. In July 2023, he was convicted again of the manslaughter and received his original 8 year sentence.

Op Uphill – In Nov 2022, Dominic Clark-Ellingford was fatally stabbed within a dwelling after an argument with a friend - Perry Coulson. In August 2023, Coulson was found guilty of the murder and sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum tariff of 16 years.

Op Corfu - In August 2020, emergency services were called to an address in Harlow to reports of an unresponsive infant (Malik Goncalves). Malik died and was found to have non accidental injuries which caused his death. The father - Muritala Olaiya-Imam was not at the address when the murder happened, however was under a direction not to allow Malik to be alone in the care of the mother - Eloddie Goncalves-Taborda. As a result in July 2023, Eloddie Goncalves-Taborda was found guilty of murder and Muritala Olaiya-Imam was found guilty of allowing the death of a child. Both are awaiting sentencing.

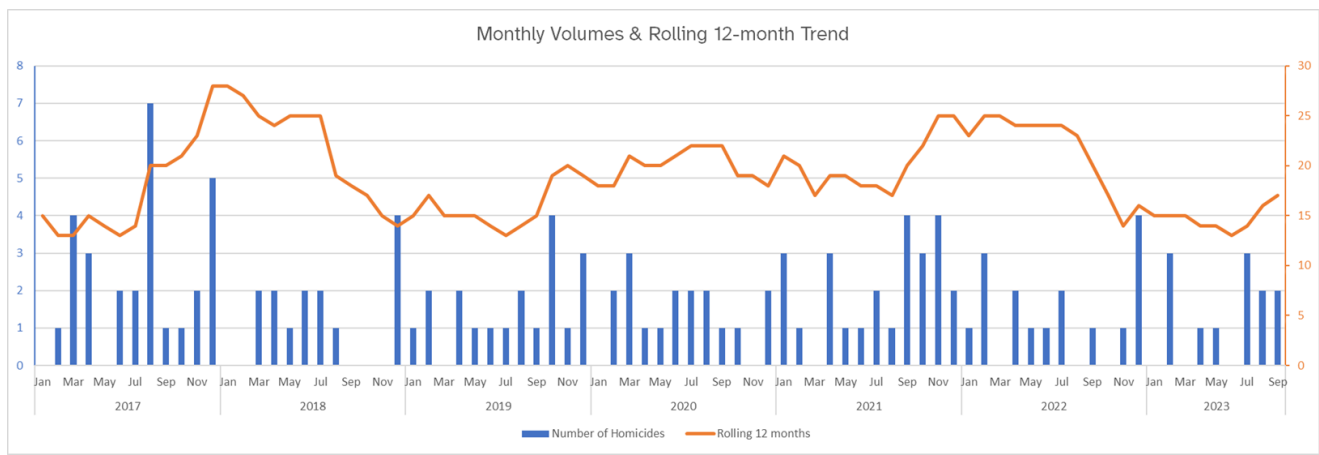
Other Major Crime investigation results for attempted murder investigations:

Op Midland – In June 2023, police were called to a residence where a female was found with significant stab wounds to her neck. In September 2023, due to the overwhelming evidence presented to the court, her husband - Bisim NEZHA pleaded guilty to attempted murder and is awaiting sentencing.

Op Hawaii – In June 2022, a male was stabbed in the chest with a skewer by Cayleigh Reid during a BBQ in a garden in Harlow. An attempted murder investigation was launched. In August 2023, she was found guilty of grievous bodily harm with intent and sentenced to 8 years imprisonment.

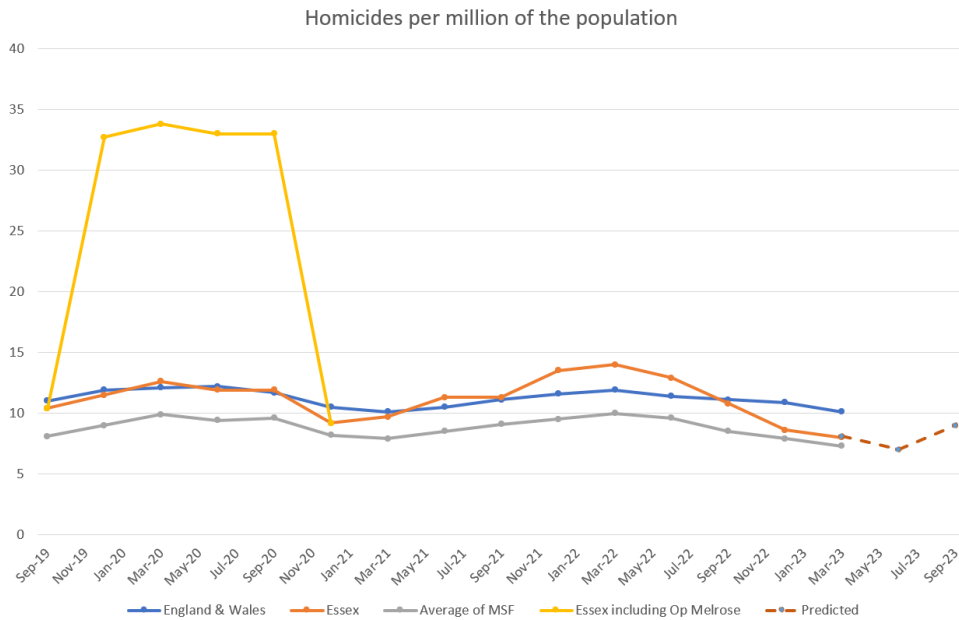
Long-Term Homicide Trends:

The long term homicide trend is slightly decreasing with generally being less than two homicides per month. There were no homicides in January, March, June or 2023. However, July, August and Sept saw 7 recorded homicides, which is a peak when considering the last rolling year, but when considered over more historic data is not as significant.



The overall rolling 12 month rate of homicides (orange line) shows a steady decrease in the second half of 2022 and a gradual decline of that line to reflect the lower number of recorded homicides in 2022 and into 2023, but does also reflect the peak in this reporting quarter.

When comparing the 12 month rolling homicide rate with most similar forces and the national average, since Sept 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 this national rate and in the most recent published data, has dipped below. Predictions (using local rather than HO data) indicates the homicide rate within Essex will rise but still sit below the national average.



Office National Statics published figures (most recent release Mar 2023)

Using local data, it shows the number of homicides in the previous 12 mths to Jun 23 is 13 and the number of homicides from Jul 23 – Sept 23 rises to 17. This equates to a drop in the homicide rate to 7.0 per million in April and a rise to 9.1 per million in September. This rate would be below the current national rate (10.1) but above the MSF average (7.3). This is reflected above in the dotted ‘predicted’ line.

So far in the reporting calendar year, there have been 12 homicides (3 in Q1 and 2 in Q2 and 7 in Q3) This would amount to a predicted total of 16 for the calendar year of 2023.

Disparity Data

The victim gender picture continues to change. The portion of male victims in 2021/22 was 75%. This reduced to 56% in the 12 months from April 2022 to March 2023, however rose again to 62.5% in the 12 months from September 2022 to August 2023.

As reported previously, some initial work has been completed to compare victim ethnicity. Data between 2016 and the end of Aug 23 shows that –

- 86% of homicide Victims in Essex were White (population in 2021 census - 88.8%)
- 8% of homicide Victims in Essex were Black or Black British (population – 3.4%)
- 4% of homicide Victims in Essex were Asian or Asian British (population – 4.2%)

Work continues to understand more detail behind the headline figures regarding whether victims were resident in Essex at the time of the homicide.

However, volume is very low, so taking homicides recorded so far in 2023 (total 12) there have been no black victims, however 2 Asian victims – causing large percentage swings – as this would equate to a 16.7% of homicide victims being from an Asian background.

Primary Influencing Factors

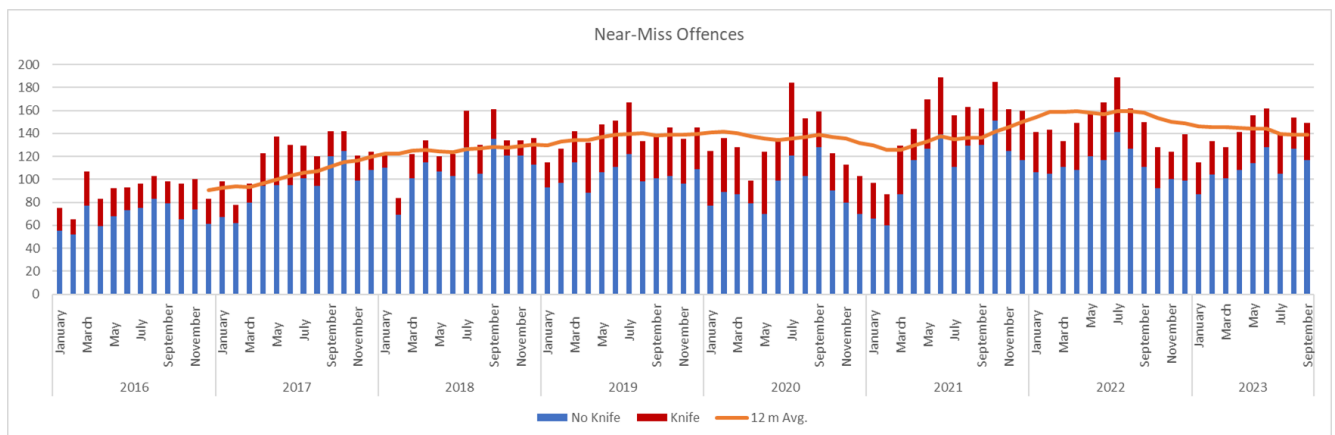
So far in 2023, Essex has seen some more unusual homicides when considering influencing factors:

- Domestic Abuse x5 (2 of which involved the death of parents)
- Acquaintance x3 (all of which were in or around a dwelling)
- Drug Driven x1
- Spontaneous Altercation x3 (all in the street, one was Night-time economy related)

The primary influencing factors remain unchanged with the largest influencing factor being Domestic Abuse, followed by Spontaneous Altercation. Mental Health is featuring less frequently, as is County Lines.

When considering ‘near-miss’ offences (consisting of GBH with intent, GBH, and attempted GBH, the below graph highlights these offences since 2016. The rolling 12-month trend increased consistently during 2021 but stabilised and has decreased towards the end of 2022 and into 2023, which continues to decrease.

There is no notable change in the proportion of knife related near-miss offences. This is a significant proportion of 24-25% of offences but does remain consistent.



5.2 Home Office Homicide Data

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

The latest data shows Essex continues to not meet any of those criteria (which is the continued position 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, which has continued into 2023.

5.3 Essex Police Homicide Prevention Approach

5.3.1 Homicide Prevention Strategy

The Essex Police Homicide Prevention Strategy 2022-26 remains in place and is used to underpin our homicide prevention approach.

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*”. Key prevention activity is completed in conjunction with the strategy.

5.3.2 Homicide Prevention Rapid Debrief Process

The Homicide Prevention Rapid Debrief process is now well established.

There has been a total of 18 debriefs with a further two being scoped.

In total 143 actions have been raised as part of the debrief process to date, of which 105 have been completed. Of the 38 outstanding, 19 are from two recent de-briefs. The working group ensures traction and completion of these actions and meets 6-weekly.

5.3.3 Homicide Prevention Activity

Domestic Abuse

A recent extensive PFCC update has recently been completed by D/Supt Cornish in a yearly deep dive entitled “Domestic Abuse”. Below is the executive summary:

The last 12 months has seen several significant change programs move from design towards implementation, all are designed to improve the Essex Police response to Domestic Abuse.

This includes:

- Project to introduce ‘DARA’ as the initial risk assessment tool to improve identification of coercion and control and better risk management.
- Creation of the DA Review Team (DART) to improve consistency in secondary assessments, and improve prevention through the better use of the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS – Clare’s Law)
- Creation of the Rapid Video Response (RVR) team in the Force Control Room to dramatically improve the initial response to DA calls and victim confidence / satisfaction.
- Training and refocus of the DA Problem Solving Teams (DAPST) targeting highest threat perpetrators to maximise ‘prevention’ opportunities, through the use of a newly designed ‘disruptions matrix’.
- Making better use of technology; through national ‘proof of concepts’ whereby Essex has piloted emerging technologies (Kulpa) to the purchase of existing technology (TecSafe) that are evidenced-based to improve victim confidence and safeguarding.

The last 12 months has seen a reduction in DA calls of around 14% and an improving solved rate in all areas of DA compared to the previous 12 months.

There have been two changes in recording process over this time though.

- Essex Police was significantly over-recording harassment cases that required changes to comply with Home Office counting rules. Analytical work suggests this change in process accounts for around 4.5%-5% of the reductions being seen.
- National 'Home Office' recording rules changed in April 2023 meaning multiple offences are now investigated under 1 crime, rather than multiple crimes which was the previous case.
- When factoring out these changes Essex is still seeing a true' reduction of around 5.5-6%.

This 'true' reduction is corroborated when checks are made around DA cases involving violence, and DA calls for service to FCR, both of which are also showing reductions over 5% compared to the last 12 months.

Whilst there are several factors that could be causing this reduction, it is felt that the preventative work being completed by DAPST is starting to have an impact.

Serious Violence

Essex Police continues to tackle the threat posed by County Lines and associated exploitation through the work delivered by the Serious Violence Unit. The Serious Violence Unit is made up of two elements that focus on County Lines and associated exploitation. The Op Raptor and Op Orochi teams investigate, pursue, disrupt, and dismantle County Lines that operate in Essex. The Prevent, Protect and Prepare Team (PPP Team) conduct work to safeguard, prevent and provide diversion opportunities for those involved in County Lines and associated exploitation. The team also delivers several measures designed to prevent crime and those that are vulnerable to exploitation.

SVU Performance (Jul-Sep 2023)		Average quarterly performance 2022
73	Searches completed	100
111	Arrests	148
79	RIC's – (69%)	62%
16	Weapons seized	31
£28K	Cash seized	£191k
79	Vulnerable people safeguarded	24

Performance data shows a reduction throughout 2023 and this is due to several reasons. In 2023, SVU renewed focus was to target Organised Crime Groups that used the County Lines business model, resulting in teams taking longer on larger scale investigations

focusing on greater threat harm and risk. Staff vacancies and support of OP Analogy has also impacted upon performance. The biggest change over the last quarter is the reduction in funding from the National County Lines Coordination Centre, or more specifically Surge funding from the Home Office. This funding has been pivotal in both the pursue and prevention elements of tackling County Lines and exploitation. To put this into perspective, in 2021 the SVU received over £400k in funding, in this financial year it has received less than £100k. This will have a significant impact upon our ability to be able to tackle County Lines through the pursue element, which leads to the prevention of exploitation, and through the prevention work delivered by the PPP team.

The team continues to focus on opportunities to develop and target those that cause the greatest harm;

OP Firefly – is the identification of County Lines nominals that exploit missing children to commit criminal offences. Through collaboration with the Missing Persons Team, the SVU analyses phone data where concerns are raised around exploitation. This approach enables the team to identify links to County Lines and to identify suspects that are exploiting them. This approach has been successful in its early development leading to the charge of a number of suspects for Modern Slavery offences.

OP Pester is a national tactic designed to prevent the activity of County Lines. Historically this tactic was used to deter suspects from supplying controlled substances. The tactic would see a text message being sent to the phone number responsible for supplying controlled substances to prevent further offending. This tactic was largely unsuccessful and meant that those supplying controlled substances would simply change numbers and continue offending. This approach did not prevent crime and did not provide support to vulnerable people at risk of exploitation.

Essex Police has developed this tactic to send messages to those that are buying controlled substances from County Lines, after police have enforced against suspects. The text message sent contains details of support agencies and treatment services, and links to their websites designed to prevent further offences being committed. Due to its development, Essex Police is leading the country in its use of this tactic.

Op Bumble has seen proactive exploitation prevention advice to companies across parts of Essex that may be susceptible to criminals using their services for exploitation, such as transport hubs, taxi companies and locations such as shopping centres. Op Bumble aims to provide awareness in spotting the signs of exploitation so that crime can be prevented.

Whole Systems Approach - The SVU has developed a new pilot with Open Road and Phoenix futures that is designed to provide a partnership response during police enforcement activity targeting County Lines. This pilot ensures that there is immediate access to treatment services for those that are vulnerable or being exploited by County Lines. This immediate support is designed to prevent further crimes being committed, and to ensure that those that are vulnerable have an opportunity to be diverted away from criminality.

Alcohol and Night-Time Economy

Chief Inspector Paul Hogben has recently taken over the lead for NTE. The first NTE Harm Reduction Group was held at the end of September. This was well attended by representatives from all Community Policing Teams, Intelligence, Serious Violence Unit, Licensing and Media.

This group will develop and include standing agenda items covering drugs in the NTE, and VAWG in the NTE. It will also scrutinise data including repeat locations, suspects and victims within the 4 primary NTE areas of Southend, Chelmsford/Maldon, Colchester and Clacton.

Throughout the summer, Community Policing Teams have executed their plans around visibility in the NTE, and continued to work with partners around welfare provisions, such as SOS buses and street pastors. Southend has been supported by Op Grip funding to provide a safe space on Friday and Saturday nights. This has consisted of a staffed mobile police station parked within the NTE area and supported by partners such as street pastors and Community Safety Officers. This has been incredibly well received by businesses and the public and will now be replicated in Colchester and Basildon.

The Community Policing Teams for the primary NTE areas have recently refreshed their 4P Plans ahead of the festive period, including a refreshed push on Op Lester, the national drink spiking response plan. The teams have additional staff on duty for key dates, such as Builders day, Christmas Eve and New Years Eve, as well as key weekends of note. This will be supported by media messaging around safety within the NTE, responsible drinking and Spiking awareness. Our Media team will also be linking in with the NHS to promote awareness of the risks of drinking while on prescribed medication.

General offending within Essex NTE appears to be on a downward trajectory. In the rolling year up to the end of September 2023, there was an 18% reduction in recorded crime within the NTE areas. When considering the harm score, offences in September 2023 had a combined harm score of 15,355, compared to 31,596 in September 2022. This means harm within the NTE was more than halved in September, compared to the September 2022.

Going forward drug testing on arrest will continue to be highlighted as a consideration for officers making arrest within the NTE, to try to force people towards support, where it is believed that drug use is a contributing factor to their offending. The Community Policing Teams will also look to utilise Criminal Behaviour Orders for people that persistently offend or commit ASB within the NTE.

Vulnerability - Mental Health

The C&PP Mental Health Team(MHT) has now been embedded. This was introduced as a result of Op Beaumont (the death of a 12-year-old boy in Debden in 2019). The team consists of one Inspector, one Sergeant, one police staff supervisor, two Police Constables and two members of police staff. The staff roles have now been recruited to, and staff will be in place from October 2023.

The role of the team is to provide the holistic overview of MH in Essex around the three areas of Response, Investigation and Prevention.

Response – Responsibilities in this area include s136 compliance and the escalation process. This has led to a 19% reduction in s136 detentions being carried out in the last 12 months signposting to more suitable pathways. There has also been a reduced average waiting time for handover spent on a s136 detention. This is done by ensuring partners are fulfilling their responsibilities which ensures officers are able to respond to other incidents. This also aligns with the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) principles.

Investigation – focuses on the criminal justice process, including the suspect experience and tackling violence within MH settings including hate crime. The work also includes partnership approach to identify those who are being released into the community to enable to police to appropriately brief local teams.

Prevention – works on the cohorts for the Mental Health Risk Management Board (MHRMB). This work manages and works to mitigate risks for those who are making threats - particularly in relation to threats of violence. The MHRMB is a strategic oversight board with partners which monitors a risk register across multiple agencies. Underneath this, aligned to the three health areas are operational boards which discuss individuals who have indicators of homicide and serious violence where MH is a factor. This activity can be recorded on accessible systems. The MHRMB has been submitted as best practice to the College of Policing.

The referral mechanism into the MHRMB is via the MHT1 form which is tracked and managed by the MHT. This, along with other key learning messages around dealing with those who may present a risk of harm to themselves or others, is encapsulated within a 17 minute training video piece on Op Beaumont. This training package is now mandatory for all operational staff and officers.

The MHT are also supporting the implementation of RCRP within Essex through an agreed delivery plan. This work set out to ensure that individuals in mental health crisis are seen by the right professional who has the right training and skills to support them. This will also mean police can respond to and investigate more reports of crime, which is what the public expects of us.

Finally, progress is being made to digitalise the s135 and s1366 form which will assist with more accurate data collection and the identification of patterns and trends.

5.4 NPCC Homicide Prevention Framework

The NPCC prevention framework continues to be developed, and now has seven areas of best practice. Essex Police continue to engage with this national framework and have recently submitted the Mental Health Risk Management Board as an example of best 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)

There are no implications or issues identified in this reporting period.

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. This is underpinned by the Homicide Prevention Strategy.

7.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

In line with the new strategy and national best practice, we will continue to develop a preventative approach to the four key areas (Domestic Abuse, Mental Health, Drug Driven Violence and Serious Violence).

In order to monitor and track the recommendations, best practice and future work that touch upon the area of homicide prevention, an action tracker has been developed which contains areas of work from the following sources:

- National recommendations from the Vulnerability, Knowledge and Practice Programme (VKPP).
- HMICFRS recommendations to the Metropolitan Police following the murders committed by Stephen Port.
- National recommendations from the HMICFRS following report into preventing homicide.
- Best practice identified in the HMICFRS report into preventing homicide.
- Recommendations from Essex Police's homicide profile.
- Other recommendations or areas of best practice.

These will be tracked and monitored via the Homicide Prevention Board.

8.0 Risks/Mitigation

There are no new risks identified.

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 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.