

**AGENDA ITEM 11**

Essex Police and Crime Panel	<b>EPCP/10/17</b>
Date: Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2017	

**Update on Domestic Abuse**

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**1.0 Purpose of Report:**

This report provides an update to the Police and Crime Panel on key developments related to priority 3 in the Police and Crime Plan: Breaking the cycle of Domestic Abuse.

**2.0 Recommendation:**

That members note the report.

**3.0 Decisions Sought:**

None

#### 4.0 **Police and Crime Plan**

*Breaking the Cycle of Domestic Abuse* is one of the key priorities within the new Police and Crime Plan. The plan commits to working with the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board to deliver an ambitious programme of transformation as follows:

- Improve our response to domestic abuse as set out in the SET DA Joint Commissioning Strategy
- Support victims and their families affected by domestic abuse to feel safe, cope and recover through help and jointly commissioned services
- Ensure children and young people affected by domestic abuse are informed about healthy relationships and work with schools in the delivery of education and prevention programmes.
- Train and develop front line professional to recognise the signs and indicators of domestic abuse and to know how and where to go to for help
- Provide more safe ways for victims to report domestic abuse and access support
- Focus on prevention through the delivery of high impact awareness raising campaigns
- Support victims of domestic abuse who have also experienced sexual abuse, ensuring they receive the specialist help and advice the need.
- Bring more perpetrators to justice by the further roll out of body worn video cameras for frontline police officers
- Tackle offending behaviour through robust behaviour change programmes to break the cycle of domestic abuse

Performance against DA outcomes and objectives are monitored through the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board performance dashboard, which is presented to the Board each quarter and shared across the partnership.

#### **The latest Essex Police performance data shows:**

- The volume of DA crime has increased at force level by 7.2% (918 more offences) since the last financial year 2015-2016.
- Southend had the highest volume of DA crime during the year 2015-2016 with 1,642 offences. Basildon had the largest number of crimes in the year 2016-2017 with 1,688 offences.
- Brentwood has had the highest numerical increase when comparing the 307 DA crimes in 2015-2016 with the 482 DA crimes in 2016-2017 (175 more offences, 57.0% increase).
- There has been a decline in medium and high risk DA offences (from 3,726 to 2603, and 6,977 to 5,875 respectively) and an increase in standard risk DA offences (3,197 more offences). This is in part as a result of a new process of secondary risk assessment (see section 10).
- Whilst the levels of DA in Essex continue to be of significant concern, nevertheless the increase in reporting is also a positive indication that more victims are confident to come forward and report.

## 5.0 **Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership**

The Essex Domestic Abuse Partnership, encompassing partners from across Essex, Southend and Thurrock including local authorities, PCC, police, health, social care, probation and housing, and supported by a reference group of voluntary and community sector organisations, published a joint strategy for addressing domestic abuse in 2015. The aim of the strategy is to enable consistent and coordinated activity, bringing partner resources together to break the cycle of domestic abuse. The strategy focuses on five shared outcomes:

- Young people enjoy healthy relationships
- Victims (adults and children) and those at risk of experiencing domestic abuse feel and are safe
- Victims (adults and children) are able to recover and move on to live independently
- Perpetrators are prevented from causing physical and emotional harm
- Communities have a greater awareness of what an abusive relationship is, how to report it, and as a consequence feel safer

The strategy is governed by the SET Domestic Abuse Strategic Board, supported by a joint commissioning group and reference group. The partnership recently adopted a broader definition of domestic abuse, in line with the Home Office definition, to incorporate so called 'Honour' Based Abuse (HBA), forced marriage, and stalking.

The Police Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable are members of the Strategic Board and actively support the Domestic Abuse programme.

## 6.0 **Work to support Victims:**

### **Essex IDVA Service**

The PCC jointly commissions the countywide Essex Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) service with the three upper-tier authorities. This service commenced in April 2015 on a three year contract. Over the last two years, this service has ensured that all high-risk victims of domestic abuse are given the opportunity to access specialist support from an IDVA. The service provider; Safer Places, have consistently delivered on the contracted outcomes despite referral volumes being 50% more than the year before the contract commenced. In the year 2016/17, 3,500 referrals were made to the service, with 85% coming from Essex Police. A quarter of referrals were from Basildon, with Colchester and Southend providing 19% and 15% respectively. The aim of the IDVA service is to provide immediate, short-term advocacy and support to an individual to reduce their risk of harm. The table below summarises the performance of the IDVA service over the last year.

## 2016-17 IDVA service performance

Measure	National KPI	Essex IDVA service performance
Cessation of abuse	50%	66%
IDVA reported reduction in risk of further harm	50%	69%
Victim reported improved feelings of safety	50%	71%
Victim reported quality of life improvements	40%	67%

Acknowledging the positive performance of the IDVA service, the Domestic Abuse Board recently approved the decision to extend the current contract by one year up to the end of March 2019.

Additional commissioned support services are also in place for DA victims within Refuges and also in the community. This is delivered through the *Community Support* contract. ECC are the lead commissioners for this contract, with the OPCC and wider partners also engaged.

In addition, there are a number of health based pilots in place, delivering services to DA victims in hospital and GP settings. These approaches are being piloted to inform future commissioning.

## 7.0 Work to tackle perpetrators

The PCC and the Domestic Abuse Board are increasing their focus on work to tackle perpetrators of domestic abuse. In taking this forward, Essex is part of a national pilot to test out new approaches to DA offending behaviour change programmes.

The districts of Colchester and Tendring have been selected as a pilot site for a three year domestic abuse perpetrator initiative along with two other areas in Sussex and South Wales. This programme seeks to engage with high risk perpetrators of abuse to address their offending behaviour; deploying both support and disruption activity over a period of ten months. The pilot programme commenced in April 2016 and following the first year the Drive programme nationally has been able to demonstrate increases in victim safety, reductions in abusive behaviour, and improved perpetrator understanding of abuse following intervention from the Drive initiative. The Essex pilot as yet does not have sufficient quantitative data available to make such claims, but where interventions have taken place, case studies provide examples of the positive impact of interventions. Drive is part funded by the PCC, Essex County Council and Social Finance. An independent evaluation of Drive is being undertaken by the University of Bristol. This will inform the development of future programmes.

In addition, in February 2017, the PCC led a bid to the Home Office for a new pilot project to improve arrangements for working with perpetrators to prevent escalation of risk to victims. Whilst decisions on the bid (to the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategic Transformation Fund) have been delayed due to the national pre-

election period, nevertheless we expect to hear back from the Home Office after the election with a funding decision.

## **8.0 Southend, Essex and Thurrock Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)**

The new MARAC processes for Southend, Essex and Thurrock were implemented in July 2016. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Teams (MARATs) are now in place in Southend and Essex, whilst in Thurrock MARAC processes are part of their Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) arrangements. To manage the volume of high risk domestic abuse referrals made to the MARACs, they are held weekly in both Southend and Thurrock, and daily in Essex. This has helped to improve the timeliness and quality of the MARAT process. The MARAT team involves practitioners from police, social care, probation, health, housing and IDVAs. The teams risk assess cases and ensure safety plans are in place for the victim, alongside action to tackle the behaviour of the perpetrator.

All three areas have recently reviewed their services and a number of common themes have been identified:

- **Timeliness of Hearing Cases**  
All areas reported improvements in timeliness of referrals being heard in MARAC; by December 2016, all cases were being heard within 14 days of referral.
- **Non Police Referrals**  
Southend and Essex reported that they had increasing numbers of other partner agency referrals being made into the MARACs. All areas identified the need to continue to increase the number of partner agencies referrals.
- **Action Planning**  
It was identified that there would be benefit in widening the pool of agencies in attendance at MARAC to include mental health and adult social care.
- **Voice of Victim**  
All MARAC action plans include nominating an agency to provide feedback to a victim post meeting. All three areas have now started to implement processes to collect MARAC victim feedback to inform on the effectiveness of the MARAC safety planning processes from the victims' perspective.
- **Business Continuity and Sustainability**  
All areas noted the need to continue to engage with partners involved in the MARATs and MASH to ensure consistent engagement and resourcing of the multi-agency teams.

An end of year (end of financial year 16/17) MARAT report is currently being prepared and will be circulated to all partners.

## **9.0 Centralised Domestic Homicide Review Process**

Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) were established on a statutory basis under Section 9 of the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims' Act (2004). The statutory requirements for initiating and undertaking a DHR sit with the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) in which the victim was normally resident.

Within Southend, Essex and Thurrock, the 13 local Community Safety Partnerships currently commission their own reviews independently from each other. This means that there is not always a consistent approach to DHRs and that lessons learned are not always shared and applied on a countywide basis. Producing a Domestic Homicide Review can be lengthy and complex. Whilst some CSPs have completed several reviews and will have developed a level of expertise around the processes, others have commissioned reviews infrequently or not at all; therefore review processes may vary from area to area.

Discussions with the Home Office have indicated that a new more flexible and proportionate approach can be adopted whilst still complying with legislation and Home Office guidelines. As a result it has been proposed to centralise the DHR process across Southend, Essex and Thurrock. The consultation period concluded at the end of March 2017 and all of the CSPs supported the proposal.

Centralised resources will be used to support all review processes, maintain a single set of procedures, engage independent chairs and monitor implementation of recommendations. Centralisation would not mean taking overall responsibility for DHRs away from individual CSPs – they would still hold the statutory responsibility as per Home Office guidance and would be fully involved in the process.

A more flexible approach to DHRs is proposed whereby a multi-agency group would work with CSPs to consider the available information and circumstances to decide the scale of review required – a full multi-agency review, a lighter touch multi-agency review or single agency review.

A central DHR budget would be created by top-slicing a small percentage (12%) of the PCC funding allocation to CSPs. This, alongside an additional contribution from the PCC (£35,000), will fund:

- Co-ordination of the DHR process
- Administration of the DHR panels
- Funding for independent chairs
- Lesson learning seminars; and,
- Monitoring and reporting on DHR recommendations and their implementation

The new process will be in place from July 2017.

## **10.0 Essex Police Juno Teams (Dedicated Domestic Abuse Investigators)**

Following an initial pilot in the South Local Policing Area (LPA) in 2014, dedicated Domestic Abuse Juno teams were introduced in all of the three LPAs in September 2014. This provides a more consistent level of service across domestic abuse investigations.

From March 2017, the remit of the Juno teams was reviewed, with the teams now responsible for the management and investigation of all high and medium risk domestic abuse crimes in their area.

The Juno Detective Sergeant is responsible for conducting secondary risk assessments on all high and medium risk domestic abuse crimes, ensuring that the appropriate risk grading and investigative resource is in place. This approach has seen a recent reduction in the number of high and medium risk cases. This is felt by police and partners to be a more proportionate and appropriate approach and brings Essex much more in line with its most similar forces.

## **11.0 Next steps:**

The PCC, working with Essex Police and the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board, will continue to tackle domestic abuse in order to ensure that victims receive the help and support they need, and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Further work is underway to refine the performance reports presented to the Domestic Abuse Strategic Board, so the PCC and wider partners have a clearer picture of current performance, including benchmarking against other areas, in order to identify areas where further improvements can be made.