

**APPENDIX A**  
**Report for People and Families Scrutiny Committee 11<sup>th</sup> April 2024**  
**Children and Families Update of Domestic Abuse and Commissioning Intentions**

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## **1. Introduction**

This paper and the accompanying slide pack outline the progress made in the Council's statutory duties since the introduction of the 2021 Domestic Abuse Act, and the commissioning intentions for post April 2025.

## **2. Background**

Since 2016 the Public Health grant of £1,644m p.a. enabled the council to deliver support to victims of domestic abuse in safe accommodation and wider community settings. It also contributes to support for perpetrators. This support is jointly commissioned with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner until 2025.

In April 2021, as a result of the Domestic Abuse Act, it became incumbent on Tier 1 Local Authorities to provide support for victims of domestic abuse (including children and young people) who are residing in safe accommodation, e.g. refuge. Following representation from Essex County Council and other councils this was extended to mean victims' own homes where additional security measures and a robust safety plan is in place.

Since 2021 the council has been in receipt of a further £2,790m per annum from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to deliver its duties. This has meant we have been able to extend our offer to victims, including for the first time to children and young people.

The Public Health Grant and DLUHC Duties monies combined means we have been able to continue to build on our offer for victims, but also importantly our early intervention and prevention offer in pursuit of preventing and reducing domestic abuse.

## **3. Redesigning a holistic approach for Domestic Abuse post 2025**

The way in which the domestic abuse offer has developed since the introduction of the new duties is that, albeit commissioned against a thorough needs assessment, it is responsive and added to enhance the existing offer rather than purposefully designed as a holistic offer. This was the same for Southend and Thurrock Councils.

In 2022 the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Strategic Partnership (SETDAB) commissioned research that reviewed the current domestic abuse support and intervention offer with a view to developing a set of recommendations that would inform future partnership delivery plans and commissioning of support.

As a result of the research recommendations a joint commissioning group was formed across SET Partners to lead the redesign of the SET wide domestic abuse victim and perpetrator response in time for recommissioning 2025. The research report highlighted:

- The Southend, Essex and Thurrock response to domestic abuse has many strengths, including the delivery of high-quality core services for victims, survivors and perpetrators.
- The system is underpinned by a strong and mature model of partnership working across three local authorities and multiple agencies which is led by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board.
- Now is the opportunity to build on these foundations and take the local response to the next level in order to build and consolidate the vision for a whole system approach that breaks the cycle of domestic abuse.

The report recommended that in consolidating and building a whole system approach commissioners should ensure that they continue to develop on:

- Preventing underrepresented groups, such as age, gender, disability, sexuality, or ethnicity, from falling through the gaps and by not coming forward or not able to access specialist support.
- An approach to long term recovery, especially for those victims and perpetrators with complex needs.
- Increasing support and programmes to focus on the behaviour change of perpetrators.
- Continuing to foster better understanding of domestic abuse, in particular coercive control and psychological abuse which are less well understood than other types of domestic abuse.

#### **4. The Pan Essex Domestic Abuse Commissioning Collaborative**

The Pan Essex Domestic Abuse Commissioning Collaborative (PEDACC) formed in 2023. Partners are the SET Local Authorities, Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Essex Police and Essex Probation.

The group has led extensive work with stakeholders, including front line practitioners and those with lived experience, to co-design a holistic offer of support that would be commissioned post 2025 and which will embed the findings from the research report i.e.. equality, diversity, inclusion and equity, understanding of abuse, perpetrator support and appropriate response and support for those with complex needs.

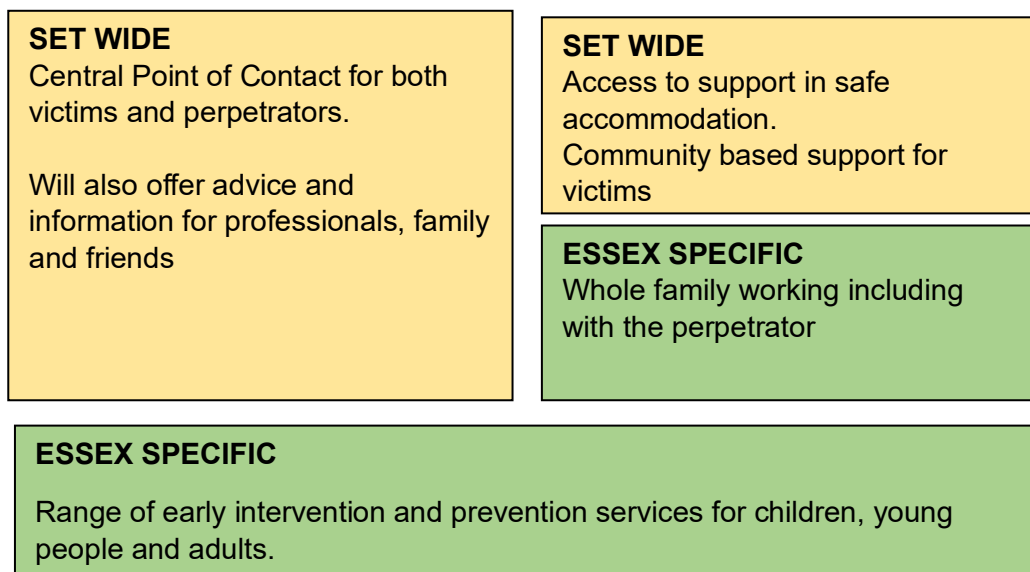
The details of the proposed model are now being considered and it consists of five key component parts that are:

- a) One central point of contact for victims and perpetrators
- b) Support for victims residing in safe accommodation
- c) Community based support for victims (including children)
- d) Early help whole family working (including the perpetrator)
- e) Community based support for perpetrators

The model is underpinned by a range of early intervention and prevention programmes and support services.

It has been agreed in principle that PEDACC will commission elements of the model together, for example the Central Point of Contact and the support in Safe accommodation. However, due to local variances (finance and delivery models), partners have agreed service standards so that victims can expect the same quality of service pan Essex

### The model from Essex Perspective



The advantages of this approach for Essex are that it

- Ensures we are meeting the requirements within the Domestic Abuse Act and complying with national guidance.
- Will achieve efficiency savings through aligned budgets and joint commissioning
- Will improve pathways to support for all those impacted by domestic abuse, including perpetrators.
- Will ensure consistent service offer and quality standards pan Essex

- Achieves improved co-ordination of services supporting transitions across greater Essex where victims are fleeing the perpetrator yet need to keep local safe connections
- Provides a whole family approach, outside of statutory services, to domestic abuse

#### Next steps

1. Each authority is obtaining their governance approvals
2. The model elements are being finalised in detail
3. The procurement approach is being considered
4. The procurement is anticipated to be launched in summer 2024
5. New offer will go live April 2025

### **Matters raised at Scrutiny Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

1. **Concerns about the central point of contact and potential and how to encourage people to use it if for victims and perpetrators.**
  - The Central Point of contact is likely to look different in terms of front facing communications and messaging to perpetrators and victims. Perpetrators do already call the current single point of access and promotion of the central point of contact for them should help in our endeavours to reduce domestic abuse. Victims have told us that having a place for their perpetrator to easily seek help, advice and support would be a good thing.
  - The multiagency working behind the central point of contact will ensure effective joining up of information for high-risk victims. This will involve a range of partners, be it physically or virtually co-located,
2. **Members queried how we will measure the effectiveness of the Central Point of Contact.**
  - The effectiveness of the Central Point of contact will be monitored through the usual contractual arrangements which will ensure effective scrutiny of the of Key Performance Indicators and outcomes for victims and perpetrators as well as service user experience.
3. **The importance of including addressing gaslighting in the service plan.**
  - Gaslighting is a form of abuse where a person causes someone to question their sanity, memories, or perception of reality. As such it would be used as an example of Psychological Abuse for which there is and will be support through the new offer.