

EPA/119/09

Meeting: Performance Committee

Date: 13 July 2009

DOMESTIC ABUSE MANAGEMENT

Report of the Chief Constable
Contact: T/Supt Ewen Wilson

1.0 Purpose of Report

This report identifies the work being completed by the force in respect of domestic abuse management.

2.0 Recommendation

That Members note the report.

**Temporary Chief Constable
Andy Bliss
Essex Police**

3.0 Background

Domestic abuse is a key strand of the Essex Police public protection portfolio since it deals with the victimisation of vulnerable people. It is also a priority local indicator for the Essex Local Area Agreement.

Domestic abuse occurs across society, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, wealth, and, geography. There are established links between domestic abuse and child abuse.

The scale of the problem that confronts the police and partner agencies is significant:

- Domestic abuse accounts for as much as 15% of violent crime nationally¹;
- Two women, on average, are killed nationally by a current or former partner each week of the year²;
- 89% of victims who suffer more than four incidents of domestic abuse are women³;
- One domestic abuse incident is reported to police nationally every minute or every day⁴.

Studies have shown that only a minority of incidents of domestic abuse are reported to the police (between 23%-35%⁵).

This paper will look to identify current performance issues within Essex in relation to domestic abuse, and specifically identify:

- What best practice is emerging or established that may assist our management of domestic abuse.
- What opportunities currently present themselves regarding multi-agency effort at a strategic level within the county.

4.0 Performance Management of Domestic Abuse

Essex Police identified reducing repeat incidents of domestic abuse as one of the key priorities for the force for the year 2008/9.

¹ British Crime Survey 2005/6.

² "Lessons Learned from the Domestic Violence Enforcement Campaigns" Home Office 2006.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Walby and Allen 2004; Home Office 2002.

In terms of what constitutes an incident of domestic abuse, Essex Police adheres to the nationally accepted definition.

The ACPO and Home Office preferred definition of domestic abuse is:

'Any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members (defined as mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents) whether directly related, in-laws or step-family, regardless of gender and sexuality'.

Essex Police will apply the above definition and record two or more incidents, in a rolling twelve month period as constituting a repeat incident. This is consistent with the annual data return required by the Home Office. This means that a repeat incident will be recorded in a given month providing:

- An incident has been recorded in that month, and,
- There has been at least one other incident in the previous rolling 12 month period.

This definition applies to our process of data reporting against our performance indicator. It must be emphasised that Essex Police and our partners will respond to the breadth of abuse of vulnerable people and this includes all such occurrences in a domestic environment not just those defined within the definition of our data return.

Other forces do not record repeat domestic abuse in the same way. For example Kent Police record the number of repeat victims of domestic abuse. This means that more than one incident in a month attributed to the same victim will be recorded as one repeat victim. Were Essex Police to follow this methodology there would undoubtedly be a sharp reduction in the number of recorded "repeats". To this end it is difficult to conduct comparative force performance since many UK forces record this issue differently. Until recently there has been no central preferred indicator which explains this disparity.

The levels of reported incidents April 2008- March 2009 are detailed below. The force objective was to reduce repeat incidents of domestic abuse, with a target level following reduction of 6292 repeat incidents for the year 08/09. To achieve this required that a monthly level of **524** repeat incidents be maintained across the twelve months. As can be seen the force exceeded this number every month.

	Apr 08	May 08	Jun 08	Jul 08	Aug 08	Sep 08	Oct 08	Nov 08	Dec 08	Jan 09	Feb 09	Mar 09
Number of Incidents	1661	2056	2041	2316	2299	1955	1966	2080	2202	2109	1902	2071
Number of Repeat incs.	642	766	867	983	932	840	863	941	977	941	836	908
% Repeat	40	37	42	42	40	33	43	45	44	44	43	43

The key fact of note is the considerable increase in overall recorded domestic abuse incidents during the year. This naturally led to an increase in recorded repeat incidents. The percentage of repeat incidents within the overall count remained relatively stable with just a slight increase. This suggests that the determining factor in terms of performance was the overall increase in recorded domestic abuse incidents.

There are seasonal variations in recorded domestic abuse with peaks in July/August and December/January. These two periods coincide with acknowledged family holidays.

Local Area Agreement delivery

Arrangements for the delivery of Local Area Agreement 2 (LAA2) by the Essex Partnership, identifies Local Indicator 7.1: Reducing repeat incidents of domestic abuse as a key priority within the indicator set for the SAFER Essex thematic partnership within the Essex County Council area. The measurement of repeat incidents for the purposes of this local indicator is identical to that of Essex Police.

The benefit of this for is consistency across agencies in terms of strategic priority and focus of local strategic partnerships on this key issue. It is fair to say that considerable concern and focus has been given by the County LAA2 Performance Management Sub Group (chaired by ACC Lowton) to the performance deficit around repeat incidents of domestic abuse.

5.0 Factors Affecting Force Performance for 2008/9

The under reporting of incidents of domestic abuse by victims has been widely reported. Any attempt to improve services to victims may lead to greater confidence of the victim to come forward, make a report, and request support. This is more than likely to lead to an increase in reported incidents. Further, improved standards of victims services will lead to an increase in the confidence of victims in these services. Naturally, victims will feel confident in reporting each repeat incident as a result.

Anecdotal research within the County supports this assertion. From dip sampling the force’s command and control system (STORM) it is apparent that many incidents reported to Essex Police do not necessarily constitute a crime. With improved confidence victims will report matters or request assistance giving scenarios that whilst constitute a domestic abuse incident may not constitute a crime.

This is supported by performance data produced monthly by the Public Protection Unit from which the following is drawn:

	APR 08	MAY 08	JUNE 08	JULY 08	AUG 08	SEPT 08	OCT 08	NOV 08	DEC 08	JAN 09	FEB 09	MAR 09
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Incident to crime rate %	33%	32%	31%	33%	32%	29%	28%	30%	28%	29%	27%	28%
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It is interesting to note that at a time when recorded incidents have been increasing the level of incidents constituting a crime is actually decreasing. Further, the highest conversion rate of the 12 month period in question was only 33% (April and July 08) suggesting at least 2/3 of all incidents do not constitute a criminal offence.

In terms of the effectiveness of the police response to criminal offences performance is improving. Year on year since 2004 the detection rate for domestic abuse related crime has seen improvements:

PERFORMANCE	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Detection rate (% of crimes)	39%	51%	58%	62%	64%

6.0 Positive Developments within Essex

There have been a number of extremely positive advance in the strategic and tactical management of domestic abuse in Essex that are worthy of mention. When considering available ACPO/Home Office guidance⁶ Essex is very well positioned. The following highlight key areas of our work to address domestic abuse in Essex:

- **Essex Police Domestic Abuse Delivery Group** - At the instruction of ACC Lowton an internal domestic abuse delivery group has been formed. The group, chaired by ACC Lowton is scrutinising the performance of Essex Police in relation to domestic abuse. The group has senior representation from all divisions and key centrally based departments. The group is very much focused upon performance improvement around domestic abuse. The remit of the group is available at appendix A. As can be seen consistent levels of service delivery across division's and a robust governance arrangement are key priorities for the group.
- **MARAC Services** - In December 2008 Essex Police led the ambitious programme to roll out MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferencing) services across the county. The MARAC process is considered nationally as best practice and seeks to draw together a number of key agencies within a formal forum to coordinate action and resources towards addressing the highest risk victims of domestic abuse in their given geographic locale. We have now achieved a consistent standard of service across Essex. Additionally, we have sourced a single county MARAC coordinator who is ensuring administrative support is applied consistently to each MARAC. We have worked hard to ensure colleagues from the various health agencies are represented on the groups. They bring a valuable perspective and service provision to these issues. Initial difficulties is gaining this representation are being addressed.

⁶ "Lessons Learned from the Domestic Violence Enforcement Campaigns" Home Office 2006.

- **County review of victim services** - At the request of the SAFER Essex Thematic Group a review of domestic abuse services was commissioned in 2008. This was completed by an independent consultant and considered. The terms of reference were as follows:
 - In order to deliver against the Essex Against Domestic Violence Strategic Plan 2008-11 this work will produce a review of current services across all agencies involved with victims, children and perpetrators of domestic abuse.
 - Recommendations will be made to close gaps in service provision across the county. This will seek to match service provision with identified needs, prioritising resourcing and identifying sustainable funding to support these priorities and how they can be taken forward over the next 3 years.
 - The review presented some 38 initial recommendations. Considerable progress has been made to address these recommendations. The priority recommendations relating to the strategic management of domestic abuse in Essex have been completed and the remaining form a programme of work for our County Strategic Domestic Abuse Group.
- **Multi Agency County Strategic Domestic Abuse Group** -Perhaps one of the greatest recent successes has been the development of a county strategic group. Building upon the successes of groups such as Essex Against Domestic Violence, the SAFER Essex thematic partnership commissioned the formation of a county strategic group. The SAFER Essex Partnership invited ACC Peter Lowton (Essex Police) to chair and lead the group.

The two principal benefits that the group brings are:

- Establishing strategic influence concerning domestic abuse, through not only senior representation of key organisations, but also managerial reporting lines through SAFER Essex into the Essex Management Board.
- Access to resources not previously available.

Within its programme of work the group has been tasked to deliver the Local area agreement commitments to domestic abuse.

The county group has drawn its programme of work around certain agreed key strands as follows:

- Resources.
- Training.
- Childrens issues.
- Criminal Justice.
- Information Sharing (including MARAC).
- **Independent domestic abuse advocates (IDVAs)**- The County Strategic Domestic Abuse Group has embarked upon a programme to roll out the Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA) service across the county. The service seeks to provide independent chaperones to vulnerable victims as they seek to end the abuse suffered to date. The group secured a substantial performance reward grant allocation in support of this programme. Essex

Victim Support Service are currently working closely with the county group to provide managerial oversight to the IDVAs.

- **County Domestic Abuse Coordinator** - As part of the work to address the recommendations from the review of victim services the County Strategic Domestic Abuse Group have coordinated the recruitment of a new County domestic abuse coordinator. This person will build upon the excellent work by Paula Ward the previous incumbent (hosted by Essex Probation Service). The County Strategic Group has coordinated the realignment of this role to ECC and the mainstreaming of the funding arrangements for the post. This role will coordinate from a strategic level the multitude of victim services across many organisations within Essex. The post holder albeit hosted by ECC will report to the County Strategic Group.
- **Training** - Training for frontline staff has been identified as a key area of work both nationally⁷, and, within the local review conducted last year. Within Essex Police there has been a great deal of investment in training for a range of frontline staff, from probationary constables, through to our specialist domestic abuse investigators and victim care officers to our staff at our force information room control centre. The programme of training is now moving to multi-agency training coordinated by the county strategic group.

7.0 Essex Police and LAA Performance Targets

As already stated in this paper considering the acknowledged level of under reporting attributed to domestic abuse there is a likelihood that the concerted effort within Essex will see a rise in reported incidents (and with this in reported repeat incidents).

To hold both Essex Police and Local Area Agreement delivery to account for reducing repeat incidents when the coordinated activities across the county will increase reported incidents is fundamentally flawed. Colleagues will be aware that the police service nationally has been keen to avoid imposing performance targets aimed at reducing other crimes affecting vulnerable people, such as race crime. Winning the confidence of victims and encouraging reporting have been identified as critical factors in our success.

The current performance indicator is not within the recommended set found in the APACS⁸ indicator set. The single, preferred indicator surrounds the performance of a county MARAC service (see Appendix C). The APACS indicator recommends focus be applied to reducing repeat incidents of domestic abuse referred to MARAC. The definition applied defines a domestic abuse incident referred to MARAC as one involving criminal behaviour.

Certainly there appears to be scope within the LAA arrangements to change over to the APACS preferred indicator 14.1, not least because as a locally set indicator it is within the governance of the local area to determine the most appropriate

⁷ “Lessons Learned from the Domestic Violence Enforcement Campaigns” Home Office 2006.

⁸ Home Office Guidance on Performance Indicators for Policing and Community Safety 2009.

indicator. Initial, preliminary discussions with colleagues from Essex County Council have shown a favourable approach to this proposal.

Benefits:

- Selecting such an indicator (which would be challenging considering that our MARAC services are very new) would allow the county to measure performance against a nationally recognised indicator.
- It would also be an indicator focussing on the effective coordination of multi-agency effort within a nationally recognised “best practice” framework for addressing domestic abuse (MARAC).
- Such a decision would remove the conflict between aiming for a reduction in reported incidents at a time when nationally all expectation is that an increase in reporting should be a successful outcome of improved services.

8.0 Proposal

That Essex Police (including on behalf of SAFER Essex) continue to explore the proposal to explore changing the current Essex Police and LAA performance target to the preferred national APACS indicator 14.1. In doing so, that the Essex Local Area Agreement remains aligned to any Essex Police performance indicator regarding domestic abuse.

9.0 Conclusion

On first sight performance against the Essex Police and Essex Local Area Agreement indicator relating to domestic abuse (as framed in the object to reduce repeat incidents of domestic abuse) is poor. The reality, however is that a significant amount of success has occurred in providing positive help, support to victims. Whilst this has led to increased confidence among victims in the services available to them we are far from complacent and we still have a way to go.

Successes have come as a result of the dedication and effort of a wealth of organisations such as Essex Police, Essex County Council, Essex Probation, and, a wide range of our statutory and non statutory partners including from the voluntary sector.

The HMIC in the review of progress following the ‘Protecting Vulnerable People’ thematic inspection in 2008 demonstrated that the Essex Police and its partners had made significant improvements. This led to an improvement in grading awarded to the force in this area.

Perhaps the most encouraging is the current the wealth of coordinated multi-agency effort being driven across the county at this time. There is substantial

strategic agreement that domestic abuse is a key priority and an appetite across organisations to coordinate their efforts to tackle domestic abuse.

Appendix A

Essex Police Domestic Abuse Delivery Group

Domestic Abuse Delivery Group. (DADG)

Terms of Reference

1. To improve force performance in respect of achieving:
 - a. Increase in satisfaction and confidence of victims.
 - b. Reduction in overall level of repeat DA offences.
 - c. Reduction in overall level of repeat DA incidents.
2. To retain an oversight of domestic abuse strategy within the force ensuring that it remains appropriate and fit for purpose.
3. To ensure robust on-going governance of performance is maintained both at force and divisional level.
4. To ensure Domestic Abuse Hate Crime Units (DAHCU) across the force operate consistently and contribute appropriately to force objectives and commitments (LAA 2).
5. To seek to improve partnership working and co-ordination with regard to DA performance.
6. To identify, disseminate and promote learning from best practice.

Membership

Chair	-	ACC TP
Secretariat	-	Head of Territorial Policing.
Members	-	Director of Investigations (Crime Division). Head of Public Protection (Crime Division). Crime Managers (With line management for DAHCUs).

Meetings - The group will meet monthly

Essex Domestic Abuse Strategy Group (EDASG)

Terms of Reference

Purpose

To act as the implementation body of the Safer Essex partnership in terms of Domestic Abuse Strategic issues, and ensure there is a coordinated approach across the county, including Southend and Thurrock.

- ❖ On behalf of Safer Essex, to manage the delivery of the LAA2 Domestic Abuse action plans, as part of the agreed Essex Domestic Abuse Strategy ('Essex Against Domestic Violence Strategy 2008 – 2011).
- ❖ To be tasked by Safer Essex, and the LAA2 Target Lead for Domestic Abuse, to undertake identified pieces of work on their behalf. For this to include:
 - Overseeing the implementation of the 'Review of the Strategic Co-ordination to tackle domestic abuse in Essex' (July 2008)
- ❖ To recommend to Safer Essex key courses of action for the further development of key aspects of work (including LAA and the 'Review / July 2008')
 - This could include proposals for cross county working and resourcing implications.
- ❖ To perform an advisory role to Safer Essex, and the LAA2 Target Lead for Domestic Abuse, in particular on issues with cross county significance, for example in respect of the Local Area Agreement and the County Community Safety Agreement.
- ❖ To provide effective means of two-way communication between local and countywide structures relating to crime and disorder reduction. For this to include:
 - Exchanging good practice across localities and services.
 - EDASG members ensuring that their respective Chief Officers, where appropriate, are briefed prior to Safer Essex meetings.
- ❖ To ensure that the needs of children and young people caught up in families where there is domestic violence are fully recognized and that there is effective communication between EDASG and the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership and the Safeguarding Children's Boards and its subgroups, especially in respect of;
 - The critical links between Domestic Abuse and Child Protection

- The impact of Domestic Abuse on children and young people and its consequences for delivering against the key areas set out in Every Child Matters and the indicators identified for Children and Young People in the LAA
- ❖ To promote a robust and consistent approach to performance management, in support of the delivery of Essex's LAA2 Domestic Abuse target. For this to include:
 - A robust overview of domestic violence related performance in the context of LAA2 and the 'Essex Domestic Violence Strategy 2008 – 2011'.
 - Identifying good and poor performance (and for example identifying where poor performance is being managed well).
 - Where there are significant performance issues to escalate these to Safer Essex with recommended courses of action.
- ❖ To identify and oversee specific programmes of work, and for these to be taken forward through sub-groups/ task and finish groups as required

Meetings: For EDASG to meet every 6-8 weeks initially and for this to be reviewed after 6 months (July 2009). For these meetings to be scheduled prior to Safer Essex meetings (to ensure timely exchange of information and appropriate decision making)

Chair: ACC Peter Lowton

Secretariat: For this to be provided by the Essex County Council Crime and Disorder Reduction Unit

Membership: As set out in schedule below

For the TOR to be reviewed annually.

Essex Domestic Abuse Strategy Group - Core membership

Senior representation from:

- Safer Essex – Target Lead to Chair EDASG.
- Essex Police – 2 representatives.
 - Territorial Division: Territorial Policing Dept.
 - Crime Division: Victims & Witnesses Unit.
- Voluntary sector – 2 representatives:
 - Women's Refuges (7) – 1 nominated representative.
 - Victim Support (Essex) – 1 representative.
- Essex County Council – 1 representative from the following 3 services:
 - Crime and Disorder Reduction Unit.
 - Children's Services (also representing Safeguarding Children's Board).
 - Adults Services (also representing Adult Safeguarding Board).

- National Probation Service (Essex) – 1 representative.
- Supporting People – 1 representative.
- Health - suggestion 1 nominated representative from the following 3 areas:
 - PCTs (5).
 - Mental Health Trusts: (South & North).
 - Hospital Trusts (mid-Essex, Basildon & Thurrock, Colchester, Princess Alexandra, Southend) - Invite 1 to represent the 5.
- Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships/CDRPs (12) – 4 nominated representatives.
- District / Borough Council Housing (Essex Housing Officers Group / EHOG) – 1 nominated representative.
- Essex Criminal Justice Board – 1 nominated representative.
- County DV Co-ordinator (ECC area).
- Invite representation from Southend & Thurrock (2).

(Total members: 22)

To co-opt other members as appropriate (e.g. Relate / Perpetrator Programme), and ensure effective links to key services and partnerships (e.g. EDAAT) are in place through sub-groups and/or EDASG as appropriate.

Appendix C

APACS indicator 14.1: Repeat incidents of domestic violence reviewed at MARAC

Defined as: $x/y \cdot 100$

Where:

x = Number of repeat cases reviewed at MARAC during the 12 month reporting period (cases which had also been reviewed at the MARAC in the 12 months prior to their review)

y = Total number of cases reviewed at MARAC during the 12 month reporting period

- Domestic violence (abuse) is defined by ACPO as: 'any incidence of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.
- MARAC: Victims of domestic violence referred to a MARAC will be those who have been identified (often by the police) as high or very high risk (i.e. of serious injury or of being killed) based on a common risk assessment tool that is informed by both victim and assessor information. It is recommended that MARACs are held at fortnightly intervals, where information relevant to the immediate safety of the victim is shared. All cases that are reviewed at a MARAC should be flagged by the police. For the purposes of this indicator, a case should be defined as a combination of a victim and perpetrator (or groups of perpetrators), being reviewed at the same MARAC.
- Once a case has been taken to MARAC it remains flagged as a MARAC case for a total of 12 months after the most recent MARAC review. For example, if a case is seen at a MARAC once only, in January, it will be flagged for 12 months after this date. If this case is then reviewed at the same MARAC in the April of the same year, then the case will be flagged for 12 months from April.
- A repeat case occurs when a case that is reviewed at MARAC has also been reviewed at the same MARAC within the preceding 12 months (from the review). Each repeat case will also be counted each time an incident involving criminal behaviour takes place, and the case is therefore reviewed within the given 12 month period (i.e. if a case first comes to MARAC in January and then is reviewed in February and July then this will count as two repeats).
- All MARAC reviews are a consequence of at least one incident being reported to at

least one MARAC agency and that the incident involves:

- Violence or threats of violence; and/or
- Where there is a pattern of stalking or harassment (the repeated following of communication with or other intrusions on the privacy of a victim) and or
- Where rape or sexual abuse is disclosed.

N.B. The repeat incident can be flagged by any of the agencies involved in the MARAC.

- Multiple incidents occurring between MARAC meetings only result in one MARAC review. It is possible for a case to go to MARAC where there is more than one perpetrator. This is counted as one case and will be reviewed if there are any incidents with any of the named perpetrators.

The following do not constitute a repeat case:

- Where a case is reviewed at the MARAC involving the same victim but a different perpetrator or group of perpetrators.
- Where a case is reviewed at the MARAC involving the same perpetrator but a different victim.
- Where an incident not involving criminal behaviour occurs and is therefore not reviewed at MARAC.
- Where the same combination of victim and perpetrator is involved, but being reviewed at a different MARAC. This is clearly a repeat incident in human terms, however will not be recorded as such for the purposes of this indicator.
- Cases which are discussed at a MARAC meeting but for information purposes only (e.g. imminent release of perpetrator from prison; perpetrator begins IDAP).
- Cases which were previously reviewed at the MARAC more than 12 months ago.