

Essex Serious Violence (SV) Strategy – JANUARY 2024

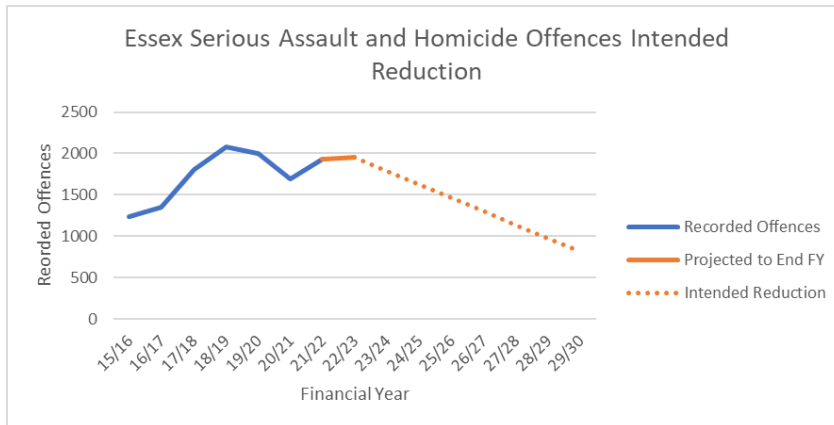
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1. Introduction

This Strategy sets out the direction and activity for the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Partnership (VVP) from 2024 to 2025.

This Strategy is part of the VVP long term’s plan. This Strategy will be reviewed regularly. This will enable the VVP to respond to any emerging trends or patterns relating to serious violence and confirm that the response remains effective and on track to deliver the VVP’s long term goal.

VVP long term goal - to reduce emergency hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object by over half and reduce non-domestic homicides by over a third by 2030.



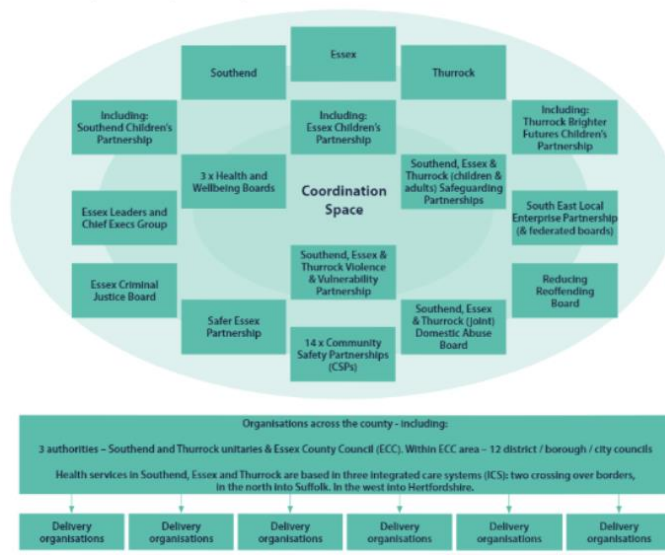
The Violence and Vulnerability Partnership (VVP) influence, co-ordinate and deliver activity which addresses issues which lead to a reduction in serious violence. Within this, the focus of the Partnership is to tackle serious violence:

- ✓ Public space youth violence including homicide.
- ✓ Violence against the person which includes knife crime and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing.

It is important to set serious violence and this Strategy into the wider picture for Essex.

There are a range of community and partnership responses across the community safety landscape responding to crime and the wider determinants of crime, across Essex. The VVP model is about embedding practice and working within the overall Essex framework; continuing to build on and link to a range of mainstream services and multi-agency arrangements.

Chart A – partnership landscape of Essex



2. What is meant by Serious Violence?

Serious violence includes a range of offences, including domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against women and girls, and some offences linked with drugs and / or alcohol. There are strategic partnerships which work across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) to provide a co-ordinated approach to address particular issues within serious violence.

The Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership is one of these partnerships. The VVP influences, co-ordinates and delivers activity which addresses issues which lead to a reduction in serious violence, namely to:

✓ Reduce hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25
✓ Reduce knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25
✓ Reduce all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives

Offence Types (VV)	Offences, where, either:	And where:
Homicide	A knife, bladed article, firearm, or other weapon was recorded as being used. OR Linked to county lines or gang activity.	Offences occurred outside the home.
Domestic Manslaughter		
Violence with injury		
Robbery		
Rape and other sexual offences		
ALL - Non-domestic		

The table below shows serious violence offences (including the focus of the VVP) as a percentage of overall crime, for Essex, for 2023.

Crime - Essex	Volume (2023)	% of Crime (2023)
All crime	157,000	100%
All violence	64,115	41%
All serious violence*	3,200	2%
Serious violence (VV)**	1,100	0.6%

The figures above are rounded to the nearest 100

* As per Home Office serious violence categories; these are - knife enabled; damage and arson, drug offences, misc. crimes against society, possession of weapons offences, public order offences, robbery, sexual offences, theft, and violence against the person

Essex is a safe county. The picture of crime in Essex is favourable compared to the national context based on the most recent 12 months official data (year to July 2023). In the year to June 2023 Essex was on the national average for the proportion of serious offences involving a knife (6%). Notably, Essex was below the national average for the proportion of homicides involving a knife (38% vs 41%) and attempted murder involving knives (40% vs 50%).

3. Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership - overall approach

The Essex VVP model is based on successful models from elsewhere in the country, including the Glasgow and Cardiff models. The insight and learning from these successes have been further developed to respond to the specific challenges of Essex. As part of this, Essex developed the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership Framework in June 2018. Since 2018 the Partnership has brought over £7m central Government funds into Essex to address serious violent crime reduction. In 2019 Essex was identified as part of the Government's Serious Violence Strategy as one of 18 Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) areas.

The VVP is committed to a long-term programme. Through a partnership public health approach, Scotland over ten years, up to 2020 reduced homicides by 35%, and from 2008 to 2018 reduced emergency hospital admissions for assault by 55%. The ambition of VVP, at the very least, is to match this, reducing emergency hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object by over half and non-domestic homicides by over a third by 2031.

“continuing to build a public health approach to addressing serious violence, investing in activity proven to work and focussing on keeping young people free from crime and intervening early to help steer them to a successful life course”.

VVP - Strategic priorities:

No 1 - The partnership will promote multi-agency working and drive system change

- ✓ VVP has a role as a system leader to influence and inform mainstream delivery and to test and deliver enhanced and specialist approaches to serious violence reduction.

No 2 - The partnership will commission evidence-based interventions

- ✓ VVP aims to continually refine its approach, based on learning, impact and evidence to develop further the approaches and interventions which are working well for Essex.

No 3 - The partnership will engage and communicate with a range of voices, including communities most affected by serious violence; service users; and young people

- ✓ VVP seeks to continually reaffirm the strong engagement across the spectrum of the partnership to deliver a focused programme of work, based on a robust evidence base, informed by the communities it serves.

No 4 - The partnership will support a learning environment

- ✓ VVP has a role in contributing to a learning culture, including where approaches are working (and not working) to understand why and provide for approaches to addressing serious violence.

How is Essex VVP meeting the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty (SVD)? Essex (covering the local authority areas of Southend, Essex and Thurrock / SET) is meeting and delivering the requirement within the Duty of a Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) through a SET wide SNA (produced in January 2023).

All partners have a role to play in reducing and preventing serious violence, especially since the commencement of the Serious Violence Duty - this statutory responsibility is an opportunity for all partnerships to review their approach. Specified organisations named within the Duty have a range of duties, including to share data, intelligence and knowledge to generate evidence-based analysis of local problems and solutions and to commit to creating environments that nurture the protective factors that are evidenced as helping to prevent violence.

4. How is Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership preventing and reducing serious violence?

Essex is well placed, through the work of the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership over the last four years and before this through the ground-breaking work to develop the countywide Violence and Vulnerability Framework, led by the Safer Essex partnership. Through making the case for investment into the county, since 2018 the VVP has brought over £7m central Government funds into Essex to address serious violent crime reduction. The positive approach and impact of the work in Essex has been acknowledged by key stakeholders, including the Home Office. The national independent evaluation of the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programme, (2020/21) noted that the Essex Violence and Vulnerability Roundtable (chief officers and lead Members from organisations across the county), in their role as system leaders, demonstrate strategic leadership in developing and maintaining relationships between partners in order to jointly address serious violence. The ratings from the independent assessment of the VVP in 2023 includes the VVP rated as 'mature' for collaboration and 'mature – best practice' in community consensus and counter-narrative.

The size of the challenge must not be underestimated and there is much still to do, but the VVP has clearly shown the ability to affect levels of violence in communities and has the structures, partnerships and capability to see this long-term project through. There is more to do - especially in terms of earlier identification and prevention work and preventing escalation for those involved in risky behaviours and on the edge of criminality. This requires long term problem solving across statutory and voluntary organisations in collaboration with communities. This also needs to include unlocking community potential to deliver solutions designed and delivered by those same communities. The VVP works:

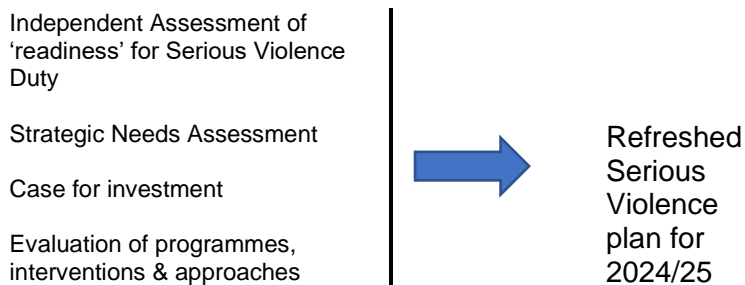
- ✓ **Through improving understanding, raising awareness and developing the workforce:**
 - To raise awareness of serious violence, the methods used to groom children, young people, young adults and the vulnerable into gangs, amongst communities and those working with communities
 - To make even better use of data to inform our understanding of the problem of serious violence across the county
 - To support professionals to have the skills and knowledge to respond effectively to individual needs
 - To take the Partnership's learning and influence delivery, policy and strategy across the whole system
- ✓ **Through the voice of communities - supporting communities to initiate change:**
 - To work in partnership with communities, voluntary sector, education providers and others to unlock community potential and build resilience in communities, including through our grants programmes
- ✓ **Through targeting interventions - delivering programmes which prevent and reduce serious violence:**
 - To keep young people free from crime and intervene early to help steer them to a successful life course
 - To reach out to individuals and communities – reducing serious violence with multiple groups and locations across Essex - protecting the vulnerable
 - To target gang members to help them step away from a criminal lifestyle

The VVP is reviewing and refreshing the delivery plan for 2024/25 – working with the leads for each of the workstream areas, shown below, within the VVP.

Working with and supporting mainstream service delivery, including universal and early preventative work



The VVP is refreshing its delivery plan for 2024/25, based on the strategic priorities of the VVP, and informed by:



Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment: Gathering this intelligence on violence into one place ensures a multi-agency lens approach which allows the VVP to better understand the levels of violence across Essex. This insight feeds into the 2024/25 plan, allowing strategic and operational activity to be targeted towards the key drivers of serious violence within the county, as part of a preventative approach to reducing serious violence.

The insight within the SNA endorses the current approach of the VVP – that the Partnership is on the right course, delivering interventions which are having an impact and making a difference to communities.

External assessment of Essex’s readiness for the Serious Violence Duty: This assessment, undertaken through work commissioned by the Home Office, provides insights on key underpinning areas for VVP (for example partnership collaboration and data and information sharing). The assessment provides a useful measure of how Essex is responding to the Serious Violence Duty including areas for further development.

This assessment also endorses the current approach of the VVP – the Partnership has strong foundations, stemming from the work in 2018 on a partnership Violence and Vulnerability Framework, through to developing a case for investment in 2002, to bring together partners to address serious violence in communities.

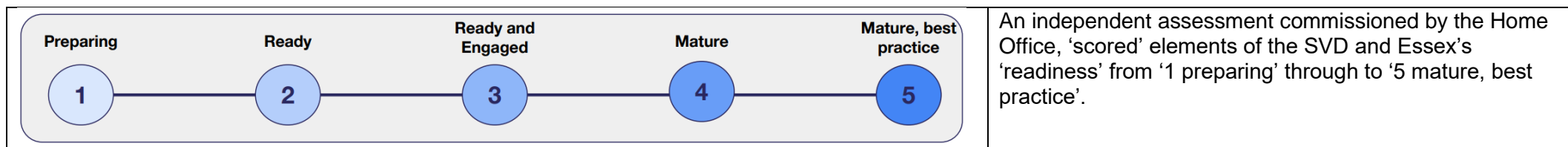
The review and refresh of the 2024/25 plan includes expectations around delivery to be agreed between partners, so all are clear on actions, deliverables, and accountability.

The priorities for the 2024/25 plan are outlined in Sections 5 & 6 (pages 7 – 9).

5: Key Themes & Priorities from Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment

Theme	Prevention Stage	Priorities 2024/25	Impact
<p>Age isn't just a number.</p> <p>We can see from the data that age is a key indicator to our work and this SNA can further develop our work to target children and young people.</p> <p>Serious violence a steep incline at the age of 12 and peaks at 15, it begins to reduce and then we see a sharp rise again at 17.</p>	<p>Primary prevention 'inoculate' the wider community against the risk of becoming either a victim or perpetrator of serious violence</p>	No 1: As part of a public health, whole systems approach, to support the provision of social skills and awareness raising into primary age children, with a focus on years 5 and 6 and in priority localities.	<p>Better knowledge/ awareness of crime/ violence</p> <p>Fewer young people engaged in risky behaviour</p> <p>Improve feelings of safety</p>
		No 2: To use communication channels to educate and inform groups within communities on risks, support and guidance relating to issues around serious violence.	
		No 3: To further enhance the early help offer, in partnership with schools, social care and a range of organisations – to identify and respond at earlier points in a child and family's risk journey	
<p>The impact of being 'well'</p> <p>Wellbeing, including mental health has an impact on the propensity of an area to increase the risk of serious violence and hospital admission.</p> <p>There is, for example, a link that can be drawn by the higher than average rates of pharmaceutical intervention in mental health in an area and violence.</p>	<p>Secondary prevention Intervention with those with existing risk factors to amplify protective factors and mitigate risk</p>	No 4. Working with children and young people and their families who are either at risk of/ or who are being exploited with involvement in county lines, gangs with regular missing episodes and family breakdown.	<p>Support young people and young adults in a trauma informed way</p> <p>Reduced (re)victimisation</p> <p>Life outcomes for young people and young adults improved / underlying risk factors supported (improved engagement / attainment in education; improved training / employment; improved mental and physical health)</p>
		No 5: To engage with young people within their own environments where they may be putting themselves at risk – to ensure they are aware of the opportunities available to them, including through voluntary and community sector groups.	
		No 6: To use targeted campaigns, informed by lived experience and user journeys to communicate difficult messages to harder to reach groups with a view to changing behaviours	
		No 7: To target the underlying risk factors in priority localities, supporting young people, young adults and families, through targeted initiatives and approaches.	
<p>A culture of normalised violence</p> <p>Violence within households - Domestic abuse is not included within the figures for the perpetrators of serious violence outside the home within this SNA. However, it is important to highlight that 43% of violent offenders have some connection to domestic violence. This is not solely as perpetrator but also as victim or interested party.</p>	<p>Tertiary intervention 'Treatment' of perpetrators and victims of violence to reduce further harm</p>	No 8: To share V&V insights with commissioners and services to ensure that more people are supported through support programmes within Essex, to reduce harm and improve outcomes.	<p>Support young people and young adults in a trauma informed way</p> <p>Reduced (re)offending / victimisation</p> <p>Life outcomes for young people and young adults – protective factors (improved engagement / attainment in education; improved training / employment; improved mental and physical health)</p>
		No 9: To share V&V insights with commissioners and services to ensure that more people are supported into and enrolled into appropriate programmes within Essex, to reduce harm and improve outcomes.	
<p>Underpins all of our work</p>		No 10: To ensure that there is support for young people and young adults (held 'pre-court'), protection and enforcement at this early stage.	<p>ALL of ABOVE</p>
		No 11: To develop further our workforce development and training, with lived experience continually informing and driving our approaches.	

6: Key Themes & Priorities from assessment of Essex readiness for Serious Violence Duty (SVD)



Assessment of Essex VVP (2023)	Priorities 2024/25	By March 2025 to be assessed as	
Co-production (built on principles of shared ownership, accountability and reciprocity)			
<p>Ready & Engaged (level 3) There is a high level of involvement among partners in the local approach to serious violence, including relevant authorities and the voluntary and community sector. This has translated into the partnership realising a number of opportunities to co-produce</p>	<p>No. 12: To identify gaps in representation and ensure that they are consulted as the partnership progresses.</p> <p>No. 13: To understand where there are opportunities for more consistent and inclusive engagement and co-production, especially improving understanding of the barriers for some to engagement and how to reduce these barriers.</p>	Mature (level 4)	
Evidence base (understand local issues through the preparation of a local Strategic Needs Assessment)			
<p>Ready & Engaged (level 3) The partnership has a Strategic Needs Assessment co-produced by the specified authorities, which demonstrates careful consideration given to the use of data.</p>	<p>No. 14: To agree and share further datasets, to be used to inform the strategic needs assessment.</p>		
Collaboration (whole-systems approach brings partners together - shared goal of tackling and preventing violence)			
<p>Mature (level 4) There is a strong partnership focus on violence and vulnerability that predates VRU funding and the current partnership is well-represented and linked in with wider activity across the county</p> <p>There is clear strategic and operational collaboration around serious violence, involving a wide range of stakeholders, not just the specified authorities.</p>	<p>No. 15: To continue to build a learning culture, from our own experience in Essex and more broadly – including where our approaches are working to build on this, providing insight and inspiration for future plans.</p> <p>No. 16: To continue to engage with non-VRU areas, to share Essex's experience regionally and nationally, supporting non-VRU areas to understand how to mature their approach to serious violence.</p>	Mature – best practice (level 5)	
Change & Impact (understand and demonstrate impact and change)			
<p>Mature (level 4) There is a robust and comprehensive framework for monitoring change and impact across the local area.</p>	<p>No. 17: To continue to outline to evaluators that any new evaluation should include cost-benefit analysis as part of the list of expected indicators.</p>		

Assessment of Essex VVP (2023)	Priorities 2024/25	By March 2025 to be assessed as
Co-operation in data and information sharing (data and information sharing is a key enabler for all multi-agency approaches)		
<p>Mature (level 4) Data is shared for the purposes of supporting the partnership approach to serious violence at a strategic and operational level. Data is used to identify individuals at risk and high risk of serious violence. A number of analytical products have been developed alongside the strategic needs assessment. Qualitative data has been used, from listening projects and lived experience work with children and young people.</p>	<p>No. 18: To outline the data sharing expectations within the Duty and use this to refresh expected contributions around data and information.</p> <p>No. 14: To broaden the range of data used (and level of granularity) to be used to inform the strategic needs assessment annual reviews, agreeing contributions from the specified authorities.</p>	<p>Mature – best practice (level 5)</p>
Community consensus (interventions designed by and for the local community)		
<p>Mature – best practice (level 5) The voice of the community is valued in the partnership and is a strategic priority.</p> <p>The partnership is accessible and transparent with its own website and communications strategy.</p> <p>There are opportunities for the voluntary and community sector to influence and engage in decision-making.</p>	<p>No. 20: To continue to build upon the voice of young people and the community and further develop a counter narrative which resonates with communities.</p> <p>No. 21: To engage with other areas regionally and nationally, to share best practice on delivery and activity involving the community, supporting other areas to translate this practice locally.</p>	<p>To maintain Mature – best practice (level 5)</p>
Counter narrative (committed to a public health approach to serious violence)		
<p>Mature – best practice (level 5) The public health approach is central to the VVU. There is a diverse range of activity across the partnership, with workstreams focused not just on interventions, but on engagement, communications and workforce development</p> <p>The community is actively involved in the design and delivery of the approach to serious violence.</p>	<p>No. 11: To continue to ensure practitioners have access to training, including the 'Every Contact Counts' and 'Spot the signs' training programmes.</p>	<p>To maintain Mature – best practice (level 5)</p>

7. Examples of work by Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership

Places - To engage with young people within their own environments where they may be putting themselves at risk

Through our detached youth work, we fund local organisations to work in our identified top 5% of areas, neighbourhoods which have been identified as including a higher level of 'risk factors' than the average across the county. In these neighbourhoods, part of our approach is supporting local community youth workers, to be at the places young people frequent and may be putting themselves at risk.

We created a short film of this intervention - detached youth workers work with, and support, young people in their local communities.

They go to where the young people hang out and congregate and engage with them in their space.

This short film outlines why their role is so important and how they build relationships with the young people they meet.

Take a look here - [The work of detached youth workers \(youtube.com\)](#)

VV Community Grants – working with our communities & local community not for profit groups

We have created a short film of our community grants projects. We respond to the issues young people tell us matter to them in their communities.

Through our grants programme, over the last five years, we have recognised the importance of building broad capacity within our communities particularly within our voluntary and community sectors. Through targeted funding we have been able to foster a strong and robust network of organisations that provide a wide range of interventions in local communities, responding to the issues of local young people. These projects are across the county from youth clubs, boxing sessions to after school sport activities for at risk children.

These deliver an ongoing level of capacity that reduces the risk of young people falling into a life of crime.

Take a look at some of the projects funded through our community grants – [VVU Community Grant Fund in action \(youtube.com\)](#)

Knife Harm Campaign – Essex is a safe county but ‘ONE KNIFE CRIME IS ONE TOO MANY’

We undertook research through Essex schools understanding the routes young people and parents will engage with for issues relating to knife harm. From this, using the voices of Essex young people, we created a campaign to help parents and carers to speak about knife harm with their young people, in response to what young people have told us. They said their most trusted sources are parents / carers.

We designed the campaign with young people, based on the latest evidence including from the Youth Endowment Fund. Working with young people on our ReRoute programme we designed a campaign that centred around four videos based on real life experience of young people who had been involved in knife harm. It used the language and authentic voice of the young people of Essex and featured Essex young people in the final films.

The four films produced have been watched more than 43k times by our target audience (parents) and the campaign viewed 536k times. This resulted in a post campaign increase of the percentage of parents who had spoken to their children about knife harm; an increase in the percentage of parent who say they feel more equipped to speak to their young people about knife harm, and **over** ¾ of parents saying they would be more likely to talk to their children about knife harm and visit our website after seeing the films.

We also developed resources which parents, carers and professionals can use.

Take a look at the films and resources – [Knife Harm Resources - Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit \(essexvvu.co.uk\)](https://www.essexvvu.co.uk)

Find out more about our work



Visit our website [**www.essexvvu.co.uk**](https://www.essexvvu.co.uk)

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