

Essex Serious Violence Strategic Needs Assessment



Contents

1 Key Themes & Recommendations	1
2 Introduction & Aims	4
3 A Wider Perspective on Serious Violence	7
4 Serious Violence – Protective and Risk Factors	11
5. What is Serious Violence (SV)?	14
6. Serious Violence Duty	16
7. The Evidence Base	19
8. Context – Essex	22
9. Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership	25
10. What has happened to Serious Violence in Essex since 2014	28
11. Perspectives on Violence – People	32
Lived Experience	36
12. Perspectives on Violence – Place	37
Places	40
13. Risk & Protective Factors – Essex	41
14. Community Voices	49
VV Community Grants	52
Knife Harm Campaign	53
Annex 1 – Area Profiles – Our Approach	54
Trends	57
Annex 2 – Evaluation Framework	58
Annex 3 – References	60
Annex 4 – Biases / Considerations	62

1. Key Themes & Recommendations

We have identified a number of **key themes** through our Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA). These themes are broad trends that are supported by both the data that we have and our extensive community connections, which identifies key factors that impact upon violence in Essex*.

These themes are:

Age isn't just a number – we can see from the data that age is a key indicator to our work and this strategic needs assessment (SNA) is informing our approach to continually target our work in ever more effective ways.

Serious violence begins 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. This is followed by a reduction until the age of 21 where it reaches a plateau at around 23 years old which continues through to later age.

The impact of being 'well' – identifying macro trends in 'wellness' allows us to understand violence.

Wellness has an impact on the propensity of an area to increase the risk of serious violence, and through this for example increased hospital admissions.

A culture of normalised violence – by identifying those most at risk of causing violence we can tie this to factors in localities and areas where external factors may be contributing or amplifying internal controls. In areas of high antisocial behaviour/arson and also deprivation there are links to higher rates of serious violence.

Violent Households – Domestic abuse is not included within the figures for perpetrators of serious violence outside the home within this SNA analysis. However, it is important to highlight that 43% of violent offenders (within the analysis of this SNA) have some connection to domestic violence. This is not solely as a perpetrator but also as a victim or interested party and further strengthens the concerns around a culture of 'normalised' violence. It aids in understanding where and when as a partnership we can introduce targeted intervention but also more broad partnership actions. This drives the work we do with partners and supports system wide change.

*Please note that where Essex is used in this document, it refers to the local authority areas of Southend, Essex and Thurrock

1. Key Themes & Recommendations

Theme	Prevention Stage	Recommendations	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 inclines steeply 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</p> <p>'Inoculate' the wider community against the risk of becoming either a victim or perpetrator of serious violence</p>	<p>1. As part of our 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> <p>2. To use communication channels to educate and inform groups within our communities on risks, support and guidance relating to issues around serious violence.</p> <p>3. To further enhance our 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>	<p>Better knowledge / awareness of crime/ violence</p> <p>Fewer young people engaged in risky behaviour</p> <p>Improve feelings of safety</p>
<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</p> <p>Intervention with those with existing risk factors to amplify protective factors and mitigate risk</p>	<p>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> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>7. To target the underlying risk factors in priority localities, supporting young people, young adults and families, through targeted initiatives and approaches.</p> <p>8. To share V&V insights with commissioners and services to ensure that more people are assisted through support programmes within Essex, to reduce harm and improve outcomes.</p>	<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>
<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</p> <p>'Treatment' of perpetrators and victims of violence to reduce further harm</p>	<p>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> <p>10. To ensure that there is support for young people and young adults (held 'pre-court'), protection and enforcement at this early stage.</p>	<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>
<p>Underpins all of our work</p>		<p>11. To develop further our workforce development and training, with lived experience continually informing and driving our approaches.</p>	<p>ALL of ABOVE</p>

2. Introduction & Aims

The Violence and Vulnerability Partnership (VVP) influence, co-ordinate and deliver 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

Further information about the VVP is available under [section 9](#).

The key goals of the Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership (VVP) for the coming year are to:

- Continually refine our approach, based on our learning and evidence and from elsewhere, to develop further the interventions which are working well for Essex, always keeping the focus on our goal to reduce serious violence, in our communities with a focus on those under 25 year olds (based on the evidence).
- Continually improve our understanding of the levers we need to pull as a partnership to make a difference – through directly funded programmes and through working across the Essex partner landscape.

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%. Our ambition is, at the very least, 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.

This Strategic Needs Assessment is an important tool in this, refreshing our understanding of the extent and range of serious violence across Essex.

In addition, so we achieve sustained change in the level of violence in our communities, the VVP as part of its long-term programme, aims to:

- Continue to embed changes we have made and continue to make over the five years
- Develop further specialist violence reduction programmes as appropriate based on what we know ‘works’

The VVP Board commissioned this SNA, on behalf of partner organisations and Community Safety Partnerships with a commitment to use its findings and insights to inform a refresh of the Essex-wide Violence and Vulnerability Work Programme. This refresh of the work programme is also informed by the external readiness assessment of Essex for the Serious Violence Duty (2023), commissioned by the Home Office; the VVP’s case for investment (2022) along with the learning and evaluation of its programmes.

Reference 1

Readiness Assessment

Strategic Needs Assessment
& Recommendations

Case for investment

Evaluation of programmes,
interventions & approaches



Refreshed Serious Violence
work programme for 2024/25

The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Strategic Needs Assessment (SNA) aims to capture the picture of serious violence across Essex. This SNA intends to provide an outline to our communities and partners about our knowledge and understanding of violence across Essex and the risk and protective factors for why violence occurs. A public health approach to violence prevention and reduction underpins this assessment and the work of the Essex VVP.

“We continue to build our 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”.

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 Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VUU), which supports the work of the VVP, has grown to now include a team of subject leads and experts from police, probation, community and voluntary sector, youth justice and local authorities working together to address the underlying causes of violence, creating a solid evidence base for intervention and evaluations for what works.

The Essex VUU is now one of twenty VRUs across the country ([reference 3](#)). The VVP recognises that strategic needs assessments are essential as they allow the opportunity to share information, identify our needs and resources for our communities and understand local trends. This allows us to target interventions appropriately, whether that is through a universal or targeted approach or components of both, to prevent violence and strengthen our communities. We achieve this by using national, regional, and local intelligence, incorporating data, as well as the voices of our communities.

It also allows us to drive the strengths that we have across our partnership and achieve a sustainable change in the prevalence of violence. Having a clear view of our risks and opportunities and the ability to share them with partners helps build organisational trust and efficiencies.

This approach enables us, as a Partnership, to continue achieving the highest possible impact in the reduction of serious violence. In doing so, our strategic priorities and direction of planning can be refreshed. This enables collaborative solutions to identify and deliver action.

In summary

Gathering this intelligence on violence into one place ensures a multi-agency lens approach which allows us to better understand the levels of violence across Essex. This insight feeds into our strategic vision, 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.

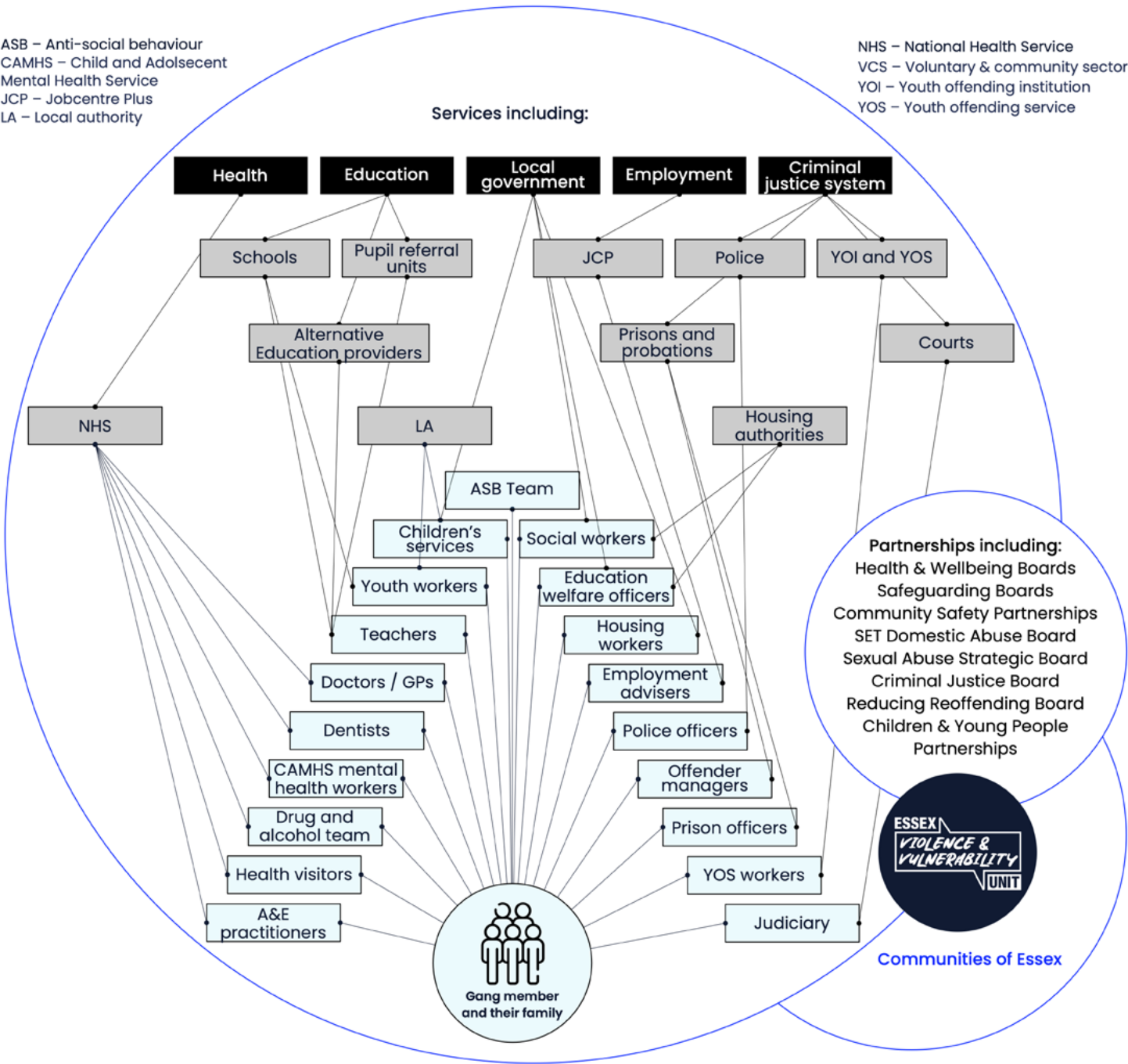
This insight endorses our current approach – that we are on the right course, delivering interventions which are having an impact and making a difference to our communities. We are now reviewing and refreshing our 2024/25 delivery plan.

3. A Wider Perspective on Serious Violence

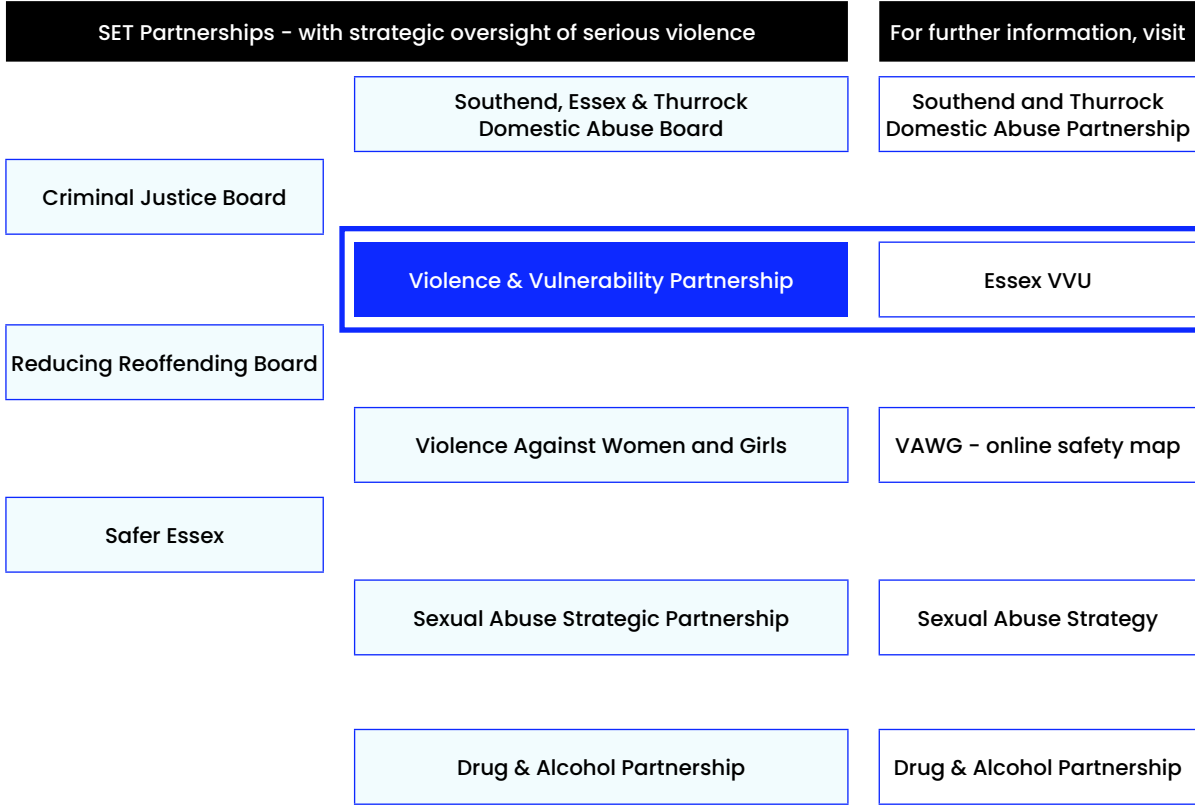
It is important that we set serious violence and this strategic needs assessment into the wider picture for Essex.

There are a range of community and partnership responses across the community safety landscape responding to crime, including serious violence, across Essex.

Our model is about embedding practice and working within the overall Essex framework. We continue to build on and link to a range of mainstream services and multi-agency arrangements.



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. The partnerships below work across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET) to provide a co-ordinated approach to address particular issues within serious violence including innovating and driving change.



The Violence and Vulnerability Partnership is one of these partnerships, with a focus on:

- ✓ 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.

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 partnerships shown on page 10 work collaboratively to ensure their approaches are complementary. They recognise that while Essex is a safe county and that during 2023 crime continued to fall, serious violence and the harm it causes devastates communities and a partnership with our communities needs to be at the heart of our response.

The table below shows serious violence (across the remits of the areas of domestic abuse, sexual offences, violence against women and girls and VV serious violence) as percentages of overall crime.

Crime – Essex	% of Crime (2023)
Domestic Abuse	16%
Sexual Offences	3.4%
Violence Against Women and Girls	23.4%
Serious violence (VV)	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

** As per Violence and Vulnerability categories, please refer to section ‘what is serious violence?’

The table below highlights the number of suspects and victims of serious violence (VV categories for 2023). It is important to note that within these numbers there are individuals who experience and are suspects for serious violence more than once.

Serious violence (VV)**	(2023)	'Repeats'
Suspects	715	20% of suspects had previously been suspects for a serious violence offence in the previous five years (and 12.5% had been suspects for a serious violence within 2023).
Victims	1,013	6.5% of victims had previously been a victim of serious violence within 2023

While the numbers above in the context of the overall population of Essex (of £1.8 million) are relatively small, as noted earlier in this section the impact of these offences are devastating and far reaching across communities.

Within [section 5](#) of this document, the extent of serious violence measured through a 'high harm index' (which adds greater weight to more 'harmful' types of crime) is explored.

4. Serious Violence

– Protective and Risk Factors

Overview

The impact from violence contributes to life-long ill-health and ultimately early death (World Health Organisation / WHO, 2022). The association between early exposure to violence and major causes of adulthood mortality has been long recognised. More recent evidence documents the biology of violence, demonstrating that traumatic stress experienced in response to violence may impair brain development, immune status, metabolic systems, and inflammatory responses. Early experiences of violence may present lasting damage at the basic level of nervous, endocrine and immune systems, and can even influence genetic alterations of DNA.¹

In addition to death, physical injury and disability, violence can lead to stress that impairs the development of the nervous system and immune system; thereby leading to ill-health in later years. People who are exposed to violence are at increased risk of a wide range of immediate and lifelong behavioural, physical, and mental health problems, including being a victim and/or perpetrator of further violence. Violence can also undermine the social and economic development of whole communities and societies.² Violence is not an inherent part of the human condition. It can be predicted, and it can be prevented. It is also complex. Risk and protective factors all interact.

Risk factors for violence are not static. Their predictive value changes depending on when they occur in a young person's development, in what social context, and under what circumstances. Risk factors may be found in the individual, the environment, or the individual's ability to respond to the demands or requirements of the environment.³

The view that protective factors is theoretically distinct from risk, defines protective factors as characteristics or conditions that interact with risk factors to reduce their influence on violent behaviour.⁴ We understand from the work completed in the VVU that a young person may be exposed to some risk factors however increasing and offering opportunities to protective factors such as diversionary activities and family support can shield them from the impact of some risk factors thus reducing the risk of them perpetrating serious violence.

1 Hoeffler and Fearon 2014
2 WHO, 2022
3 Office of the Surgeon General: 2001
4 Garrmezy, 1985; Rutter, 1985; Stattin & Magnusson, 1996

In recent years, data-driven and evidence-based approaches have produced knowledge and strategies that can prevent violence. These include interventions at individual, close relationships, community, and societal levels.⁵ Across Essex, communities and partners have come together and continue to do so to find collaborative solutions, to reduce violence and to create healthier and more inclusive communities enhancing social inclusion and individual’s levels of social capital. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) explain social capital as: “The extent and nature of our connections with others and the collective attitudes and behaviours between people that support a well-functioning, close-knit society.”

There are many types of violence. Whilst one strategy, one organisation or one community may focus on one ‘type’ of violence, there are many inter-dependencies and substantial overlap with similar root causes. It is widely recognised that preventing violence is broader than focusing on the violence alone. It is about ensuring that there is good emotional wellbeing, resilient communities, engagement, and cohesion, as well as good employment, good education and supportive and nurturing environments to flourish.

Essex VVP values the importance of enriching our communities and ensuring that the voice of communities informs and underpins our work. The strong links with the voluntary sector, youth work and localities enable us to understand, identify gaps and enhance communities through meaningful intervention which is place based, thus increasing levels of community cohesion which is recognised as a protective factor against offending behaviour. Interventions to prevent violence, especially those in early childhood, prevent people developing a propensity for violence. They also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes.⁶

There have been many studies that have provided evidence to determine what are the risk and protective factors for violence. Understanding these factors means we can develop and adopt public health-based approaches to tackling violence. Such approaches focus on stopping violence occurring in the first place by reducing known risk factors and promoting the known protective factors throughout the life course. It should be noted that these factors indicate correlation rather than causation.

5 WHO, 2022

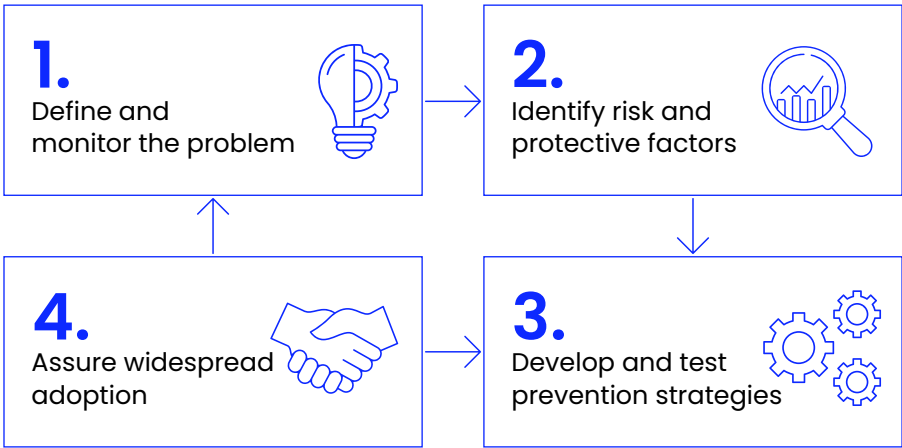
6 Home Office: Serious Violence Duty Preventing and Reducing Serious Violence Statutory Guidance for Responsible Authorities (2022)

The VVP recognise that understanding these factors supports the development of a public health-based approach and this underpins our work to address serious violence. The VVP is part of the national Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) programme.

Reference 2 – VRU public health approach to violence prevention

- Focused on a refined population, often with a health risk in common
- With and for communities
- Not constrained by organisational or professional boundaries
- Focused on generating long term as well as short term solutions
- Based on data and intelligence to identify the burden on the population including inequalities
- Rooted in evidence of effectiveness to tackle the problem

The World Health Organisation identifies four steps to defining and addressing violence using the Public Health Approach:⁷



In summary:

“Violence is preventable, not inevitable. Interventions, especially those in early childhood, not only prevent individuals developing a propensity for violence but also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes. Tackling violence and its root causes can improve the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities and have wider positive implications for the economy and society.”⁸

7 Quoted in Home Office: Serious Violence Duty Preventing and Reducing Serious Violence Statutory Guidance for Responsible Authorities (2022)

8 A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention. A resource for local system leaders in England + Public Health England working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office

5. What is Serious Violence (SV)?

For the purposes of the statistical analysis as part of this SV strategic needs assessment and based on the remit of the V&V Partnership, and for the reasons noted in this section, serious violence in this SNA is based on:

Offence Types of:	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 and other sexual offences		
ALL – Non-domestic		

These offences account for approximately 0.6% of total crime (reported to the Police) in Essex (in the year ending June 2023). However, while relatively small in number, the impact and consequences of these offences on individuals, families and communities are considerable.

Most crime analysis focusses on counts and volume of crimes, however, not all crimes are equivalent to one another. Weighting crime counts according to harm offers an alternative measurement. The Cambridge High Harm Index is a recognised ‘harm index’ measure. This approach adds a larger weight to more harmful crimes (e.g. homicide, rape and grievous bodily harm with intent), distinguishing them from less ‘harmful’ types of crime (e.g. minor thefts, criminal damage and common assault). Practically, adoption of a harm index can allow targeting of the highest-harm places, the most harmful offenders and the most harmed victims,

The average Cambridge High Harm Index (CHHI) score for Essex offences (across all crimes) in 2023 was 73. The average for Essex serious violence offences (as defined within this SNA) was 950. This means that whilst serious violence accounts for approximately 0.6% of the crime within Essex, it is on average 13 times more harmful than crime in general.

The table overleaf indicates the impact of serious violence, as measured by the Cambridge High Harm Index (CHHI).

X13		
Offences	Number of SV offences (actual – Essex 2023)	1,100
	Impact of CHHI Offences weighted – number would equate to	14,300
Suspects	Unique suspects (2023) (715 suspects in 2023, 12.4% were repeat suspects within the year for SV, therefore the figure of 626 is used here)	626
	Impact of CHHI Suspects weighted – number would equate to	8,138
Victims	Number of victims (1013 victims in 2023, 6.5% are repeat victims within the year of SV, therefore the figure of 947 is used here)	947
	Impact of CHHI Victims weighted – number would equate to	12,311

The focus of the VVP and these offences also are in line with the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty – a focus on:

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

For the purpose of the VVP and this SNA, the following exclusions have been made regarding the definition of violence, (and as noted in [section 3](#) – there are other partnerships with a remit for these areas):

- Domestic and familial abuse have been excluded on the basis there is already a co-ordinated statutory response for this type of violence and abuse.
- Where violence against women and girls (VAWG) is covered is by the definition used for this SNA (and shown in the table at the top of this page), it is included within the analysis, however there is already a partnership approach to VAWG (and a needs assessment has been produced).
- Other violence pertaining to sexual offences has been excluded on the basis that this type of violent offence requires a different response and presents a different offender typology. There is also a partnership across Essex considering these issues.

In summary:

Our focus is on serious violence in public spaces. This includes offences with weapons, and areas of criminality where serious violence or its threat is inherent, such as in county lines drug dealing. While this equate to a relatively small percentage of total (reported) crime, the impact for individuals, families and communities is considerable.

6. Serious Violence Duty

The Serious Violence Duty enshrines the principles of multi-agency working in law and ensures that every local area in England and Wales work together to prevent, tackle and reduce serious violence.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 ('the PCSC Act') does not define serious violence for the purposes of the Duty 2022. This is for local areas, based on their local need, to determine. The Serious Violence Duty 2022 states that 'specified authorities' will need to work together to identify the kinds of serious violence that occur in their areas as far as possible. The Duty goes on to state: in determining what amounts to serious violence in their local area, the specified authorities must take into account the following factors listed in Section 13 (6) of the PCSC Act:

- a) the maximum penalty which could be imposed for any offence involved in the violence
- b) the impact of the violence on any victim
- c) the prevalence of the violence in the area
- d) the impact of the violence on the community in the area.

Specified authorities includes Chief Officers of police, fire and rescue authorities, Integrated Care Boards, Local Authorities, Youth Offending Teams and Probation Services. It should be noted that terrorism is not included, and violence is not limited to physical violence against the person.

In considering serious violence, the Duty 2022 outlines that there should be a focus on:

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

The Duty 2022 allows local flexibility when defining serious violence to include (but not limited to):

- ✓ Alcohol related violence
- ✓ Criminal exploitation
- ✓ Modern slavery
- ✓ Violence against women and girls, including domestic abuse
- ✓ Sexual offences
- ✓ Male and LGBTQ+ victims.

The Serious Violence Duty Statutory Guidance document provides a level of autonomy to local areas in the definition of serious violence to both identify key issues within localities and allow the agility to identify emerging trends and patterns within violent offending as a whole.

In line with the Home Office Serious Violence Strategy published in 2018, and the remit of Essex VVP, this Strategic Needs Assessment focuses on serious youth violence, violence against the person and knife crime outside the home.

The analysis considers the extent of violence, including volumes and rates and compares areas within and outside Essex over time. But true to the core principles of a public health approach to reducing violence, it also considers the risk factors associated with violence at both a population-centred and place-based level.

Essex readiness assessment (external)

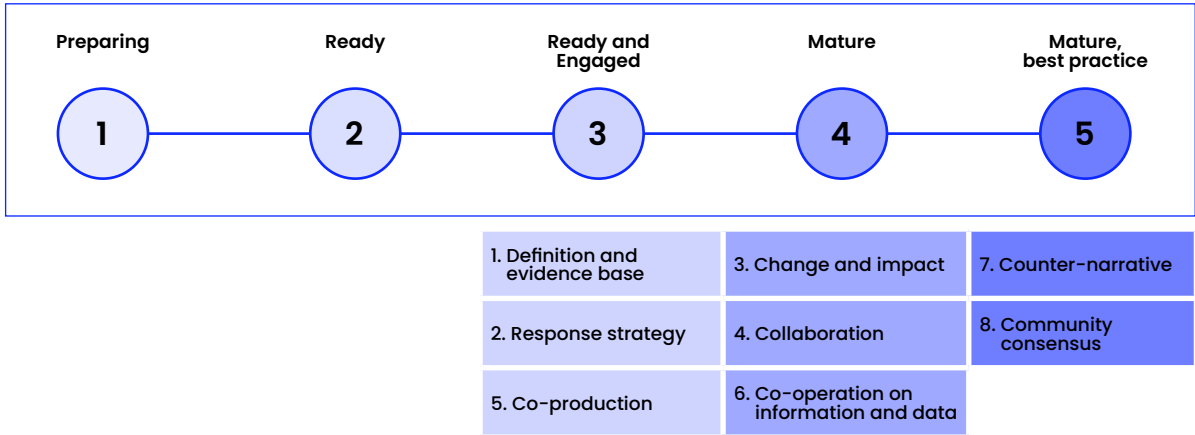
The Home Office commissioned work (which took place in the first half of 2023) looking at progress against the requirements of the Serious Violence Duty.

This assessment to understand the readiness was undertaken at each of the level of the 43 areas across England and Wales (VRU and non-VRU areas).

The assessment is across 8 areas (elements within the Serious Violence Duty), as noted below:

- i. Definition and evidence base
- ii. Response (strategy)
- iii. Change and impact
- iv. Collaboration
- v. Co-production
- vi. Co-operation on information and data
- vii. Counter-narrative
- viii. Community consensus

For each of these 8 areas a ‘score’ has been given to an area, based on the five ratings below (from ‘preparing’ through to ‘mature, best practice’). For Essex the ‘assessment scores’ are shown below:



The VVP has reviewed the information provided from this assessment and is looking to identify additional areas we would want to recommend further actions on. While there are no outstanding requirements at this time against the SVD for the Partnership, (as based on this assessment the VVP is meeting all of the requirements), the VVP is committed on ongoing improvement, and therefore to move each of these assessments to the next level (where they are not already assessed as ‘5 – mature, best practice’).

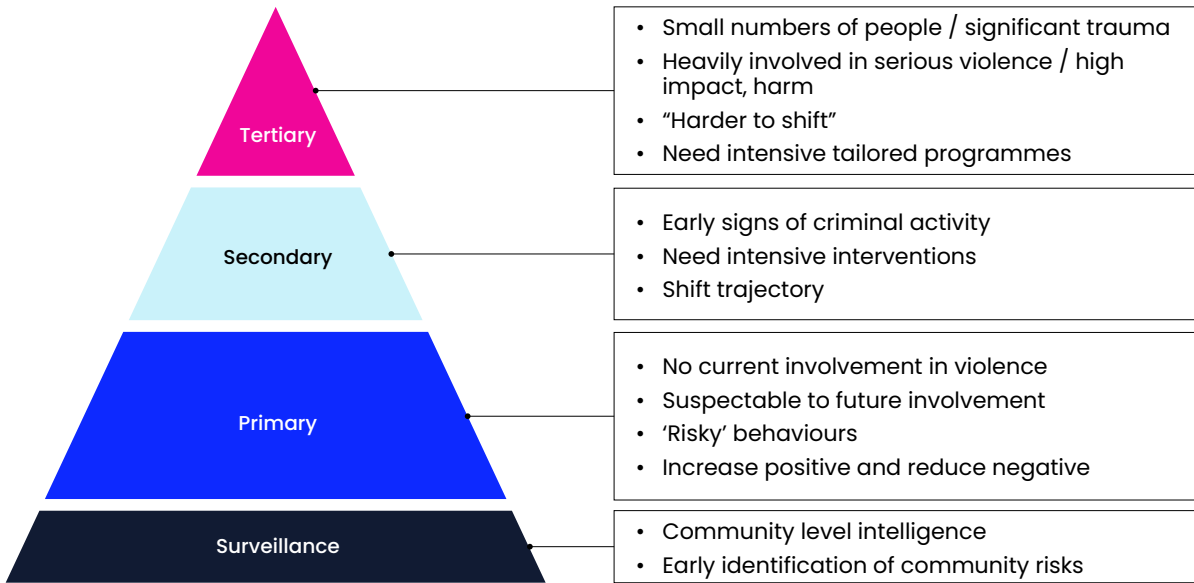
In summary:
As a Partnership, Essex has made strides in addressing serious violence.

The increased focus on drug crime has resulted in the number of offences dealt with rising by 111% since 2016; but it is bringing results as deaths from drug-related violence have fallen by 60%. We need to continue to drive down drug driven violence by tackling organised criminals while protecting our young and vulnerable people from being exploited. As a partnership, we will continue to strive to work with partners and local communities to continue tackling serious violence through more innovative interventions, co-designed with our communities, grounded in evidence and focussed on understanding and combatting the underlying factors linked to serious violence.

7. The Evidence Base

This section summarises the evidence of “what works” in violence prevention. Responding to and preventing violence – public health generally organises violence reduction efforts into three main strands of prevention: primary prevention, secondary prevention, tertiary prevention along with surveillance – understanding the needs and identifying these as early as possible.

Reference 3



What the evidence tells us – Primary Prevention

Primary prevention seeks to reduce the overall likelihood of ever becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence, by reducing risk factors for violence in the general population and creating conditions that make violence less likely to occur.

Early childhood:

- ✓ Promoting environments that support healthy development in early childhood is identified as having one of the strongest evidence bases in preventing future violence at a universal level.

Parenting skill and family relationship programmes:

- ✓ Multiple systematic reviews of various parent skill and family relationship approaches have demonstrated beneficial impacts on perpetration of violence as well as risk and protective factors.

Strengthening young person's social skills:

- ✓ Strengthening young people's social skills is an important component of any comprehensive approach to preventing violence. The likelihood of violence increases when skills in the areas of communication, problem-solving, conflict resolution and management, empathy, impulse control, and emotional regulation and management are under-developed or ineffective.

Creating protective community environments:

- ✓ Creating protective community environments in which young people develop is an important step towards achieving population-level reductions in youth violence. Violence is associated with a number of community-level risks, such as residential instability, and access or perceived access to drugs. Reducing exposure to such community-level risks can potentially lead to population-level impacts on violence.
- ✓ Street outreach and community norm change approaches. Utilising community and voluntary sectors to enable outreach with residents to promote norms of non-violence, connect youth and vulnerable families to community support in order to reduce risk and promote resilience factors build buffers against violence.

What the evidence tells us – Secondary Prevention

Activity is implemented after risk factors for violence have been identified, therefore screening and early detection of risk factors is important.

Many who engage in violence as teenagers and young adults have histories of adverse childhood experiences, aggression, and exposure to violence as a child. Known risk factors include substance misuse, problems in school, association with 'delinquent' peers, and disrupted home environments. Many have experienced traumatic events and show signs of behavioural and mental health problems. Several approaches have a strong evidence base in preventing the continuation and escalation of violence, and address some of these risk factors.

Therapeutic approaches:

- ✓ Therapeutic approaches have a strong evidence base in reducing violence amongst individuals who have been involved in aggressive or violent behaviour or are at risk of such behaviours. Programmes involving cognitive behavioural therapies are most effective.

Mentoring:

- ✓ Mentoring programmes are usually targeted at youths engaged in, or thought to be at risk of, criminal behaviour, issues with school engagement, violence or other antisocial behaviour. There is mixed evidence regarding the effectiveness of mentoring, however some mentoring programmes have been shown to have effects on secondary risk factors for youth violence.

What the evidence tells us – Tertiary Prevention

Tertiary prevention focusses on intervening with those already engaged in violence.

Focussed deterrence:

- ✓ Identification and selection of the most appropriate offenders is a prerequisite to applying strategies, such as focussed deterrence, which are designed to prevent and deter crime by targeting identified individuals. Evaluations of focussed deterrence have evidenced substantial reductions in crime and violence where applied. A reward and sanction basis operates in which services are provided to 'high-risk' offenders willing to desist and engage, whilst there is enforcement where behaviours require this sanction.

In summary:

We know 'what works' and it is important that we continue to invest in these approaches. We are making a difference to the communities we serve and beyond. We are adding to as well as learning from the growing national evidence base.

8. Context – Essex

Essex is a vibrant and diverse county, with a population of 1.8million. Essex is a mix of urban and rural areas, with three cities, and towns with populations over 100,000 (Chelmsford, Colchester and Southend). The majority of people in Essex live in rural areas, with concentrations of more dense population centres. Transport links across the county can be a challenge meaning that across rural communities and more dense conurbations they are not always linked leading to social and economic isolation. In the south its proximity to London brings economic opportunities as well as challenges. There are three major ports in the county, two major airports, bringing international commerce and potentially crime, such as drug supply and human trafficking. While a relatively wealthy county, there are areas of significant deprivation within the county.

Within Essex there are 14 Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). These partnerships work together to develop and deliver strategies to tackle crime and disorder in the local area and help create safer communities. They are statutory partnerships with member organisations including local councils, police, fire, health and probation services.

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%).

Table A below, shows the latest figures for the three key measures for the VVP and progress for the year ending July 2023.

Table A		Aug 2021 – Jul 2022	Aug 2022 – Jul 2023	% change (latest position compared to previous year)
1	Knife enabled serious violence (excluding Domestic Abuse)	1176	1066	-9%
2	Non-domestic homicides	15	10	-33%
		2020/21	2021/22	
3	U25s admissions to hospitals	35	27	-23%

Tables B, C and D below, show progress, where it is possible against the baseline year of 2018/19 (or where the earliest recording of accurate data is available).

Table B		Calender Year		% change (latest position compared start of the VV programme)
		2020*	2023	
1	Knife enabled serious violence (excluding Domestic Abuse)	1184	1043	-12%

* Knife crime offences are measured using the Knife Used flag on Police systems. The use of this flag nationally is of low accuracy before April 2019. As such 2020 is the first full calendar year of data usable for purposes of comparison.

Table C		Financial Year 2018/19	Calender Year 2023**	% change (latest position compared start of the VV programme)
2	Non-domestic homicides	15	9	-40%

**Figures for FY2018/19 have been compared with the calendar year 2023

Table D		Financial Year		% change (latest position compared start of the VV programme)
		2018/19	2021/22	
3	U25s admissions to hospitals	40	27	-33%

The VVP uses a range of additional measures, to the three key success measures, to monitor activity and the impact of the overall VV work programme. More information on this is provided in Annex 2. This includes, for example, monitoring knife enabled homicide. Table E, below, provides an overview of non-domestic homicides where a knife was involved and progress for the year ending July 2023 compared to the previous year.

Table E		2018/19	2023	% change (latest position compared start of the VV programme)
	Knife enabled homicide (excluding Domestic Abuse)	10	3	-70%

***Knife crime offences are measured using the Knife Used flag on Police systems. The use of this flag nationally is of low accuracy before April 2019. As such 2020 is the first full calendar year of data usable for purposes of comparison.

Context – National

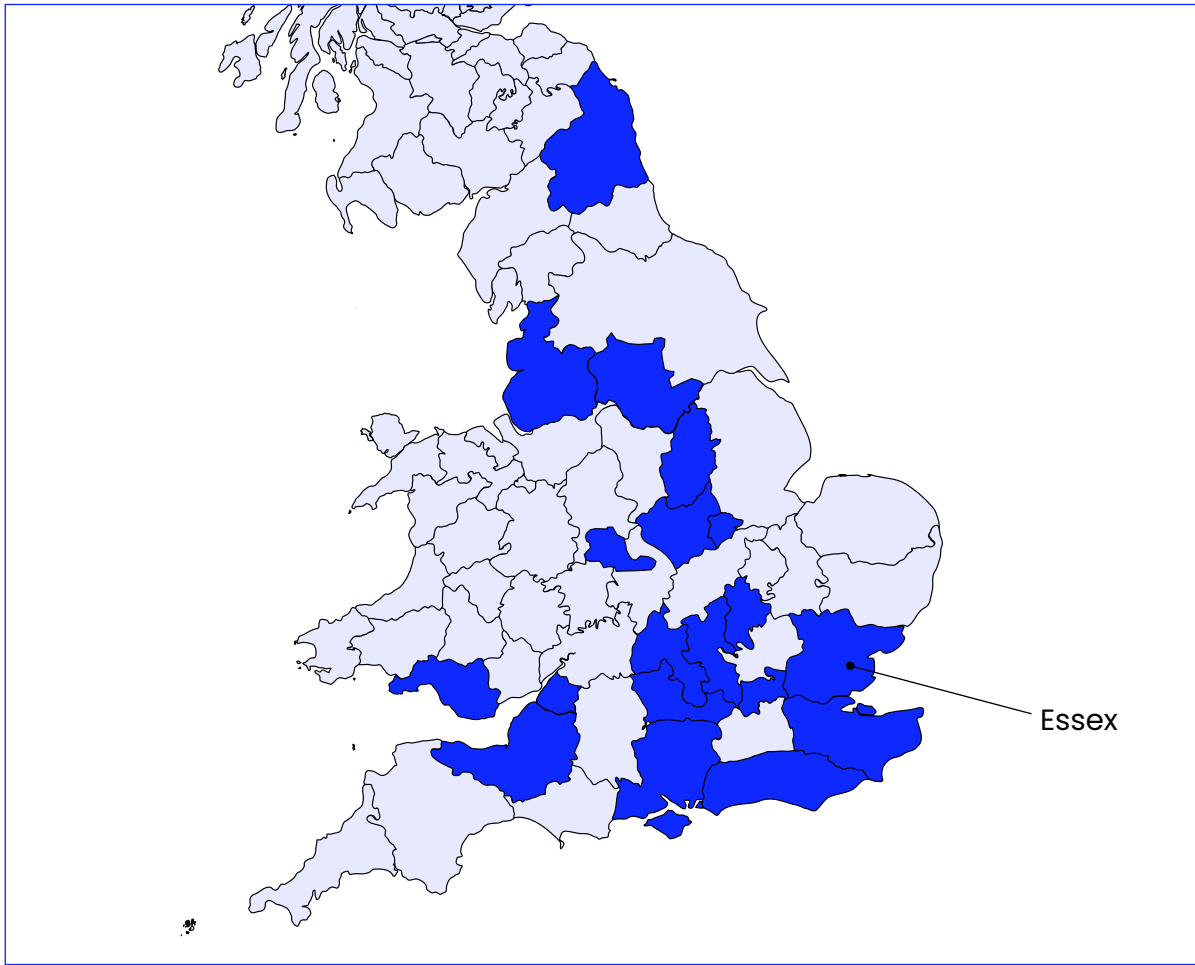
We acknowledge and implement the framework laid down by the national **Serious Violence Strategy (2018)** and the learning and guidance this provides underpins our overall approach to reducing serious violence.

- ✓ **Beating Crime Plan 2021** helps to drive our activities and sets a framework for our work to protect victims and create environments where neighbourhoods can thrive.
- ✓ **From Harm to Hope** – the Government’s ten-year drugs strategy (2022) provides an excellent opportunity to build on locally funded projects and drive down the harm caused by drugs. We continue to work with partners to ensure a co-ordinated approach.

Essex is one of the 20 Violence Reduction Units (VRU) across England and Wales.

Reference 4

Map showing the Violence Reduction Units across England and Wales



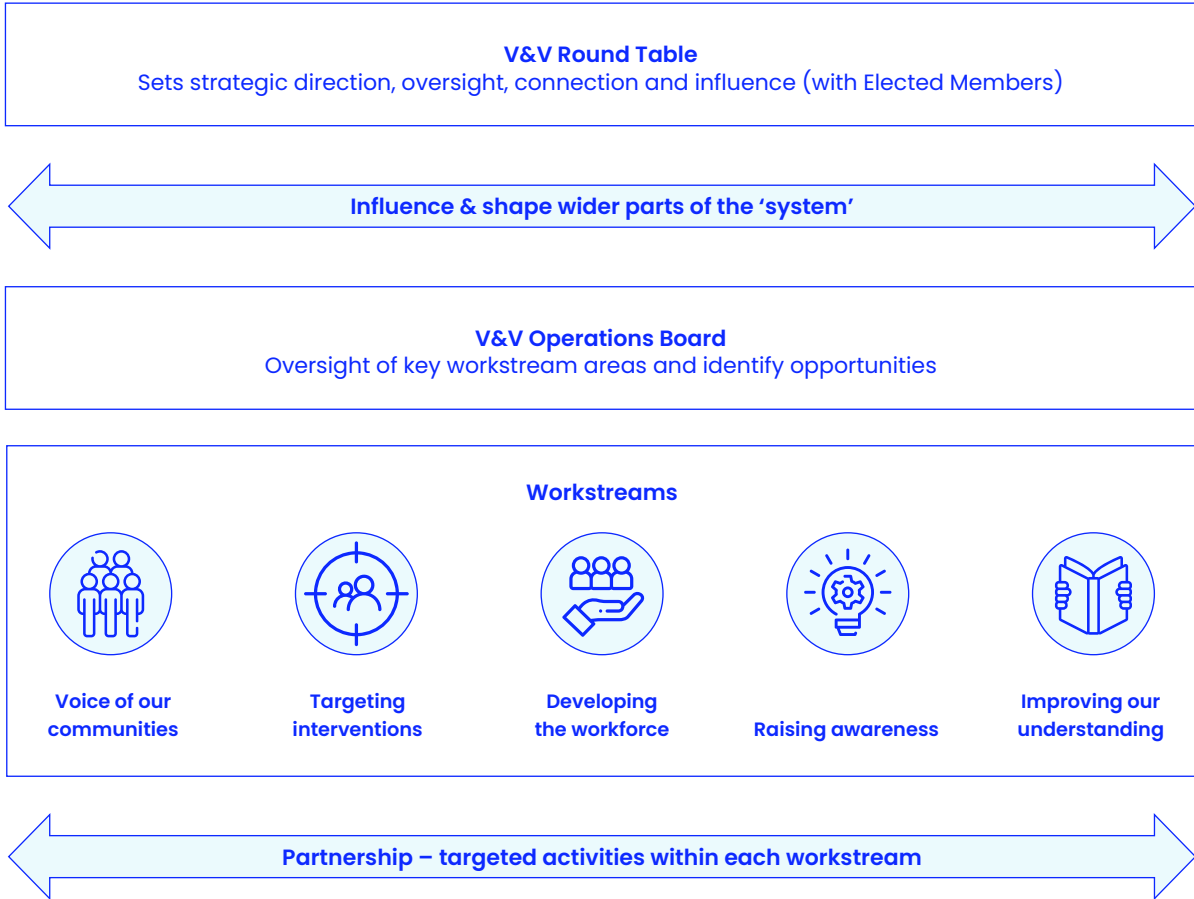
9. Essex Violence & Vulnerability Partnership

The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Partnership 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

The VVP is chaired by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), who is chair of the strategic leadership group, the 'V&V Round Table'. The visual below sets out the structure of the VVP.

V&V Partnership



The focus of the Partnership is to tackle serious violence and drug driven harm linked to gangs and County Lines, particularly for those under 25 years of age (based on the evidence of those most likely to be involved).

Essex identified the issue of serious violence linked to gangs and county lines early and put in place a partnership approach with commitment and leadership from organisations across the county, based on a 'public health' model.

This approach is supported through a range of organisation plans and strategies, including through the strategic commitment by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) to prevention, as noted in the Police and Crime Plan, 2021 to 2024:

www.essex.pfcc.police.uk/what-we-are-doing/police-and-crime-plan

Our overall approach is "to continue to build our 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".

- ✓ We know that interventions, especially those in early childhood, not only prevent individuals developing a propensity for violence but also improve educational outcomes, employment prospects and long-term health outcomes.
- ✓ We know that serious violence impacts on individuals and communities and is a drain on health services, the criminal justice system and the wider economy.
- ✓ The Essex Violence and Vulnerability Partnership 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.
- ✓ We continue to learn from our own experience in Essex – including where our approaches are working to build on this, providing insight and inspiration for future plans.
- ✓ We continue to learn from the increasing evidence base, nationally and internationally – including through the work of the Youth Endowment Foundation.

- ✓ As a partnership, we are seeking to continually reaffirm the strong engagement from partner organisations to deliver a focused programme of work, based on a robust evidence base, from community feedback and practitioner insights.
- ✓ Specified authorities, under the Serious Violence Duty, are jointly responsible for decision making and that decisions regarding the Duty are implemented in Essex in a multi-agency way.

Essex has a developed and complex partnership landscape. The county of Essex includes the councils Southend, Essex and Thurrock. Within the Essex County Council area there are 12 district / borough / city councils. Across the county there are 14 Community Safety Partnerships. Health services in Southend, Essex and Thurrock are based in three integrated care systems (ICS): Mid and South Essex Health and Care Partnership, Hertfordshire and West Essex ICS and Suffolk and North East Essex ICS and include acute hospital services, mental health services and primary care services.

The V&V partnership is part of this overall landscape, ensuring the appropriate issues are fed into and help to shape the agendas of the wider Essex partnerships and being informed by the issues identified by others.

In summary

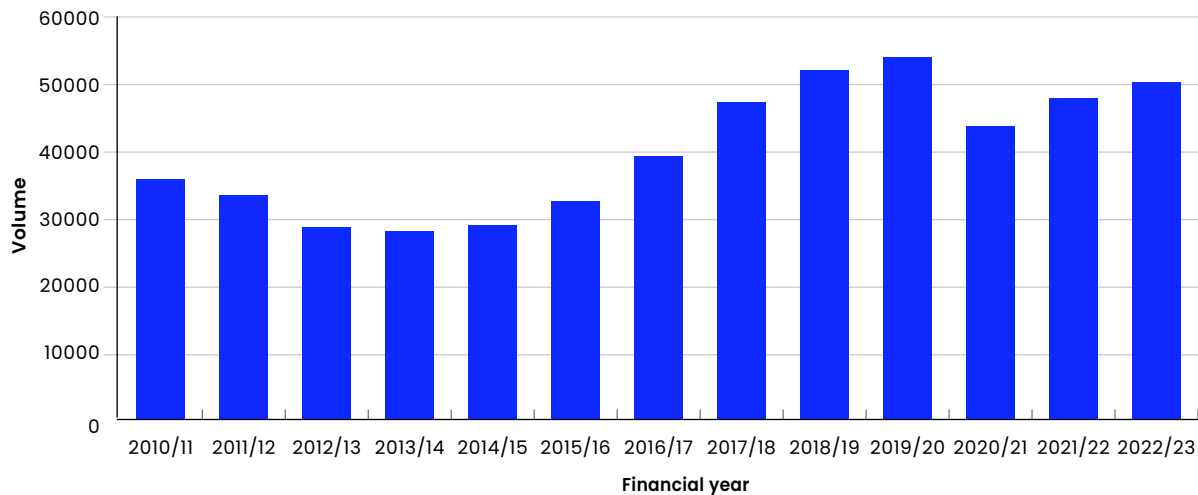
Our violence reduction model is about embedding practice and working within the overall Essex framework. We continue to build on and link to a range of other multi-agency arrangements to sustainably reduce serious violence.

10. What has happened to Serious Violence in Essex since 2014

The Essex model is based on successful models from elsewhere in the country, including the Glasgow and Cardiff ‘public health’ models. The insight and learning from these successes have been further developed to respond to the specific challenges of Essex.

Nationally knife crime rose by 46% between 2014/15 and 2018/19. This national picture, and the increase in knife related offences from 2014, was also experienced by Essex. In 2018 central Government launched the national Serious Violence Strategy with a focus on long term ‘public health’ preventative measures to address the increasing trends in serious violence.

Reference 5: England & Wales
– Selected offences involving a knife or sharp object from 2014/15 to 2022/23

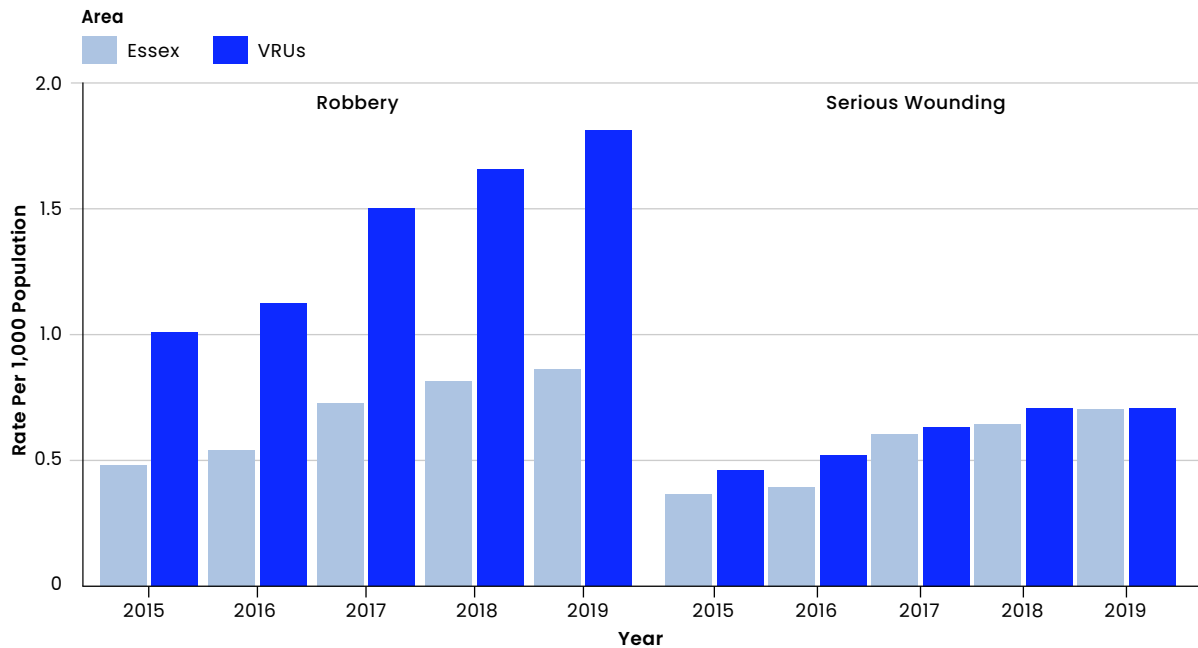


Source: ONS Crime in England and Wales July 2023

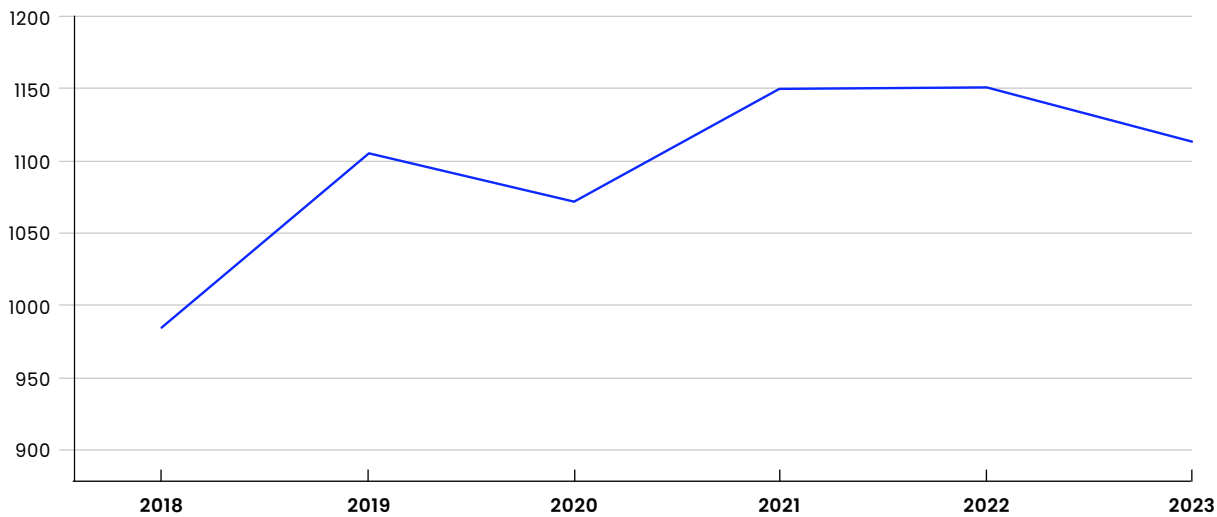
In 2018 Essex developed the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership Framework. The work of the Partnership is based on the issues identified in the Framework and our experience over the last five years, this includes the V&V case for investment developed in 2022. We know that intervention benefits are approximately 3.5 times higher than intervention costs. A long term prevention approach is cost effective to people and services, reducing harm to individuals and communities and improving life chances.

Essex established its Violence Reduction Unit, known as the Violence & Vulnerability Unit (VUU) in 2018. In the following year, 2019, central Government announced 18 Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) areas (which included Essex).

Reference 6: Essex (and other Violence Reduction Unit / VRU areas)
– Robbery and serious wounding offences from 2015 to 2019







Reference 7: Serious Violence – what has been happening since 2018?



Serious violence plateaued in 2022 and is showing signs of a drive towards a more positive position with offences in 2023 seeing a 3.4% reduction in comparison to 2022. This pattern matches the experiences of other areas that have taken a public health approach such as Glasgow and Cardiff.

Working together the Partnership has tested and trialled a range of interventions over the last five years and through careful evaluation has developed a strategic approach that is delivering significant results in the fight against violent crime. The Partnership has a programme of work across early prevention through to supporting those already involved in serious violence through ‘focussed deterrence’ approaches, appropriate support alongside enforcement if required, an approach which has a strong evidence base, as noted through the [Youth Endowment Fund toolkit](#).

Examples of our work include:	
	We have a programme for young people arrested for knife or drug offences, with support and positive activities. We aim to refer the young person to the programme, ReRoute, within 24 hours.
	Visit our article: Our new project: ReRoute (June 2022)
	We have programmes within identified schools to support young people at risk of falling out of education, this includes the Respect Project , which is working in schools in, Basildon, Maldon, Tendring and Uttlesford.
	Visit our article: Learning Outdoors with the Respect Project (Sept 2023)
	We have a programme known as the ‘ team around the family ’ supporting the workforce to identify and access appropriate professional support for young people (and their families), to prevent the escalation of issues. This approach has been used in identified schools.
	Visit our article: Extra support for our Essex families (October 2022)
	Through our community grants programme, we support local organisations to work in their communities, reaching out into communities and responding to the issues identified through our listening projects. As part of this work, we have supported The Building Lives Project in Chelmsford which works with young people identified as vulnerable or at high risk of offending.
	View our film here: Building Lives Project at The Base

While these individual examples provide a flavour of the innovative and effective interventions currently underway, the real strength of the approach over the last five years has been the integrated and system wide strategy that this broader partnership has been able to deliver.

By taking a holistic view of how we work together to support young and vulnerable people and reduce violence we can spot opportunities to intervene early, to make a difference and stop people falling through the gaps. Just one example of this has been the development of safeguarding officers in the Police OpRaptor teams: [Introducing Safeguarding Officers into Op Raptor](#).

Through this work more vulnerable young people have been identified and supported at ‘reachable moments’.

In summary
Serious violence is reducing. Our approach works because it is done in partnership, the VVP works with a range of agencies and with local communities and businesses and the vibrant third sector across Essex.

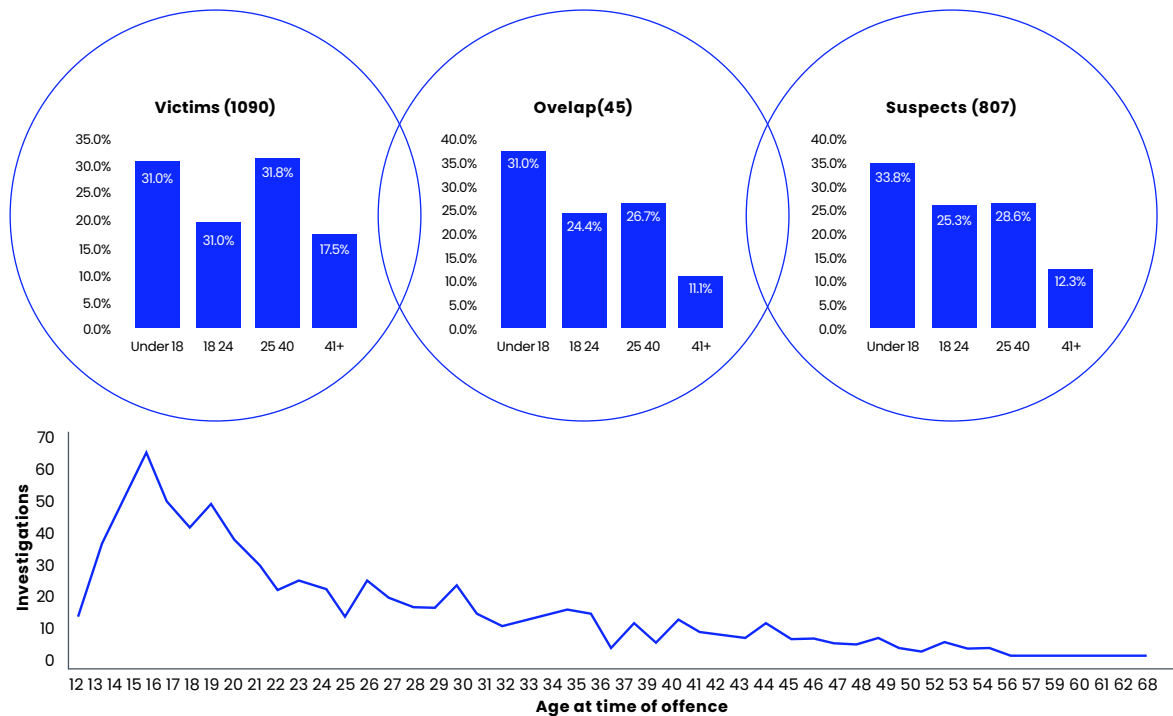
We are part way through a long-term programme, we are making a difference, but we must see this programme through if we want to achieve the lasting change that has been achieved in other areas in the country such as Glasgow and Cardiff.

11. Perspectives on Violence – People

The analysis in this section is based on the calendar year of 2022, and where comparisons are provided this is always to a 12 month calendar period (in the previous year or in some cases for the five years from 2018).

Serious violence doesn't only impact the young. Whilst more than half of suspects and victims were aged 24 and younger, a third of suspects and nearly half of victims were aged 25 years or over. However, analysis shows a significant drop away (nearly halving) in offenders between the ages of 18 and 21.

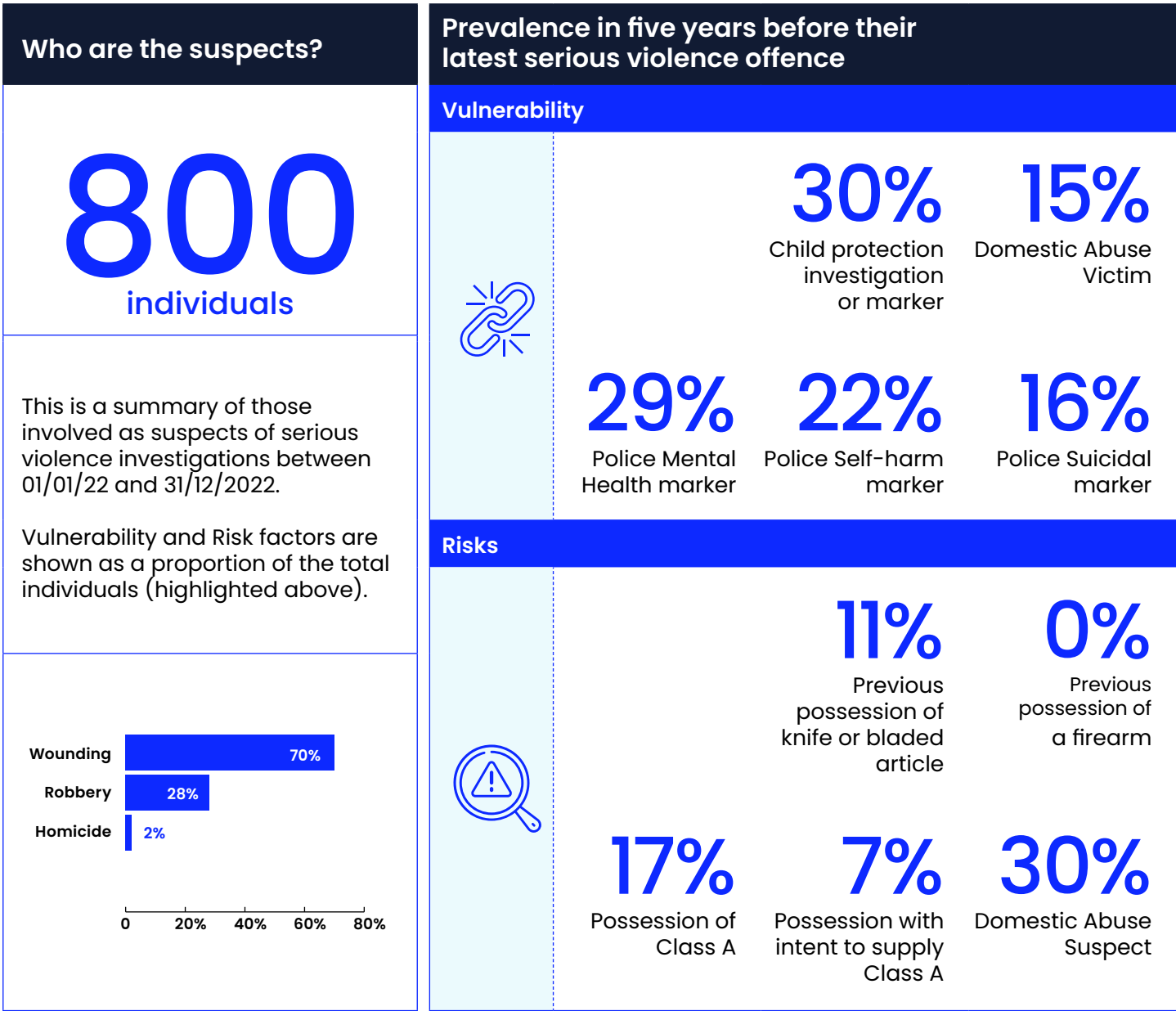
Reference 8: Serious Violence – those involved (calendar year 2022)



Serious violence begins 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.

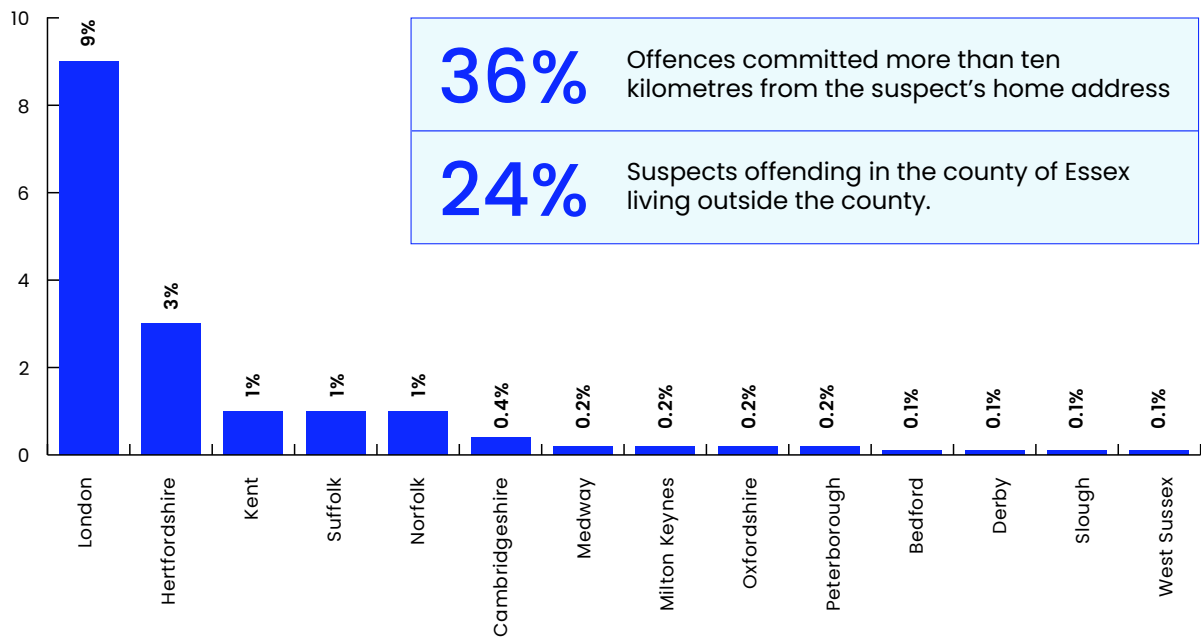
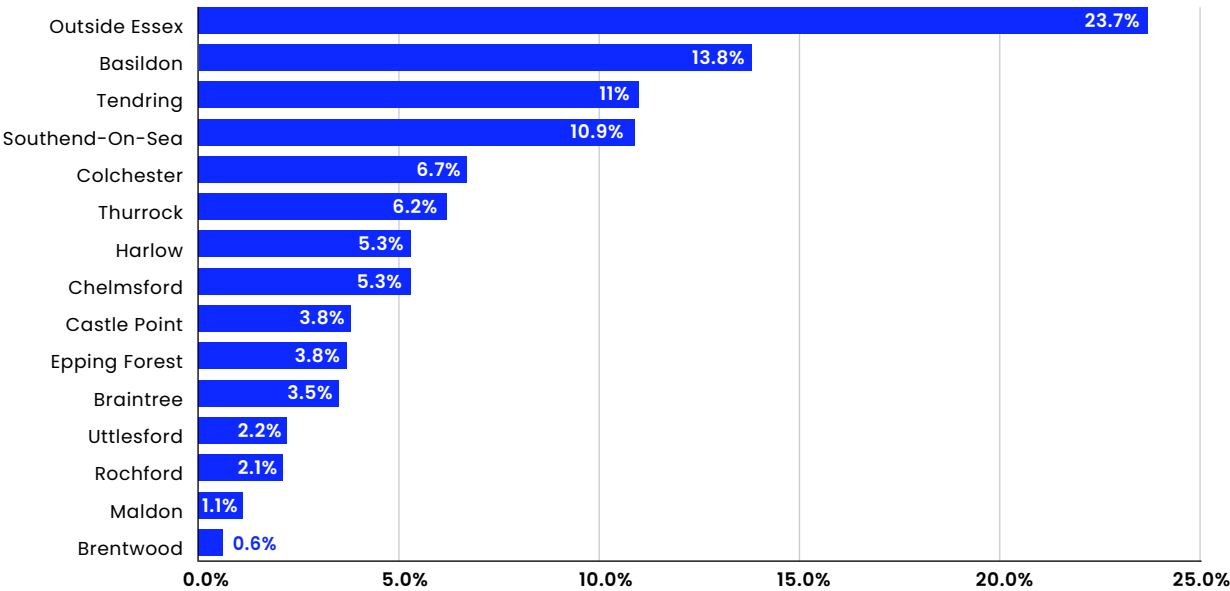
Our insight identifies that those involved as suspects of serious violence often present multiple complex needs including, (as outlined earlier in this report), experience of domestic abuse either as victims or perpetrators. In addition, the data highlights the prevalence of poor mental health and conversely the importance of promoting good physical and mental health in preventing serious violent offences.

Reference 9: Serious Violence – suspects (calendar year 2022)



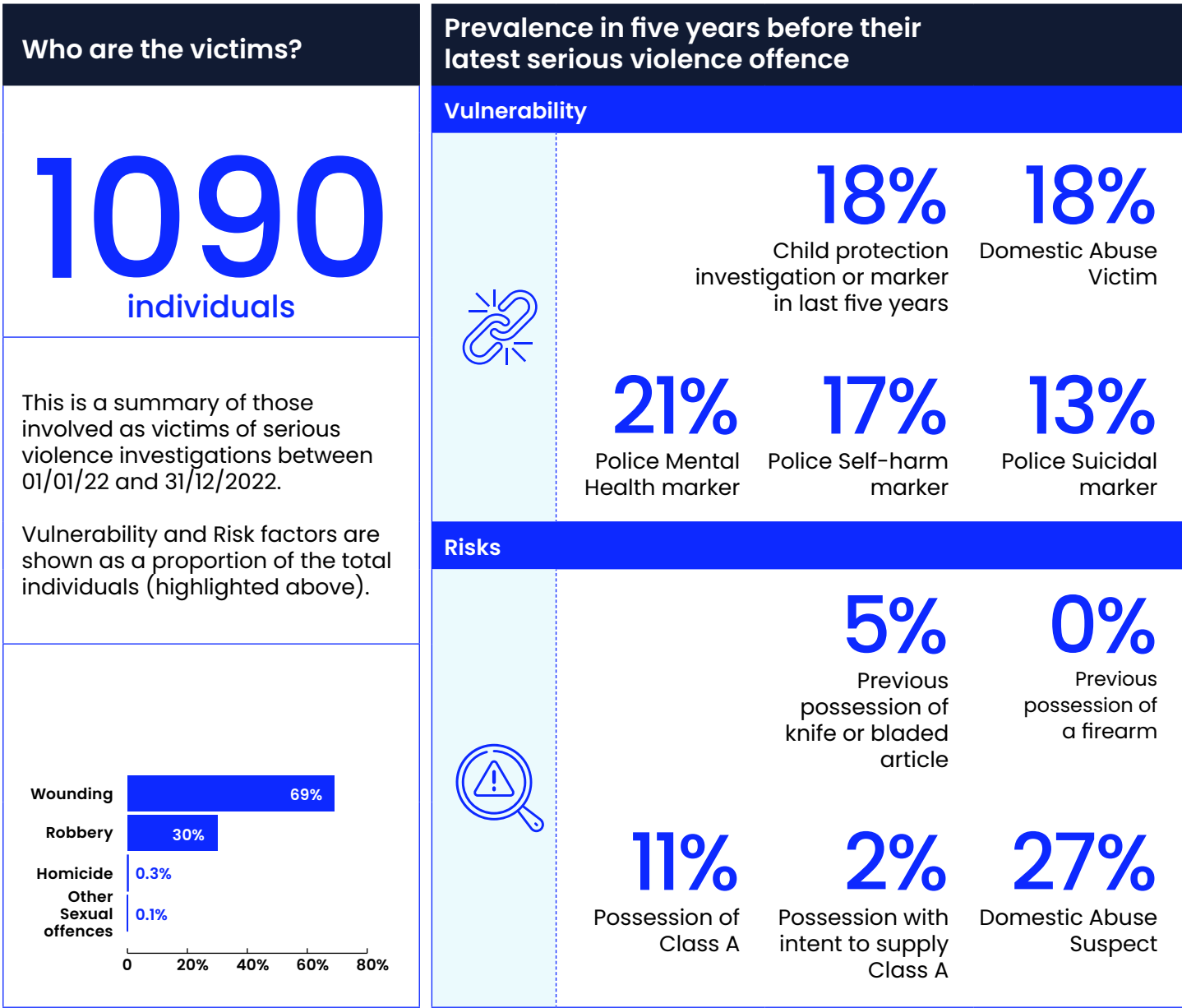
Reference 10: Serious Violence suspects – where they come from (calendar year 2022)

With more than a fifth of suspects of serious violence coming from outside of Essex we remain committed to extending the cross border work that is underway, not only with other counties but with the several London boroughs that border Essex.



This Essex data highlights the complexity of an individual experiencing serious violence through becoming a victim as well as the proportion of victims who are also a perpetrator of serious violent crime, emphasising the importance of implementing interventions at the right touch point – reachable moments – for individuals.

Reference 11: Serious Violence victims (calendar year 2022)



Lived Experience

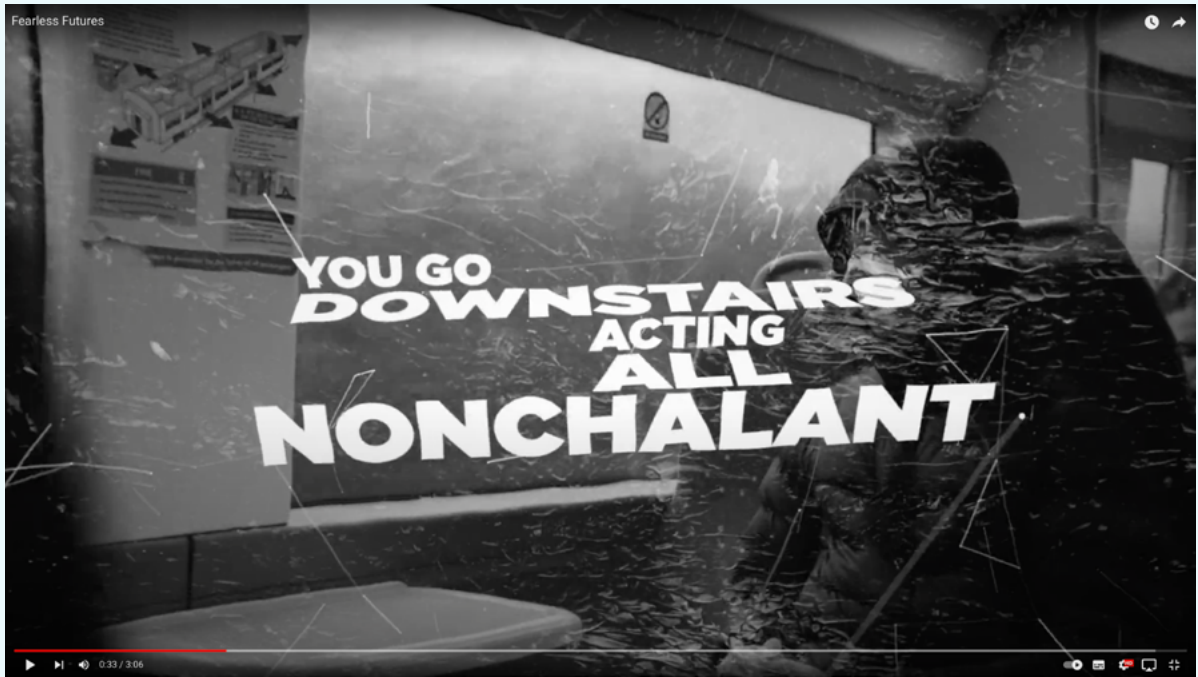
We capture the views of children, young people and young adults who take part in our programmes

We have created a short film which, using real life experience, tells the journey that some of the young people and young adults on our prevention programmes have made to turn their lives around.

Our tertiary prevention programmes work with those who have been identified, suspects in some cases, or through arrests or previous convictions, as being more likely to be involved in violent crime in the future.

The film uses spoken word by Quentin Green to illustrate the journey that the young people take, and how with the right support and intervention lives can be turned around and a positive impact made on society.

Take a look here: [Fearless Futures](#)



Key Finding

We can see from the data that age is a key indicator to our work and the SNA is informing our approach to continually target our work in ever more effective ways.

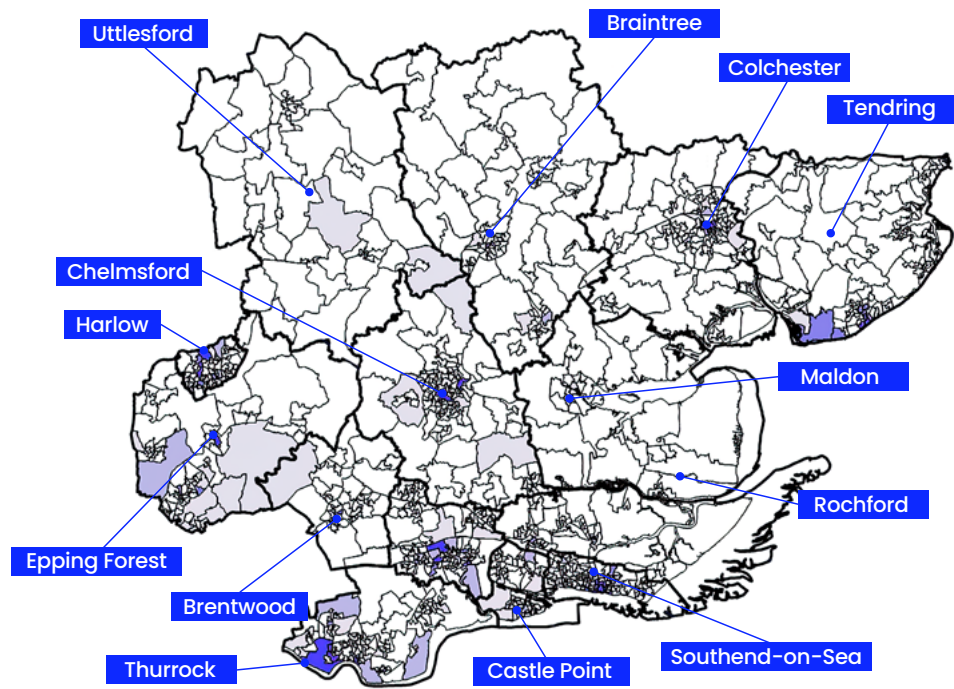
Serious violence begins a steep incline at the age of 12 and peaks at 15, it begins to reduce and then we see a sharp rise again at 17.

12. Perspectives on Violence – Place

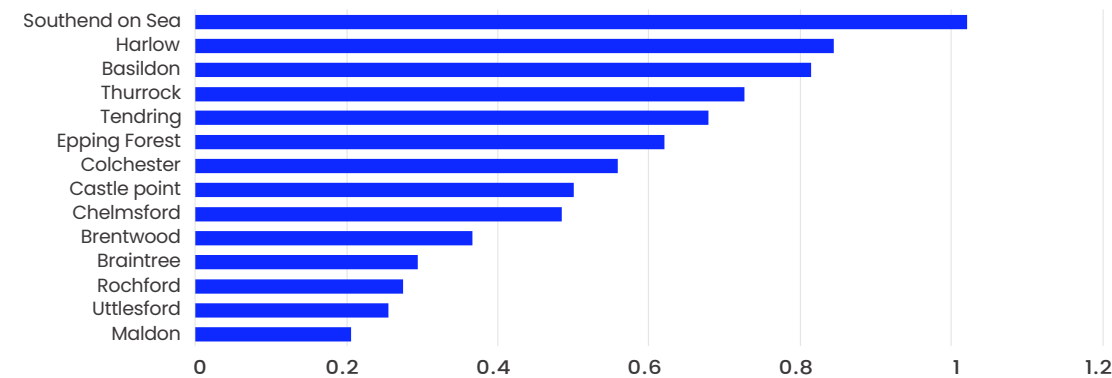
Serious violence over the past five years has primarily occurred in densely populated urban areas (accounting for 87% of police investigations). However, unlike other forms of street violence the link with night-time-economy (NTE) is relatively weak, with 13% occurring in NTE areas.

Reference 12: Showing the persistence of serious violence hotspots across Essex for the past five years (2018 – 2022). Darker blue signifies how persistent each area was as a ‘hotspot’

Serious Violence – Where does it happen in Essex (2018–2022)?



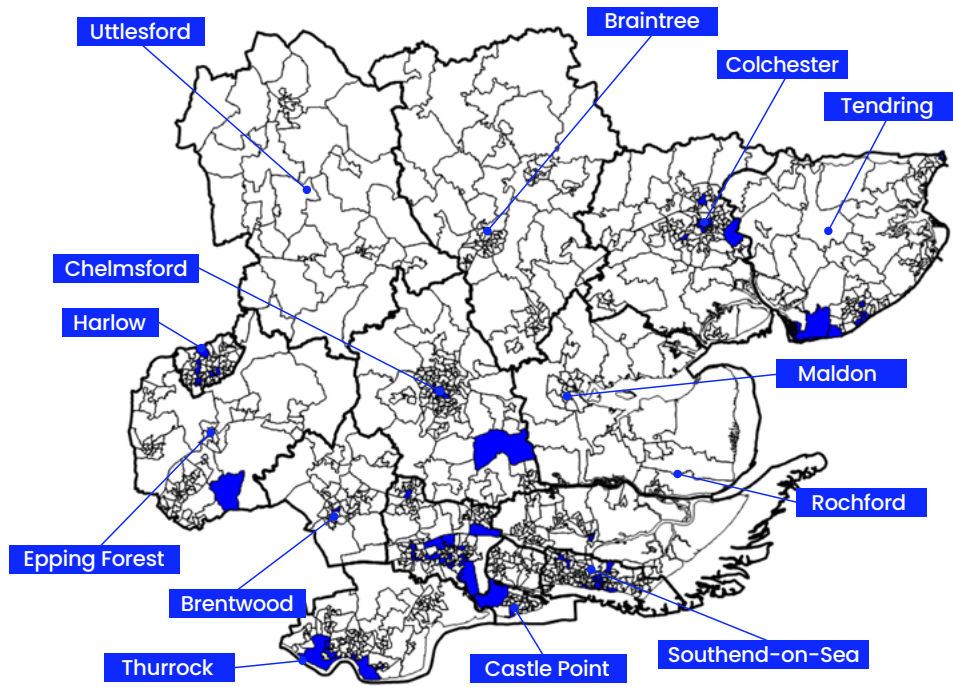
2022 Serious Violence Investigations 2018 – 2022 per 1000 Population



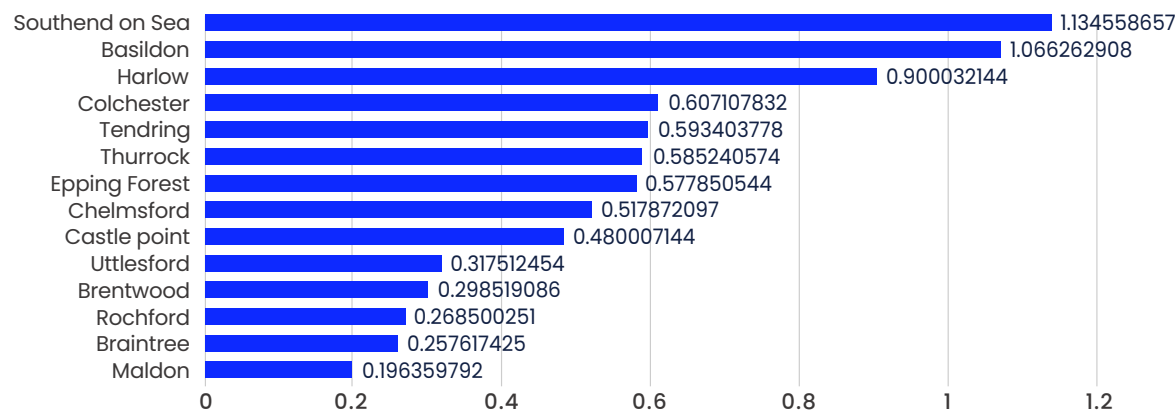
Over the five year period Southend saw both the highest proportion of investigations across the county of Essex (17%) and the highest volume per 1,000 population. Notably Harlow accounted for 7% of offences across the county (below Basildon, Thurrock, Colchester, Chelmsford, Tendring and Epping Forest) but had the second highest investigations per 1,000 population.

Reference 13: Showing serious violence hotspots across the county during the calendar year of 2022. ‘Hotspots’ are shown as dark blue areas

Serious Violence – Where did it happen in 2022?



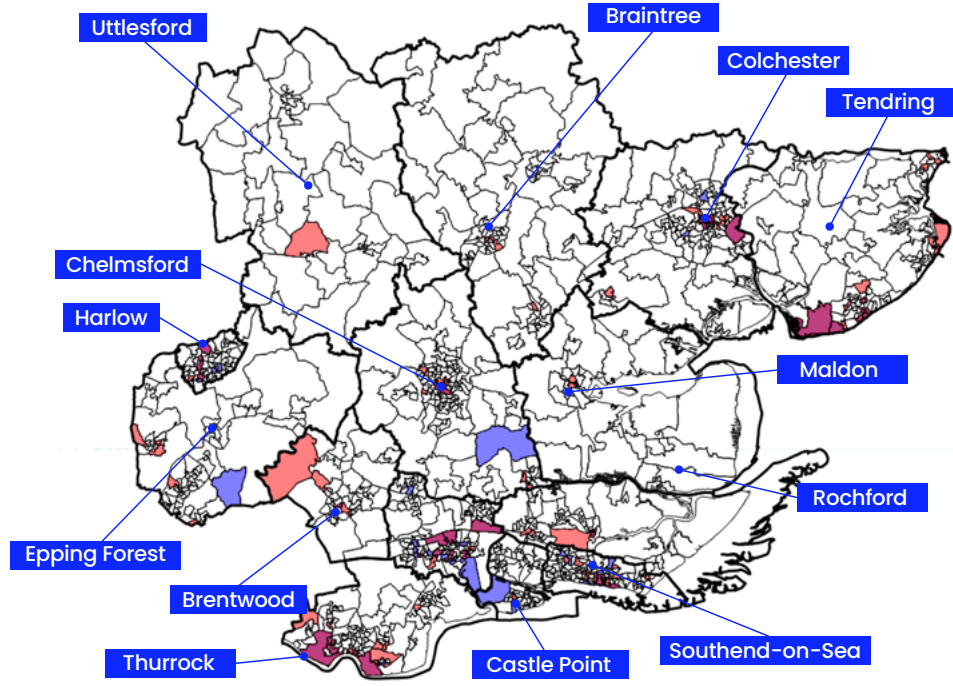
2022 Serious Violence Investigations per 1000 Population



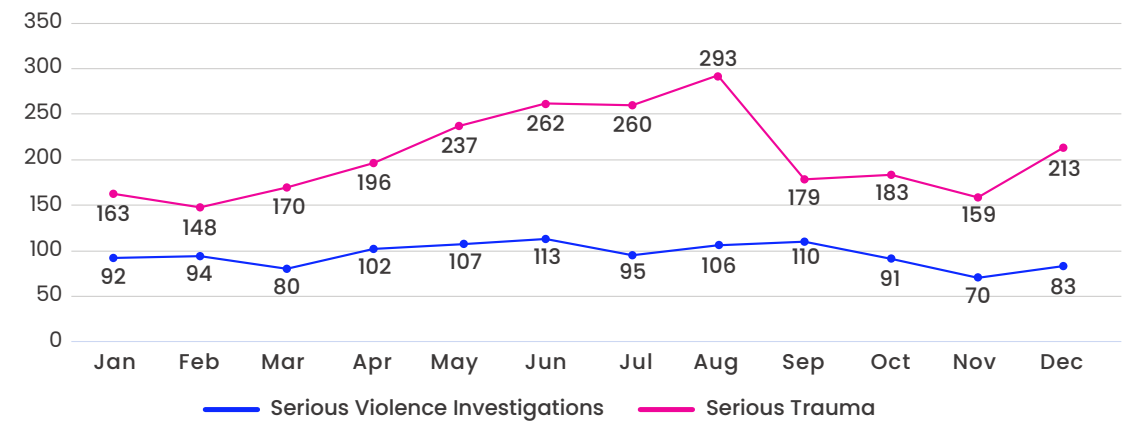
The most notable change in the pattern of serious violence in 2022 was the proportion of police investigations in Basildon increasing by 4%, while the proportion occurring in Thurrock reduced by 3%. There were twenty Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which were new hotspots in 2022 (not having been a hotspot in the previous four years). Half of these were in Basildon. It should be noted that serious violence is not a volume crime, and as such statistical analysis of hotspots will show greater variance in hotspots than volume crime.

Reference 14: Showing areas of elevated serious violence against areas of elevated ambulance call outs for serious trauma across the county during the calendar year of 2022. Ambulance data is based on calls relating to Assault/ Sexual Assault and Stab/Gunshot/Penetrating Trauma.

Serious Violence – Ambulance response and Police investigations –2022



Serious Violence Investigations and Serious Trauma



Serious trauma (ambulance calls relating to assault/sexual assault and stab/ gunshot/penetrating trauma) broadly correlates with the trend in serious violence.

Two thirds of areas of elevated serious violence also saw elevated levels of serious trauma.

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](#)



Key Finding

The impact of being ‘well’ – identifying macro trends in ‘wellness’ allows us to understand the impact of both mental health and the wider indicators of health in the wider reduction of violence. Wellness has an impact on the propensity of an area to increase the risk of serious violence, and through this for example increased hospital admissions.

13. Risk & Protective Factors – Essex

Accepted research has identified a number of factors which correlate with the risks of violence increasing. By understanding the profile of these risk factors across the region, the VVP can focus its preventative work more effectively.

We are working not just with communities who are already experiencing high levels of violence, but also with those who are most likely to become affected by violence in the future. The Office for National Statistics 2022 report reviewing the Nature of Violent Crime found ‘those living in the most deprived areas of England were more likely to be victims of violence with injury than those living in the least deprived areas (1.2%, compared with 0.5%); they were also more likely to be victims of stranger violence (2.2%, compared with 0.2%)’.

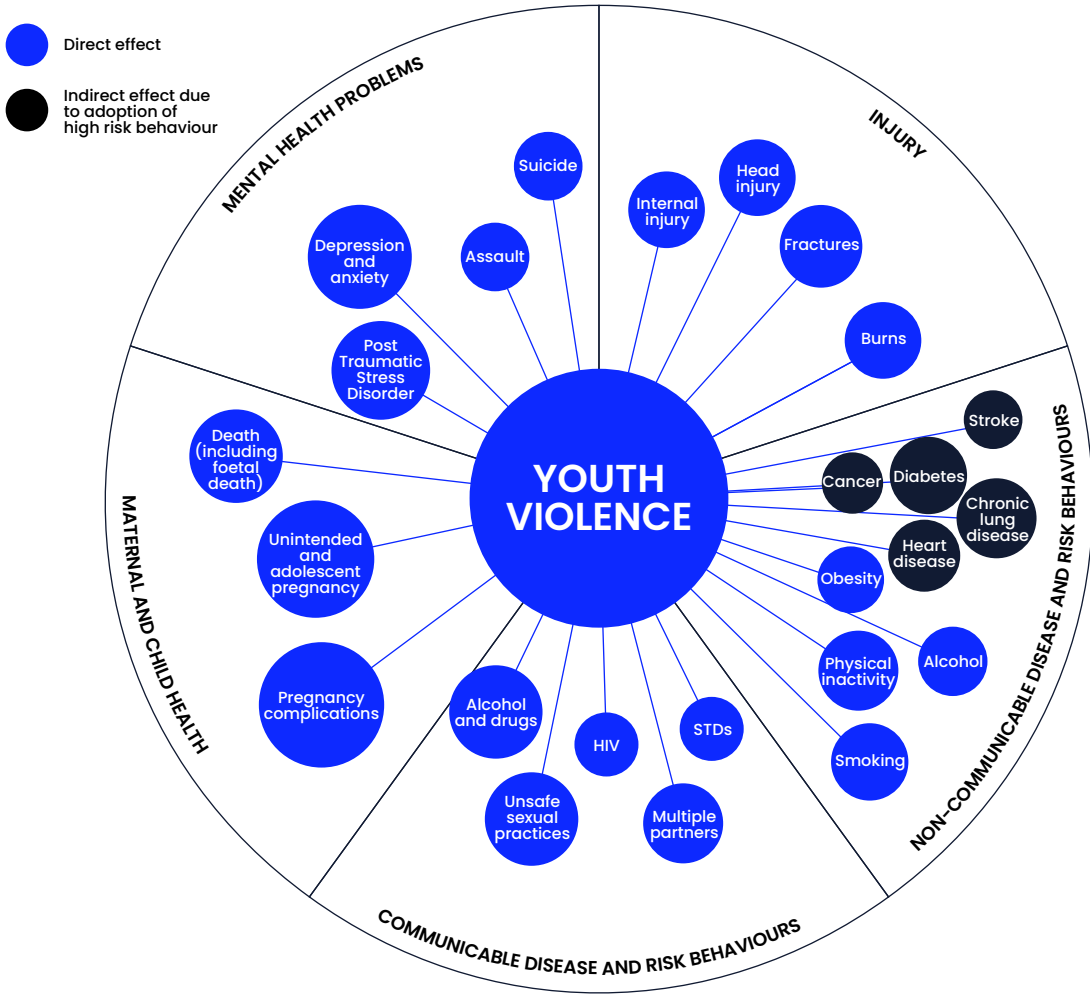
Serious Violence – Risk and Protective Factors

Group	Factors	Risks
Individual	Previously committed offences	Risk taking behaviour
		Aggression
		Persistent absentee
		Anti-social behaviour
		Substance misuse
		Gang membership
		Low self esteem
		High psychopathic features
		Previously perpetrated violence
		Conduct disorders
		Previously perpetrated violence
		Conduct disorders
Family	Family violence/abuse/neglect	Maternal drug/alcohol misuse
		Disrupted family
		Lack of family supervision
		Lack of parent/child communication
School	Exclusion and suspension by reason	Low commitment to school
		Low school attainment
Peer and Community	Culture of normalised violence	Lack of recreation facilities
	Disorganised neighbourhoods	Availability of and exposure to cannabis
		Low quality housing
		Poor relationships with peers

Children and young people can be victims of violence, witnesses to violence or perpetrators of violence. The causes of which are complex and where the foundations are often set out through their early years. It is important that a whole system approach to reducing youth violence recognises the impact of events much earlier in life as well as the impact of events from families, communities and society later on in life. For example to consider upstream interventions, such as early years investment, family support and contextual safeguarding as well as improving cohesion.

For this SNA the focus for risk and protective factors has been on the factors highlighted in the table above: previously committed offences; family violence; exclusion and suspensions; culture of normalised violence; and neighbourhood disorganisation. Our approach to understanding these is continually evolving.

Reference 15: Impact of youth violence, including violence against children, on health and wellbeing outcomes



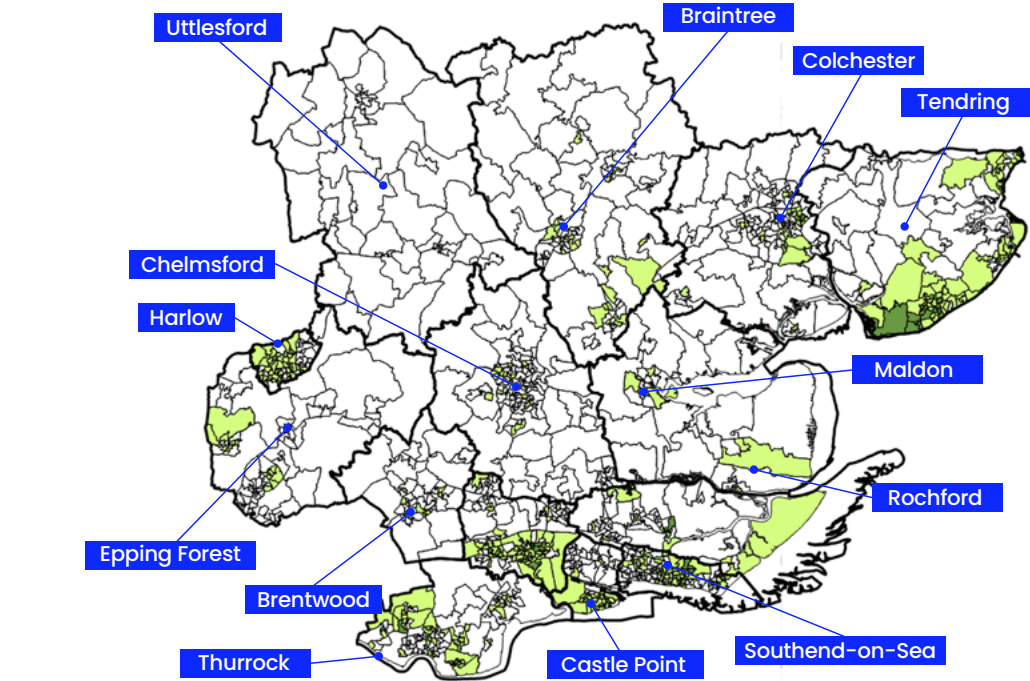
Source: Wales Violence Prevention Unit

Community: understanding the issues – communities experience

Showing hotspots for households deprived in two or more dimensions (based on census 2021 data). Areas in lighter green have 20 – 30% of households deprived in two or more dimensions, areas in darker green have between 34% – 50% households in this category.

Deprivation is a key factor in serious violence with over half of suspects originating from deprived areas. The factors used were identified from Census 2021 data using number of households with two or more dimensions of deprivation. The full Indices of Multiple Deprivation is a more comprehensive metric for levels of deprivation however the most recent indices are four years old at the time of writing. When the latest indices are produced the ability to understand the link between deprivation and serious violence will be more accurate.

Reference 16: Serious Violence – Deprivation

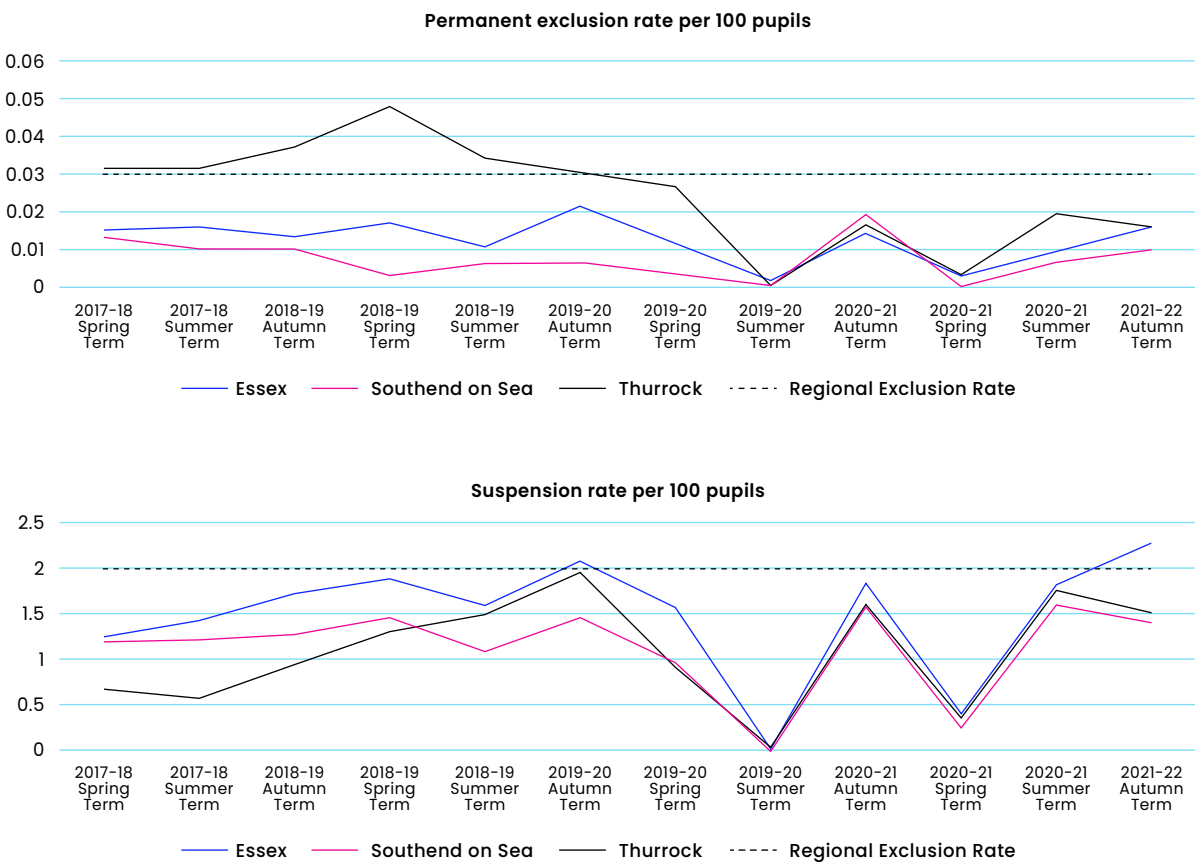


54%	Serious violence suspects in 2022 living in areas with higher than average proportion of households in two or more dimensions of deprivation
46%	Serious violence suspects in 2022 living in areas where more than 20% of households were deprived in two or more dimensions

School exclusions and suspensions 2017/18 through to 2021/22 for the local authority areas of Southend, Essex and Thurrock.

School exclusions reduced through the pandemic period. This is likely due to the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns. Exclusions levels are helpful alongside other information and can help to identify risk. Young people excluded from school are four times more likely to be involved in serious violence and increase the risk to themselves. Working with young people, families and schools as part of a whole community approach is essential. The figures within this SNA provide a high level of summary of exclusions and suspensions for Essex.

Reference 17: Serious Violence – School exclusions and suspensions

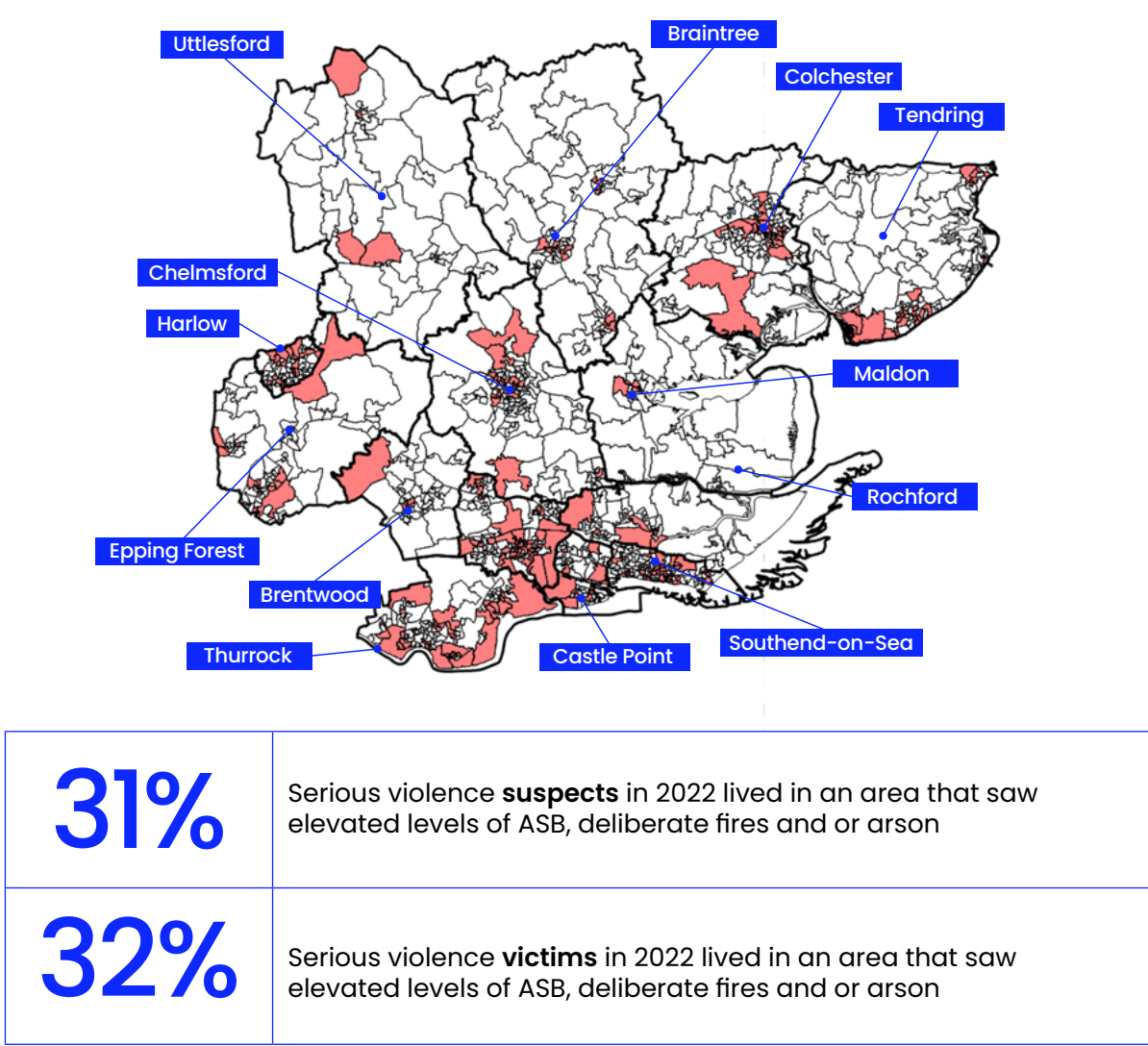


Showing combined hotspots of antisocial behaviour (ASB), deliberate fires, arson not endangering life and arson endangering life. Counts of incidents have been weighted with ASB scoring 1, deliberate fires 2, arson not endangering life as 3 and arson endangering life as 5.

These incidents have been used as a proxy for “neighbourhood disorganisation”

A third of suspects and victims of serious violence lived within areas seeing elevated levels of ASB, deliberate fires and arson.

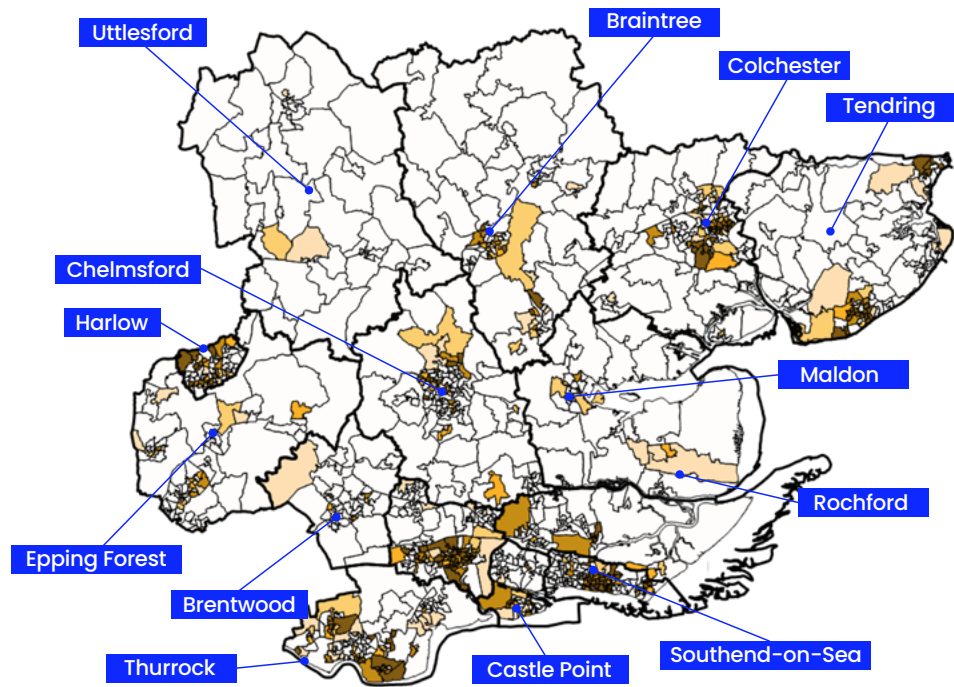
Reference 18: Serious Violence – Antisocial behaviour, deliberate fires and arson



Showing the persistence of hotspots of domestic abuse victims (by home location) across the county for the past five years. Darker blue signifies how persistent each area was as a hotspot.

A culture of normalised violence is identified as a risk factor in serious violence. Domestic abuse can, to some extent, be considered as a proxy for a culture of normalised violence. However, domestic abuse is only one factor in identifying areas with a culture or normalised violence. Further data acquisition and analysis is being considered as part of the VVP data sharing plan to address this.

Reference 19: Serious Violence – The link to domestic abuse



43%	Serious violence suspects in 2022 named on a DA investigation in the past five years as either suspect, victim or involved party
24%	Serious violence suspects in 2022 living in an area where elevated levels of domestic abuse were persistent for at least five years

Risk Index




Essex VVP has designed a risk index based on the analysis within the People, Place and Risk & Protective Factors sections of this SNA. The purpose of this has been to identify areas with the strongest correlations towards violence. The factors considered are summarised below:

- Serious Violence Suspects Home Addresses Hotspots: at census 2021 LSOA level, this identifies hotspots for the home addresses of suspects of serious violence during the calendar year 2022.
- Households Deprived in more than two areas hotspots: at LSOA 2021 level. Based on areas where more than 25% of the houses in the LSOA featured deprivation in two or more areas in census 2021 data.
- Domestic Abuse Hotspot Persistence: at census 2021 LSOA level, this identifies hotspots of the addresses of victims of domestic abuses hotspots are identified calendar year on calendar year for the past five years (2018 – 2022) and their persistence is established by the number of years they feature as a hotspot during the period.
- Disorganised Neighbourhoods: at census 2021 LSOA level using a combination of ASB incidents, Arson (both not endangering life and endangering life) ranked by harm as a metric for neighbourhood disorganisation based on incidents/investigations recorded in 2022.
- Possession of Class A Drugs Suspects Home Addresses Hotspots: at census 2021 LSOA level, this identifies hotspots for the home addresses of suspect of Possession of Class A drugs during the calendar year 2022.
- Possession of Class A Drugs with Intent to Supply Suspects Home Addresses Hotspots: at census 2021 LSOA level, this identifies hotspots for the home addresses of suspect of Possession of Class A Drugs with intent to supply during the calendar year 2022.
- Unemployment history: Not in employment: Not worked in the last 12 months: at LSOA 2021 level. Based on a Poisson distribution hot spotting.

All the data that has been used is anonymised and aggregated and the index is intended solely as an indication of potential risk at neighbourhood level. No individual or personal data has been used.

The index is part of our understanding about how combinations of the risk factors vary across our geography, at a local level. The index is intended as a broad indication of place and population-based risk at neighbourhood level, in order to help prioritise the VVP’s resources.

The neighbourhoods referred to here are lower super output areas (LSOAs). These are small areas with broadly similar population sizes that can be compared within local authority areas and nationally. There are 1,111 LSOAs across Essex. The analysis used has identified the top 5% highest scoring Local Super Output areas / LSOAs (assessed as having a population at heightened risk of committing serious violence or being subjected to serious violence). This top 5% of LSOAs totals 54 LSOAs.

Examples of our work include:	
	<p>Providing funding for programmes which help get young people and young adults into training and employment. For example the carpentry project at Rainbow Services Harlow. Giving young people a pathway into employment and away from crime. Watch how it has made such a difference to those who attend.</p> <p>VVU Rainbow Services</p>
	<p>We have programmes within identified schools to support young people at risk of falling out of education. For example U Turn which is working in schools in Tendring and an Outreach Programme at the Olive Academy in Thurrock.</p> <p>Outreach at the Olive Academy (Oct 2023)</p>
	<p>Providing support to local community groups who reach out into communities and support a wide range of people. For example, our support for The OutHouse in Colchester, which means young people across Colchester, Tendring and Harwich who identify as LGBTQ+ have safe places to meet, can make friends and also receive counselling and one to one support in a trusted place.</p> <p>The OutHouse</p>

In summary

The impact of ‘place’ – creating environments that nurture protective factors, including community cohesion and strong connections within place, are clearly evidenced as helping to prevent violence. To be able to target our joint efforts with our local communities and community assets is an integral part of our approach.

14. Community Voices

Community engagement

Community groups are engaged through our dedicated workstream ‘Voice of the Community’ which is focused on community engagement through voluntary organisations and asking them to have a say on our approach and holding us to account on the way we prioritise and spend funds. By having a dedicated stream for ‘Voice of Community’ the Violence and Vulnerability Partnership is showing the importance that we are all placing on engaging with these groups. It is important for us as a partnership to have community involvement throughout the whole process, from planning to evaluation.

We engage with Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (which represents over 220,000 children and young people in voluntary youth clubs in our area), The Essex CVS network, Active Essex, the 14 Community Safety Partnerships across the county, local youth organisations including The Red Balloon Foundation, Essex Boys and Girls Clubs, Chelmsford Diocese, Pact for Autism and The Children’s Society East. We also have statutory partners engaging with our ‘Voice of Community’ group from local councils, the police, youth offending services to enhance communication and join up conversations around safety and vulnerabilities that we can help action together.

How voices of young people shape our work

We capture the voices of young children, young adults and communities through a variety of routes, this includes capturing the views of children and young people through the settings they chose to be in and with adults which they feel comfortable.

It is really important to the VVP to listen to young people’s views around how safe they feel in their communities. This is because we want to make sure that we commission or deliver responsive services. Through our extensive community groups and with the expertise of youth workers, in 2022/23 we had conversations with over 1,500 young people through our ‘listening project’. The listening project enables the VVP to hear directly from young people and helps to make sure that any future work carried out is insightful, driven and targeted to what young people are telling us they need in order to have a safer Essex, Southend and Thurrock for everyone. In 2022 we spoke to young people in every area of Essex. The listening work happened from December 2022 – March 2023 in youth club settings where the trusted youth leaders could discuss the questions, listen to any concerns, and help direct to further support or resources if the young people needed it. Our partners, Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services collected the feedback from these groups and have produced the following report:

[vvu-youth-voices-report-2022-2023-final-pdf.pdf](#)

The findings from these conversations are used to inform our overall delivery, and that of a wide range of partnerships. The listening report and its key findings have been shared with over 100 forums across Essex. Also in response to the issues identified in each area, the VVP undertook bespoke projects, named “you said – we did”.

As part of this approach, in collaboration with Essex Council for Voluntary Youth Services (ECVYS) and youth groups we report back to the young people who take part in our Listening Project.

We let them know what we have done and how it links to the points they raised through their conversations.

This includes sharing flyers through youth workers about what has changed due to them engaging with the VVP – part of feeding back directly with the young people through face to face conversations.



Thanks to views from local young people, the Essex Violence & Vulnerability Unit invested £1.6 million to help young people stay safer in 2022–2023



Listening to young people is key to making sure we are doing what is wanted and needed so that young people feel safer in their communities

Since the VVU was set up, we have heard

5000
young people's views



In 2021–2022, 600 young people from the County of Essex told us that they need more:

- 1. Youth facilities, safe spaces and affordable activities
- 2. Street lighting and CCTV
- 3. Trusted adults around to talk to
- 4. Targeted education and support for young people most at risk
- 5. Awareness raising of the impact of youth violence and how to stay safe

These views helped the VVU to invest £1.6 million in 2022–2023 on direct interventions to help young people stay safer;

	11,000	children and young people were supported through grants for local youth work to 20 community groups
	536,000	people engaged in education around knife crime through work in schools and online campaigns
	£42,000	spent on CCTV, youth club activities, and safe places
	20	young people supported back into education and employment after an arrest
	189	vulnerable young people supported in hospitals to make positive life choices
	3,000	young people engaged with youth work in places young people choose to hang out (like parks/streets)
	77	young people who were stopped by police because of drugs, made positive changes and were diverted away from arrest
	5305	'higher risk' children and young people were supported through sports, mentoring and group work

To find out more or to take part in our next listening project email rachel@ecvys.org.uk

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](#)

We have asked young people about their views on county lines, violence and safety. These are an integral part of our delivery, from planning, co-designing through to evaluating our work with young people. This includes young people reviewing applications for VV funding through our grants programme. When our young people tell us about their concerns, it is important we understand these in the context of their local communities, and that our analysis along with these community views underpin our delivery.

This includes the concerns and real-life experience of young people shaping and influencing our communications activity. Using results from the listening projects, plus research and analysis from segmented groups that we work with, we can focus delivering high quality campaigns that we know speak to and resonate with our target audiences. This includes our County Lines campaign that worked with young people in Essex youth services to understand their experiences of County Lines and drugs across the county. Watch our film Essex County Lines:
[Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit](#)



We have also developed a Knife Harm Campaign based on what young people and parents have told us about their concerns, how they like to receive information and what routes work best for them in hearing about what can be sensitive information.

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 Resource](#)



Key Finding

By identifying those most at risk of causing violence we can tie this to factors in localities and areas where external factors may be contributing or amplifying internal controls.

Annex 1 – Area Profiles

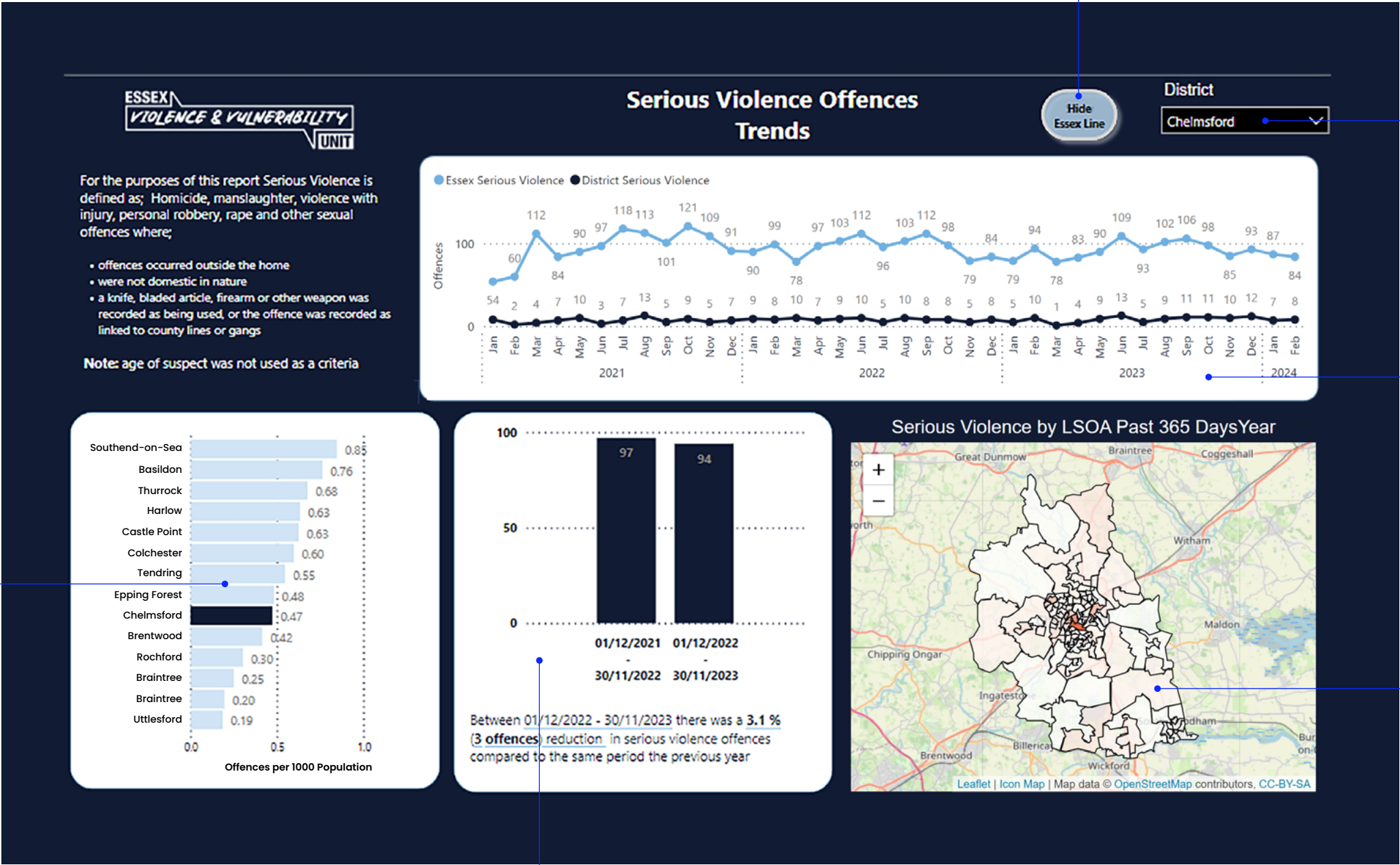
– Our Approach

For each Community Safety Partnership (CSP), serious violence data is made available for their area – this is now provided monthly. With the first set of data provided in October 2022. This informs the CSPs, as well as the Essex wide VVP work programme.

Trends

This button will switch off the light blue line showing the overall offences for the county of Essex. You must press CTRL and click for this to work.

This shows the number of offences within the district per head of 1,000 population, as well as the district's relative rank within the county of Essex.



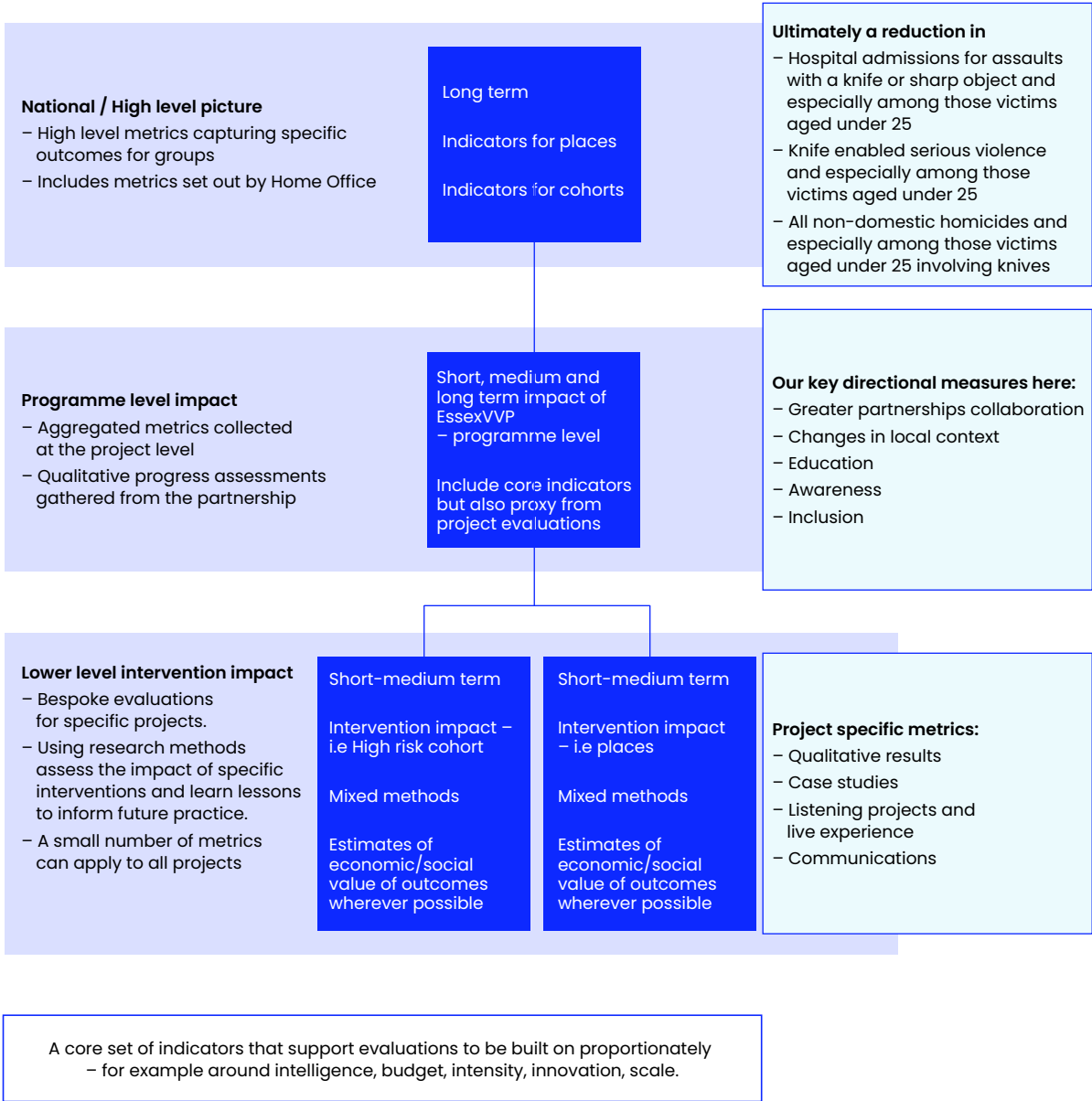
Annex 2 – Evaluation Framework

Our approach, is to:

- ✓ Take the learning from the national Youth Endowment Fund (YEF) ‘what works’ centre and seek to incorporate learning into Essex delivery.
- ✓ Continue to undertake evaluations of the projects to support at risk young people; including working with independent evaluators when appropriate to provide additional capacity, external expertise, objectivity and additional rigour to evaluations.
- ✓ Support collection and sharing of a consistent dataset (as per VV data sharing plan) to enable appropriate targeting of protective factors through VV funded interventions.
- ✓ Identify further opportunities for evaluation.
- ✓ Continue to evidence impact against cost benefit as set out in VV case for investment (2022).
- ✓ Gain a greater understanding of wider commissioned services and how this meets the needs of the VV identified cohorts.

Monitoring and evaluation framework

The following image reflects our overarching approach to monitoring and evaluation whereby information is garnered from national, programme and project level work.



Annex 3 – References

1. Brennan, I. R., & Moore, S. C. (2009). Weapons and violence: A review of theory and research. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 14(3), 215–225.
2. Garnezy, N (1985) Stress-resistant children: The search for protective factors. In J. E. Stevenson (Ed.), *Recent research in developmental psychopathology* (pp. 213–233). New York: Elsevier Science.
3. Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit – [Greater Manchester Violence Reduction Unit \(gmvruc.co.uk\)](http://gmvruc.co.uk)
4. Hoeffler A and Fearon J (2014). Benefits and Costs of the Conflict and Violence Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Working paper as of August 22, 2014
5. Home Office et al. (2021). 'From Harm to Hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives'.
6. Home Office Serious Violence Strategy 2018 [Home Office – Serious Violence Strategy, April 2018 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/684441/home-office-serious-violence-strategy-2018.pdf)
7. Home Office. (2022). County Lines Programme Overview. Available at: County Lines Programme overview – [County Lines Programme overview – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/county-lines-programme-overview)
8. Home Office: Serious Violence Duty Preventing and Reducing Serious Violence Statutory Guidance for responsible authorities England and Wales December 2022 [Serious Violence Duty – Statutory Guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1144441/serious-violence-duty-statutory-guidance.pdf)
9. Home Office: Preventing Serious Violence, 2019. Preventing serious violence: summary – [Preventing serious violence: summary – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-serious-violence-summary)
10. Home Office, (2020). Violence Reduction Unit interim guidance (publishing.service.gov.uk)
11. NCA (National Crime Agency), (2023). County Lines – National Crime Agency
12. Office of the Surgeon General (US); National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control (US); National Institute of Mental Health (US); Centre for Mental Health Services (US).
13. Office of National Statistics – The Nature of violent crime in England and Wales: Year ending 2022. [The nature of violent crime in England and Wales – Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violent-crime-in-england-and-wales/2022)
14. Office of National Statistics (Crime in England & Wales, year ending June 2020). www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables
15. Rockville (MD): Office of the Surgeon General (US); 2001.
16. Rutter, M Resilience in the face of adversity: Protective factors and resistance to psychiatric disorder. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, (1985);147:598–611.
17. A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention. A resource for local system leaders in England & Public Health England working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office
18. Stattin, H., & Magnusson, D Antisocial development: A holistic approach. *Development and Psychopathology*,(1996); 8:617–645.

19. Essex Police and Crime Plan 2021-2024
www.essex.pfcc.police.uk/what-we-are-doing/police-and-crime-plan
20. Violence Prevention Wales (2022).
[Youth Violence | Violence Prevention Unit \(violencepreventionwales.co.uk\)](https://violencepreventionwales.co.uk/youth-violence)
21. VRU evaluation report, gov.uk (2023).
[Violence Reduction Units, year ending March 2022 evaluation report GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/violence-reduction-units-year-ending-march-2022-evaluation-report)
22. West Midlands VRU –
[West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership \(westmidlands-vrp.org\)](https://westmidlands-vrp.org/)
23. Wieshmann H, Davies M, Sugg O, Davis S and Ruda S (2020). Violence in London: what we know and how to respond. A report commissioned by the Mayor of London's Violence Reduction Unit
24. World Health Organisation – Definition and Typology of Violence – [Violence Prevention Alliance Approach \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int/publications-detail/definition-and-typology-of-violence)
25. YEF (Youth Endowment Fund), 2022
[YEF-Children-violence-and-vulnerability-2022.pdf \(youthendowmentfund.org.uk\)](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/yef-children-violence-and-vulnerability-2022.pdf)

Annex 4 – Biases / Considerations

Biases, limitations and caveats have all been considered in the formation of this strategic needs assessment.

It is acknowledged that decisions have been made to determine what data, analysis and recommendations have been used and concluded. In establishing this the VVP has ensured that any conclusions are grounded in data and evidence which has been critically reviewed and analysed to ensure it is understood in both national and local context.

We have ensured that the voice of communities has been a constant thread throughout all research reviewing with those impacted if the presented data is representative of real-life experiences. That said the VVP acknowledges that no dataset is ever a perfect interpretation and may have limitations, this has been considered as part of the themes and recommendations within this strategic needs assessment.

**Supporting young people, families
and communities to live positive lives
free from violent crime and exploitation.**

Find out more:

www.essexvvu.co.uk

[!\[\]\(e2376d476d06eb31946dc01a69a4403a_img.jpg\) Essex Violence and Vulnerability Unit](#)

[!\[\]\(74d4806277d7e73349d8e8c0897931e9_img.jpg\) @essexvvu](#)

[!\[\]\(0aff635c4179ba9e710b00f4b01d3b20_img.jpg\) @EssexVVU](#)

