

A STRATEGY TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THURROCK 2017- 2020

Whilst this Strategy is focused on the needs of women and girls as a deliberate response to the disproportionate impact of the crimes of domestic and sexual violence and abuse on them, it also fully recognises and responds to the fact that men can be victims of these crimes, too. Similarly, it recognises that not all perpetrators are men.

The Thurrock Community Safety Partnership is committed to meeting the needs of both women and men by tackling all forms of exploitation and abuse across Thurrock and by delivering protection and legal redress for all.



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1. FOREWORD

As the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety, I am delighted to welcome this three-year Strategy to tackle violence against women and girls in Thurrock. The Strategy outlines our response to a wide range of serious crimes, affecting all sections of the community. As well as domestic and sexual violence and abuse, responding to honour based abuse, child sexual exploitation and other harmful cultural practices is included. Whilst it is recognised that women and girls are disproportionately affected, men can also be victims of violence and abuse, this Strategy accordingly, addresses the needs of all victims. It also looks to respond robustly to perpetrators, to reduce the number of victims of these offences.

All this is conducted within the framework of a strong and collaborative Community Safety Partnership and I look forward to seeing the positive results that will be achieved by the agencies within it.

Cllr Brian Little

2. VISION

The Vision of this Strategy is for everyone in Thurrock to live a life free from domestic and sexual violence and abuse and harmful practices, defined below as “Violence against Women and Girls” (VAWG).

3. PURPOSE

The government’s National Statement of Expectations for Violence Against Women and Girls Services (December, 2016), identifies a range of policies that should be considered in any effective strategy to combat VAWG. It describes VAWG as a range of unacceptable and deeply distressing crimes, including domestic violence and abuse; sexual violence; child sexual abuse; stalking; so-called “honour-based” violence – including forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM); gang-related violence; and human trafficking.

The National Statement emphasises that we can only deliver an effective VAWG Strategy if we;

- **Put the victim at the centre of service delivery;**
- **Have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe;**
- **Take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG;**
- **Safeguard individuals at every point;**
- **Raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.**

In line with the national approach on this agenda, this Strategy is therefore focused on the needs of women and girls as victims and is a deliberate response to the disproportionate impact of VAWG crimes on women and girls. The latest figures show that in Thurrock, 76.8% of victims were women and 23.3% were men. Nevertheless, the needs of men as victims are recognised and responded to just as robustly as female victims.

In responding to perpetrators, it is also recognised that women, as well as men, can be perpetrators. The latest figures for Thurrock confirm that 23.7% of perpetrators were women with 76.3% men. The gender split in Thurrock for victims and perpetrators almost exactly mirrors the proportions seen nationally.

We know that violence can affect women and girls regardless of their age, race, religion, socio-economic background, sexual orientation or marital status. It can take place in relationships, including same-sex relationships, in families, and in communities.

This Strategy and supporting Action Plan is intended to drive activity in Thurrock in a transparent and dynamic format to respond to the challenges of the National Statement. To help do this the Action Plan is formatted to show clearly how we intend to deliver against each of the aims identified in the Statement, using the

outcomes of the VAWG conference held in November 2016. These set out existing and potential service gaps and how the VAWG partners in Thurrock are responding to these gaps.

4. GOVERNANCE

The response in Thurrock to VAWG, is in alignment with the government's "Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2016-2020" (March, 2016) and the National Statement of Expectations, referred to above. More locally it supports the Outcomes of the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Domestic Abuse Board (SETDAB) and the delivery of the Board's "Joint Commissioning Strategy for Domestic Abuse, 2015-20".

Within Thurrock itself the VAWG Governance Group, reporting directly to the TCSP, identifies and implements local action with increasing effectiveness, to deliver against the Action Plan in support of the Strategy. The Action Plan is updated in advance of every meeting to ensure it is kept fully updated. The Group also feeds into the Thurrock Adult Safeguarding Board; the Thurrock Local Safeguarding Children's Board; and the Thurrock Health and Wellbeing Board.

A welcome development is that the SETDAB has expanded the remit of its work to incorporate a widened definition of domestic abuse, but this does not yet include sexual abuse and sexual violence. In Thurrock the government's definition, which does include these additional offences, is adopted.

5. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The legal framework that supports the work outlined in this Strategy is underpinned by several key pieces of legislation. These include;

- **The Equalities Act, 2010** which places a duty on all local authorities and other public bodies to eliminate unlawful victimisation, harassment and discrimination on the grounds of gender.
- **The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act, 2004** which introduced the requirement, from 13th April, 2011, for Community Safety Partnerships to conduct a Domestic Homicide Review of the circumstances surrounding the death of any person aged 16 or over, whose death was, or appears to be, a domestic homicide. Thurrock CSP liaises closely with all the other CSPs in Essex to monitor and adopt national good practice as well as the outcomes of Essex DHRs, to strengthen preventative measures to reduce the risks associated with such tragedies. The CSPs are supported by the establishment, in July 2017, of a centralised unit within the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- **The Care Act, 2014** which places adult safeguarding on a legal footing and directs the way in which it must be undertaken by local authorities.

6. **The Children Act, 1989** which places a responsibility on local authorities to safeguard children and, as amended by the Adoption and Children Act, 2002, adds to the definition of harm those children suffering impairment “from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.”

6. EVIDENCE BASE

The latest Crime Survey for England and Wales ¹ suggests there is a long-term downward trend in the proportion of 16-59 year-olds experiencing any form of reported domestic abuse, with latest figures indicating that 7.7% of women and 4.4% of men had been abused in the latest twelve-month period. This compared to the 11.5% of women and 6.4% of men reporting domestic abuse in 2005-06.

However, more than one in four women and more than one in ten males have experienced domestic abuse at least once since the age of 16. We also know that abuse affects significant numbers of people over the age of 59 and data is now being captured to direct activity at both national and local level to deal with this area which has not always had the attention it requires. Latest police data confirms that in 2016, 15.6% of victims of domestic abuse in Thurrock were over the age of 45, compared with the county average of 13.0%.

In Thurrock, in the twelve months to December 2016, according to the police,² there were 1,055 female and 319 males victims of domestic abuse over the age of 16.

When compared against the population as a whole in Thurrock, this was the equivalent of 16.8 female victims per 1,000 population, compared with an Essex average of 13.6, giving Thurrock the fourth highest district ratio, behind Tendring (19.1); Harlow (18.3); and Basildon (17.3). For male victims the Thurrock ratio was 5.3 per 1,000 head of population. This compared with an Essex average of 4.3; the same ratio of 5.3 was seen in Basildon and Harlow and less than Tendring (6.5) and Southend (5.7).

The combined rate for both female and male victims in Thurrock was 11.2 per 1,000 head of population, compared with 9.1 for the whole of Essex, placing the district fourth behind Tendring (13.2); Basildon (11.6); and Harlow (12.2 offences per 1,000 head of population).

This is despite reporting levels remaining low. Research shows that still only 26% of women and 10% of men told police of their most recent experience. That said, more victims do at least disclose to someone than used to be the case. During the period 2001 to 2016, the proportion of women disclosing any form of abuse rose from 69% to 88%, whilst the proportion of male victims disclosing during the same period, rose from 37% to 61%.

¹ “Focus on violent crime and sexual offences, England and Wales; year ending Mar 2016” – Office for National Statistics, February 2017

² Essex Police Domestic Abuse Data Summary Pack – 12 Months to March 2017

The challenge is therefore how best to improve the public's awareness of the services available and the referral pathways to access them so that an even greater proportion of these cases are brought to notice of the relevant agencies, enabling more victims to be protected and more perpetrators brought to justice.

7. POLICE DATA

DA Offences vs. Incidents

The phrase "total domestic abuse incidents" includes all domestic abuse investigations and can be divided into crimes and non-crimes. The terms "crime" and "offences" is used interchangeably but relates to the notifiable crime types defined by the Home Office that make up the recorded crime figures. Domestic abuse offences are therefore recorded crimes that are domestic in nature, for example an assault by one partner on another. Domestic incidents are any other investigations that are domestic in nature but no crimes have occurred or been disclosed to the Police. An example could be a drunken verbal argument between partners to which the Police are called to attend.

Solved Crime

The crime is regarded as solved when a perpetrator has been recorded as responsible for committing the offence and has been dealt with by one of the approved methods of disposal.

The Table below gives details of those incidents reported to police both county-wide and in Thurrock. It can be seen that whilst there was a 4.2% increase in reporting across the County in 2016/17, compared with the previous twelve months, from 30,719 to 32,009 incidents. In Thurrock the number of incidents reported in 2016/17, fell by 5.7% (183 incidents) compared to the previous period, from 3,219, to 3,036. That was still over 8 incidents per day.

Similarly, whilst recorded offences increased across the whole County by 7.2%, from 12,779 to 13,697, a reduction of 2.6% was seen in Thurrock, from 1,418 to 1,381, nevertheless, domestic abuse cases still accounted for 10.6% of all crime locally.

Area	Incidents			Offences			Solved Rate %		
	2015/16	2016/17	Change	2015/16	2016/17	Change	2015/16	2016/17	Change
Essex	30719	32009	+ 1290 (4.2%)	12779	13697	+918 (7.2%)	30.7%	26.2%	-4.5%
Thurrock	3219	3036	-183 (-5.7%)	1418	1381	-37 (-2.6%)	32.1%	27.9%	-4.2%

In terms of actual numbers of offences recorded in 2016/17, of the districts in Essex, Thurrock had the fifth highest total, as shown below;

Tendring – 1,516

Southend – 1,513

Colchester – 1,407

Thurrock – 1,381

8. VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

In 2016/17, again using police data, there were a total of 2,975 victims of domestic abuse recorded in Thurrock. Of these, 2,284 (76.8%) were female and 691 (23.2%) were male. These are very similar to the proportions seen at County and national level.

During the same period, there were 2,992 perpetrators identified, of which 2,284 (76.3%) were male and 708 (23.7%) were female, reflecting closely again the proportions seen elsewhere.

A study over the last four years shows that in Essex 75.8% of suspects were current or former intimate partners; 9.8% were adult children; 4.5% were siblings; 4.2% were parents towards adult children; and 3.5% were towards family members.

The connection between what used to be called the “toxic trio” between domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health is emphasised by these data which also identified that 18% of victims had substance misuse problems (7% drugs and 11% alcohol) and 35% had mental health issues. With perpetrators, the data shows that 93% had substance misuse problems (39% drugs and 54% alcohol) with 28% with mental health issues.

Greater engagement between key agencies and partners, both countywide and locally, is progressing in order to harmonise services to victims and perpetrators, to reduce offences and improve aftercare.

To make this happen in Thurrock the supporting Action Plan lists eight specific actions to support victims and seven in regard to perpetrators. Eleven actions are aimed at improving safeguarding and twelve to improve partnership working. All these are contained in the accompanying Action Plan. These include improving the response to the needs of both young people and the elderly specifically; neither of these groups have always received adequate focus previously in VAWG Strategies. Responding to VAWG in the workplace will also be addressed.

Perpetrator Programmes

In Thurrock the Domestic Violence Interventions Programme delivers a 26- week RESPECT-accredited perpetrator programme to ten men each year. Importantly, it also provides support for (ex) partners regarding practical and safety issues. The key

performance indicators and feedback from course attendees and their (ex) partners is impressive.

Whilst other perpetrator programmes are in place across Essex, they tend to be small scale in nature and very locally based. It is clear there is scope to link these more effectively. Consequently, it is extremely encouraging to see that a successful, Countywide bid to the Transformation Fund, in which Thurrock was a key contributor, has secured £450,000, over the next three years to upgrade the response to perpetrators. This is focused on five key areas, comprising;

1. Targeting “Bystander Intervention” – which seeks to challenge attitudes, especially focused on the university student population;
2. Early intervention, including male mentoring, aimed at the 13-18 age group;
3. Increasing service capacity, including to sexual violence;
4. Perpetrator outreach;
5. Perpetrator programmes in Chelmsford Prison.

Progress in these five areas will be closely monitored and key partners will be kept updated.

9. BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC (BAME) COMMUNITIES

Using data for 2015/16, research conducted by the Place Team, Organisational Intelligence of Essex County Council, (Domestic Abuse in BME Communities – August 2016) has shown that of the 30,539 domestic abuse incidents reported in Essex, 10.2% involved members of the BAME communities. This is in line with the proportion of the whole population of Essex which come from BME communities, which is 10.5%.

In Thurrock, 29,010, residents come from members of BAME communities; the equivalent of 19.1% of the district's population, with five of the top ten wards in Essex with the highest BAME percentage population are in Thurrock. These being;

2nd - South Chafford (40.3%)

4th - Grays Riverside (38.8%)

5th - West Thurrock and South Stifford (36.7%)

7th - Chafford & North Stifford (31.7%)

8th - Grays Thurrock (26.9%)

Of the total number of domestic abuse cases in Thurrock, 22.6% involved BAME residents, which suggests that effective engagement with BAME communities, vital to ensure all victims of VAWG can access services may be in place. This is especially important in Thurrock as we had 626 BAME victims during this period, the highest number in the County, well above the 494 victims in Southend, the district with the second highest number.

A number of these victims were deemed to have “No Access to Public Funds”, which causes further complications in responding effectively and sensitively to their needs.

The Action Plan, as well as covering generic support for victims and perpetrators, includes specific work to scope the extent of domestic abuse amongst BAME communities, including those victims with no recourse to public funds.

10. DOMESTIC HOMICIDE REVIEWS (DHR's)

Nationally, over the last three years, 60% of all female homicides and 14% of all male homicides (amounting to 29% of all homicides) were found to be due to domestic abuse. Since April, 2011, Community Safety Partnerships have had the statutory responsibility to conduct DHRs in all cases of domestic homicide. These are intended to provide an opportunity to learn any lessons from the circumstances of each case and identify and implement any service improvements.

Since that time there have, by July 2017, been 28 domestic homicides in Essex, each requiring a DHR, although thankfully, the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership has yet to face the challenges of conducting one. In July, 2017, in a very positive and well-received initiative by the Police and Crime Commissioner, a centralised unit was set up to support CSPs with the substantial administration requirements of DHRs, without removing their statutory responsibilities for them.

The recommendations of published DHRs are studied closely, both in Thurrock and around the County, to learn from the lessons reported in them and to implement any responses to them. These have often indicated problems with data sharing. Also, that many perpetrators were in treatment for substance misuse or mental health issues and had missed appointments prior to committing the homicides. Work is in hand to develop more effective referral pathways to address these recurring weaknesses as speedily as possible.

11. INDEPENDENT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ADVOCATES (IDVAs)

IDVAs help keep victims and their children safe from harm from violent partners or family. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis, to assess the level of risk. They:

- discuss the range of suitable options
- develop plans for immediate safety – including practical steps for victims to protect themselves and their children
- develop plans for longer-term safety
- represent their clients at the MARAC

- help apply sanctions and remedies available through the criminal and civil courts, including housing options

In 2016/17, there were 282 referrals to the IDVA service in Thurrock, roughly 8% of the Essex-wide total of 3,472. Whilst both in Thurrock and Essex as a whole, the IDVAs do provide an excellent service, there is continuing concern that almost all referrals still come only from the police.

Nationally the percentage of police referrals is between 60% and 75%, however in Essex the figure rises to 84% and in Thurrock to 95% (268 of the 282 referrals).

Action will be taken by the VAWG Governance Group to increase awareness of the role of IDVAs and referral pathways with partner agencies to ensure that all appropriate cases are brought to notice and acted upon. The quality of the IDVA service will continue to be evaluated through engagement with the contract monitoring undertaken by staff in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

12. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION NOTICES (DVPNs)

A DVPN is aimed at a perpetrator aged 18 years or over, who has been violent or threatened violence at the time of a domestic incident or presents an on-going risk of violence to the victim. It allows immediate conditions to be placed on perpetrators by police that can prohibit them from returning to the family home and prevent direct contact with the victim and children as well as attending the area in which the victim resides. The objective is to allow the victim and the perpetrator to have a period of reflection which gives police and partner agencies time to consider further, more co-ordinated action

The DVPN is also the initial stage of advising a domestic violence perpetrator that the police will be seeking a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) against them. This allows the police and assisting agencies to build on existing procedures and bridges the current protective gap, providing immediate emergency protection for the victim, allowing them space to explore the options available and make informed decisions regarding their safety. An application for a DVPO must be heard at court within 48 hours and can last from 14 days – 28 days.

Since the introduction of DVPNs in June 2014, data from Essex Police indicates that 835 DVPO applications were made, of which 733 DVPOs were granted by the courts. In Thurrock, a total of 167 DVPNs have been issued, since they came into force, as shown below:

2014 - 31

2015 - 91

2016 - 36

2017(YTD) - 9

Action will be taken to ensure close links between police at local and central level, including staff in Op. Juno and Op Shield, the on-going police operations against perpetrators are maintained further to improve liaison between them and local stakeholders and partners. This will include work on high risk perpetrators.

13. SANCTUARY SCHEME

The Sanctuary Scheme supports victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence or hate crime by providing professionally installed security measures to allow those experiencing these crimes to target-harden their homes. This enables them to remain in their own homes, where it is safe for them to do so, and they so wish to do so. In Thurrock the Council offers this service to victims of all tenures and work with registered providers in the borough to safeguard all survivors.

Whilst referrals are accepted from both internal and external agencies, the majority of referrals are made from Essex Police, Social Care or Housing staff.

The number of referrals has increased markedly over the last three years, as can be seen from these figures;

2014/15 – 56 referrals

2015/16 – 105 referrals

2016/17 – 135 referrals.

The staff members of the Council's Housing Team also deal with domestic abuse cases involving residents. These have increased in 2016/17, by 29 cases (13.5%) compared to the previous year, from 215 cases to 244 cases.

14. CHANGING PATHWAYS

Changing Pathways is a specialist domestic abuse support provider in Thurrock and South East Essex. Its services for survivors of domestic abuse in Thurrock include:

- A locally based refuge for women and children who are at risk of serious harm and unable to remain in their own home.
- Specialist children and young people support for children living in the refuge.
- A floating support service to support individuals experiencing domestic abuse and living in the community.
- One to one parenting support programme through the Brighter Futures Early Help service.
- Specialist Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) offering culturally sensitive domestic abuse support to the local BAME community.
- Health focused IDVAs with Basildon University Hospital.
- Support for victims of stalking and harassment.
- Specialist and confidential domestic abuse adult and child counselling for service users.

The majority (96%) of service users in Thurrock, between 1st February and 30th June 2017, were female, whilst 35% of service users identifying themselves as coming from BAME communities. A further 20% of service users identified as having a disability and 70% of total service users were aged between 21 and 40 years.

Multiple/Complex Needs

Between 1st April and 30th June 2017, 70% of Thurrock refuge residents were being supported by our Practitioners with their needs that could be considered as multiple/complex. The support needs of these residents were as follows:

Support Needs*	%
Substance Misuse	13%
Alcohol Misuse	19%
Poor Mental Health	63%
Child Protection/Child in Need	19%
Immigration Needs	6%

15. MULTI-AGENCY RISK ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE (MARAC)

The MARAC is located in the MASH and holds meetings every Wednesday morning to assess the response to all high-risk cases DV cases. The result is that every case has been heard within seven days, half the target date set by the Southend, Essex and Thurrock Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Team Steering Group.

The latest Review Report (July 2017), identifies that between 1st January 2017 and 30th April 2017, 45 cases were heard, of which 29 involved children and the remaining 16 were adult-only cases.

Referrals are mainly from police, with only 9 from other agencies. This is outside the recommended ratio and work is in hand to raise awareness of the role of the MARAC and of its reporting pathways.

Very encouragingly, only 2 cases of repeat referrals were seen and feedback from clients has been extremely positive.

16. HONOUR BASED ABUSE (HBA)

HBA is defined by the National Police Chiefs' Council as;

“any incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse), which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the “honour” of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community’s code of behaviour.”

The very use of the term “honour” in relation to the offences referred to and categorised as HBA is, itself, controversial. HBA covers a wide range of offences,

not just those involving violence, such as assaults, kidnap, murder and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), but also harassment; criminal damage; arson and forced marriage. It differs from domestic abuse in that the perpetrator may not necessarily be an intimate partner or family member, but can be more than one individual and come from other families and the wider community to which the victim belongs.

Identifying that these offences are motivated by the protection or defence of so-called “honour” can be a challenge, accordingly, data at national, County and local level remains less than comprehensive, but considerable efforts are being made to improve it, to enable responses to be focused as effectively as possible. The findings of Karma Nirvana, a charity supporting men and women at risk of forced marriage or other HBA offences, is very helpful in identifying the most effective approach to be taken.

The two specific offences within the wider definition of HBA that are most commonly associated with it are Forced Marriage and FGM.

Forced Marriage

Forced marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties where duress is a factor. Data gathered by Essex Police (Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation Problem Profile – January 2017), shows that in 2015/16, there were 12 cases of forced marriage. Action will be taken to raise awareness of this offence with students in local academies and schools, as well as amongst frontline staff in partner agencies, with whom greater understanding of referral routes will be a focus.

Female Genital Mutilation

During the same period there were 4 cases of FGM, which is defined as any procedure that intentionally alters or causes injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons and 75 other HBA offences reported to police. Of these 55% came to notice from the reporting of a crime and the remaining 45% were created to protect and safeguard a victim, or potential victim.

In Thurrock a member of the Barnardo’s National FGM Centre is attached to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). In 2016/17, this staff member received 13 referrals and conducted 5 telephone consultations. The referrals came from midwives (11), schools (3), police (2) and the courts (1). Ten of the referrals related to families of Nigerian origin and the rest from Eritrea, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Uganda. Two FGM Protection Orders were taken out and several others referred for further interventions by the FGM Centre.

The staff member also delivers awareness raising and training for front-line staff, to drive up knowledge of this offence and how to respond to cases when they come to light.

A wide-ranging programme of 13 actions in regard to the overarching challenges of HBA is included in the Action Plan. A further 16 actions focus on ensuring a robust professional response to FGM, amongst which be establishing closer links with local community and faith groups, as well as schools and frontline staff.

17. HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Whilst Human Trafficking is within the wider definition VAWG, it is dealt with by the TCSP as part of its response to Modern Day Slavery, the details of which are contained in the separate Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking Action Plan.

18. SEXUAL ABUSE AND EXPLOITATION

Concerns about the under-reporting of domestic abuse cases are also very evident in the official figures for sexual violence. The latest figures for Thurrock are as follows;

	RAPE OFFENCES	RAPE OFFENCES SOLVED	OTHER SEXUAL OFFENCES	OTHER SEXUAL OFFENCES SOLVED
2015/16	157	24	102	25
2016/17	144	24	97	5
CHANGE	-13	-	-5	-20

The South Essex Rape and Incest Crisis Centre (SERICC) is a Thurrock based specialist service provider for all victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse.

SERICC provides services in Thurrock, Basildon, Brentwood, Harlow and Epping and is the lead partner for Synergy Essex, a partnership of Essex Rape Crisis Centres. SERICC offer specialist sexual violence support services including:

- **Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVA)** providing specialist support and advocacy for victims and survivors throughout the Criminal Justice System
- **Sexual Violence Advocacy Support** providing sexual violence advocacy in relation to homelessness, debt, interruption to employment/education and independent living.
- **Specialist Sexual Violence Counselling Service** offering specialist, confidential counselling and support to anyone who has experienced any form of sexual violence.
- **Children and Families** providing direct work with children and young people that have experienced sexual violence/abuse and the wider family members, including siblings and parents who are impacted by sexual violence.

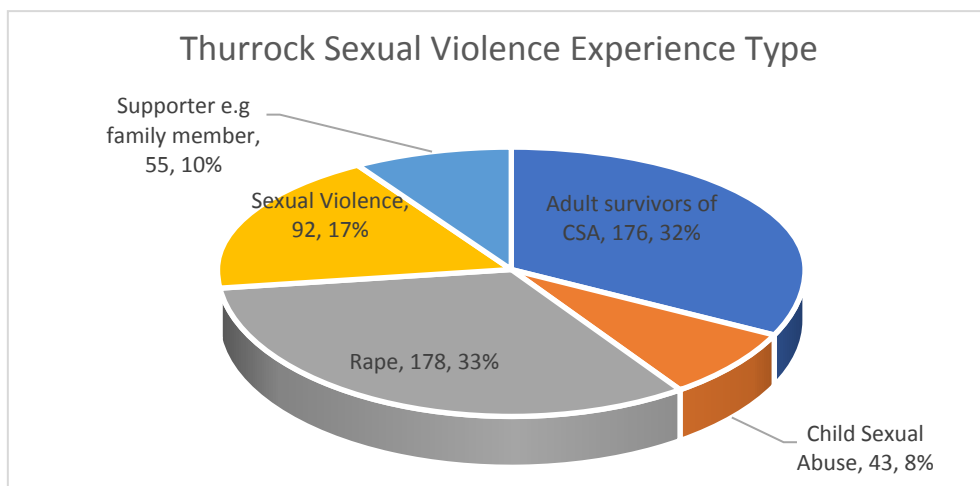
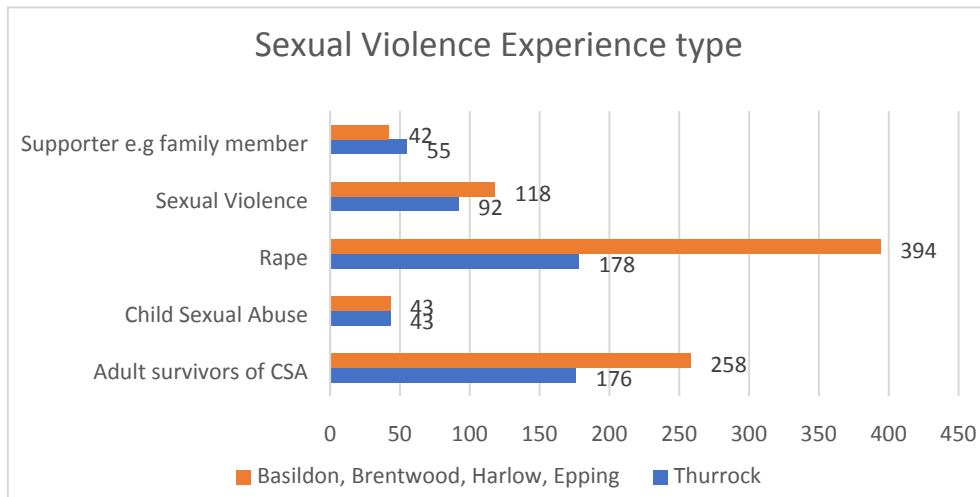
The chart overleaf indicates the steady growth in the demand for services, counselling and support over the last three years;

Thurrock only contacts	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
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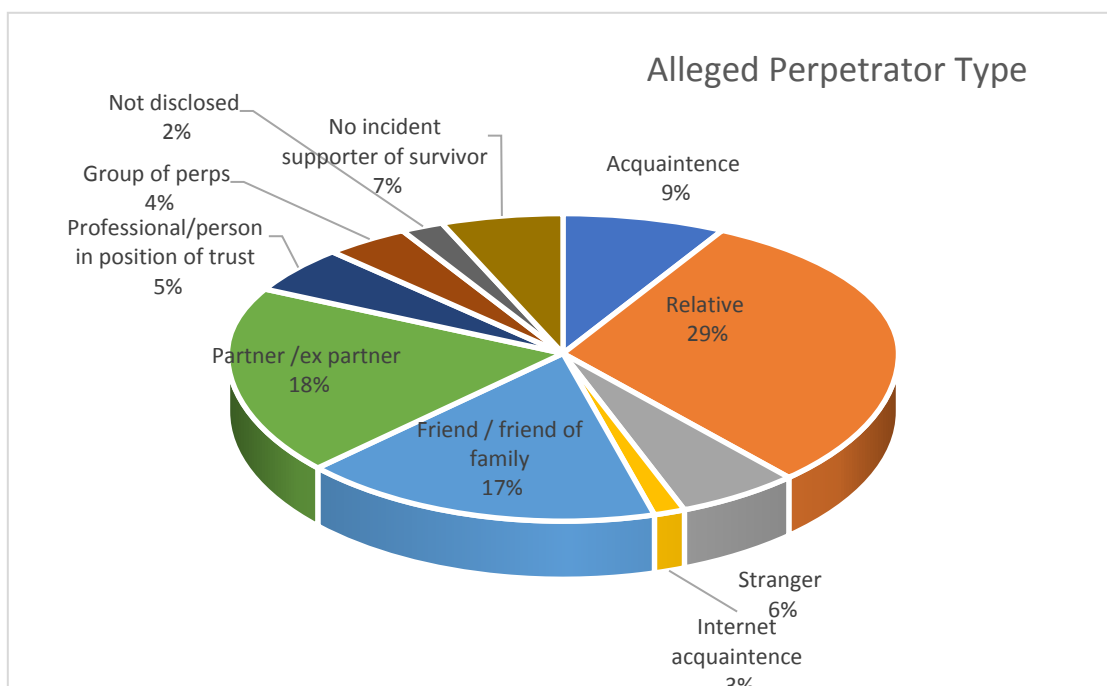
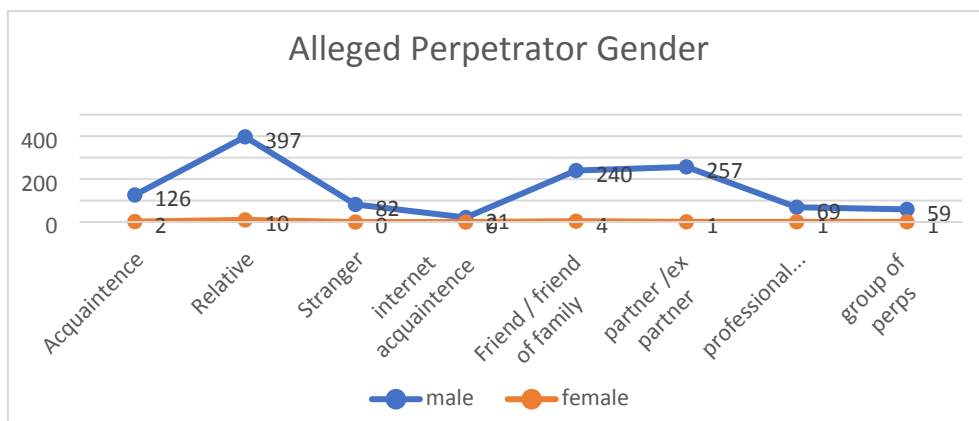
One to one support sessions	2937	3822	3982
Telephone/email contacts	6998	11,214	13,370

2016/17 SERICC Service User Statistics

This chart below details the experience of sexual violence disclosed by service users who used SERICC's services between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017. Experiences may have been recent or non-recent.

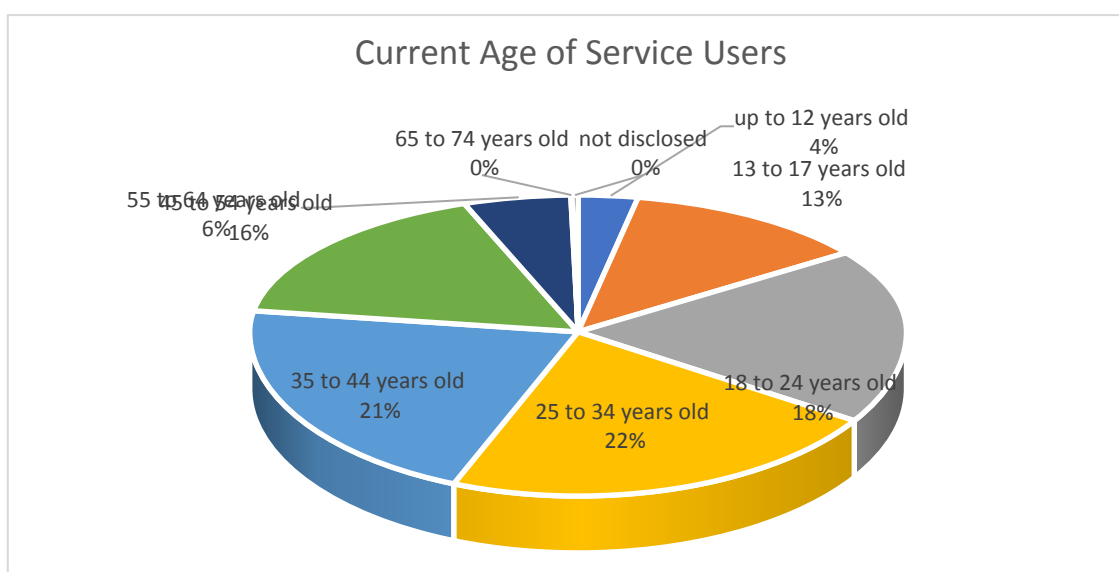


The charts below show the breakdown of the gender of the alleged perpetrator and the relationship between them, of all disclosed experiences of sexual violence and abuse between 1st April 2016 and 31st March 2017.



- 94% of services users knew the alleged perpetrator.
- 98.64% of alleged perpetrators were male.
- The category “Group of perpetrators” relates to organised sexual offences carried out by more than one perpetrator at one time.

The Chart below shows the current age of those accessing SERICC services.



The youngest victim/survivor was age 4; the oldest victim/survivor was age 74. The Action Plan includes 21 actions in regard to Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, covering awareness raising, referral pathways, support for victims and other tangible measures to improve the service further for them.

19. SEXUAL ASSAULT REFERRAL CENTRE (SARC)

The SARC, based in Brentwood Community Hospital, is funded by a partnership between Essex Police and NHS England. It provides a service to men, women and children who have been raped or sexually assaulted, which might be either acute or historic in nature.

The service can be accessed by the police, any outside agency, or the client themselves and consists of the following immediate and/or ongoing care;

Immediate Care

- Forensic Evidence Collection by trained specialist medical staff
- Medical care – including emergency contraception or HIV Post Exposure Prophylaxis
- Specialist Sexually Trained Officer (SOTOs) from Essex Police, and;
- Crisis workers

Ongoing Care

Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and counselling is provided at the SARC by the Essex Rape Crisis Partnership.

The Annual Activity Report for 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017, reports that there were 298 referrals, which included 22 self-referrals. Specific data for the full year is not available, but a shorter period shows that 12 cases were from Thurrock.

Additionally, full –year data shows that 6% of referrals were male, 1% transgender and 93% female.

20. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

The sexual exploitation of children and young people involves exploitive situations, contexts and relationships where they, or a third person, or persons, receive “something” (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affections, gifts or money), as a result of them performing and/or others performing on them sexual activities. This can include forms of grooming.

The common themes seem to be that these offences are complex and are usually hidden both from the public and professionals. There are rarely straightforward responses to these challenges and data on the prevalence of child sexual exploitation have only recently begun to be collected. Nevertheless, it must be assumed to be taking place and Thurrock is committed to the countywide approach as contained in the Southend, Essex and Thurrock CSE Strategy, which contains the following seven themes;

- Prevention
- Identification
- Assessment of Risk Factors/Intervention/Protection
- Engagement with children/young people
- Impact
- Disruption of Perpetrators & Enforcement
- Support for victims of CSE

Local activity has included awareness raising by staff from the Council’s Licensing Department and the CSE Manager, with hotels and taxi drivers, which has been well-received. The Action Plan includes a section dedicated to directing activity against this criminal activity.

STALKING

There is no agreed definition of stalking but it is described as a pattern of repeated, unwanted behaviour that causes the individual to feel distressed or scared. It has an impact on all areas of the community, not just the individual victim, but also friends, family, work colleagues and other associates. Recent researchⁱ into 350 domestic homicides showed that stalking behaviours were present in 94% of cases. This has led stalking to be described as murder in slow motion.

A nationwide survey in 2016 - The Stalker In Your Pocket – showed nearly a fifth of all British adult women (18%) and 8% of all British adult men had been stalked. 20% of people are stalked by someone they don’t know. Despite this high prevalence, the police recorded only 4,168 stalking offences in the 12 months to June 2016. Even fewer – 1,102 cases – were prosecuted in the courts in 2015-16.

In August 2016, Changing Pathways set up a specialist stalking service for individuals in Thurrock and South East Essex funded by the Big Lottery. In the first twelve months, the service has provided intensive support to over 70 individuals experiencing stalking and as the service becomes established, it is anticipated that referrals to the service will increase.

To add to this service, a further 6 actions are contained in a dedicated section of the Action Plan, to drive activity to improve how we deal with this issue, including maintaining links with the Suzy Lamplugh Trust to promote awareness raising on an annual basis; developing self-assessment tools and making available personal safety equipment, such as alarms, for individuals and communities.

APPENDIX 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Name of service or policy	Thurrock violence Against Women and Girls Strategy 2017/20
Lead Officer	Jim Nicolson
Contact Details	
Why is this service or policy development/review needed?	
To inform the annual refresh of the strategy and subsequent action plan to highlight and address any community or equalities anomalies. These to be incorporated within the three year action plan	

1. Community impact (this can be used to assess impact on staff although a cumulative impact should be considered).

What impacts will this service or policy development have on communities?
Look at what you know? What does your research tell you?

Consider:

- National and local data sets – for example, [key statistics and ward profiles](#)
- Complaints
- Consultation and service monitoring information
- Voluntary and Community Organisations
- The Equality Act places a specific duty on people with ‘protected characteristics’. The table below details these groups and helps you to consider the impact on these groups.

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	What are the positive and negative impacts?	How will benefits be enhanced and negative impacts minimised or eliminated?
Local communities in general	x			Tackling hidden offences across all spectres of society	By improved engagement and awareness raising, resulting in increased reporting and safeguarding
Age	x			<p>The strategy addresses victims and perpetrators both elderly and young unlike previous national strategies</p> <p>Sexual exploitation adversely impacts young people</p> <p>Elder abuse is acknowledged as under reported and is being highlighted for action</p>	Targeted campaigns such as Christmas 2017 for both elderly and young
Disability	x			<p>The strategy addresses sexual abuse of adults with learning disabilities.</p> <p>Also, mental health issues are addressed within the connection to domestic abuse and substance misuse.</p>	<p>By engagement with local voluntary groups and addressing offender behaviour.</p> <p>By seeking to harmonise the services available to respond to clients' needs.</p>
Gender reassignment		x		The scope of the strategy doesn't cover gender reassignment	
Marriage and civil partnership	x			Addresses abuse within all domestic	By greater transparency with

				relationships and highlights forced marriage in particular.	communities linked to forced marriage
Pregnancy and maternity	x			Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to domestic abuse, the strategy reinforces the responses to domestic abuse	By increased engagement with midwifery services and FGM
Race (including Gypsies, Roma and Travellers)	x			<p>Improving engagement and reporting levels from all BAME communities. 19% of Thurrock residents come from BAME communities compared to the County average of 10.5%.</p> <p>22.6% of Thurrock victims of domestic abuse come from BAME communities compared to the County average of 10.2%. Reporting is therefore disproportionate.</p> <p>BAME communities are more at risk from Honour Based Abuse including FGM</p>	Ongoing work across Essex to increase awareness and reporting across BAME communities
Religion or belief		x		None of the established religions recognise the abuse highlighted within this strategy	
Gender	x			<p>77% of victims were female. 24% of perpetrators are male</p> <p>There is a greater focus on men as victims within this strategy</p>	Greater support and awareness for men as victims

Sexual orientation		x		The strategy makes no differentiation on sexual orientation and treats all victims and perpetrators regardless of sexual orientation	We need to improve the accuracy of data of with regards to this community in order to drive activity and is reflected in the action plan
Any community issues identified for this location? <i>See above link to ward profiles.</i> If the project is based in a specific location please state where, or whether Borough wide. Please note any detail of relevance e.g. is it an area with high unemployment, or public transport limited?	x			Whilst domestic abuse affects all communities, deprived wards have a higher reporting level. 5 of the top 10 wards of BAME communities in Essex are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sth Chafford • Grays Riverside • W Thurrock & S Stifford • Chafford & N Stifford • Grays Thurrock 	Targeted response to these wards.

2. Consultation.

Provide details of what steps you have taken or plan to take to consult the whole community or specific groups affected by the service or policy development e.g. on-line consultation, focus groups, consultation with representative groups?

This is a vital step – see [full guidance \(PDF\)](#).

The actions plan was developed following consultation with attendees at the VAWG conference 2016.

The following voluntary groups have been consulted with: Changing Pathways, SERICC, Safer Places, and Thurrock Lifestyle Solutions

This strategy will be shared with Thurrock Council staff for: Women's, LGBT, BAME and Disability

3. Monitoring and Review

How will you review community and equality impact once the service or policy has been implemented? <i>These actions should be developed using the information gathered in Section 1 and 2 and should be picked up in your departmental/service business plans.</i>		
Action	By when?	By who?
The accompanying action plan identifies the gaps referred to above and also the responses over the next 3 years in order to address them	March 2020	Jim Nicolson and Thurrock VAWG governance group within the Community Safety Partnership

4. Next steps

It is important the information gathered is used to inform any Council reports that are presented to Cabinet or Overview and Scrutiny committees. This will allow Members to be furnished with all the facts in relation to the impact their decisions will have on different equality groups and the community as a whole.

Take some time to précis your findings below. This can then be added to your report template for sign off by the Community Development and Equalities team at the consultation stage of the report cycle.

Implications/ Customer Impact
<p>The implementation of the strategy and action plan will have a positive impact for victims who have not previously received the level of attention they merit. Improved harmonised interagency services will also tackle the root causes including early interventions with perpetrators and also work with BAME communities to forge a robust approach to Honour Based Abuse.</p> <p>The strategy and action plan signpost a sensitive but thorough response to safeguard victims regardless of gender and ethnicity.</p>

5. Sign off

The information contained in this template should be authorised by the relevant project sponsor or Head of Service who will be responsible for the accuracy of the information now provided and delivery of actions detailed.

Name	Role (e.g. project sponsor, head of service)	Date
Jim Nicolson	Chair of the VAWG governance group	12/9/17
Julie Rogers	Chair of the Community safety Partnership	26/9/17
Natalie Warren	On behalf of Thurrock Council	24/9/17

APPENDIX 2 – Glossary of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Term
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CRC	Community Rehabilitation Company
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DAAT	Drug and alcohol action team
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
IDVA	Independent Domestic Violence Advocate
ISVA	Independent Sexual Violence Advisor
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
NPS	National probation service
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
YOS	Youth Offending Service

APPENDIX 3 - Definitions of Offences

Domestic Abuse, including Intimate Partner Violence has since March 2013 been defined as:

“any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.”

This can encompass, but is not limited to the following types of abuse: psychological; physical; sexual; financial; emotional”

Family members are defined as: mother, father, son, daughter, brother, sister and grandparents whether directly related, in-laws or step-family.

“Controlling behaviour” is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependant by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them, of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

“Coercive behaviour” is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim

Forced Marriage is a marriage conducted without the valid consent of one or both parties where duress is a factor

Honour Based Violence/Abuse (so called) is an international term used by many cultures for justification of abuse and violence. It is a crime or incident committed in order to protect or defend the family or community “honour”; this can often, but not always, go hand in hand with forced marriages.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) refers to procedures that intentionally alter or cause injury to the **female genital** organs for non-medical reasons

Sexual Violence and Abuse **Sexual Violence and Abuse** can be defined as any behaviour perceived to be of a sexual nature which is unwanted and takes place without consent or understanding:-

- **Rape** is defined as penetrative sex with another person against their will. This includes vaginal, anal and oral penetration.
- **Sexual assault** covers any other sort of sexual contact and behaviour that is unwanted, ranging from touching to any other activity if it is sexual.
- **Child Sexual Abuse** Child sexual abuse is the involvement of a child in sexual activity that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or for which the child is not developmentally prepared and cannot give consent
- **Sexual Harassment** is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favours, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Sexual exploitation of children and young people involves exploitive situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive “something” (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs,

alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. (This can include forms of grooming)

Sexual Harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

Sexual Exploitation including trafficking for sexual exploitation the forcible or deceptive recruitment of woman, men and children, for the purposes of forced prostitution or sexual exploitation:

Stalking has no legal definition but the effect of such behaviour is to curtail a victim's freedom, and when carried out repeatedly amounts to a course of conduct, which may then cause significant alarm, harassment or distress to the victim. Stalking behaviour can be educated online and is known as cyber stalking.
