

28 January 2021		ITEM: 12
Health and Wellbeing Board		
Essex Sexual Abuse Strategy		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: No	
Report of: Greg Myddelton, Police Fire Crime Commissioner Office		
Accountable Strategic Lead: Cheryl Wells, Community Safety, Emergency Planning & Resilience		
Accountable Director: Julie Rogers, Environment, Highways and Counter Fraud		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

The Essex Sexual Abuse Strategy represents the county's first partnership strategy to focus on sexual abuse; bringing together a range of stakeholders that all have a role to play in preventing and reducing sexual abuse, as well as ensuring perpetrators are brought to justice. The strategy's vision is "for partners to work together to prevent the volume and impact of sexual violence and abuse in Southend, Essex and Thurrock" and it focuses on the key themes of prevention, victim services, awareness/communications, partnership working across the criminal justice system, and perpetrators. The strategy includes specific objectives for each theme, and an outcomes framework which makes it clear what the ambition of the partnership is, including a clear understanding of consent amongst children and young people, giving victims access to appropriate support, and increasing the rate of sexual abuse charges and prosecutions.

The strategy has been developed using existing resources such as the national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy, the NHS England Strategic direction for sexual assault and abuse services as well as local strategies including the Thurrock VAWG strategy, and Thurrock's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on sexual violence and abuse.

1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 The Board is asked to endorse the strategy and consider how their organisations might help to deliver the strategy's objectives in Thurrock.**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Crime Survey of England and Wales estimates that 20% of women and 4% of men have experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16. In Essex this equates to around 300,000 people. The demand for support has increased over recent years as the issue has become increasingly prominent due to high profile cases and coverage on social and mainstream media.
- 2.2 Nationally, there has been an increasing focus on sexual abuse in recent years, for instance the ongoing Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) as well as publications such as the [Home Office VAWG strategy](#) (2016) and [NHS strategic direction for sexual abuse support](#) (2018). This strategy is the first attempt to develop a local strategic response to sexual abuse that articulates how the partnership will tackle sexual abuse. As well as it being imperative to develop the strategy in response to the growing need in Essex, a partnership sexual abuse strategy is also a recommendation in the [Home Office Commissioning toolkit for sexual abuse, 2019](#)

3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Demand for specialist support services for victims of sexual abuse in Essex has increased consistently and significantly over recent years. A chart in the full strategy shows it increased from 2,195 in 2017-18 to 4,173 in the most recent quarter (data provided by Synergy Rape Crisis Partnership).
- 3.2 The Police Fire Crime Commissioner (PFCC) commissions a whole-county, specialist support service for victims of sexual abuse and the forensic medical provision through the Essex Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). Essex is one of 5 local PFCC areas that successfully applied to receive devolved Rape Support Funding from Ministry of Justice.

4. Reasons for Recommendation

- 4.1 We are seeking a collective buy-in to this strategy from key stakeholders. Sexual violence and abuse cannot be tackled by an individual agency; it is best approached in partnership with a number of key outcomes and objectives and a collective understanding of how, when, and by whom these will be achieved.

5. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

- 5.1 This strategy was developed by the Essex Sexual Abuse Strategic Partnership and has been presented to the Essex Leaders and Chief Executives Forum, the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Boards, Health Executive Forum, Essex Police Strategic Board, individual CCG executive boards, the Essex Children's Partnership, Essex Criminal Justice Board, Safer Essex and the integrated health and justice commissioning group. More recently it was discussed and endorsed at the new Thurrock

Sexual Violence and Abuse Partnership Board, which the PFCC office are members of. This Board will facilitate the implementation of the Thurrock Sexual Violence and Abuse Action Plan.

- 5.2 The development of the strategy has been an iterative process over recent years and will continue to evolve in response to stakeholder engagement, good practice, and relevant updates in local and national data or policy.

6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

- 6.1 This will complement existing delivery on the Thurrock Community Safety Partnership priority for 20/22 of Violence Against Women and Girls – including domestic abuse, sexual offences, stalking and rape of all genders

- 6.2 This strategy will complement the ongoing work in Thurrock which is delivering the recommendations from the Thurrock JSNA on Sexual Violence & Abuse.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Laura Last, Senior Management Accountant (Environment, Highways & Counter Fraud Directorate, Place Directorate and Property**

There are no financial implications arising from this report

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lindsey Marks
Deputy Head of Law**

There are no legal implications arising from this report

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: N/A report produced by Council Partner

The Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed across SET and the findings are recognised within the strategy

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

This strategy will support the Council and its Partners to ensure that they are delivering on its commitments to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

- [Essex Sexual Abuse Strategy](#)

9. Appendices to the report

- Essex Sexual Abuse Strategy EIA

Report Author:

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