

FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM

Area of Assessment:	Essex sexual abuse strategy
Date of Assessment:	18/08/2020
Owner:	Greg Myddelton
New or existing policy/function:	New strategy

Stage 1 – Detail of policy, function, project or proposal

Briefly describe the aims, objectives and outcomes of the policy/function

The Essex sexual abuse strategy aims to prevent the volume and impact of sexual violence and abuse in Southend, Essex and Thurrock. The strategy is split into 5 key aims; Prevent abuse, provide good quality support for victims, provide a consistent approach to communication, tackle perpetrators of abuse, and ensure an effective criminal justice process.

A partnership strategy promotes a more consistent approach across the partnership, rather than individual agencies pursuing different strategic objectives. This has been an effective approach in our collective response to domestic abuse which we aim to replicate in response to sexual abuse.

The strategy emerged from the Essex Sexual Abuse Strategic Partnership which is the strategic body concerned with improving the collective approach to sexual abuse across the County. The partnership is made up of representatives from police, local authority, health, Probation, Crown Prosecution Service, and support providers.

What policies/procedures/functions are relevant to this area?

This strategy relates to sexual violence and abuse in all its forms. As such it relates to crime, safeguarding, and abuse, as well as preventative areas such as education.

The strategy is not intended to be a guide to inform operational practice, but it should be used by organisations to understand their responsibilities and commitments in relation to all forms of sexual abuse and what they can do to prevent abuse, support victims or bring perpetrators to justice.

This strategy will be supported by an operational plan that will articulate the required actions to achieve the stated ambitions. Each agency will be asked to take responsibility for delivering the identified actions.

Stage 2 – Consider the Evidence

Which individuals and organisations are likely to be affected by the policy/function and in what way?

This is an all-age, all-gender strategy. The scope extends to all forms of sexual abuse including, but not limited to; rape, child sexual abuse and exploitation, sex trafficking, online sexual abuse and other sexual offences.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual abuse so this strategy recognises the harm experienced by children, adults, and adult victims/survivors of child abuse.

As the strategy notes, research suggests there are cohorts of individuals that may be at increased risk of becoming victims of abuse. These include, but are not limited to; young people, young adults (university/college students), disability groups and those associated with the sex industry.

As a partnership strategy it is intended that a range of stakeholder organisations sign up to this strategy including Essex Police, Southend, Essex and Thurrock Councils, Essex CCGs, NHS England (East), and Probation.

What relevant quantitative data has been considered?

The strategy draws on quantitative data produced by a number of sources including the ONS Crime Survey of England and Wales, Essex Police data, performance data from our local rape crisis service providers, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFS), Home Office, and NHS.

Amongst other things, the data shows that demand for support from victims of sexual abuse is on an upward trajectory, despite the fact that these offences remain amongst the most under-reported, with an estimated 80% of crimes not resulting in a report to police.

An estimated 20% of women and 4% of men have been a victim of sexual abuse which equates to almost 300,000 people across Essex.

What relevant qualitative data has been considered?

The SYNERGY rape crisis partnership delivers specialist support for victims of sexual abuse in Essex. SYNERGY provides case study examples within their quarterly monitoring reports and have arranged for direct inputs from victims and survivors at events including a PFCC-led sexual abuse roundtable, a visit from the Victims' Commissioner in November 2018, and a Violence Against Women and Girls event in Thurrock in early 2020. In addition, Essex Police has used direct experience for training events and to improve local practice. When the PFCC recommissioned its sexual abuse support service in 2020 it worked with Healthwatch Essex to convene a panel of victims of sexual abuse to provide their input into the evaluation process for the procurement exercise to ensure the process took account of the experience and voice of victims.

These case studies and direct experience have been vital in improving understanding of the nature, impact and prevalence of abuse locally and have prompted action to develop this strategy amongst members of the Essex SASP.

Has the function/policy been subject to consultation? If no, why not? If yes, which individuals and organisations were consulted and what form did consultation take?

This strategy was developed with the support and extensive input from our specialist sexual abuse support providers; Synergy rape crisis partnership. As support providers, Synergy has a wealth of experience of hearing directly from victims, survivors and their families about the issues raised in this strategy.

We have also presented to, and consulted with, a range of stakeholders and forums including Safer Essex, the Essex Health Executive Forum, the Essex Criminal Justice Board, Essex Integrated Commissioning Group, the Essex, Southend and Thurrock Safeguarding Boards, and the Essex Partnership Board.

Were any gaps in information identified? If so, what consideration has been given to commissioning work where required?

Suggestions were made at various stages of the consultation process of this strategy. Examples include the addition of more information regarding sexual abuse in domestic settings and BAME victims. These suggestions were integrated into the final iteration of the strategy.

Stage 3- Assessment of impact

		Yes/No	Comments and evidence where appropriate
Potential for differential/ adverse impact based on analysis of data and information	Race	Y	It has been found that some individuals or groups are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, including those with disabilities, younger people, and individuals working in the sex industry. It should also be noted that many more women than men are victims of sexual abuse. We also know that many individuals do not report abuse and therefore do not access support that is available to them. There may be a disparity in reporting due to barriers associated with certain characteristics such as gender, religion or race. Support services endeavour to be delivered in an accessible and non-judgmental way that any victims regardless of their characteristics, can access and receive support. Services monitor demographic data of those engaging and undertake activities and actions to reach out to all groups and encourage engagement with those groups that may be under-represented.
	Disability (Including physical, sensory and mental health)	Y	
	Gender reassignment	Y	
	Age	Y	
	Religion or belief	Y	
	Sexual orientation	Y	
	Pregnancy and maternity		
	Marriage and civil partnership		
	Sex	Y	

Stage 4 – Deciding the way forward

If potential for differential/adverse impact remains explain why implementation is justifiable in order to meet the wider policy aims.

This strategy establishes the collective ambition to reduce the harm associated with sexual abuse in Essex and will set out the partnership's approach to achieving that goal. It is acknowledged that some groups are more vulnerable to harm but in combatting abuse we expect to reduce harm across all characteristics. We also aim to improve our understanding of the scale of the issue in Essex and enhance the accessibility of reporting mechanisms and support services for all victims of sexual crimes.

Summarise any changes made to the policy to reduce or remove the potential for differential/adverse impact

No changes

If the function/policy is to be abandoned, please explain why and how the implications will be managed

This is a new strategy. It will not replace individual organisational strategies or operational work plans but is intended to align with those strategies already in place. As such an abandonment of this strategy would risk reducing the consistency and collaboration between different organisational approaches to a complex issue that is best tackled collectively.

Describe how the function/policy promotes good relations

By developing a partnership strategy we are strengthening the approach to what is a complex, multi-faceted issue that cannot be addressed by a single agency.

Stage 5 - Monitoring Arrangements

Describe how the function/policy is (or will be) monitored

We will monitor the strategy through the Essex Sexual Abuse Partnership. The strategy is accompanied by an outcomes framework which will be reported via the SASP.

Demographic information associated with reports of sexual abuse and those accessing support services will continue to be monitored and will inform the evaluation process of this strategy.

Have the assessment outcomes been fed back to those consulted?

n/a

Impact assessed by:	Greg Myddelton	Date:	19/08/2020
Approved by (owner):		Date:	