

People's Scrutiny Committee Safer Communities Annual Report 2022/23

Appendix 2 – Serious Violence

1. Context

- 1.1 The Serious Violence Duty was legislated for as part of the Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act 2022 and received Royal Assent on 29th April 2022. It requires 'specified authorities' (Police, Fire and Rescue Services, Integrated Care Boards, Local Authorities, Youth Offending Teams, and Probation Services) to work together to formulate an evidence-based analysis of serious violence in a local area and then formulate and implement a strategy detailing how they will respond to those issues.
- 1.2 The Duty came into effect in January 2023, alongside statutory guidance [Serious Violence Duty](#). The guidance also applies to a secondary group of 'relevant authorities' who can co-operate with the specified authorities as necessary. This includes prison, youth custody and educational authorities.
- 1.3 Serious Violence is under increasing national scrutiny. Although rates of serious violence in East Sussex are low, the ESCC Safer East Sussex Team (SEST) has an active focus on this through our partnership working to meet the new Serious Violence Duty.
- 1.4 In Sussex, the specified authorities have agreed the pan-Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership (SVRP) will be the accountable partnership through which the Serious Violence Duty is delivered. The Home Office has evaluated the Sussex VRP as 'mature'.
- 1.5 The focus of the Sussex and local Violence Reduction Partnerships (VRP) is public place and non-domestic serious violence. Although domestic violence accounts for around a third of all serious violence in East Sussex, governance around this issue sits with the statutory Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.
- 1.6 The Act and the Duty are far-reaching and will impact upon many of the services and partnership arrangements that ESCC is involved in.

2 Serious Violent Crime in Sussex (SVC)

- 2.1 Across the three Sussex authorities, the rate of Violence against the Person offences per 1,000 population is lower than the national and regional averages.
- 2.2 Sussex has a lower rate of Homicide offences compared to national and regional averages.
- 2.3 The rates of Robbery offences and of Knife-Enabled crime in Sussex are also lower than the national average.

3 Serious Violent Crime in Sussex (SVC)

3.1 East Sussex has lower rates of overall crime than the national average with an average of 69 crimes per 1,000 people compared to 94 nationally. This is also the case when compared with Brighton & Hove (103) and is comparable to West Sussex (also 69).

3.2 Across most crime types, East Sussex has comparable or lower averages compared to the rest of Sussex, including Violence Against the Person offences:

Crimes per 1,000 population (2022-2023)	East Sussex	West Sussex	Brighton & Hove	Sussex	England & Wales
Violence against the person	28	25	34	28	36
Public order offences	8	8	12	9	10

3.3 A recent assessment of serious violence in East Sussex (excluding domestic violence) showed that:

- SVC reduced during Covid-19 national lockdowns in 2020 and 2021; 2022 had 15% fewer SVC offences compared to pre-pandemic levels, although the volume is now rising to pre-pandemic levels.
- SVC accounts for less than 2% of crime (encompassing homicide, serious violence with injury offences, robbery knife crime on selected offences), and is concentrated in very small areas, thus disproportionately affecting some of the county's most deprived communities.
- In 2022/23 there was an increase in Public Place SVC in East Sussex compared to the previous year. There was an increase in robbery and knife crime, however there was a decrease in serious violence with injury.
- Suspects and offenders of SVC were significantly more likely to live in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the least deprived.
- Victims of SVC were more likely to live in the most deprived neighbourhoods compared to the least deprived.
- Males under the age of 25 continue to be the majority of both victims and offenders of SVC.

3.4 The Reputation Tracker Survey of 500 East Sussex residents in summer 2022 found that:

- 38% of residents indicated that SVC was a priority
- 19% of residents indicated that SVC was their first priority
- 23% of residents have been or know someone directly affected by SVC.

3.5 Serious violence has significant overlap with Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.

4 Governance Arrangements, Information Sharing, Monitoring and Compliance

4.1 The VRP structure operates in a 'hub and spoke' model with a pan-Sussex VRP 'hub' and upper tier authority 'spokes'. The East Sussex VRP 'spoke' is a sub-group of the Safer Communities Board, which is the co-ordinating body for addressing crime and disorder in East Sussex and includes elected members from across the County.

4.2 There are several other partnership structures in East Sussex working on the Serious Violence agenda, all of which have membership drawn from across ESCC:

- Community Safety Partnerships
- Health and Wellbeing Board
- Serious Organised Crime Partnership
- Connected Families Programme
- Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)
- Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board
- Sussex Criminal Justice Board
- Sussex Violence Reduction Units (non-statutory)
- Youth Justice Chief Officers Group
- Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Multi-agency safeguarding arrangements and Boards.

4.3 The Youth Justice Chief Officers Group has a statutory responsibility for ensuring an integrated approach to youth crime prevention and offending. In respect of wider Children's Services, the Connected Families Board and Early Intervention Partners Board oversee other preventative strands of work.

4.4 The Serious Violence Duty includes specific provisions around information sharing across partners to produce a strategic needs assessment.

4.5 The SVRP has produced a pan-Sussex Needs Assessment and Response Strategy. The first Serious Violence Reduction Needs Assessment and Strategy specifically for East Sussex are in development.

4.6 The Home Office has allocated monies to Sussex to implement the new Duty and East Sussex partners submitted a successful bid for additional analyst capacity and engagement work to enable better targeting of resource through place-based responses.

4.7 The three national key success measures for the prevention and reduction of serious violence are hospital admissions, police recorded crime, and homicides. Locally, there will be a focus on serious youth violence in public spaces.

4.8 Compliance will be monitored at a national level through a cross-Whitehall Board, the Secretary of State for the Home Department, and the Secretary of State for Justice. At a local level, compliance will be monitored through Violence Reduction Partnerships, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Community Safety Partnerships, Local Government scrutiny functions, and routine inspections.

5 The Role of the County Council

5.1 The whole of the County Council has a role in delivering against the Serious Violence Duty:

- Public Health Collaboration with Criminal Justice Partners at the East Sussex VRP
The Government wants to see a 'public health approach' to tackling violent crime, which involves treating violence like a preventable disease and using scientific evidence to identify what causes it and what prevents it spreading. ESCC Public Health recognises that violence is a major cause of ill health and poor wellbeing and is related to differences in health status and health-related behaviours.
- Strategic Development and Commissioning Services
ASC commission and deliver a range of services which address the drivers of serious violence, in particular Mental Health, Substance Misuse and Domestic Abuse.
- Resourcing and Piloting Place-Based Approaches
The East Sussex VRP has embarked on an ambitious place-based Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to better understand serious violence at a place-based level. This includes scoping community development work in key locations to provide insight into the complex and interconnected risk and protective factors for violence. These profiles will be shared with lower tier community safety partnerships to enable them to target attention and resource most effectively.
- Safeguarding and Transitions
The Safeguarding Adults Board and Safeguarding Children's Partnership are currently looking at the transitions of young people who are most at risk of violence and exploitation into adult services.
- Implementing a Whole Council approach to Contextual Safeguarding
In 2022 ASC and Children's Services Department (CSD) match-funded a Contextual Safeguarding Co-ordinator to respond to young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families, prevent the exploitation of young people escalating into violence, and to explore the levels of exploitation of vulnerable adults by those young people.
- Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews
The Act makes provisions for the establishment of offensive weapons homicide reviews, where adults are murdered with a weapon.
- Championing the Duty and Community Leadership Role - Integrated Care Board (ICB)
The ICB is specifically subject to the Duty and must collaborate with other Duty holders to prevent and reduce serious violence in the area and should consider its joint forward plan when developing strategies to reduce serious violence.
- Sussex VRP Home Office Funding for Serious Violence Interventions
East Sussex has been in receipt of serious violence funding since 2019 and partners have targeted this resource at children and young people who are engaged in or at risk of serious violence and exploitation. Partners prioritised all funding available in 2022/23 to enable Children's Services Department (CSD) to deliver a Whole Systems approach to Child Exploitation over and above statutory provision. The project has extended

beyond its original scope to draw in parents/carers of the children and young people most at risk and has achieved many positive outcomes (see Appendix 3).

The Habitual Knife Carriers project has also been funded for multiple years due to its evidenced reduction in serious violence/exploitation on the target cohort. The Habitual Knife Carriers Index has been highlighted as an example of good practice by the College of Policing. See evaluation of Habitual Knife Carriers Project Appendix 4.

- **Broader Children's Services Work**

CSD are delivering a range of services which will impact on serious violence for young people under 18, including the Youth Justice Service, Early Help Services, Attendance Behaviour and Support work to address attendance and school exclusion, the Connected Families Programme, Family Hubs and Targeted Youth Support.

- **Additional Responsibilities for Children's Services**

The Duty necessitates the engagement of children and young people in receipt of statutory services alongside wider engagement through mechanisms such as the Youth Cabinet to inform the needs assessment. This will be complemented by aggregated data-sets from education, the Youth Justice Service, and children's social care. All types of residential care for looked-after children, including secure children's homes, will be the responsibility of the local authority in which they are located. The onus will therefore be on ESCC to ensure engagement between the VRP and such institutions where necessary.

6 Funding to address Serious Violence

6.1 East Sussex is in receipt of funding from the Home Office via the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership, and alongside partners has commissioned several interventions which are predominantly delivered by Children's Services totalling £839,442 since 2019/20.

6.2 The Home Office has allocated further funding to Sussex to implement the Serious Violence Duty (2023/24 £301k and 2024/25 £270k for Sussex - mainly for staff costs) and this is available to all specified authorities. A successful East Sussex bid for £66k in 2023/24 focuses on the need to build analytical and engagement capacity to target resources, include the voices of lived experience, and involve communities in the solutions to affect change for those most at risk of and suffering the effects of serious violent crime.

7 Conclusion

7.1 The Act and Duty are far-reaching. ESCC has an essential and leading role to play in both the partnership arrangements and delivery of activity to prevent and address Serious Violence.

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