Force Management Statement 2026

Essex Police Submission

Date: 1 June 2026

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE

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Strategic Summary

Chief Constable Foreword

Essex is a large and diverse county of 1,417 square miles with a population of approximately 1.9 million. While three-quarters of the county is rural, it also contains several major urban centres such as the cities of Chelmsford, Colchester and Southend as well as Basildon and Grays. Significant population growth is expected due to a government target of more than 14,000 new homes annually.

The county hosts key national infrastructure, including major road networks (M25, M11, A12, A13), Stansted Airport, and international seaports along the Thames Estuary and in Harwich. These assets make Essex a strategic hub for travel and logistics while generating complex policing demands.

From 1 April 2028, the existing county, unitary, city, district and borough councils will be replaced by fewer, larger unitary councils. Following the government's formal consultation, they have decided that there will be five new unitary councils across Essex.

Essex is an efficient Force with 1.9 officers per 1,000 head of population; servicing a population that will continue to grow due to domestic migration and an ever increasing older population. The exponential growth of population and housing in Essex will continue to place additional demands on policing resources.

Significant events at a global and national level have continued to have a local impact on policing throughout the year and require the profession to continually adapt and develop new skills and strategies. The possible impact that these events and others that may have on the Force in the future are described in the 15 Year Predictions at Appendix A**,** supported by the operational Force PESTELO at Appendix B**.**

Global Impacts:

- **Geopolitical conflicts and terrorism:** Ongoing international instability has heightened the need for vigilance in counterterrorism and public order policing, as well as an alertness to fast changing community tensions and local community needs.
- **Technological change:** The rapid evolution of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cybercrime, and digital fraud has required forces to adapt operationally and invest in new capabilities.
- **Climate change and social inequality:** These long term trends are expected to increase the complexity of policing demands over the next two decades.
- **Epidemic / further pandemic:** The likelihood and impact of any future pandemic on policing demand.

National Impacts:

- **Police Reform:** Following publication of the Government's Police Reform White Paper, work has now begun on the Independent Review of Force Structures, and we are awaiting the outcome of this to understand the local implications.

- **Devolution and Local Government Reform:** The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill are progressing through Parliament and is expected to receive Royal Assent in 2026. Initially, the new authority will operate under existing legislation as a Combined County Authority until the Bill becomes law. Mayoral elections have been postponed from May 2026 to May 2028 to allow time for councils to establish new governance structures and strategic authorities. Local elections proceeded as planned in May 2026.
- **Sentencing Act 2026:** The changes introduced under the Sentencing Act 2026, came into effect on 22 March 2026, with the impact on offender management over the short, medium, and longer term being closely monitored and managed.
- **Police Performance Framework 2026:** The Police Performance Framework sets out a broad, comparable set of measures covering the whole policing system. It reflects continued government focus on neighbourhood policing, reducing knife crime, and improving outcomes for violence against women and girls.
- **HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) Tiered Performance System:** The Tiered Performance System sits alongside routine PEEL inspections (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) and launched in April, with three planned reviews each year. Essex Police have initially been assessed as Level 1, which means that HMICFRS are content with how Essex Police are responding to demand and consider that the Force has an overall positive trajectory.
- **UK Immigration Flow and Response:** Policing demand where the impact and perception of this leads to community tensions and public protest.
- **Zero Emission Vehicles:** Operational Impact and Cost / Fleet Transformation.

One of Essex Police's core strengths is our ability to respond and adapt quickly and efficiently to a changing operating environment without losing sight of our strategic direction through the Force Priorities, Police and Crime Plan, and the necessary changes we are making under the Continuous Improvement Programme described below. As a result, the long term trend for all crime is decreasing. In the 12 months to the end of March 2026, there were 141,619 crimes recorded, which is a 1.0% reduction compared to the previous 12 months. The decreasing trend for all crime is projected to stabilise over the next few years. The solved rate increased by 2.2% for the 12 months to March 2026 compared to the 12 months to March 2025 (2,899) more crimes solved.

This combined with the strong partnerships the Force maintains (see separate Partnership section) will be vital over the coming years. As the local government structure evolves and financial pressures continue across public services, our ability to reduce and prevent crime, protect the public, and bring offenders to justice will depend on our agility and collaboration.

Continuous improvement and planning for the future

Within the Continuous Improvement Programme, the Force has set clear objectives to deliver operational change and financial stability over the coming years. Sitting under a focused Affordable Futures Programme, the objectives are as below:

Affordable Futures is driven by two primary objectives: to deliver the best possible service to the public while supporting colleagues and partners, and to maintain the greatest possible resilience in the Force's financial position over the short and medium term.

The programme is focused on strengthening investigations relating to the protection of vulnerable people, neighbourhood policing, offender management, and custody, while also developing a more joined up approach across the Force to working with young people and youth offending. These are deliberate choices intended not only to improve current performance, but also to strengthen the Force's resilience for the future.

The change activity being delivered to meet those objectives includes Strategic Automation, Local Policing Support Unit remodel, Crime and Public Protection (C&PP) remodel, Domestic Abuse Investigation team realignment, neighbourhood policing growth, and enhancing our offender management provisions. Further detail on these projects, including programme delivery, can be found in the relevant sections of this Force Management Statement (FMS 2026).

Affordable Futures puts the Force in a strong position to face the rapidly changing technological, political, social, and financial realities of the coming months and years.

The Force remains in the lower quartile for funding per 1,000 population (HMICFRS Value for Money profiles 2024/25), and any change to the funding formula that sees the Essex position improve will have a positive impact. Against the current challenging financial backdrop, Essex Police has continued to improve and, through its collection and analysis of the right data can be confident that investment and resources are directed to the right areas as identified in our own self assessments. These often include the use of wider partner data, extensive horizon scanning, input from academia and industry leaders as well as insight from peer reviews.

The Force acknowledges the UK Government's Spending Review announced on 11 June 2025, which includes a 2.3% real terms increase in police funding. This uplift, backed by over £2 billion in additional investment, will support the strengthening of policing by 13,000 neighbourhood policing officers. See the strategic priorities below for further details of local neighbourhood investment as part of Affordable Futures.

However, long term certainty in police funding remains essential. Structural funding inequalities, particularly for Essex Police, must be addressed and the spending review is not expected to reduce the financial challenges set out in this FMS.

This lack of sustainable investment risks pushing the Force into a period of financial austerity over the longer term hindering our ability to exploit the right technology, retain skilled personnel, and deliver on our ambitions for a safer Essex.

Essex is an efficient and effective Force. The sections of this report include many examples of our commitment to the public, victims, and witnesses to provide the best possible services in every one of our policing commands and support departments.

Delivering Efficiency and Effectiveness through a strategic approach to Automation
Delivery of automation aligns with the Force Plan, and Police and Crime Plan. The Force's ambition is to deliver operational service improvements, enhance productivity, reduce unnecessary administrative demands, improve victim, public and staff satisfaction, and to enhance public trust and confidence. It should also be noted that our strategic automation programme builds on previous successes in areas such as auto-redaction, the technology programme for our Contact Centre, Digital Forensics, Live Facial Recognition and the adoption and use of Copilot.

As well as delivering clear operational benefits, generation of time saving efficiencies will enable the reinvestment of officer and staff time to focus increasingly on core activities that drive effective response, safeguarding, and investigations. Additionally, where automation can also improve our access to quality data, the Force will be better positioned to manage compliance and performance in those areas.

Essex Police must continue to invest in the information technology (IT) required to support a 21st century organisation, while ensuring this is delivered using methods that are appropriate and offer value for money, supported by robust contracting arrangements.

Automation and the adoption of artificial intelligence are an essential element of this, and our strategy sets out a strategic approach where our local capabilities are maximised whilst having the agility to benefit from wider national activity. The Force is initially focussing this activity in areas of highest risk such as disclosure of information about individuals, vetting, domestic violence disclosure, and firearms licensing. These capabilities will not replace human decision making but will enhance the process of gathering evidence on which to base decisions and enable judgments to be made leading to improved service delivery and efficiency.

Strengthening our approach and delivery of Protecting Vulnerable People (PVP) investigations
The C&PP command is where some of the highest harm crimes, such as rape, sexual violence, and the exploitation of children and the vulnerable are investigated. The nature of the work is often complex and requires collaboration with statutory, community and voluntary sector specialists. It is an area that disproportionately affects women and girls. Essex has seen immense improvement in this area with sustained reductions in domestic abuse, which is now stable at just over 23,000 crimes per year down from 29,000 in 2022. Increasing numbers of sexual offenders are being brought to justice through the implementation of enhanced investigative approaches (Operation Soteria) with our solved outcomes increasing this year. The Force will be strengthening our approach and delivery of PVP investigations in 2026/27 with the movement of additional officers and staff under the Affordable Futures Programme.

Enhancing how we Protect Vulnerable People
Ensuring the Force can identify and continue to protect the most vulnerable in society is a priority for Essex Police and we have a significant role to play with partners in achieving this. The enhancement to capacity and capability to investigate domestic abuse, sexual violence and child abuse as set out above will ensure the Force is equipped to discharge those responsibilities as effectively as possible.

Equally the ongoing and enhanced engagement between NPT and community safety partners means the Force can identify those at risk as early as possible, to ensure that they are being protected. To protect young people specifically, the consolidation of our officers and staff who support young people into one command will further enhance our ability to meet our statutory obligations in preventing harm to children.

Strengthening Neighbourhood Policing and delivering the Guarantee by developing policing of local communities
Essex Police has invested heavily in neighbourhood and community policing whether in local teams or with the formation of our Town Centre and Rural Engagement teams which have been central to service delivery. The government Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has supported this work, and Essex Police increased the number of neighbourhood officers by 74 in the 2025/26 financial year, and this has both consolidated crime and violence reductions and allowed us to focus on issues such as retail crime. The Force will build on this progress following further guidance issued by the Home Secretary in January 2026, enabling the introduction of an additional 39 officers into neighbourhood policing by 31 March 2027.

Streamlining Offender Management to ensure a joined-up prevention focus
The Force has taken a strategic approach to preventing crime in recent years, using dedicated teams, close partnership working, and effective use of orders to tackle offenders and manage their behaviour. Whether through the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and the management of registered sex offenders lawfully living in the community or using electronic tagging for those convicted of acquisitive crime such as burglary, the Force has sought to better manage those who cause harm to communities.

This joined-up approach is being strengthened further by the introduction of streamlined and localised offender management oversight, which is essential as the Force prepares to deal with larger volumes of offenders being managed within the community as a result of the sentencing act and ongoing efforts to ease pressure in the prison and wider criminal justice arenas. Whilst extra investment is planned in His Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service there is an expectation that, until then, a burden will fall on policing to ensure that communities are protected. The assessment by National Police Chiefs Council is that there is likely to be an additional 5% rise in crime associated with offenders being managed in communities in lieu of custodial sentences.

Strengthening Custody by aligning with Local Policing

Custody is a critical gateway to the criminal justice system and a key enabler of effective investigations, supporting the delivery of justice for victims and the tackling of crime. In addition to providing a safe and secure environment for detainees and staff, custody must facilitate investigative activity. The changes already delivered by the Force have improved efficiency, effectiveness, safety, and staff wellbeing as well as reducing the number of officers diverted from public response and crime investigation duties.

This has been enabled by the introduction of extended powers for new Dedicated Detention Officers. Since implementing those changes, average wait times from arrival at a police station to authorisation of detention have reduced by nearly ten minutes in comparison with the previous year.

With the transfer of custody responsibility to Local Policing under the Affordable Futures programme, those benefits will continue as better synergy is built between all stages of offender management.

Developing a preventative and cross force joined-up approach to young people and youth offending

As well as streamlining offender management to ensure a joined-up prevention focus the Force has also consolidated the teams that work with young people to ensure they receive the most effective support and, where necessary, interventions. Until now, the Force's capability to work with partners to safeguard young people and to divert or prevent them from entering a life of crime has been dispersed across different departments. Bringing these functions together under a clear and shared prevention focus will help ensure that the young people most at risk are safeguarded and that offending by young people is reduced.

Improving victim and public confidence

The operational and organisational improvements delivered under the Affordable Futures Programme will directly impact outcomes for victims, with early indications that these will improve. Whether in the enhancement of investigative capacity to deal with sexual violence or the ongoing focus and activity in local neighbourhoods this puts the Force in the best position to reduce crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) and bring more offenders to justice. Bringing custody closer to Local Policing and investing in enhanced capability and capacity to deal with offender management will reduce victimisation and in turn build public trust and confidence.

Delivering a balanced budget for 2026/27 and a resilient and sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)

An essential and enabling part of Essex Police plans is not only to ensure we undertake our fiduciary duty to deliver a balanced budget for 2026/27, but to do so in a way that enhances service delivery against priorities in a resilient and sustainable way. The financial challenge over the life of the MTFP continues to reflect Essex Police's position as one of the lowest-funded Forces nationally, alongside rising workforce costs and increasingly complex demand. For 2026/27, the Force has set a balanced net revenue budget requirement of £439.5m, supported by a 5.74% council tax precept increase (£14.94 per Band D) and increased Home

Office grant funding, enabling delivery of agreed operational plans while maintaining value for money.

The 2026/27 settlement includes additional Home Office funding, including a ringfenced Neighbourhood Policing Grant of £8.22m which will only be received if neighbourhood policing combined officer and Police Community Support Officer numbers grow by a net 113 compared to the March 2025 baseline. In the short term the forecast financial position is much improved compared to the previous FMS with the inclusion of assumptions announced following the Comprehensive Spending Review, with assumptions in Home Office Grant now included in the MTFS at 3.6% for 2027/28 and 2.5% for 2028/29. With the addition of significant recurring financial savings delivered in 2026/27, this puts the Force in a strong position for future years. Thus, enabling operational improvements and investments to be embedded and to deliver sustained outcomes without the disruption of further, immediate, budget-driven organisational change.

Since 2020, Essex Police has maintained high levels of public confidence with 72% of the public in Essex saying Essex Police are doing a good or excellent job. This represents a high level of achievement and our continued commitment to improving public confidence in our Force. A dedicated section on Public Confidence describes what we are doing to maintain and improve public confidence in our Force.

Introduction

This FMS 2026 reflects the challenges of a continually changing environment for policing services and partners. The Partnership section highlights many of our strong partnerships and some of the challenges they and the Force may face, particularly over the next few years as the local government structure takes effect following devolution and local government reform. The report has been informed by feedback and insight from our partners about the challenges they face in the context of our county as shown in Appendix C. Concerns relating to the levels of resources and funding is consistent across all partners.

This FMS is used to inform transformation and investment decisions and is embedded in our annual strategic business planning and in our continual resource planning cycle. The Strategic Demand Assessment at Appendix D sets out our understanding of the scale, nature, and associated challenges of the demand for policing services that we currently face and expect to face in the foreseeable future.

Of particular focus, as we enter that future state, will be the changes in resourcing and structure within Local Policing. Local Policing Team (LPT) remains the area with the highest volume of crime investigations. As such the ability as per the supporting principles, to keep the level of LPT sergeants, remains key.

The Assessment and Investigation Centre (AIC) have the third highest volume of allocated investigations, behind LPT and Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPT). This is an important finding because this has the potential to positively impact the decreasing victim confidence rating which is being seen in our SMSR (survey undertaken by SMSR, an independent Market

Research Company). There is less of a delay for victims and thus an increased opportunity for positive impact on victim confidence. Noting not all roles in the AIC are focused on Crime Triage.

This Report

Consistent with each previous FMS, this report has been purposefully designed as a forward-looking assessment, tailored by the Force to align to the budget setting and resource planning cycle. As the Force Business Plan and alongside changes in the county relating to infrastructure, environmental change, housing, the road network, and commercial development it sets the context in which the Force is, and will be, operating.

The report draws on detailed analysis of multiple data sources (increasingly using partner data through sources such as the Essex Centre for Data Analysis and independent reviews commissioned by the Force) combined with our own professional judgment to form the robust assessment that follows. The FMS identifies where gaps may currently exist in the ability to meet future demands for service and how these have been prioritised to ensure the Force sustains improvement over time, whilst building on the successes of previous investments.

The document is layered as follows:

- Individual sections (1 to 14) examining each policing theme, are restructured every year to reflect the latest HMICFRS guidance and our Force structure.
- A risk assessment with prioritised high-level findings to inform the Force business planning and financial planning cycle.

This year's FMS (FMS 2026)

The Force has developed a report that forecasts demand for our key drivers. The drivers of demand are set out in Appendix E**.**

Overall, the long term trend for all crime is decreasing. In the 12 months to the end of March 2026, there were 141,619 crimes recorded, which is a 1.0% reduction compared to the previous 12 months. The decreasing trend for all crime is projected to stabilise over the next few years.

In 2025 the Force provided the following headlines in terms of current demand and predicted demand to 2030. This has been updated in 2026, more details can be found at Appendix E.

- The Force recorded an increase in theft offences during March 2024, which was forecast to continue over the subsequent four years. However, recorded crime fell by 6.4% in the 12 months to March 2025, and this trend has continued, with a 10.2% reduction in the 12 months to March 2026, equating to 4,653 fewer recorded crimes.
- The Force reported that victim-based crime has decreased in March 2024 the forecast was that this will continue to decrease over the next four years. In 2025 and 2026 Victim

based Crime continued to decrease, with 1,977 fewer offences in the 12 months to end of March 2026, compared with the previous 12 months (-1.6%).
- The Force reported that State based[1] crime decreased in March 2024 the forecast was that this trend will continue over the next four years. State Based Crime continued to decrease in the 12 months to March 2025. However, there was a 3.3% increase in the 12 months to March 2026. This was due to increases in possession of weapons offences (194 more offences/ +12.6%) and increases in drug offences (1,009 more offences/ +17.0%). Public Order offences continued to decrease (-4.1%).

As reported above, crime is reducing overall. The following areas are exceptions, activities to address these exceptions can be found in the individual sections of the FMS.

- Possession of drugs offences are predicted to increase by 15.5% next year, having increased by 17.5% in the 12 months to March 2026, compared with the previous year.
- Shoplifting is predicted to increase by 9.1%, and other theft offences are predicted to increase by 9.5%.
- The Force has seen an increase in residential burglary in 2025/26, and this is projected to increase by a further 5.1% in 2026/27 unless unchecked.
- The Force has also seen an increase in Other Sexual offences over the last year driven by new offence types under the online safety act, and this is predicted to increase by 6.3% in 2026/27.
- Whilst significant progress has been made to reduce the number of Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) collisions over the last 10 years, in line with the ambition of Vision Zero on our roads, that progress slowed in 2024, with an increase in fatalities. 2025 saw 58 fatal collisions (versus 45 in 2024) and a 20.5% increase in KSIs overall. Drink and Drug driving remains a challenge on our roads. The county continues to see significant population growth and increasingly congested roads.

Ongoing Focus

From our robust assessment of each FMS theme alongside supporting analysis, and the evidence that our efforts are having an impact, where continued focus in 2025/26 will allow us to best achieve the priorities set out in our Force Plan 2024-2026 at Appendix F.
These are not new priorities, but areas that remain key to supporting progress.

- Maturing our strategic prevention activity and delivery of Neighbourhood policing with partners to further our strategic shift to the prevention and deterrence of crime.
- Embedding our force-wide approach to safeguarding.
- Enhancing capacity, capability, and quality of investigations to further improve the number of solved crimes, through consistent supervision to a high standard.
- Tackling violence and high harm such as violence with injury, rape, and domestic burglary.
- Reducing the disparity in confidence between our victims and non-victims and increasing victim satisfaction through investments in first response and investigation.

[1] All crime is broken down to Victim Based Crime and State Based Crime. State Based Crime includes Drug Offences, Possession of Weapons and Public Order.

- Recruiting and retaining an inclusive, skilled, and capable workforce that is representative of the diversity within our community.
- Continued focus on internal professionalism and maintain trust and confidence in our Force.
- Commitment to exploiting and adopting technology and automation in areas that will increase our productivity.
- Ensuring a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Force has demonstrated continued investment in these areas (as described in our previous reports) without which we would experience an unmitigated rise in demand for service as set out in the risk assessment.

The new Police and Crime Plan 2024–2028 builds on what the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner and Essex Police has achieved and sets out the policing priorities and aims for keeping Essex safe. It brings together the police, partners, and the public of Essex to build safe and secure communities, to ensure the public have confidence in the police and that victims are satisfied with the service and support they receive. The Essex Police Force Plan seeks to deliver the objectives in the police and crime plan alongside statutory and national priorities as described at Appendix G**.**

Risk Assessment

The following section summarises the high-level findings from our gap analysis. The table below indicates where the risk assessment has changed from the previous FMS (more detail in Appendix H).

FMS2026 Section / DoT		**FMS2026 Risk Rating**	**FMS2026 Section / DoT**		**FMS2026 Risk Rating**
Finance	Reducing	Substantial	Major Events	Reducing	Moderate
Workforce Management	Unchanged	Low	Knowledge Management and ICT	Unchanged	Substantial
Public Contact	Unchanged	Moderate	Force-wide Supporting Functions	Unchanged	Moderate
Prevention and Deterrence	Unchanged	Moderate	Collaboration	Unchanged	Low
Investigations	Unchanged	Moderate	Public Confidence	Unchanged	Moderate
Public Protection	Unchanged	Substantial	Managing the Organisation	Unchanged	Moderate
Tackling Serious and Organised Crime	Unchanged	Moderate	Partnerships	Increasing	Substantial

Section Summary

Finance

Essex Police has delivered a balanced and sustainable financial position for 2026/27 despite operating within one of the lowest funding settlements nationally, underpinned by prudent financial planning, a council tax precept rise at the limit of national flexibility, and increased Home Office grant funding. The Force has successfully aligned resources to operational priorities through the Affordable Futures Programme, securing significant recurring savings while safeguarding frontline capability and maintaining historically high officer numbers, including continued investment in Neighbourhood Policing. Improved short-term funding certainty following the Comprehensive Spending Review has enabled confident medium-term planning, alongside a substantial capital investment programme to modernise estates, enhance digital capability, support carbon-neutral ambitions, and address historic underinvestment. Strong governance, disciplined savings delivery, and a prudent reserves strategy continue to protect financial resilience, maximise value for money, and ensure resources remain focused on delivering effective policing for the people of Essex. Notwithstanding the above, the forecasted level of risk in this area, whilst reducing, is still substantial to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to continue to achieve a balanced budget.

Workforce Management

Essex Police demonstrate strong workforce management through an integrated approach to Health and Wellbeing, Human Resources and Learning and Development, underpinned by effective governance and sustained investment. The Force was graded **GOOD** in the most recent HMICFRS PEEL inspection for workforce support, with no areas for improvement identified. Wellbeing services are responsive and innovative. Human Resources has successfully met recruitment and retention objectives alongside a reduction police staff posts under the Affordable Futures Programme while strengthening leadership, diversity, and inclusion. Learning and Development has adapted effectively to sustained demand following officer uplift. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains low to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Public Contact

Essex Police Contact Management has delivered sustained and measurable improvements in public contact through significant investment in operating models, workforce capability, and digital innovation. The introduction of the Target Operating Model has embedded a victim-centred, omni-competent workforce, stabilised performance and strengthened resilience across emergency and non-emergency contact channels. Call handling performance has improved, with reductions in abandonment, faster answer times, and recovery against national standards, alongside marked gains in crime recording timeliness and investigation allocation through the nationally recognised OIC Allocation App. Digital contact has expanded successfully, with increased uptake of Live Chat, Single Online Home and the introduction of inclusive services such as SignLive (video interpreting service for British Sign Language), improving accessibility while protecting emergency capacity. The forecasted level

of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Crime Prevention and Deterrence

Essex Police continue to demonstrate strong and sustained performance in crime prevention and deterrence, underpinned by a whole-Force, partnership-led approach that is delivering tangible reductions in harm and improved outcomes for communities. Long term decreases in overall crime, serious violence, knife crime, and burglary alongside stable incidents of ASB reflect effective prevention activity, targeted problem-solving, and high visibility neighbourhood policing, supported by strengthened governance and analytical oversight. Investment in neighbourhood teams, integrated offender management, business crime prevention, rural policing and designing out crime has enhanced local capability and resilience, while mature partnerships with local authorities, health, probation, voluntary services, and national bodies are enabling early intervention, safeguarding, and diversion from offending. Together, these initiatives demonstrate a coherent, evidence-led prevention framework that is reducing victimisation, protecting the most vulnerable and contributing to safer communities across Essex. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability – alongside our partners - to meet projected demand.

Investigations

Essex Police has delivered significant and sustained improvement across local investigations through deliberate redesign, workforce development, and targeted innovation. By redistributing investigative demand from LPTs to strengthened NPTs, the Force has widened the investigative pool, improved workload sustainability and this is leading to increases in the number of solved outcomes. Workforce capability has recovered strongly from previous levels of inexperienced due the police officer uplift. There is a marked increase in experienced officers supporting better decision-making, investigative confidence, and quality. Targeted interventions by the Investigation and Support Team have delivered measurable improvements in supervisory and investigative standards to local policing, while automation, revised crime-allocation frameworks and abstraction reduction activity are improving productivity and capacity. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Public Protection

Essex Police continue to prioritise the protection of vulnerable people. The implementation of Operation Soteria has contributed to increased solved outcomes for rape and serious sexual offences. Under Affordable Futures, the restructure of the C&PP Command delivers additional investigative capacity for both adult and child sexual offences, with Domestic Abuse investigations moving into the same structure to support more consistent allocation and more dynamic use of specialist resources. The redesign aims to better manage investigative demand and strengthen safeguarding responses for current and future investigations. As with all major organisational change, benefits will continue to materialise over time.

Innovation has been evident through improved collaboration with the Crown Prosecution Service. Enhanced use of data and technology to identify hidden harm, and preventative initiatives such as Operation Makesafe have improved victim engagement, investigative quality, and long term safeguarding outcomes. Alongside this, Essex Police has enhanced multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, improved referral quality, and transparency, and invested in workforce growth, training, and wellbeing, demonstrating a clear and sustained commitment to protecting vulnerable people and continually improving public protection services. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains substantial.

IT and Knowledge Management

Essex Police continue to make strong progress in strengthening its technology capability, underpinned by significant investment in modern, secure, and performant IT infrastructure and a clear commitment to innovation. Delivery has progressed across priority areas including automation and AI, contact management, digital forensics, and data transformation, with programmes aligned to national strategy and supported through enhanced governance and prioritisation. User satisfaction has improved notably, with higher-than-national-average results for IT hardware and software and a marked increase in staff satisfaction, reflecting effective focus on service quality and stability across a large and complex technology estate.

Demand for new technology/focus on security will continue to rise, due to maturity level increase, threat level, speed of new versions/patches, number of alerts and vulnerabilities. Overall, it is recommended the level of risk remains substantial in the Force's capacity/capability to meet projected demand.

Major Events

Essex Police continue to deliver strong and effective specialist policing across a wide range of complex and high-risk demands, maintaining public safety through resilient operational response, skilled specialist teams, and proactive workforce development.

Specialist Operations, comprising the Operational Support Group, Dogs, Marine, CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear) and Drone capabilities, have provided flexible and high-impact support to major incidents, protests and serious crime, absorbing demand that would otherwise have diverted wider Force resources.

The Resilience function has markedly strengthened emergency preparedness, governance and compliance, reduced backlogs and increasing training and testing activity, while Firearms Licensing continues to perform strongly against national benchmarks, embedding enhanced safeguards and modernising systems in response to legislative change. The forecasted level of risk in this area is more moderate than substantial to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Serious and Organised Crime

The Serious Crime Directorate continues to deliver strong operational performance in the face of growing and increasingly complex demand, supported by a highly skilled, resilient,

and motivated workforce. Across intelligence, serious and organised crime, economic crime and major investigations, the directorate has demonstrated effective prioritisation, innovative use of technology, and strong partnership working to maximise impact.

The Serious Economic Crime Unit has maintained high levels of performance despite static resourcing, with exceptional outcomes in asset recovery and specialist training, while the Major Crime Department continues to deliver high-quality investigations that are consistently commended within the criminal justice system. Collectively, these achievements demonstrate clear organisational commitment to prevention, safeguarding, and harm reduction, ensuring Essex Police remains effective in tackling serious and organised crime now and into the future. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Force-wide Functions

Force-wide Functions continue to provide a resilient and effective foundation for policing delivery, maintaining strong performance across criminal justice, custody, forensics, transport, professional standards and estates despite sustained demand and organisational change. Teams have demonstrated adaptability and professionalism, sustaining file quality, victim care compliance, safe custody operations, and forensic timeliness while managing high workloads and vacancy pressures. Significant progress has been made in modernising processes and infrastructure, including the planned introduction of bar-coding and centralised storage for property, streamlined forensic operating models, effective fleet optimisation and strengthened estate rationalisation. Across all functions there is a clear commitment to continuous improvement, innovation, and prudent use of resources, ensuring the Force is well positioned to meet future demand while maintaining public confidence and service quality. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Managing the Organisation

The Force demonstrates strong and sustained organisational capability through a mature approach to change, innovation, and information governance. Highly skilled programme and project teams provide effective strategic oversight of complex transformation activity, delivering efficiencies, benefits realisation and robust governance aligned to Force priorities. Significant progress has been made in modernising ways of working, including the successful transformation of programme reporting through Microsoft 365, the development of a strategic automation programme with an in-house Centre of Excellence, and clear leadership investment to drive productivity and service improvement. Research, analysis and innovation are increasingly embedded across the organisation, supported by strengthened governance, academic partnerships, and growing data science capability, enabling more evidence-based decision-making. Information Management continues to play a critical role in maintaining lawful, ethical and trusted policing, with planned automation, improved assurance processes and stronger data design capability putting the Force in a progressively stronger position to manage rising demand, support major programmes and underpin future digital transformation. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Collaboration

Essex Police demonstrate strong and effective collaborative working that delivers clear operational, financial, and preventative benefits, underpinned by mature partnerships at local, regional, and national level. Through the Essex and Kent Collaboration, the Force has achieved tangible efficiencies and capability gains, including unified serious crime delivery, strengthened intelligence and covert functions, innovative in-house solutions such as the Multi-Agency Approach to Fraud, and shared procurement that delivers value for money. Regionally and locally, collaboration enables resilience, specialist capability, and demand reduction, from firearms training and organised crime response to contact management and technology-enabled service improvements. This is further reinforced by sector-leading analytical partnerships, including Project Minerva, the Essex Centre for Data Analytics and BT Hothouse innovations, which translate data, research and innovation into practical prevention and safeguarding activity. Collectively, this work reflects a well-embedded collaborative culture that improves outcomes for communities, strengthens workforce capability, and positions the Force to better manage future demand. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains low to Essex Police in its capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Partnerships

Essex Police continue to demonstrate strong and mature partnership working across neighbourhood policing, criminal justice, health, and safeguarding, recognising collaboration as central to preventing harm, reducing demand, and delivering better outcomes for communities. The Force works effectively with local authorities, health services, the criminal justice system and voluntary sector partners through established governance structures, joint forums and shared processes, including Community Safety Partnerships, the Local Criminal Justice Board, safeguarding boards, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference.

Notable strengths include the expansion of partnership engagement through the 2026 Partnership Survey, enhanced analytical and community insight to support joint problem solving, and sustained multi-agency collaboration in high-risk areas such as mental health, offender management, and vulnerability. Despite operating in a challenging and constrained system, partners remain committed to shared responsibility, innovation within statutory duties, and maintaining effective safeguarding and community safety arrangements during a period of significant structural change. However, uncertainty relating to local government reorganisation and its impact means the forecast level of risk in this area remains above moderate for Essex Police and its partners in terms of their capacity and capability to meet projected demand.

Public Confidence

Essex Police continue to deliver strong operational and organisational performance that supports public trust and confidence, despite a challenging external environment. Crime has continued to fall across the county, with reductions in serious and high-harm offences and an increase in positive outcomes for victims, reflecting effective prevention, investigation, and

offender management activity. NPTs remain central to this work, providing visible, accessible, and locally focused policing aligned to community priorities. Significant investment has also been made in proactive communication and engagement, with the Media and Communications Team consistently promoting positive operational outcomes, crime prevention activity, and victim advocacy, reaching over 1.3 million people through Essex Police channels. This is underpinned by extensive media training and professional development for officers and staff, strengthening capability, transparency, and confidence in frontline policing across the Force. The forecasted level of risk in this area remains moderate, the Force is working hard to improve victim confidence alongside public confidence.

Next Steps

The FMS is a key strategic planning document which informs the ongoing development of Essex Police business planning processes. It provides valuable insight into the demand in future years and how the Force is equipped to meet this demand or equally where changes may be required. As was the case for previous FMS reports, it will inform budget setting and operational planning in 2026/27 and beyond through the robust evidence and analysis it provides.

Finance

Introduction

The financial challenge over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) continues to reflect Essex Police's position as one of the lowest funded forces nationally, alongside rising workforce costs and increasingly complex demand. For 2026/27, the Chief Constable has set

a balanced net revenue budget requirement of £439.5m, supported by a 5.74% council tax precept increase (£14.94 per Band D) and increased Home Office grant funding, enabling delivery of agreed operational plans while maintaining value for money.

The 2026/27 settlement includes additional Home Office funding, including a ring-fenced Neighbourhood Policing Grant of £8.22m which will only be received if Neighbourhood Policing combined officer and PCSO numbers grow by a net 113 compared to the March 2025 baseline. In the short term the forecast financial position is much improved compared to the previous FMS with the inclusion of assumptions announced following the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), with assumptions in Home Office Grant now included in the MTFS at 3.6% for 2027/28 and 2.5% for 2028/29 plus the implementation of the Affordable Futures Programme which will deliver savings that will continue into the future. The MTFS position, based on information known in March 2026, reflects a forecast deficit of £1.4m in 2027/28, £1.2m in 2028/29, rising to £11m in 2029/30 and £19.9m in 2030/31, with the later years reflecting the uncertainty of future funding increases beyond the period of the most recent comprehensive spending review.

Alongside the revenue position, the Force is delivering a substantial capital programme to address historic underinvestment, maintain essential infrastructure and progress commitments to carbon neutral buildings and fleet electrification. This includes planned capital expenditure of £20.054m in 2026/27 and £123.275m across the five-year period to 2030/31. With no capital grant as part of Home Office funding as well as low levels of other capital funding resources, delivery remains heavily reliant on prudential borrowing over the next five years (£93.050m, 75%), increasing the proportion of future revenue required to service capital financing costs.

The Force remains at historically high officer numbers, with an establishment of 3,745 officers proposed for 2026/27 to support Neighbourhood Policing and operational priorities. This is based on a reduction of 10 officers over the duration of the coming year, following the removal of the previous ringfence around Police Officer Maintenance funding, and thus enabling the release of 39 more officers into Neighbourhood Policing.

Maintaining affordability will continue to depend on savings delivery and workforce redesign through the Affordable Futures programme, which will see the force strengthen key delivery areas whilst ensuring resources are reallocated around these priority workstreams. The sections that follow set out how demand, capacity, assets, and affordability interact, and where financial risk places clear limits on the demand the Force can expect to meet over the medium-term.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years

The CSR has provided short to medium term funding certainty, enabling a balanced budget for 2026/27 and continued investment in Neighbourhood Policing, subject to national conditions. Despite this, uncertainty remains beyond the current settlement period, including

the impact of Police Reform with the redesign of the funding formula now being linked to changes to policing because of the Reform agenda.

Current demand can be managed within available resources, but pressures increase over the medium term as demand grows in scale and complexity. Key drivers include population growth, safeguarding and vulnerability related changes, criminal justice system changes and rising public expectations. These trends place sustained pressure on workforce capacity and specialist capability, reducing financial headroom and resilience which the Force is adapting to with the implementation of the Affordable Futures Programme.

While prioritisation and efficiency allow the Force to manage current demands, forecast increases in call for service and investigations over the next four years increasingly exceeds MTFS funding assumptions. Without further national funding reform or additional productivity gains, particularly with Police Reform still some time away, a widening structural gap between demand and affordable capacity presents an escalating medium-term risk.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

Essex Police continue to operate within one of the lowest funding positions nationally (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) Value for Money profiles 2025/26). While changes to the funding formula would improve sustainability, current plans are based on existing allocations, leaving both workforce capacity and asset management programmes extremely sensitive to the wider funding environment and MTFS assumptions.

Significant savings have been delivered to maintain affordability, with continued pressure to identify efficiencies as pay and non-pay costs rise faster than funding. Although a balanced position has been achieved for 2026/27, further savings will be required in later years to manage forecast deficits and maintain service capability. Assumptions modelled within the MTFP are based on increases to government grants based on indications from the 2025 Comprehensive Spending Review with a 5.1% (£13.95) increase in the Council Tax precept for 2027/28, followed by 4.8% (£13.95) in 2028/29, and 2.5% thereafter. Based on these assumptions, deficits continue to be reported during the upcoming MTFS period, which whilst being significantly lower during the earlier years, continue to be sizeable during the latter years of the MTFP.

A substantial capital investment programme is underway to support modern policing and address historic underinvestment in the force asset base. Priority spending areas across the MTFP period include a focus on Estates (£77.353m), Information Technology (IT) (£22.873m), and Transport (£18.302m). Estate investment targets modernisation, energy efficiency, and carbon neutral legal requirements, and includes a key project to significantly redevelop and modernise the Force Headquarters site in Chelmsford. The investment in IT encompasses a wide range of national and locally led projects, focusing on more efficient digital solutions, embracing the opportunities of automation, and further developing

processes which underpin operational effectiveness and productivity. Not reflected in our capital plans and posing a potential budget pressure, if not funded by the Home Office, is dual running costs associated with the implementation of the Emergency Services Network (ESN) in the planned withdrawal of Airwave by the end of 2029.

Fleet investment will continue to focus on maintaining serviceability, fleet electrification to meet government targets, and meeting other legal environmental standards. Despite all this planned investment, the ability to fully maintain and service assets to the standard required remains a constraint for the Force. Zero capital grant and limited reserves mean continued reliance on prudential borrowing, increasing longer term revenue commitments and reducing financial flexibility. Without more favourable funding, this constrains the Force's ability to sustain workforce capacity, maintain assets effectively and ensure operational resilience.

What are we doing to make sure our workforce and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The 2026/27 budget continues to support high officer numbers, with 3,745 officers, including and increased officer numbers in Neighbourhood Policing in line with national requirements, supported by maintenance of PCSO numbers. The Force Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has been submitted to the Home Office, setting out how the Force will meet the required growth of both officers and PCSOs into Neighbourhood Policing by the end of 2026/27, thus maximising grant funding available to the Force. Based on this plan, no further growth in overall officer numbers is anticipated, with a small reduction (10 officers) forecast over the year to deliver this plan. The focus remains on consolidating recent increases, strengthening capability, and embedding long term sustainability.

Future workforce planning prioritises productivity and redesign over expansion. This aligning skills to demand, strengthening supervisory and specialist capacity in high-risk areas, and expanding digital and automation solutions to release operational time from administrative activity.

The MTFP assumes future council tax precept increases within national flexibility to manage inflationary pressures. Essex Police retain a prudent level of reserves to deal with known commitments (Earmarked Reserves) as well as unforeseeable events (General Reserve). A prudent reserves strategy provides limited resilience for known commitments and unforeseen events, while maximising resources directed to frontline policing and protecting the people of Essex. Whilst budget setting constraints for 2026/27 have not allowed the General Reserve to be set at the minimum 3% of net revenue budget level normally applied, the ambition remains to increase contributions during the MTFS period to replenish this balance back towards the optimum 3% level. The final 2025/26 outturn position may also provide an earlier opportunity to increase the General Reserve, depending on the assessment of confirmed costs in respect of Affordable Futures.

Maintaining affordability depends on continued efficiency and savings delivery, overseen through established governance and scrutiny arrangements. As funding tightens and

costs remain pay dominated, identifying further recurring savings without impacting capacity is increasingly challenging. Workforce changes, particularly within police staff functions, have already been required to balance recent years, and ongoing engagement with the PFCC (the Finance Lead for the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners) and the Home Office continues the scale of the financial challenge and the case for funding reform.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

The MTFS remains extremely sensitive to national pay awards. Any award exceeding assumed levels (3% for September 2026) would generate an immediate unfunded pressure which, assuming no further Home Office support, would require the use of reserves or in year reductions to non-pay budgets, further constraining service delivery.

Rising workload and the need to modernise the estate and digital infrastructure require significant investment. With no core capital grant and limited alternative capital resources, reliance on prudential borrowing increases the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) and commits future revenue, limiting flexibility to respond to emerging pressures or accelerate improvement beyond agreed priorities. When added to the existing CFR (capital expenditure from previous years still to be funded), this increases the forecast CFR to £110.749m by 31 March 2031.

The Force must also absorb the initial costs of major operations and incidents, which can run into millions of pounds. Recent examples of these include Operation Melrose, the investigation into the deaths of 39 Vietnamese nationals who were trafficked into the country through an Essex port, and Operational Hazel, the Just Stop Oil protests across the county. While Special Grant funding may sometimes be available (normally when the costs exceed 1% of the Force net revenue budget, currently equating to £4.3m), the requirement to meet the costs of these operations, which can run into millions of pounds, typically exposes the Force to significant unfunded risk, with limited reserves to absorb such shocks without wider impact.

With IT solutions now moving toward cloud based and service based digital solutions this moves costs from capital to revenue, creating an immediate and additional cost pressure as projects progress and business cases mature. Due to often not knowing what the specific IT solution will be at the time of budget setting, these revenue budget pressures become apparent as business cases are further developed, placing additional cost pressures on the MTFS.

Taken together, these constraints limit the Force's ability to absorb further unfunded pressures while maintaining existing services. Without more favourable funding or reductions in responsibilities, tough decisions may be required, including further workforce reductions or changes to service scope for the public of Essex, placing clear limits on the demand the Force can expect to meet over the medium term.

Workforce Management

Introduction to Health and Wellbeing
The continued investment in health and wellbeing demonstrates the Force commitment to providing all employees with supportive interventions to maintain their health, wellbeing, and safety. This is considered a key investment in the maintenance of our key asset, the officers, staff, and volunteers of Essex Police.

An extensive range of interventions, both reactive and proactive measures and programmes continue to be offered by Health and Wellbeing Services. The Force's Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2026 is part of the ongoing commitment to provide support and opportunities for employees to maintain their health, wellbeing, and safety. The third version of the strategy aligns fully to the appropriate services for Essex Police and the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS) strategy.

The Force expects increases in demand in some areas, as experienced in the preceding financial year as the workforce continues to utilise the services the Force provides.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years
It can be anticipated the demand for Health and Wellbeing Services will continue to rise, particularly in Occupational Health (OH), as staff seek early preventative support, pursue self-care, and use the provisions made available by Essex Police. Wellbeing requirements will continue to evolve as more individuals take ownership and responsibility for their own wellbeing needs, be that physically, mentally, and financially.

The Force continues to focus on key areas of proactive initiatives including Suicide Prevention, Attendance Management, Managing Anxiety, Grief and Bereavement, Navigating Change and Uncertainty and the popular Feel Well Live Well (FWLW) programme. The Force continues to benefit from the collaborative delivery of virtual interventions with Kent Police, which effectively doubles the available capacity. In addition, the teams continue to schedule sessions to align with the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) 'Weeks of Action,' for example the Investigator Week of Wellbeing.

The now annual and thought-provoking suicide prevention month also took place in September 2025 and remains a key feature of the annual wellbeing calendar. It is anticipated these proactive interventions will continue to take place to educate and inform the workforce for the forthcoming years.

The Counselling and Wellbeing Team have provided loss and bereavement support this year following officers who have tragically died in service. This follows the development of a support strategy to consider short-, medium- and long term measures to ensure stabilisation and support mechanisms are known and accessible for individuals who may need them.

The demand for reactive and proactive mental health services is reflective of previous years. There were 373 counselling referrals in financial year 2025/26 (517 in 2024/25) which represents a reduction on the previous financial year. There have been previous resourcing challenges experienced in the department due to long term abstraction and resignations, this lower referral rate has ensured the maintenance of service delivery, for core services (counselling and high-risk roles) throughout this reporting period.

The Counselling and Wellbeing Team continue to utilise all options to manage referral demand including the use of external trauma therapists and NHS pathways for referral. To further reduce the external demand for specialist clinical interventions, Eye Movement Desensitisation Reprocessing (EMDR) is delivered in house where demand allows, thus reducing some of the external costs associated with individuals requiring this specialist and more expensive external therapy.

The OH Team received 2,769 management referrals in the 2025/26 financial year, (2,869 referrals in financial year 2024/25). This has equated to 2,301 appointments being undertaken compared to 1,921 in financial year 2024/25. This demonstrates a stable position in respect of OH referrals however a 17% increase in the appointments undertaken. This is comparative with the level of complexity being experienced with some of the OH referral needs. Appropriate and robust triaging on receipt of the referral and signposting to other support options continues to be utilised to manage demand where appropriate.

In terms of the reasons for referral, physical health needs are still a larger proportion than mental health needs. Whilst there is a higher proportion of sickness absence for mental health matters, it is recognised that some support could be being sourced elsewhere, for example the Counselling and Wellbeing Team, Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) or via NHS services.

Whilst the above analysis indicates a fluctuating position across the functions within Health and Wellbeing it can be assumed that demand on the department will continue to increase as individuals seek support and interventions.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

Essex Police has a dedicated Counselling and Wellbeing Team, enabling performance to be maintained at responsive levels. There have been some resourcing challenges due to abstraction and resignation in this period, however all individuals are now in the workplace and where vacancies existed, these are in the pre-employment stages of joining the team. This will ensure sufficient resources are available to meet requirements going forward and evidences the Force's continued commitment to organisational wellbeing, in a period of financial challenges and reductions in other police staff roles.

In addition to the in-house counselling team, the Force utilises an EAP. This service provides a 24/7 telephone, online portal, and App package with access to practical information and

emotional support for personal and work-related issues. The aim is to provide accessibility for all individuals.

In financial year 2025/26, 195 contacts were made to the EAP service: 135 of these were via the mobile APP service. 123 individuals were allocated a counsellor with 738 appointments delivered. Anxiety, bereavement, depression, closely followed by family problems remain the most common reasons for people accessing the counselling services. There is an 85% clinical outcomes improvement rate for those with anxiety and 90% with depression.

Current wellbeing capability and capacity is divided into the following activities:

- FWLW: A wellbeing programme to help employees boost resilience.
- High Risk Role Assessment Programme: In-house wellbeing assessment for those in Home Office assessed, and additional force directed, high-risk roles to ensure individual wellbeing is understood.
- Attendance Management Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Programme: a programme of two sessions exploring Attendance Management and, Reasonable Adjustments and Risk Management and Creating the Environment, to enable line managers to support team members. In addition, a session has been developed and delivered to enable the most to be gained from OH engagement. Writing a Good Management Referral, with further sessions scheduled for financial year 2026/27.
- A range of talking therapies delivered by in-house clinicians: including specialist EMDR treatment.

Essex Police is well engaged with Operation Soteria, the national rape criminal justice improvement programme, whereby wellbeing features as part of Pillar 4. The Health and Wellbeing team continue to prioritise support for primary rape investigators as part of the high-risk role wellbeing support programme and work with the Pillar 4 lead within the Crime and Public Protection command in respect of investigator wellbeing.

The Clinical Nurse Manager has reviewed working practices and Standard Operating Procedures to understand where developments are required within the services provided. This has resulted in a programme of engagement and development with the OH teams, with more local policing engagement planned for 2026/27. This also includes more focus on quality review and audit of OH outcomes to ensure the needs of both the organisation and the individual are met, to support operational policing delivery.

With respect to workforce absence, Human Resources (HR) support Commands to manage absence individually and collectively through the governance of the Attendance Management and Wellbeing Groups. Strategically, a regular Governance Board is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable to oversee progress, direction of travel and to ensure a collective responsibility of absence management and individual support.

A separate project review of all attendance management processes has been undertaken, leading to the launch of a force-wide Attendance Management Strategy. Featuring several pillars, the strategy includes, as examples: the re-launch of the Positive Attendance

Management process, a framework for absence management and support, enhanced absence data for Commands and training and guidance for supervisors and line managers.

Performance

Essex Police have an embedded nursing team which is responsive to organisational needs consisting of an OH Nurse team of 2.0 FTE nurses supported by an OH Team Leader (1.0 FTE) and externally contracted Force Medical Adviser (0.4 FTE).

The Force Medical Adviser contract and services are now well embedded with the provider commencing in late 2024. There is particular focus on the more complex OH cases. This service complements the in-house OH Advisers and the Clinical Nurse Manager, who directs and oversees OH service development and delivery.

The police officer medical assessment, as part of the recruitment process, is also delivered internally and is nurse-led with doctor requirement where necessary. This has enabled flexibility where required and supports the continued focus on police officer recruitment.

The OH referral to appointment waiting time (Occupational Health Assessment and Force Medical Adviser combined) for financial year 2025/26 was 12 working days which represents a slight improvement on 2024/25 (12.8 working days).

When analysing OH referral data, specifically reviewing referrals for psychological reasons, of the 633 reviewed where analytical data exists, 34% of these referrals cited work as the reason for the referral, with a further 37% citing a mixture of both work and private matters necessitating the referral. 17% of the referrals cited private matters only. As some of the referral's state ‘not disclosed’ or ‘not applicable’, exact calculations cannot be derived from the data, however, as can be seen above there is a work element cited in most of the psychological referrals received within OH. Of note however, as personal matters are in the main directed to the EAP, this may account for the lower referral numbers in this area as individuals may go directly to the EAP without going through the internal team, thus having the ability to adversely impact the data assumptions in this area.

A total of 1,087 screening nurse interventions, which include health surveillance reviews, blood borne virus interventions, blood testing, and inoculations have been undertaken in this reporting period (1,038 in 2024/25). In addition, in this financial year, 501 police officer recruitment medical appointments have been completed by the internal team. This is compared to 257 in 2024/25.

The Force provides a flu vaccination programme annually to support officer and staff winter health. The annual flu vaccination programme took place in October 2025, whereby the Force purchased 700 vaccinations with clinics taking place across Essex Police locations with colleagues able to attend in duty time.

The programme this year commenced at the same time as the NHS programme and an increase in uptake has been experienced. With NHS focus coinciding with the Force’s own

promotion an additional 50 vaccines were purchased and the full 750 utilised this year, showing improved take up of this initiative. This learning will be taken forward into future winter health activities. The total investment was £16,600.

The Force has benefitted from an in-house physiotherapist in this period. The internal physiotherapist has undertaken 1,218 appointments in this reporting period. This data includes assessments, telephone appointments, and face-to-face physiotherapy treatment however there is no comparative data, as the physiotherapist joined mid-year in 2024. Full comparative data will be available in the 2026/27 submission.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

The NHS counsellor previously embedded within the Police Online Investigation Team as a collaborative venture between the NHS and Essex Police has now concluded with provision returning the internal Counselling and Wellbeing team. Support has been provided to the Command Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure a smooth transition of services and support and that all staff and officers are aware of the Essex Police provision available to them.

Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) is utilised and well established in the Force. TRiM is a peer support tool to respond to traumatic or potentially traumatic events in the workplace. There have been 553 referrals for TRiM interventions in this financial year, from 153 incidents.

The Force has utilised and completed the Oscar Kilo Blue Light Wellbeing Framework (BLWF) however this was withdrawn in February 2026. The Force has completed and submitted the Workforce Prioritisation Guidance, which is the replacement for the BLWF, identifying where developments are required.

In addition, the Force has completed the NPWS Foundation, Enhanced and Advanced OH standards, which again is a self-assessment tool to measure organisational maturity and is based on the SEQOHS (Safe Effective Quality Occupational Health Service) assessment methodology, being adapted to the policing environment.

The Force is one of a small number of forces engaged with a pilot programme for the collation of OH Needs Evaluation. The Force attended a College of Policing event and committed to being a pilot force for this activity. Once proof of concept is understood, this data collection methodology will be required by all Home Office forces to understand the drivers and occupational health needs within policing.

The Force has completed the NPWS Suicide Self-Assessment and developed an in-house action plan to complement the requirements in the national plan. Following two Coroner's Preventing Future Death notices in other police services, the Health and Wellbeing teams utilised one of these outcomes for a CPD event to ensure all clinicians and non-clinical teams were aware of the impact and implications their actions may have. It was a moving and emotive event with quantifiable learning outcomes.

Essex Police remains engaged with the NPWS, attending events to ensure force activity complements the national picture whilst maintaining home force key developments and objectives. This includes the annual conference, the OH Practitioner forum, the national OPAS (OH software) delivery group, and the NPCC Health, Safety and Wellbeing Board.

The Force actively promoted the completion of the new style NPWS Wellbeing Survey in May 2025 and will be participating in the 2026 survey. From the 2025 survey actions were developed by the Leadership teams to look at how they could address their local issues. In February 2026, two members of the Health and Wellbeing Team, along with an operational superintendent attended the Leading with Care conference hosted by the NPWS and the Wellbeing survey providers. This was an opportunity for senior policing leaders to consider outcomes and interventions from last year's survey and influence the topics for inclusion in this year's version.

The Force launched the Health and Wellbeing Stakeholders meeting in January 2026, with 40 senior leaders in attendance from both Essex Police and Kent Police. The Health and Wellbeing and HR teams provided national and departmental updates followed by local senior leaders sharing learning from their local interventions. As a collaborative meeting, it also provided an opportunity for cross force engagement from the same units, for example Public Protection, where one force was really interested to engage with their opposite force counterpart where similar wellbeing challenges are being experienced. The meeting was originally scheduled to take place six-monthly however attendees requested this take place on a quarterly basis to support their teams effectively.

The Health and Wellbeing teams benefitted from technology development in 2024/25 by way of an industry specific OH system. It is a fully integrated workflow system, thus reducing administration functions and aiding data management and confidentiality.

All Health and Wellbeing activity is housed within the new system with extensive internal development and configuration having been undertaken, to ensure the benefits of this system can be optimised, in support of OH and Counselling and Wellbeing activity.
The department has an extensive SharePoint resource under the banner of Healthy You. All line manager and individual information and resources are readily available and include, as examples, the Leaders Toolkit, Investigator's Toolkit, and the Suicide Prevention Toolkit.

In addition to business-as-usual operational HR interventions and the robust Attendance and Wellbeing Meeting process, the Absence Star Chamber process, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable continued through 2025/26 to explore and review local attendance concerns and understand factors impacting positive attendance. An additional Absence Oversight Board commenced in early April 2025, again chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable whereby the Chief Officers were held accountable for attendance performance. These two Boards have been reviewed for financial year 2026/27, now streamlining to one Board to ensure Executive strategic oversight of this key area of performance is maintained and the objectives of the new overarching Absence Strategy (launching April 2026) are progressed and scrutinised.

The Performance Improvement Unit (PIU) continues to focus on attendance and supporting Heads of Department through the Attendance and Wellbeing Management Group process.

Where a line manager is sufficiently concerned regarding a member of their team, the manager may refer the person to the Force Support Forum. The forum brings together colleagues from Professional Standards Department, HR, Health and Wellbeing and the PIU and is chaired at Chief Officer level. This monthly Board ensures that a more rounded picture of an individual's overall wellbeing can be assessed and thus, a potential risk profile, where high level risks exist, can be more accurately determined by the group.

Following the inception of the psychological assessment process for High-Risk Roles in 2024, this delivery continues with regular positive feedback, growing trust, and engagement from local teams and SLTs.

The Investigator Wellbeing suite of interventions is now business as usual within the Health and Wellbeing arena. The resources continue to be reviewed and updated in line with developments and support provided to the Wellbeing of Investigators Week of Action by the NPCC. At a national level, the Health and Wellbeing Delivery Manager attends the quarterly NPCC Recruitment, Retention and Wellbeing of Investigators meetings and was invited to host some sessions on the above-mentioned national wellbeing week.

The Force supports the NHS Health Checks in Force each year, with NHS providers invited into the organisation to undertake the over-40s health assessments with information following the assessment provided directly to the individual's GP. These assessments are undertaken within duty time to promote and support informed healthy options for officers and staff.

Health and safety reporting data is utilised so emerging patterns or trends in wellbeing can be reviewed and local or force-wide strategies developed to address any issues identified. The Force Health and Safety Board is chaired at Chief Officer level and maintains senior organisational wide attendance.

Demand across all services provided continues to have weekly scrutiny and due to the in-house composition of the workforce, resources are aligned and flexed to the demand being experienced. For example, to achieve the recruitment medical requirements, OH nurses undertook some of the medical assessment processing undertaken by the Practice Nurse team. In addition, robust triaging, and greater focus on OH quality and audit have taken place to ensure OH is responsive and meets the needs of both the individual and organisation, focussing on the quality of outcomes and functional capacity advice for line managers.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above

All the Force's wellbeing services and offerings are continually reviewed and adapted to assist the wider workforce and ensure progression in the vital area of maintaining the health, wellbeing, and safety of our staff. The Force has proactively invested and chosen to maintain funding in this area as described above and has not been subject to Affordable Futures efficiency requirements.

As can be seen from the analysis contained within this report, there are increases in requests for OH appointments required at 17%, a stable position for OH referrals and a decrease in Counselling referrals. Despite the increase in appointments required, the referral to appointment waiting time has decreased slightly in this reporting period to an average of 12 working days.

The work detailed below will continue to support officers and staff within Essex Police and the innovation in wellbeing development will continue to be utilised across the organisation to understand and respond to the needs of the workforce:

- Psychological support – ongoing delivery and development of wellbeing interventions, which are responsive to organisational need and operational demand.
- Support for those in high-risk roles with a holistic wellbeing assessment process, normalising seeking help in demanding environments and maintaining a high-quality service to victims and witnesses.
- Maintain the TRiM and Peer Support networks to further develop options for local intervention.
- Engagement with charities and specialist organisations for support for individuals and involvement in the delivery of proactive support.
- Use past referral data to influence future proactive offerings and ensure timely access to internal provision.
- Provide holistic wellbeing outreach clinics, incorporating both physical and mental health.
- Support the Attendance Management Strategy and review attendance management governance procedures, providing a reliable and informative narrative to the attendance data so absence trends can be understood.
- Development, innovation, ability to adapt programmes to emerging need and a forward-thinking approach to wellbeing provision in line with latest developments, evidence-based research and increasing demand, to ensure appropriate and cost-effective methods are achieved.

The Force's wellbeing services are continually reviewed and adapted to assist the wider workforce and ensure progression in maintaining the health, wellbeing, and safety of officers and staff. Through policies and wellbeing engagement the Force's aim is to:

- Support the workforce with access to responsive and timely OH and Counselling Services.
- Promote a positive culture and remove mental ill health stigma, which can impede help seeking activity.
- Empower leaders by providing the tools to support those they lead.
- Engage with the NPWS, promoting services to the workforce, aligning force activity to the National Wellbeing Strategy and horizon scan for emerging wellbeing trends or implications.

Introduction to HR

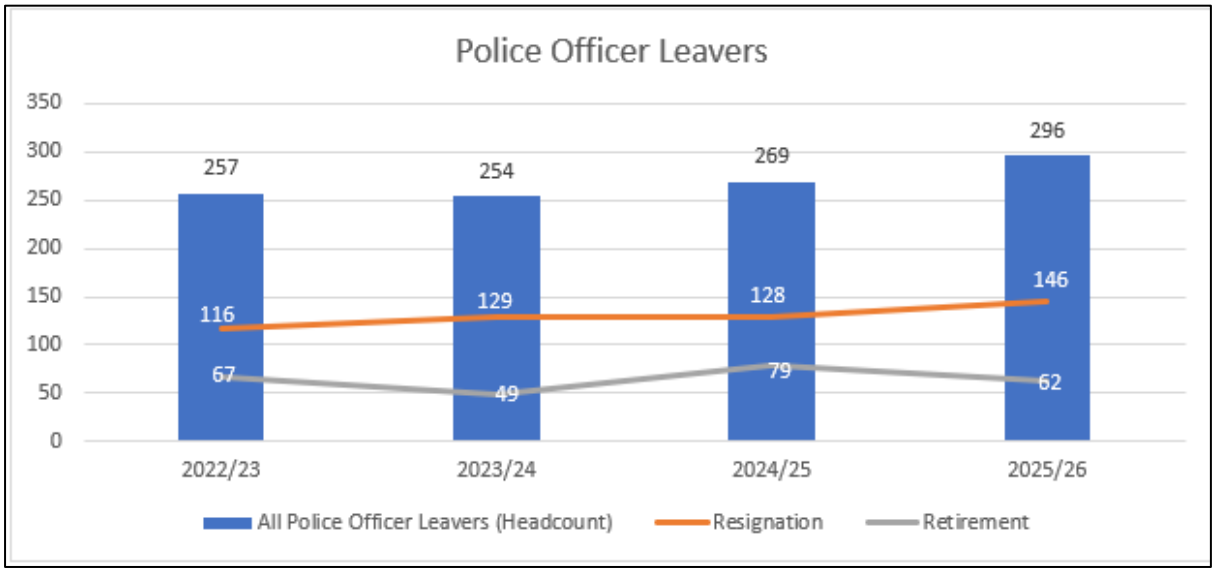
The joint Human Resources (HR) Directorate is led by the Director of HR and delivers business led professional people practice through the overarching People and Learning Strategy to attract, develop, support, and retain our people.

The difference between current and anticipated future demand in the foreseeable future or next four years

Current demand is understood through HR data and strong governance processes, which also enables evidence-based demand forecasting for HR over the medium term next few years.

The Force delivered the 2025/26 police officer headcount requirements with 3,825 officers on 31 March 2026. This achieved, and exceeded, the recruitment objective to maintain an officer headcount of 3,820. The 2026/27 recruitment plan has been agreed by Chief Officers to maintain the officer headcount at 3,820. This plan is set against the attrition forecast, which continues to be predicted at 23 officer leavers per month for 2026/27, however, the recruitment plan remains agile to cope with short term fluctuations.

As illustrated in the below graphic, the number of officers leaving has increased in 2025/26 compared to a reasonably stable and strong position over the previous three years. This increase has been driven by an increased number of officer resignations. Resignations remain the most frequent exit route from the organisation, and this is expected to continue as an organisational normal. Retirements account for the second most frequent exit route, and this position is expected to continue at a stable level, although a potential increase in retirements is speculated for the early 2030s based on the current length of service data and pension eligibility.



Resignations from officers with less than five years' service have reduced, with this group accounting for 67.1% of resignations in 2025/26, compared to 73.44% last year and 76.74%

in 2023/24. The proportion of serving officers with less than five years' service is 30.4% as of 31 March 2026. This is broadly consistent with last year (31.3%) and it remains a significant workforce demand with pressure on leadership, development, training, support, performance and attendance management, policy guidance and supervisor advice.

Neighbourhood policing (NHP) remains a core national priority, in line with the Government's 'Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee'. The Force has a requirement to deliver 322.25 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) NHP officer strength and has consistently achieved this in 2025/26 delivering 337.75 FTE on 31 March 2026. The NHP baseline requirement for 2026/27 personnel will be expanded to include neighbourhood Police Community Support Officers, and the force expects to continue to meet this commitment in full.

The Affordable Futures programme commenced in 2025/26, with the aim of investing in key areas including: neighbourhood policing, custody, offender management, investigations to protect vulnerable people and delivering a more joined up and force wide approach to work with young people and youth offending. The programme activity is focused on sustainably adapting the force to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, as well as ensuring the force delivers a balanced budget.

The programme will continue into 2026/27, with ongoing business cases and organisational restructures. These place sustained pressure on HR capacity to support change processes that are lawful, professional, efficient and effective. All HR functions, including employee relations, resourcing, and health and wellbeing experience increased demand supporting individuals, advising managers and delivering the change outcomes.

The increasing use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and robotic automation to improve efficiency and effectiveness across the force is identified as an area of potential emerging demand for HR, as innovation is likely to drive organisational change and workforce adaptation requirements. HR supports this through active attendance at the Strategic Automation Board and Tactical Automation Group aligned with the Automation Programme's stated commitment to 'Support change management and workforce adaptation'.

Work to respond to requirements arising from the Employment Rights Act has already commenced, creating additional work for HR through policy review, implementation activity, and advisory support. As the Act continues to be embedded over the next few years, the ongoing compliance, workforce impact, and management of employee relations will generate sustained future requirements.

The Force is ambitious to be representative of the communities it serves, to build trust and confidence in policing services and to be recognised as an inclusive employer of choice. This significant and impactive area of work is expected to continue for the foreseeable future and is being delivered through the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and the Police Race Action Plan.

Overall, HR expects to continue to deliver its full range of services over the coming years with only a minimal potential gap due to the vacancy factor pressure within the directorate.

The status of the force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

HR is collaborative across Essex Police and Kent Police, encompassing HR Operations, Resourcing, Strategy, and Diversity and Inclusion departments.

Capability is strong, with trained, qualified, and experienced resources delivering the diverse demands of the directorate. HR roles often require specialist knowledge, experience, and qualifications and can be hard to fill, which impacts the security of resource supply. The vacancy factor is also expected to continue to meet budgetary constraints.

The HR teams are predominantly office-based, with only a small number of individuals working a home-based typology. All teams are agile and deliver face-to-face support for operational colleagues across the county, coupled with flexibility for work life balance. Essex Police remain ambitious to be more representative of the local demographic.

Population census data (2021) indicates the economically active population of Essex is 47.65% female and 11.15% ethnic minority. At the 2025/26 year-end (31 March 2026) the number of female police officers is 1,496 (39.21%) and the number of ethnic minority officers is 156 (4.09%).

What we are doing to make sure our workforce and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

The HR Directorate delivers business led, professional people practice services through the overarching People and Learning Strategy under the key areas of Attraction, Development, Support and Retention. Through this strategy the HR Directorate aims to meet the high demand, help the force to be an employer of choice and deliver better work and working lives.

Attraction

Essex Police will continue with its recruitment marketing and media campaign #We Value Difference, supporting a continuous programme of outreach and recruitment work aiming to secure the best talent and maximise diversity, equality, and inclusion. The Force will continue to recruit officers through a variety of available routes including the Police Constable Entry Programme and the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship and Degree Holder Entry Programme in collaboration with the Anglia Ruskin University.

The Police Constable Entry Programme provides an entry route to join on a non-academic qualification pathway. The Force also continues to recruit new entrants into the detective career pathway via the Investigate First programme across all three entry routes.

The Force also offers transferee opportunities for officers from other force's wishing to join Essex Police, both at level transfer and on promotion, including into specialist roles such as

detective and firearms officers. Furthermore, the force operates a re-joiner and a returner scheme which are opened according to operational need, to provide a route for former officers wishing to return to the organisation, typically where there is a critical or hard to fill skills requirement.

Development

The Force has adopted the National Talent and Development Strategy to deliver consistent strategic talent development and workforce planning across the service to meet current and future needs. New national guidance for the Professional Development Review (PDR) has also been adopted, rebranding it from the previous 'Performance Development Review' to provide a broader development and support facility for officers and staff.

Furthermore, the force continues to deliver its 'Succession Planning' career conversation framework, and also continues to offer mentoring, attachments, project opportunities, Myers Briggs assessment and 360-degree feedback under its 'Develop You' programme. The Force also continues to support the Fast-Track Constable to Inspector promotion pathway and the Police Staff Leadership Programme.

Support

Key areas of high demand and impactive HR process such as the PDR process, attendance management and flexible working have had sustainable improvements delivered in 2025/26 under the Productivity Building programme. These continuous improvements have a direct impact on resource capacity and capability ensuring time available to serve the public is optimised.

To further support workforce capacity and capability, HR works closely with operational and command teams to deliver timely interventions, support and development for officers and staff absent from the workplace. This is a key focus for Essex Police in 2026/27, with the attendance strategy focused on early contact, prioritised occupational health referrals, and consistent use of informal and formal attendance management to support wellbeing, enable return to work, reduce avoidable abstraction, and sustain operational resilience.

More broadly, HR Operations directly supports all command teams through the HR Advisers and HR Business Partners portfolios, and supports the development of the Force's leaders, by delivering specialist HR inputs to the 'Be the Change' leadership courses.

Retention

Retention Strategy is aligned with the overarching People and Learning Strategy to support individuals across their career journey, to attract high-calibre individuals, support their wellbeing and development, and foster a culture that encourages long term commitment and career progression. A clear understanding of leaver reasons underpins this work, captured via the Force's professional and dignified exit process delivered in line with National Leaver Framework.

The Force continues to provide extensive and holistic support and development options that make a positive contribution to retention including:

- Clear candidate and recruitment information and communication
- Enhanced support for student and probationer officers
- Health and wellbeing support
- Financial wellbeing support
- Development opportunities
- Promotional opportunities
- Flexible working
- Career breaks
- Posting exchange initiative
- Independent interventions from Retention Ambassadors
- Education via 'Be the Change' leadership inputs

Representation

The Diversity team supports officers and staff from underrepresented groups with recruitment, retention, and development. The team also works with the Force's support networks and the Independent Advisory Groups to improve processes, and ensure a level playing field, equity and opportunity for all.

The team focuses on attracting, developing and supporting underrepresented officers and staff. This is delivered through targeted outreach to recruit from across our communities and initiatives such as the 'Achieve Programme' which is directly supporting personal development.

The Force is also engaged with the national Police Race Action Plan and HR are specifically delivering the 'Culture and Workforce' workstream to support Black officers, staff and volunteers with issues such as recruitment, career progression and misconduct.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above

HR expects to continue delivering its full range of services to attract, support, develop and retain officers and staff by working collaboratively across teams and with internal and external partners. While high demand and vacancies create a small potential demand gap, no reduction in service is anticipated. This risk is mitigated through ongoing activity, improvement and innovation.

The Force recognises being representative of the communities it serves is a long term challenge and aims to continue to help build trust and confidence through outreach to attract ethnic minority and female officers. The Force continues to support and develop serving officers and staff from underrepresented communities through the diversity and inclusion strategy and positive action.

Introduction to Learning and Development
Learning and Development (L&D) are responsible for developing officers and staff and provide operationally credible and professional training to the highest possible standards that is modern, innovative and demonstrates value for money, enhancing frontline capability to provide the absolute best possible service outcome for victims, witnesses, and the local communities.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years
Current demand remains high. A plateau in 2025 followed by a reduction in 2026/27 had been anticipated. This included a demand shift across the L&D business as the large volume of Police Uplift Programme (PUP) officers worked through their early careers, attaining specialist skills such as driving, taser or detective accreditation. This shift has been realised and there has been a reduction in Initial Training numbers to previous rates before the Uplift Programme. Professional Development Units are still challenged with a significant volume of probationary constables as the uplift numbers work through their probationary period. Volume and complexity will remain high during the first quarters of 2026/27.

The Police Constable Entry Routes (PCER) routes into policing are stable, which allows the department to optimise and take the opportunity of the future regulated profession model. The Essex Police contract with Anglia Ruskin University for the partnership delivery of the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship and Degree Holder Entry Programme has been extended for 12 months to March 2028. Work is due to commence in late 2026 on the procurement of a new contract for the delivery of the entry routes from April 2028. This will create demand on the leadership team.

There has been a reduction in staff and officers within L&D to support other priority areas of the Force under the affordable futures program. The command continues to assess the impact of the change programmes and will ensure impact is escalated where new and existing training needs may be affected.

The rollout of dedicated Neighbourhood policing training has increased demand on the team; however, this training is scheduled and courses have started. Essex Police will keep on track of the rollout from the College of Policing (CoP) around the different types of training over the coming years.

Taser 10 has now been formally approved for use within the UK, and planning work is underway in Essex Police to determine how the transition to the new device will be managed.

The existing estate within Essex continues to present challenges to L&D in terms of capacity. Detailed planning takes place to ensure classroom space is utilised to its full extent, and it is unlikely we would need to utilise other facilities with the team being fully engaged in the strategic estates programme considering the future strategic estates requirements.

The CoP pilot of the future Sergeant and Inspector promotion process is likely to create a new demand in the mid-term. Estimates suggest implementation no earlier than 2027, which allows time to prepare.

Demand for the detective pathway remains consistent, with detective accreditations continuing to uplift the number of detectives beyond the detective requirement. The introduction of Specialist Sexual Assault Investigator Development Programme (SSAIDP) and domestic abuse matters has increased demand, but the demand is mapped. Focus remains on training and assessment of the SSAIDP. This work supports Operation Soteria and the transition toward Specialist Rape and Serious Sexual Offences teams (as defined by the Home Office).

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

Most areas of L&D business are relatively stable, due to the skills and experience required. However, some vacancies have endured longer than usual timeframes which has had an impact on resource availability (known as the vacancy factor). The need to maintain vacancies have at times created a minimal gap in meeting requirements. The command continues to work with Corporate Recruitment, Corporate Communications, and the support groups to attract new and diverse talent from across the organisation. The external training budget has been reduced as part of the wider savings programme, but internal capability always considered. This will increase demand but is likely to be more cost effective and may lead to income opportunities in the future. A recent example of this is the Child Death course which L&D can now facilitate, reducing the cost of sourcing spaces on a national course.

Equipment is regularly reviewed and are well maintained. Staff and students are issued with the requisite IT equipment to engage with learning in a variety of ways including digital delivery and packages. Driver Training have a fleet which is fit for purpose and well maintained.

The current Hydra suite (immersive learning) at Essex Police has been upgraded enabling us to continue delivering training courses with immersive Hydra learning programmes in line with CoP guidance.

The resulting impact of the PUP and the grant maintenance requirements continue to be felt across L&D, as well as on Commands and in Professional Development Units as student officers progress in their probation. Tutors and frontline units are also impacted.

Work to continuously improve the entry routes has tracked the CoP optimisation of PCEP that is now complete.

Attachment and associate trainer opportunities are offered to the Force to create a pipeline of trainers. Sickness absence across the command is stable.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

Demand within Foundation Training will now see a reduction as the previous impact of the Police Uplift Programme comes to an end. The effects of the uplift will still be felt into the first quarter of the year when those officers start to be confirmed in post.

The organisation responded to changing requirements and supported the department to manage increases.

Future demand mapping is challenging, particularly with uncertainties around the government's intentions for increases in Neighbourhood officers and what that will mean for recruitment. Based on what is known now, the medium-term prediction is likely to result in an increase in training requirements, but not at the levels seen during the uplift programme. This may not realise in core training delivery but will impact provision of bespoke Neighbourhood Training, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and/or formal assessment and accreditation.

The ability to monitor business delivery is effective and remains in place. Demand is monitored through internal governance such as L&D Senior Leadership Team meetings, which monitor and review the status, opportunities and threats associated with service delivery, people, and performance. Departmental leaders are engaged in this process to ensure collective awareness, accountability, and contribution. Quarterly events are held for CPD, engagement and future planning. Wider structural transformation will be governed through the relevant corporate board.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

There is a reasonable level of assurance about the ability of the department to meet anticipated demand based on analysis and horizon scanning processes. The embedding of L&D within corporate governance at a senior level ensures impact on training is understood within the concept and planning phases of major change initiatives, enabling effective future demand modelling.

Should unforeseen, urgent new requirements arise, prioritisation will be necessary but is not a new challenge. The Force underwrites the training calendar according to priorities, giving an understanding of what can be delivered whilst including flexibility. This flexibility is essential to be able to react to any national changes in training via the CoP, such as the recent introduction of neighbourhood policing training.

Public Contact

Introduction

Essex Contact Management plays a critical role in delivering timely and effective policing services through multiple channels, including emergency calls, non-emergency calls, online reporting and live chat. This narrative supports the Force Management Statement 2026 by outlining anticipated demand, workforce and asset status, planned improvements, and residual gaps. It draws on risk assessments, PESTELO analysis, and lessons from last year's gaps to ensure a robust and forward-looking approach.

The Force has made significant investments and improvements in public contact over the last two years. This includes the development and introduction of a new Target Operating Model (TOM) in April 2024 which introduced a victim-centric approach and prioritised resolution at first contact. The benefits of this change programme continue to be realised for victims, the public and officers and staff working in the Force. This led to the reinvigoration of the triage function and the launch of the 101 Call Back Service, both aimed at reducing call abandonment and improving responsiveness.

Since the implementation of the TOM, performance has stabilised and improved, with sustained progress across key performance indicators. The model is now delivering consistent operational resilience, improved service quality for victims, while maintaining financial discipline. In particular:

- 999 performances have stabilised and strengthened, with sustained compliance against national standards outside peak summer demand periods.
- Significant improvements have been delivered in crime recording timeliness, alongside reductions in quality assurance backlogs and improved allocation performance.
- An omnicompetent workforce is now embedded, enabling flexible deployment across channels and demand types.
- Material growth in digital contact (Live Chat, Single Online Home (SOH) and email) has been enabled while maintaining emergency resilience.
- Cost neutrality has been achieved, alongside savings, delivered in parallel with improvements in service quality and victim satisfaction.

Digital transformation has also played a central role. Essex Police has adopted all SOH modules, expanded Live Chat to 24/7, and launched the Victim's Engagement Portal to provide inclusive and flexible contact options. In June 2025, the introduction of SignLive, a British Sign Language (BSL) video interpreting service, further improved accessibility for Deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

Operational efficiency has been strengthened through the OIC (Officer in Case) Allocation App, which streamlines case assignment and improves victim communication. Performance data shows a steady increase in digital contact volumes, reflecting public preference for online engagement.

Feedback mechanisms, including BT SMS surveys, are actively used to gather public insight and inform service improvement. Looking ahead, Essex Police is developing four major digital workstreams: Victim Journey, which will provide automated case updates; Bobbi, an autonomous artificial intelligence (AI) virtual assistant for non-emergency public enquiries,

available 24/7; Customer Relationship Management (CRM), to improve engagement and efficiency; and My Police Portal, to support secure communication between victims and officers.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Current calls for service continue to rise, driven by increased complexity in vulnerability-related incidents and growth in digital reporting channels. Online crime reports and live chat usage have expanded significantly, adding pressure on existing resources.

Forecasts for the next four years indicate further growth in digital contact, heightened public expectations for multi-channel access, and increased complexity from cybercrime and safeguarding cases. External factors such as population growth, economic pressures, and legislative changes will amplify demand. Without intervention, capacity constraints will limit our ability to manage rising digital demand and complex cases effectively.

Public Contact – Emergency

Twelve months to April 2026 the volume of calls was 388,817 compared to 369,808 last year. This represents a volume difference of 19,009 and a percentage point difference of 5.14% on the same 12-month period last year.

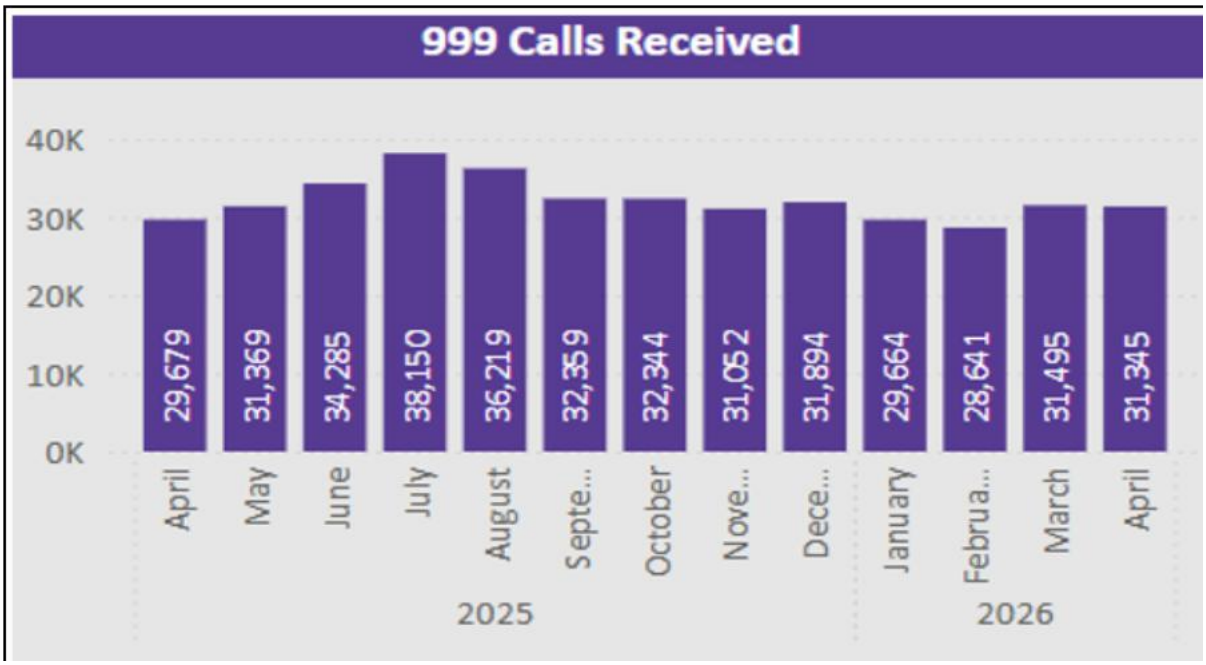


Figure 1: 999 call volume April 2025 to April 2026.

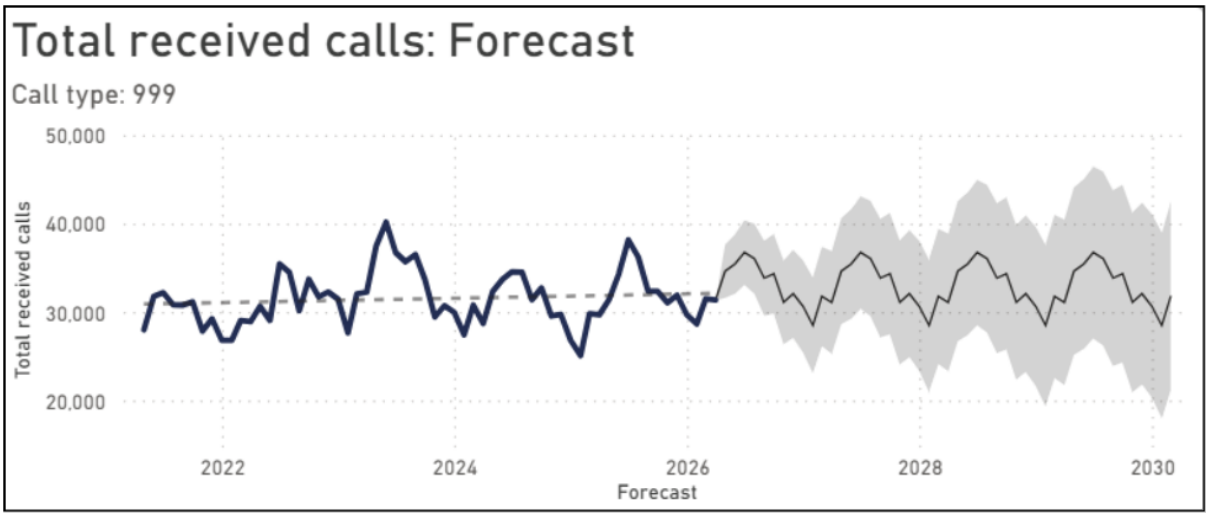


Figure 2: 999 volume and forecasting to 2030.

Twelve months to April 2026 the percentage of calls answered in time was 85.89% compared to 83.31% the previous year. This is a percentage point change of 2.58.

The chart below illustrates Essex Police's national performance position over the past 12 months. While year-to-date metrics demonstrate that this has been an extremely challenging period for the Force, the data above evidences a sharp and sustained improvement over the most recent four months.

Since October 2025, performance has consistently improved, with Essex Police performing above target for the percentage of calls answered within 10 seconds. During this period, the Force has continued to climb national ranking, reflecting a marked recovery in service delivery and increased operational stability within Contact Management.

Performance in relation to 999 call handling demonstrates a period of sustained improvement since October 2025 (see below). Grade of service has remained consistently strong, with average answer times below 10 seconds and a significant reduction in call abandonment, evidencing improved call handling capability and resilience.

Public Contact – Non-Emergency

In the twelve months to April 2026, the volume of 101 calls was 163,417, compared with 179,243 in the previous year. This represents a reduction of 15,826 calls, equivalent to a 8.83% decrease over the same 12-month period.

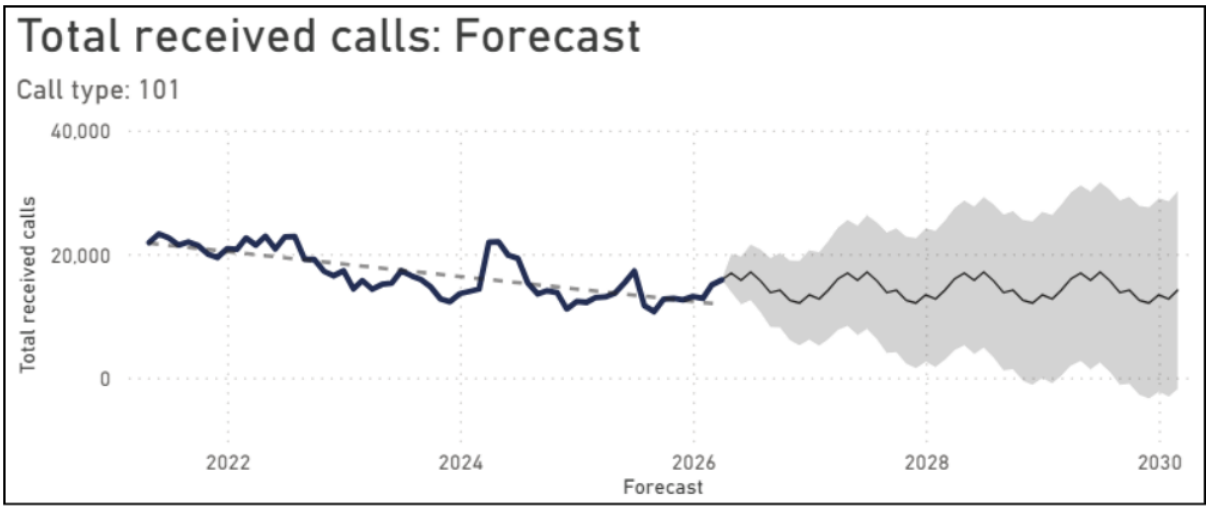


Figure 6: 101 volume and forecasting to 2030.

In the twelve months to April 2026, the percentage of calls answered in time was 54.12% compared to 41.98% the previous year. This is an increase of 12.14%. There has been continued and sustained improvement in 101 performances over recent months with January 2026 (74.05%) recording the highest Grade of Service since May 2022, and a 39.38% increase when compared with January 2025 (53.13%).

Average wait times also improved, falling from 5 minutes 59 seconds in October 2025 to 5 minutes 16 seconds in November 2025, 4 minutes 42 seconds in December 2025 and 3 minutes in January 2026, before stabilising at 4 minutes 13 seconds in February 2026. This remained better than both April 2025, when the average wait time was 6 minutes 34 seconds, and February 2025, when it was 6 minutes, representing a substantial year on year improvement despite higher call volumes in 2026.

As 101 performance continues to improve, public confidence in this contact channel may increase, which could in turn drive further demand. In the twelve months to April 2026, the proportion of abandoned calls was 22.45%, compared with 26.03% in the previous year, a reduction of 3.59%.

In the twelve months to April 2026, average call wait time is 7 minutes and 8 seconds compared to 8 minutes and 57 seconds the previous year, a reduction of 1 minute and 49 seconds. Demand pressures and associated increases in waiting times peak between June and September, which is the busiest period for the Force. This seasonal increase in wait times aligns with known demand drivers and reflects predictable pressure rather than a deterioration in performance. Outside of the summer period, average waiting times have reduced significantly. Periods of increased waiting times are consistently associated with higher levels of abandonment, reflecting well understood behaviour during peak demand.

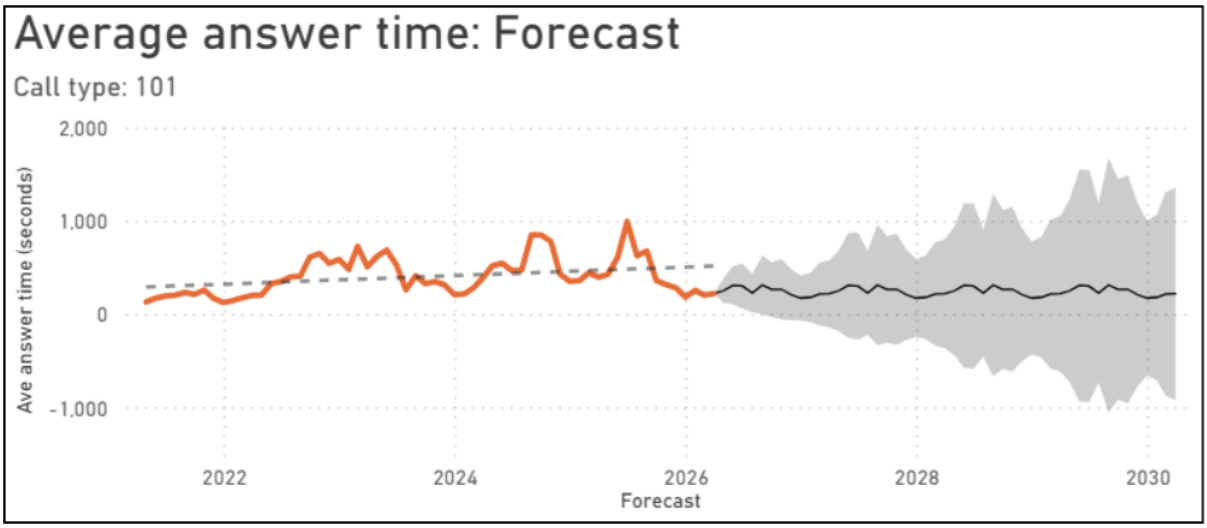


Figure 7: Current average answer time and forecasting to 2030 representing a predicted decreased in average answer time.

It is important to note that not all abandonment represents a service failure. The Contact Management team has implemented changes to the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, enabling earlier and clearer signposting to key information, alternative contact channels and self-service options. As a result, a proportion of callers are choosing to exit the call intentionally to access services through more appropriate or convenient channels.

This reflects a more informed customer journey through channel shift, rather than unmet demand, and supports the wider strategy. The changes to IVR are therefore contributing to better demand management, improved customer choice and more efficient use of contact handling capacity, while ensuring that urgent and complex calls are prioritised appropriately.

Demand follows a clear and consistent pattern. These demand patterns directly align with periods where average answer times increase and abandonment levels rise, reinforcing the link between volume, capacity and customer behaviour. The data provides a clear evidence base to support demand led resourcing, targeted deployment of staff during peak periods and the continued use of technology and alternative contact channels to mitigate pressure during the busiest times of day.

The command has commenced a structured process to capture a richer insight into the reasons why members of the public contact the Force via 101. This data is intended to support targeted problem-solving and reduce avoidable demand across the system.

Early analysis since the introduction of this data capture highlights that a significant driver of 101 contact is failure demand. This includes repeat contact from members of the public seeking updates from officers and staff, most commonly in relation to crime and investigation progress. This type of demand places additional pressure on contact management resources without adding value to the customer journey.

Live Chat

Essex Police continue to expand and promote digital non-emergency contact channels, offering the public more flexible and accessible ways to engage with policing services. This approach empowers individuals to choose their preferred method of contact, whether via phone, online platforms, or in-person, ensuring they can interact with Essex Police on their own terms.

Essex Police have a Live Chat channel for the public to make contact. Live Chat is a real-time digital contact service that enables members of the public to communicate directly with Essex Police contact centre staff for non-emergency enquiries. Available 24/7, it offers a convenient and accessible alternative to calling 101. This channel is particularly valuable for individuals with hearing or speech impairments, supporting inclusive engagement with policing services. Through Live Chat, users can report incidents, ask questions, or seek guidance without needing to make a phone call, if that is their preferred method of contact. Essex Police actively promote the use of Live Chat through its media and communications strategy, recognising its role in enhancing accessibility, responsiveness, and public confidence. Following the extension of live chat to 24/7 in July 2024, there has been a significant increase in volume.

In the 12 months to April 2026 the volume of live chats received by Essex Police was 41,720 compared to 28,931 last year, representing an increase of 12,789 on the same 12-month period last year. Essex Police undertake analysis of abandoned and unresponsive live chats and whilst the percentage of abandoned/unresponsive live chats has increased from 16.14% to 27.09% in the last 12 months this is acceptable against in the increase in volume but an area the Force is monitoring closely.

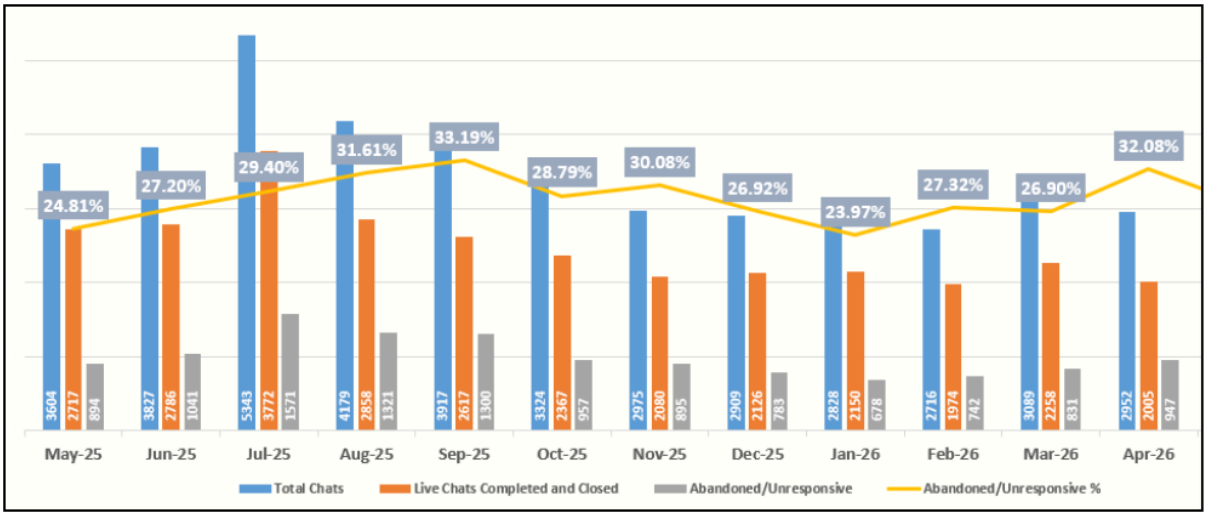


Figure 8: Total live chats in the last 12-month period and percentage of those chats abandoned/unresponsive.

Response times for Live Chat remain a key priority for Essex Police. Although response times increased during the peak summer demand period, performance has since improved, with February 2026 recording the lowest average response time of the year to date, before increasing again in March and April 2026.

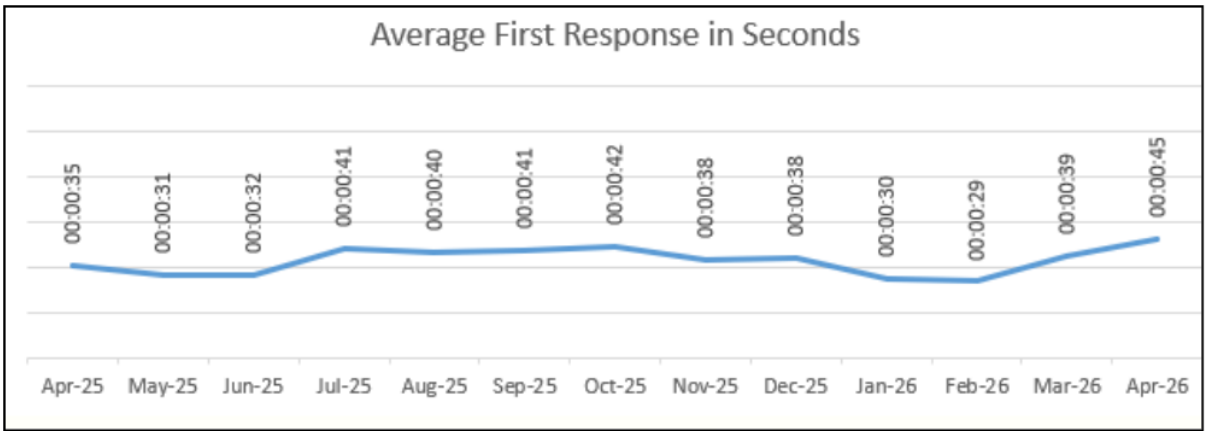


Figure 9: Average Live Chat first response time.

Single Online Home and Email

Single Online Home (SOH) is the national digital platform for policing, designed to provide a consistent and accessible online experience across all UK police forces. Essex Police has fully adopted all available modules, enabling the public to report matters online more easily. The volume of SOH reports continues to increase, with 104,558 reports received in the 12 months to April 2026, compared with 103,811 in the previous year, an increase of 747.

Overall, email demand has remained broadly stable. Volumes increased through spring and early summer, peaking in July 2025, before reducing and stabilising through the autumn and winter period. This trend aligns with expected seasonal patterns across contact channels and does not indicate any structural increase in demand. From October 2025 onwards, total email volumes have shown a gradual and sustained reduction, supporting a more stable operating position. Contact Management Command (CMC) continue to focus on timeliness and service quality.

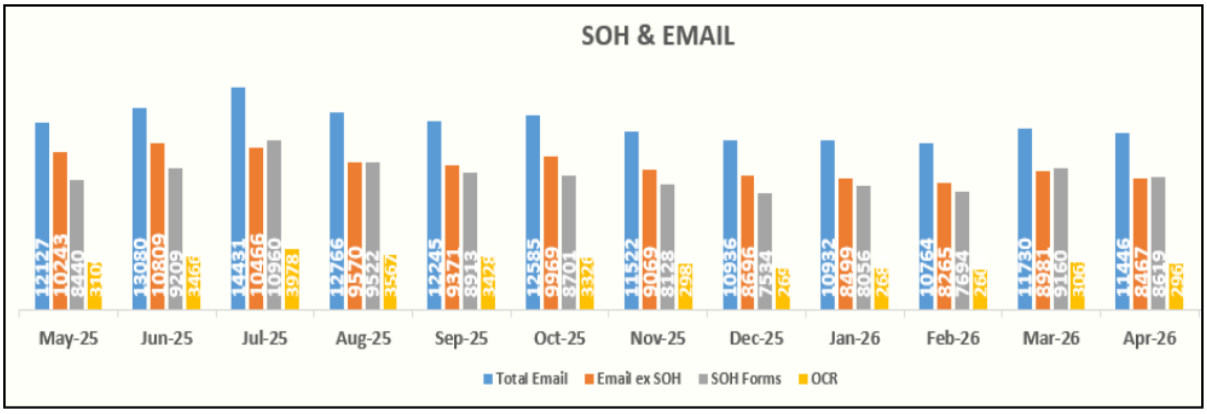


Figure 10: SOH and Live Chat volumes.

In addition to bespoke forms integrated with the ATHENA records management system (Integrated policing system, brings forces together to connect information and align processes) for specialised reporting, Essex Police also offer a range of non-specialised

forms. These provide alternative digital reporting options, further enhancing accessibility and flexibility for the public.

Front Counters

In 2025 Essex Police reduced the number of front counters available to the public from ten to four. A footfall survey was undertaken in November 2024 which demonstrated an 8.54% decrease in footfall compared to November 2022.

Following the restructure of the front counter provision a footfall project is currently being conducted. Since the project commenced in November 2025 there has been 12,935 recorded visits to the four remaining front counters.

Incident Response

In the year to April 2026, incident volume increased from 387,305 to 402,023, representing a rise of 14,718 incidents and a 3.8% year on year increase.

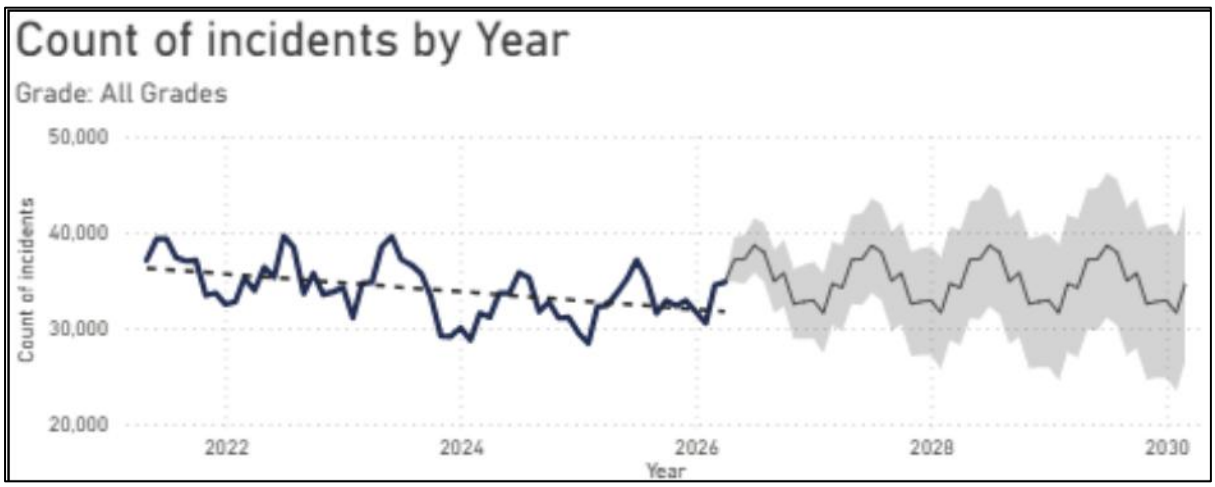


Figure 11: Total incidents received and forecasting to 2030.

Emergency Response

The volume of emergency incidents recorded year to date is 81,180 compared to 76,161 last year representing an increase 5,019 emergency incidents. The volume of emergency incidents is forecasted to continue to increase as shown in the graph below.

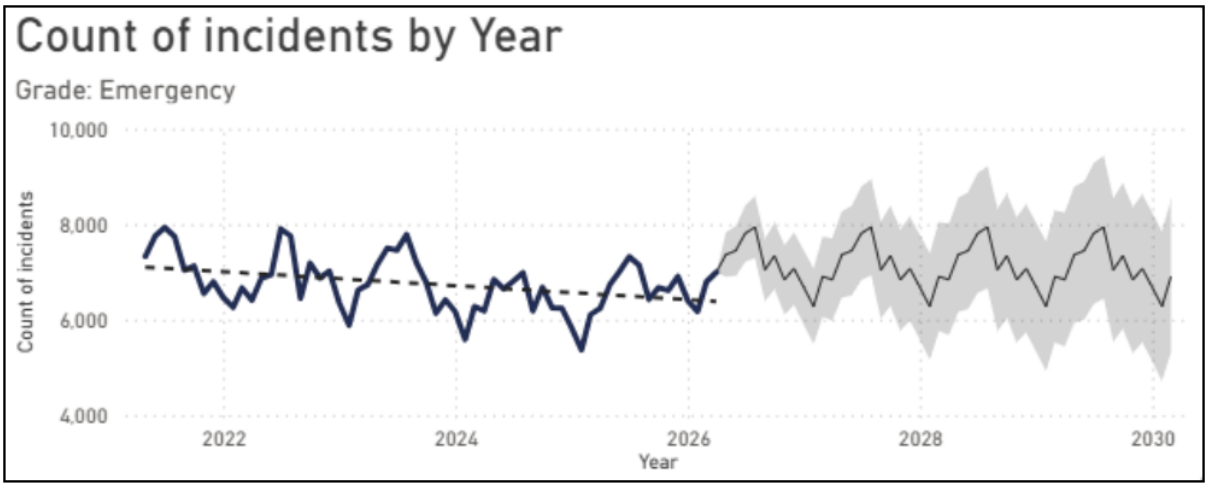


Figure 12: Volume of emergency incidents and forecasting to 2030.

Priority Response

The volume of priority incidents is continuing to reduce significantly. The volume of priority incidents year to date was 32,306 compared to 36,864 last year representing a 12.4% decrease and this is forecast to remain stable over the next four years.

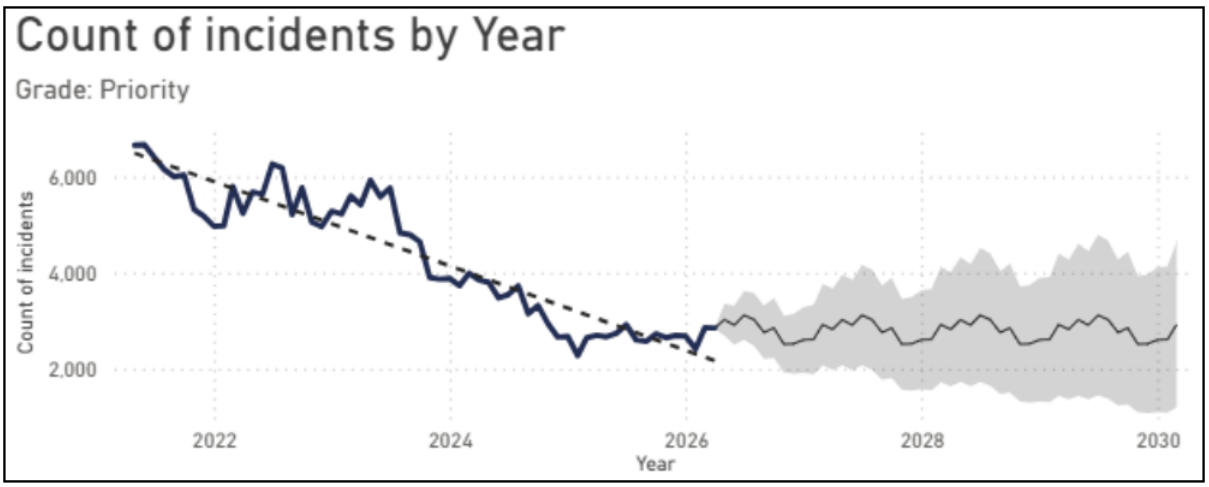


Figure 13: Volume of priority incidents and forecasting to 2030.

Response Performance

Emergency response performance has improved, with 77.4% of incidents attended within the service level agreement in 12 months compared with 76.2% last year.

Priority response performance has improved more significantly, with 66.1% of incidents attended within the service level agreement in 12 months compared with 59.8% last year.

High Harm Incidents

In the twelve months to April 2026, high harm incidents increased to 53,572, compared with 52,489 in the previous year. This represents an increase of 1,083 incidents, or 2.1%.

ASB

The volume of antisocial behaviour (ASB) incidents has increased to 15,795 in the year to April 2026, compared with 14,400 in the previous year, representing an increase of 9.7%. Despite this rise, ASB incidents have reduced significantly over the past five years and are forecast to stabilise over time.

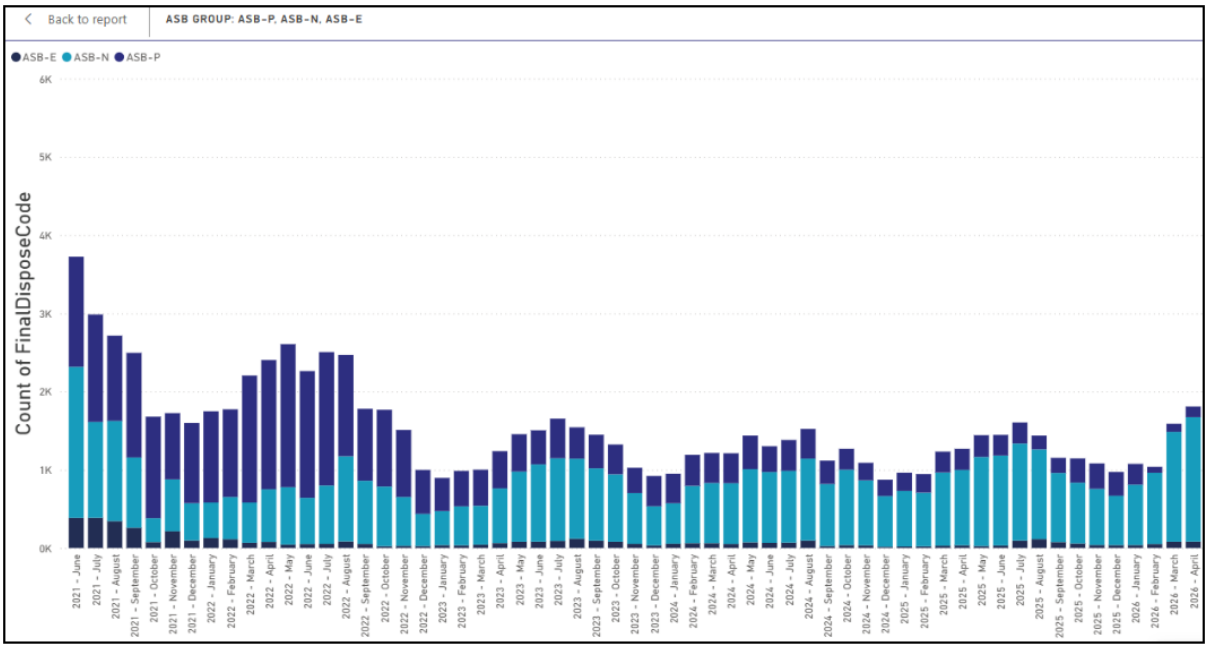


Figure 15: ASB incidents incident comparison.

The OIC allocation application is a digital tool developed to support the accurate and timely assignment of investigations. Its primary purpose is to streamline the allocation process, ensuring cases are progressed efficiently and in line with crime recording standards. Since its implementation, the application has significantly reduced the time taken to assign investigations, improving operational efficiency and enabling earlier engagement with victims. This enhancement supports compliance with the Victims' Code and strengthens the quality of volume crime investigations. This has also allowed for improved efficiencies and capability building across the Force. The App's impact has been recognised nationally, having been shortlisted for a National Police Chiefs Council Digital Innovation Award. Further development is planned for 2026 to extend its benefits across the wider organisation.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The workforce has strengthened through additional staff and supervisory roles, but challenges remain with sickness rates, psychological absence, and skills gaps in digital investigation. Planned technology upgrades, such as customer relationship manager integration and citizen portal enhancements, will improve capability.

The Force continues to invest in supporting recruitment. This is reflected in the current position within Contact Management. The recruitment pipeline into the Contact Management command remains in a good position and police officer roles in the command are

supported by the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) which continues to be in place ensuring the rotations of officers into and out of the command.

As technology continues to advance, including the introduction of AI, CMC will require appropriately trained staff to support these developments and to provide training and mentoring in emerging digital capabilities.

Absence management continues to present a challenge for Contact Management. In response, the command has introduced a range of measures designed to strengthen absence management processes and enhance the support provided to both our workforce and the public we serve.

The Head of Command has strengthened the governance and now chairs a bi-weekly Absence Management Oversight Board, ensuring regular scrutiny and timely intervention. Additionally, improved data sets have been made available to the command team, Inspectors and managers to aid early identification of issues and inform decision-making. Further training has also been introduced, alongside increased opportunities for supervisors to engage with Human Resources to discuss absence-related challenges and receive tailored guidance.

It is a recognised feature of the Command that it will naturally hold a higher proportion of staff and officers with workplace adjustments or restrictions. Given that all roles within Contact Management are nonconfrontational, many officers posted to the Command have existing restrictions or permanent adjustments.

Contact Management is widely regarded as a gateway into policing, and a significant number of those who leave the Command progress to become regular officers or move laterally into other departments. As a result, many staff are undertaking their first role within policing and may therefore lack experience and a broader understanding of organisational processes. Consequently, tutoring can be more intensive than in other areas, and close supervision and robust quality assurance are essential to ensure high and consistent standards of service.

The Command continues to make significant investment in training. Following the implementation of the TOM, substantial upskilling was required to equip staff with the competencies needed to operate within the omnicompetent model.

There has also been a strong focus on developing supervisory capability. All Sergeants and supervisors have been required to complete the ‘Be the Change’ programme, which emphasises core leadership principles with a particular focus on effective people management. This approach is designed to strengthen leadership across the Command and ensure consistent, high-quality support for teams.

A new shift pattern commenced in April 2025, which has built in five continuous professional development (CPD) days per year, which will enable the command to have a structured approach to delivering training without impacting on operational delivery.

Performance: HMICFRS PEEL 2024/25

In the HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy (PEEL) Inspection 2022, the Force was assessed as 'requiring improvement' in Responding to the Public with four areas for improvement (AFIs) identified. In the 2023/24 PEEL inspection, the Force was assessed as adequate in responding to the public, with one area for improvement noting that the Force must reduce the number of non-emergency calls abandoned before they are answered.

The performance section evidences the improvements achieved in call-answering times. The Command continues to work closely with stakeholders across the Force to reduce levels of failure demand, including repeat contact from members of the public regarding matters already reported.

A process is currently in place to monitor and understand the nature of failure demand received, enabling more targeted problem solving. This approach will feed into the Public Contact Improvement Forum, ensuring that all Commands play an active role in identifying and addressing the root causes of unnecessary repeat contact.

The collaborative approach provided through the Public Contact Improvement Forum will become increasingly important to ensure that failure demand and repeat contact continue to be effectively addressed across the organisation.

Working with the Performance Analysis Unit, the command now understands in detail the various stages of abandonment, which has been considered positive practice by other forces and has been shared. Where a caller abandons in the IVR stage and subsequently reports online, this is considered positive abandonment, as the caller has responded to the instruction given and diverted to an online method, which is more efficient for the caller and the Force.

The command works closely with the media team to create meaningful campaigns to inform the public about the best way to contact us; examples include the 'help us to help you' campaign, and another regarding how to minimise the risk of accidental dials to police. The Force is also advocating use of our online channels as a more effective method of reporting.

As part of the Command's ongoing focus on reducing 101 call waiting times and abandonment rates, a callback system was introduced in December 2024. Since its implementation, the operating hours have been extended.

There are two additional AFIs that the command will support delivery against, both relating to how the Force manages reports of ASB.

Crime Date Integrity: the Force needs to improve how it records crime when ASB personal is recorded.
Preventing and deterring crime and ASB and reducing vulnerability: the Force should consistently identify crimes and incidents that relate to ASB and complete effective risk assessments.

The Force has implemented a new process in Contact Management whereby at the initial point of contact a risk assessment is completed for all incidents that are categorised ASB Personal. The new policy guidelines provide a risk assessment process around the journey of an ASB incident.

New processes have been introduced requiring the Officer in Charge and supervisor to consider whether offences relate to ASB and to complete an ASB risk assessment where appropriate. Oversight is provided by the ASB Oversight Board, supported by dip sampling at key stages of the ASB incident journey.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Essex Police is taking a proactive and structured approach to ensuring Contact Management has the capability, resilience and technological support required to meet rising levels of public contact. Central to this approach is the operational model which embeds omnicompetent staff, risk-based decision-making and a victim-centred service. The TOM aligns fully with the National Contact Management Strategy and its nine working assumptions, ensuring our transformation approach reflects both local operational needs and national direction.

Workforce development remains a primary focus. The Command continues to invest in raising capability through structured CPD programmes, including THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement), National Standards of Incident Recording (NSIR) and national Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) training, enhanced vulnerability awareness and strengthened supervisor competence. Mandatory leadership development ensures that first line managers are equipped to support staff, manage performance and uphold professional standards. The introduction of five protected CPD days per team per year within the new shift pattern ensures learning can be delivered consistently without detriment to operational coverage.

To increase resilience, the Force is maintaining a strong recruitment pipeline, supported by the MOU with Local Policing that enables predictable rotation of police officers into and out of the Command. This maintains operational continuity and preserves specialist contact-handling expertise. Alongside this, improved absence management processes, including bi-weekly oversight boards and early-intervention support, ensure that resourcing risks are identified and acted upon quickly, protecting service delivery at times of higher demand.

The Workforce Management (WFM) system was introduced into the Contact and Control Centre in June 2025 to strengthen our capability to align staffing levels with predicted public

calls for service. By analysing historical and real-time data, the system provides accurate forecasting of resource requirements, supporting the efficient deployment of staff. This has enhanced our ability to maintain service delivery standards, ensuring that emergency and non-emergency calls are responded to promptly and that resources are used in the most effective way. The system also provides live visibility of performance, enabling supervisors to identify emerging pressures and make timely interventions to protect service levels. A programme of further development is now underway to enhance the WFM system and deliver additional operational and organisational benefits. This includes the automation of several manual processes, improved forecasting accuracy, and the introduction of features that give staff clearer insights into their own performance, strengthening engagement and supporting continuous improvement. These enhancements will create greater efficiency within the Contact and Control Centre, improve our ability to match resourcing to demand, and reduce delays during periods of high activity. Ultimately, these improvements will deliver a more reliable, responsive, and consistent service to the public, ensuring that calls for assistance are handled swiftly and that the Force is better positioned to meet current and future demand.

The increased demand experienced by Essex Police during the summer months, from June to September, remains a priority for the organisation. Changing weather patterns and a trend towards longer, warmer summers are contributing to sustained growth in public demand. Essex, as a coastal county with multiple seaside destinations, attracts substantial seasonal tourism, which further amplifies demand on policing services during the summer period. A range of measures is being developed to support Contact Management in meeting public demand. Collectively, these measures aim to reduce abandoned contact resulting from extended waiting times and to enhance our overall service delivery.

Technology and innovation have, and continue to play a critical role in meeting future demand. The Force is progressing a major digital uplift across public contact, including the introduction of AI driven triage tools, predictive analytics for resource allocation and advanced CRM integration to provide a unified view of the citizen journey. These changes will streamline workflows, enable more effective prioritisation and reduce pressure on telephony by improving digital self-service. Automation, particularly around crime updates, email sorting and basic information requests, will reduce failure demand and free staff to focus on higher risk or more complex cases.

Investments in digital services such as Bobbi and Victims Journey will expand the range of accessible contact options while reducing repeat contact generated by lack of information. These solutions are essential to improving responsiveness, reducing queue times, and supporting victims more consistently. They also generate long term cost savings by shifting suitable demand away from higher cost channels such as telephony.

To ensure these changes translate into measurable improvements, performance will be monitored closely through enhanced dashboards, risk registers and established governance forums. The Public Contact Improvement Forum will continue to provide cross-organisational insight into failure demand, ensuring the wider Force plays an active role in improving

contact with the public whilst reducing repeat demand. Benefits realisation will be tracked through existing governance, demonstrating value for money and enabling informed decisions about future investment.

Wellbeing remains a critical priority for the Command, recognising the high-pressure environment in which contact staff operate. The command has implemented a wellbeing plan and regularly communicate that the wellbeing offer is in place, combining proactive support, early intervention and structured access to specialist services. Supervisors are equipped to identify early signs of stress and fatigue, supported by regular one-to-one check-ins and more robust data that highlights emerging risks. Staff have access to a range of wellbeing pathways including the Occupational Health, psychological services, counselling, trauma-informed support and the employee assisted programme. Cycle 6 of the CPD has been dedicated on Wellbeing. The command has responded quickly and effectively to feedback such as that through the Wellbeing survey. The command has also commenced a bespoke 'Safe to Say' campaign which takes place twice per year to encourage the recording of protected characteristics to improve culture and inclusion.

Improvements have also been made in how we recruit and train new staff working in Contact Centre. This improved training and support will ensure Contact staff are given the best opportunity to learn and develop, thereby improving retention and wellbeing. Work remains ongoing to ensure those involved in recruitment are trained to reduce adverse impact on those with protected characteristics.

In June 2025, Essex Police launched a collaboration with SignLive, an online video interpreting service that provides real-time access to BSL interpreters. This service enables deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals to communicate directly with Contact Centre officers, with interpreters facilitating the conversation. This initiative significantly enhances accessibility and inclusivity, ensuring that all members of the community can engage confidently and effectively with police services.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

- Peak-period telephony surges, can lead to increased queue times, a higher risk of abandonment on 101, and additional pressure on 999 during exceptional spikes.
- Real-time digital responsiveness at scale may remain challenging. Rising volumes of Live Chat and online contact are likely to affect first response times and resolution speed during peak periods, despite the introduction of automation and triage improvements.
- Complex safeguarding and vulnerability-related contact will also continue to place significant demands on capacity. Incidents involving mental health, missing persons, exploitation, domestic abuse and other high-risk presentations.
- Failure demand and repeat contact, particularly progress-chasing, will continue to absorb capacity until automated updates and digital engagement tools are fully established. Repeat enquiries relating to investigations and victim updates are therefore expected to remain a source of avoidable demand.

- Workforce constraints and skill shortages are also likely to reduce resilience and limit the pace at which service improvements can be sustained. These include churn, sickness and psychological absence, together with shortages in specialist capabilities such as digital investigation.

The indicative scale of pressure, based on the current position and projected trajectory, remains high across all contact channels. Current volumes include 388,817 year-to-date 999 calls, 163,417 101 calls, 41,720 Live Chat contacts, 104,558 Single Online Home reports and 81,180 emergency incidents. The unmet demand is most likely to arise during peak periods and in complex contact, where incremental growth or short-notice surges cannot be fully absorbed. In practice, this is most likely to present as longer waiting times and greater abandonment risk on 101, slower first response on Live Chat, and delays in providing updates that would otherwise reduce repeat contact.

Despite the extensive improvements delivered through the TOM, digital expansion, improved supervisory structures, and planned technological uplift, Essex Police will continue to face areas of future demand that cannot be fully met within the next four years. These gaps arise from forecast increases in demand complexity, structural workforce constraints, external system pressures and national strategic risks identified within the National Public Contact Portfolio Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA).

National workforce risks, training churn, and specialist skill shortages highlighted in the National Public Contact STRA, will continue to constrain capacity despite investment in CPD, supervision and new shift patterns. Failure demand and repeat contact for victim updates will remain a structural challenge until automation and digital engagement platforms fully mature.

Even with improved resilience, the Force will continue to experience periods, where telephony and digital demand exceed available capacity. Sudden surges generate operational pressure that cannot be fully mitigated with current and projected staffing levels or estate configuration.

Social challenges such as complex safeguarding and vulnerability may impact our ability to respond quickly and decisively. There is an increased expectation that staff will identify vulnerabilities, particularly those hidden, to ensure that the threat, risk and harm is addressed or mitigated beyond the initial presentation. Mental health related contact, missing persons, exploitation concerns, domestic abuse, and other vulnerability driven demand require longer call handling times, detailed THRIVE assessments and greater supervisory oversight. Forecasted growth in high harm reporting means the Force may not fully meet rising demand, even with improved workflows and automation.

Digital demand is expected to increase year on year as channel availability continued to be embedded beyond telephony. Even with automation and wider technological improvements, real-time responsiveness across all digital channels will be challenging. There will be an even greater emphasis to develop the technology being implemented to support the Force to

meet and mitigate against any significant increases in demand, whilst supporting staff to work more efficiently.

Future demand is likely to be driven increasingly by complexity rather than volume. High-harm incidents, forecast growth in ASB, and other risk-intensive cases require more time and enhanced decision-making. Although technological development will create efficiencies, significant investment in staff training and development will still be required. As a result, capacity gaps may persist despite workforce improvements.

Prevention & Deterrence

Introduction

Essex Police's success in preventing and deterring crime has been well documented in previous Force Management Statements (FMS). This section reflects the Force's continued commitment to prevention and demonstrates the depth and breadth of partnership working and activity taking place, delivering significant crime reduction, fewer victims and safer communities for people living, working and visiting our county. Forecasts suggest that the decreasing trend of crime is due to stabilise over the next four years without continued investment which may prove to be challenging due to anticipated financial constraints.

Transforming from the Local Policing Support Unit (LPSU) to the new Prevention, Partnerships and Engagement Command (PPEC) will enable the delivery of co-ordinated community crime fighting and a strategic approach to reducing crime, and provide an area of excellence, advice and support for our neighbourhood and town centre teams. It will build upon the existing structures of the rural engagement team (RET), our business crime team (BCT), our citizens in policing, special constabulary, licensing and designing out crime teams to combine with new focus on dedicated problem solving and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) officers, to create an area of expertise around prevention and community policing and problem solving. This will strengthen our problem solving and build on the work we are doing to reduce crime and ASB. In summary together this will continue the forces strategic focus on prevention.

Performance

The long term trend for all crime is decreasing, working with partners across the Essex system and beyond this year has again been successful in reducing all victim-based crime, especially in theft offences, and has increased the number of overall volume of crimes by 10.9% (2,323 more solved offences) compared to last year. The decreasing trend for all crime is projected to stabilise over the next few years.

The long term trend in anti-social behaviour has been downward. As anticipated, this trend has stabilised during the current year, with 14,990 recorded incidents in March 2026, representing 1,029 more incidents than in the previous 12-month period.

Whilst forecasting is not available for all areas of prevention, crime has decreased significantly in the last 12 months (-4.6%), high harm crime, victim-based crime, repeat

victims and DA repeat victims all decreased significantly in the last 12 months, compared with the previous 12 months. Officer assaults also decreased significantly (160 fewer in the last 12 months).

Essex Police take a whole Force approach to prevention and deterrence. The four-step process has been completed for each of the main areas responsible for delivering crime prevention, alongside analysis of key areas that demonstrate the whole Force approach.

Crime Prevention Strategy
The Crime Prevention Strategy is currently under development with partners and will be based upon a whole system approach, with a strong focus on partnership working, using intelligence and evidence to predict the challenges the Force will face over the next five years, and prepare us for the anticipated increase in volume and complexity of crime in an environment of significant political, economic and community change.

Knife Crime
Essex Police's effectiveness in preventing and deterring crime has been consistently evidenced in previous Force Management Statements. This section outlines the Force's ongoing strategic emphasis on prevention and highlights the breadth and maturity of the partnership activity that supports this approach.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Knife crime remains a core focus within Essex Police's Control Strategy and supports the Force priority of reducing violence and protecting vulnerable people. The Police and Crime Plan and Force Plan emphasise early intervention, targeted enforcement, safeguarding and the reduction of community harm. The Crime and Policing Bill 2025, updated in February 2026, strengthens police powers by enabling the seizure and destruction of knives found on private premises, increasing sentences to two years for prohibited knife offences and four years for possession with intent, and introducing mandatory bulk purchase reporting, enhanced age verification and updated officer training.

The number of offences flagged as knife-related decreased by 18.18% (795) in the 12 months from April 2025 to March 2026 compared with the previous year. Of the 3,578 offences recorded in 2025 to 2026, 20.54% were flagged as DA.

Ongoing reduction in knife harm relies on strong partnership delivery. Key partners include Re-Route, Probation, Youth Justice Services, The Children's Society, SET (Southend, Essex, and Thurrock) Social Care, Essex Risk in the Community, Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VVU), Ben Kinsella Trust, and Active Essex Foundation. These partnerships provide trauma-informed, early-help interventions and help safeguard vulnerable young people while disrupting exploitation and risk factors.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The Force is working consistently to develop the skills and capability of our people alongside our physical assets. Detailed descriptions of the workforce performance and capabilities in respect of the prevention activity described above can be found in the corresponding individual sections of this FMS and in the Workforce Management Section of this report.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The Force continues to develop plans and initiatives with partners and look to adopt new technology and best practice to continue to prevent knife crime and protect the public.

Update on 2025 Initiatives

- Knife Crime and Violence Model (KCVM): Run 4 (October to November 2025) ongoing with Re-Route embedded. ARU evaluation found the model effective.
- Sceptre Weeks of Action activity in November 2025 involved all Local Policing Areas (LPAs), cadets and Community Safety Partnerships (CSP). A total of 22 sweeps were conducted, resulting in four knives being seized and six arrests.
- Delivered visibility in hotspot areas.
- Ronan's Law and Project Alpha: Strengthens online weapon supply enforcement through mandatory reporting and enhanced age-verification. Project Alpha supports intelligence and monitoring; a new Home Office-funded unit will target illegal online sales.
- Round Knives Campaign: Explored with VVU; not yet implemented in Essex. Kent VVU continues to show strong outcomes, offering potential for future adoption.
- A joint initiative with Border Force, seized ninety-nine weapons last year. Prevent, Prepare, Protect (PPP) team will take over the management of this.
- Knife Disposal Bins: 2,646 kilograms of knives deposited and destroyed last year. New bin installed in Braintree with funding confirmed to maintain the network and place a new Brentwood bin.

New Initiatives 2026 to 2027

- National Knife Crime Coordination Centre: Launching 2026, led by National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC). This supports enforcement, Ronan's Law implementation, and national intelligence sharing.
- Knife Crime Concentration Fund (KCCF) - Essex Police have been allocated just over £800k from the KCCF. This fund will be managed under Operation Guardian and follows previous hotspots methodology, with investment in analytical, governance and compliance capability to support delivery of at least a 33% reduction in knife crime over the next two years.
- Operation Aluma: PPP officer completed national training (weapon ID, Royal Armories Practice, Level 3 trainer). Officers will deliver workshops and enhance evidential standards.
- VVU Funding: Confirmed for KCVM delivery and knife-bin network maintenance 2026 to 2027.
- The initiative will continue as part of our upstream enforcement activity; however, management of the initiative is now transferring to the PPP team, ensuring closer alignment with our wider knife-crime prevention and intervention work.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Forward projections indicate that, without ongoing investment, the current downward trend is likely to stabilise over the next four years. This represents a potential risk to maintaining progress, particularly in light of the financial pressures outlined in the Finance section.

Residential Burglary
The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
In Essex, there have been 3,805 residential burglary offences, representing a 6.3% reduction over the past 12 months leading to less demand on investigative teams. The substantial reduction in burglary incidents is attributed to the continued and sustained focus in crime prevention, active media communications, quality of response and investigation, victim care, offender management and targeted campaigns such as the "darker nights" campaign.

However, despite this longer-term reduction, there has been a recent increase in residential burglary over the past three months. This mirrors national patterns and aligns with well-established seasonal increases associated with darker winter evenings.

Evidence consistently links economic strain and cost of living pressures to an increased risk of acquisitive crime including burglary. While inflation has eased from its 2022 peak, many households continue to experience real terms financial pressure which is likely to sustain underlying burglary risk.

A further factor likely to influence burglary demand is the expanded use of early release schemes to alleviate sustained pressure on the prison estate. Since late 2024, the Government has implemented emergency measures allowing eligible prisoners to be released after serving 40% of their sentence. This has resulted in accelerated increases in releases into the community. Although high risk offenders are excluded, many of those released are serving short custodial sentences, a cohort historically associated with higher reoffending rates. Broader evidence indicates that around one in three adults reoffend within one year of release, rising to over half for those serving short sentences, particularly where accommodation, employment or substance misuse support is limited. Acquisitive offences, including burglary, commonly feature within this reoffending profile.

Another factor shaping burglary risk over the next four years is the sustained increase in the value of precious metals, particularly gold, which has led to historic highs throughout 2025 and into early 2026. Academic research demonstrates a clear relationship between gold prices and burglary activity. As the value of gold rises, burglary rates increase in areas where gold jewellery is commonly stored in the home, often referred to as 'family gold' offending.

An additional emerging risk relates to manufacturer led target hardening of vehicles, particularly in response to keyless theft and relay attacks. While enhanced vehicle security measures and software updates are expected to suppress some forms of vehicle crime,

evidence suggests offenders are more likely to adapt their behaviour than desist entirely. This may result in displacement from vehicle only offending towards burglary offences specifically targeting car keys inside homes. Where electronic compromise becomes more difficult, offenders may seek to remove the technical barrier altogether by stealing keys directly, particularly for high value vehicles that are in demand, easily exported or quickly dismantled once accessed.

The Force has and continues to develop strong strategic partnerships to mitigate these risks and remain ahead of emerging demand. For example, an established partnership with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service integrates burglary prevention advice into fire safety visits. This approach ensures that vulnerable individuals, particularly those who are seldom heard and not digitally connected, receive tailored crime prevention support alongside existing safety interventions. Operation Reassure is an ongoing plan whereby victim support contact victims of burglary and offer reassurance and prevention advice.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The Force has seen a measurable improvement in performance in relation to residential burglary investigations. Over the last 12 months, the solved rate for all residential burglary has decreased slightly to 8%. When examined more closely, the solved rate for burglary of a dwelling has reached 10% over the same period. While this remains below the level the Force aspires to, ongoing work and monthly burglary meetings are carried out to make sure this doesn't decrease any further, with the aim to improve it in the future.

Although there has been a slight decrease in solve rates, officers and staff are developing greater confidence and competence in managing burglary investigations, which will contribute to improved outcomes across the board. The Force recognises that burglary of the home has a significant and lasting impact on victims, their families, and wider communities, and this area continues to receive focused attention.

The Force has established policies, procedures and guidance to support officers and staff in preventing burglary, responding effectively, and conducting proportionate and thorough investigations. Internal audits indicate that investigative standards are improving and that changes introduced are beginning to have a positive effect. However, these improvements are not yet consistent across all teams, and further work is required to embed good practice and sustain performance. Overall, workforce capability and performance are improving.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The Force continues to invest in a balanced approach that combines prevention, workforce capability, governance, and partnership working to ensure it is well positioned to meet anticipated burglary demand over the medium term.

Enhanced crime prevention activity remains a core component of this approach. Targeted prevention campaigns strengthened collaboration with partner agencies and sustained

community engagement have all contributed to reductions in burglary. In parallel, a victim focused service improvement scheme continues to be a priority to enhance the support provided to burglary victims by working with Victim Services. This has proven effective in ensuring victims receive timely reassurance, advice and safeguarding.

The Force remains committed to attending all burglaries of the home. Over the last year, a 100% attendance rate has been maintained, providing early investigative opportunities, reassurance to victims and improved evidence capture. This commitment is underpinned by clear expectations, supervisory oversight and resource prioritisation.

Governance and strategic oversight are provided through the Force Burglary Improvement Board, chaired and overseen by the Strategic Portfolio Lead. The Board monitors delivery of the Force Burglary Improvement Plan, ensuring a cohesive and joined up approach across prevention, investigation, intelligence, leadership, training and victim care. Workforce capability is covered within the plan, with a clear focus on supporting officers and staff to meet anticipated demand through targeted training, education and professional development.

The Force has a strategic intelligence collection plan that identifies priority threat areas and emerging risks. This enables the Force to adapt proactively to changing crime patterns and offender behaviour. The Force increasingly uses data, analytics and digital tools to identify hotspots, repeat locations and priority offenders, enabling proactive and targeted activity.

Investment in workforce capability is supported through both initial training and continuous professional development (CPD). Through the Virtual Crime Academy and Initial Recruit Training, the Force continues to deliver structured learning inputs to ensure new officers are operationally prepared. At the same time, officers and staff already in post benefit from ongoing development opportunities designed to refresh skills, embed good practice and respond to increasing investigative complexity.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

Despite the governance arrangements, systems and efficiencies outlined, the Force recognises that some areas of future demand may be challenging to absorb fully within existing resources.

While the Force has strong strategic oversight and a clear understanding of current and emerging risks, a significant or sustained shift in offending patterns, particularly those driven by economic pressures, reoffending or displacement from other crime types may place additional strain on investigative resources. This reinforces the importance of maintaining a strong focus on crime prevention as a means of mitigating future demand before it develops into investigative workload.

Although year to date burglary volumes continue to show an overall downward trend, there has been a recent increase in burglary of the home over the past three months. If sustained, this increase is likely to generate additional demand for Criminal Investigation Department (CID) officers. The Force has systems and processes in place to ensure that risks within investigations are identified early, appropriately escalated and subject to robust supervisory oversight.

In summary, the Force assesses that most anticipated demand can be met through existing arrangements and planned efficiencies. However, sustained increases in residential burglary and more complex investigative demand may present challenges to the Force's ability to absorb this fully. These are assessed as situational rather than systemic gaps and will continue to be mitigated through prevention, prioritisation and strong governance.

Homicide Prevention

Homicide levels in Essex have remained low in line with the national trend, with some quarters recording no homicides and subsequent quarters recording single incidents, indicating a sustained reduction when compared with earlier years. Prevention activity has become increasingly targeted and thematic, with homicide risk now consistently understood through four principal drivers: DA, Serious Violence, Mental Health vulnerability, Alcohol, and Night-Time Economy (NTE) related harm.

Near-miss incidents and serious violence data (including attempted murder and Grievous Bodily Harm (GBH) with intent) are routinely analysed alongside homicide data, strengthening the Force's preventative understanding of escalation risk.

Governance has matured, reflecting stability in themes and confidence in underlying prevention arrangements.

The reduction and stabilisation in homicide levels are linked to sustained, structured prevention activity across each thematic area, underpinned by strong governance and analytical oversight:

Domestic Abuse

- DA remains the single most significant driver of homicide risk and is consistently prioritised within the Homicide Prevention Strategy.
- Prevention activity focuses on early identification of repeat and escalating risk, supported by learning from homicide and near miss debriefs and the routine scrutiny of domestic related homicides within prevention governance.
- DA abuse prevention is integrated with wider vulnerability and safeguarding frameworks, ensuring homicide risk is considered alongside ongoing protective interventions. This includes DA problem-solving teams in each LPA.

Serious Violence (including knife crime and youth violence)

- Serious violence is treated as a precursor risk rather than a standalone category, with attempted murders and high risk GBH incidents informing prevention activity.

- The Force routinely analyses near miss offences to identify patterns of escalation and opportunity for intervention before fatal outcomes occur.
- This approach supports a public health style prevention model, aligning homicide prevention with serious violence reduction activity already underway.

Mental Health Vulnerability

- Mental health features prominently within homicide prevention analysis, particularly where vulnerability, crisis, or unmet need intersects with violence risk.
- Prevention activity ensures that learning informs both policing and partnership responses.
- This has strengthened understanding of systemic risk rather than individual incidents, supporting earlier preventative engagement.

Alcohol and the Night-Time Economy

- Alcohol related violence and the nighttime economy (NTE) is consistently recognised within the homicide prevention framework as contributory risk factors.
- Prevention activity focuses on pattern analysis of violence linked to alcohol consumption, informing both enforcement and partnership based harm reduction approaches, such as targeted police patrols and visible engagement.
- Inclusion of this theme ensures homicide prevention activity reflects place based and environmental risk, not solely offender centric models.

Learning and Debrief

- Rapid Homicide Prevention Debriefs are a core component of the Force's prevention model, designed to identify learning quickly following homicide and near miss events.
- These debriefs focus on immediate, practical prevention learning, rather than retrospective review, and are overseen through established governance arrangements.

What is the impact of the change?

- Sustained low homicide levels, indicating that prevention activity is focused on the correct risk drivers and is proportionate to current threat.
- Improved confidence in the Force's prevention framework, allowing senior oversight to shift from frequent narrative reporting to outcome focused scrutiny.
- Stronger alignment between homicide prevention, serious violence reduction and vulnerability governance ensures prevention activity is integrated rather than siloed.
- More efficient use of analytical and leadership capacity, with biannual reporting supported by continuous internal monitoring through the Homicide Prevention Board and related forums.

Stop and Search

There were 16,869 stop and search recorded in the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This is an increase of 10% (1,685 records) on the previous year. The percentage of positive outcomes increased year-on-year, from 32.6% to 34.94%. This is above the national average.

The latest HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) 2023-2025 PEEL (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy) inspection found that in line with the force self-assessment plans there is a need to improve training to ensure officers understand and properly record the use of stop and search powers.
This Area for Improvement has been submitted for closure following extensive action.

Essex Police have introduced a more robust oversight and auditing mechanism for Stop and Search and enhanced training and access to information to ensure compliance with the HMICFRS recommendation. At the time of writing, 94% of officers have completed refocused training in this area. Learning and Development have further enhanced the training opportunity through Public and Personal Safety Training ensuring officers apply powers and procedures correctly, using accurate data and current themes to further enhance the role play environments.

Additionally, there has been an increase in supervisory reviews of auditable body worn video (BWV), resulting in greater engagement with officers who require development in this area. This has been supported by Essex achieving a 99.25% compliance in activating BWV during Stop and Search Encounters. The scrutiny also provided by the Independent Advisory Group is welcomed and was recently reported positively by BBC Look East.

The implementation and continued development of the A4E (Analytics for Everyone) dashboard have significantly strengthened the Force's ability to review and report on disproportionality. However, robust analysis remains dependent on a reliable baseline. As Census data is now five years old, the Force must continue to address this by consistently recording self-defined ethnicity (SDE) in every stop and search encounter. This position is improving, with the proportion of records marked as 'SDE not stated' reducing from 26.17% in 2024/25 to 21.97% in 2025/26. This remains essential to ensuring the Force can accurately measure and assess disproportionality in stop and search activity. Data scrutiny has also been strengthened through the ability to filter results between Essex residents and non-residents, providing a clearer understanding of local impact.

Technological improvements have also been introduced, including translation cards in seven languages to support officers in asking for an individual's SDE. These are accessible through the Stop and Search tile within the Mobile First Patrol App.

A structured health check process has been introduced to provide oversight of referrals relating to young and vulnerable individuals, repeated instances of SDE being recorded as 'not stated' and stop and search records requiring supervisory sign-off. These areas are governed through both Tactical and Strategic Boards, which include force-wide representation.

In the most recent edition of the *Public Views and Experience of Policing and Criminal Justice in Essex* report for Quarter 3 2025/26, covering October to December, 67.3% of respondents stated that Essex Police use 'stop and search' powers fairly, compared with 67% in the same period in 2025, indicating a stable position.

Future work includes the development of a new digital form combining Stop and Search, including Section 163 vehicle stop checks, Use of Force and Operation Hampshire officer assaults.

Preventative Orders
Proactive Order Enforcement Team (POET) is the Proactive Orders Enforcement Team. Established in 2022, it manages and enforces criminal and civil orders to disrupt offenders. They focus on serious crime prevention, non-domestic stalking, slavery and trafficking, female genital mutilation, and violent offender orders. POET collaborates with other units like Domestic Abuse Investigation Team and Management of Sex Offenders and Violent Offenders.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
POET is responsible for the application of all civil orders and complete evidential files, collating material and timelines from police owned systems and identify third party material that can be used in civil order applications. Referrals can be made to POET to review a nominal for civil order consideration.

Demand on POET is expected to increase in the coming four-years in line with national trends, not least due to increased focus on violence against women and girls, and the need for stricter monitoring. The significant changes under the Sentencing Act will mean more offenders being managed in the community and an increase in monitoring of conditions and the need for preventative orders to keep victims and communities safe.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
There is ongoing focus required to ensure POET remains fully effective.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Restructuring within Essex Police means that plans are in place for POET to move away from the Crime and Public Protection Command to a single, coordinated Offender Management Unit (OMU) within Local Policing. This is envisaged to give the Force consistent, professional offender management, reduce harm, and improve outcomes for victims. The OMU will bring together enforcement and partnership working, with police staff and with warranted officers, able to carry out lawful enforcement such as arrests, bail checks and warrants.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Essex Police will continue to monitor the performance of the OMU to assess its impact on the management of civil orders in the community. In 2025 a new procedure has been published detailing proactive and preventive orders available to police. it is designed to act

as a reference guide to enable officers to understand the full scope of options open to them and encourage wider application and use.

Careful monitoring of the impact of the Sentencing Act under Operation Redford will assess the increase in workload linked to offenders being managed in the community.

Public Engagement

During 2026, Essex Police has continued to strengthen its approach to public engagement, with an intentional shift from the volume of engagement activity to the quality and meaningful impact of every public interaction. This reflects our commitment to ensuring engagement is purposeful, consistent, and aligned with the communities we serve.

April 2026 will mark the first full year since the publication of the Engagement Operational Plan (EOP) and the Meaningful Engagement Toolkit. These resources have supported officers and staff in adopting a structured, repeatable approach to engagement, while still affording district commanders and senior leaders the flexibility to tailor activity to local needs and community dynamics.

At the core of the EOP and Toolkit is the principle that effective public engagement and visibility are essential to delivering the Essex Police Force Plan and Public Engagement Strategy. Each engagement event is now expected to clearly demonstrate:

- Intent – defining the aims and desired outcomes
- Implementation – identifying the target audience, suitable location, and accessibility considerations
- Impact – assessing whether the aims were met and determining what improvements should follow

To guide this, the EOP asks three key questions:

- Why have you targeted this location or event?
- What will you do when you are there?
- How will you know the event has had an impact?

The impact of this renewed focus can be seen in our engagement data.
In 2025, the Force recorded 4,573 engagement events, of which 794 resulted in at least one member of the public subscribing to the Dispatch electronic newsletter. This generated a total of 3,681 new subscribers.

This compares to 2024, when 5,564 events were recorded, but only 195 events resulted in sign-ups, totalling 747 new subscribers.

While the number of events in 2025 was lower, the conversion rate and overall impact were substantially higher. Increasing the reach of Dispatch remains important in ensuring timely, relevant messaging to local communities. A key aspiration for 2026 is that 100% of engagement events secure at least one new Dispatch subscriber.

The Affordable Futures programme and wider force reorganisation will influence engagement capacity in 2026. Community Safety Engagement Officers (CSEOs) will be aligned to the LPAs rather than individual districts.

Quality and measurable outcomes will be prioritised over the total number of events delivered in 2026. The expectation will fall firmly on NPT to maintain engagements.

CSEOs also maintain several essential communication and engagement channels, including Single Online Home (SOH) content, the DISPATCH e-newsletter, and Level 2 Facebook accounts. As the CSEO establishment reduces and moves to a centralised model, Media and Communications will assume full ownership and authoring responsibility for Dispatch and district social media accounts, supported by relevant metrics to track PPEC and engagement key performance indicators (KPIs). The centralised CSEO team will have a critical co-ordinating and convening role, ensuring Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) continue to provide content (stories, images and updates) to their Media Single Points of Contact (SPOCs) for both Dispatch and district social media, supporting consistency and resilience in communication output. They will also ensure that neighbourhood teams actively promote Dispatch sign-up at engagement events, and that SOH neighbourhood pages remain accurate, with up-to-date team information, priorities, actions, and event data.

As Essex Police adapts to organisational changes, the emphasis on meaningful, targeted engagement will remain central to our relationship with the public. The first year of the EOP has provided a strong foundation, and 2026 will focus on consolidating and enhancing this approach, ensuring every engagement activity supports visibility, trust, and improved service to our communities.

Neighbourhood Policing

Essex Police's response to His Majesty's Government's Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee (NPG) programme launched in April 2025.

Through this programme, Community Policing became Neighbourhood Policing and a significant increase in the staffing establishment occurred, with the number of NPT officers increasing by 30 in the North, 24 in the South and 20 in the West Local Policing Areas. This resulting in an overall increase of 74 officers in NPTs. These officer increases supported the national NPG programme with the Essex uplift sourced from probationary Constables who joined the April and June 2025 intakes respectively.

NPTs are and will continue to be highly visible in Town Centres and across their local neighbourhood areas. In line with the Force Plan and Police and Crime Plan, they will listen to communities and businesses, working closely with partners to tackle issues that are important to them. A key driver of this will be problem solving and prevention activity, supported by the entire NPT, including Town Centre Teams as well as wider support from the BCT, RET, Children and Young Person Officers, CSEOs and others from various commands in a collaborative approach to community safety.

Considering the Essex Police Force Plan key objectives, alongside preventing and responding, the team will investigate a range of neighbourhood crimes, carry out pro-active operations, enforce orders, and target those exploiting vulnerable people in our communities.

The NPG covers six pillars (and associated Commitments), all of which are subject of NPCC and Home Office governance and scrutiny as well as existing and in some cases, new, governance and activity within Essex Police. These Pillars, all with a Subject Matter Expert member of Essex Police as their lead include:

1. Police back on the beat.
2. Community-led policing.
3. Clear performance standards and professional excellence.
4. Crackdown on anti-social behaviour.
5. Safer town centres.
6. Special Constabulary and Volunteer recruitment and retention.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Demand within neighbourhood policing is high and has become more complex due to an increase in digitally enabled harassment, stalking and neighbourhood disputes. Problem-solving and retail crime are further examples of emerging areas of focus that will have a resourcing impact. Further details can be found in the Problem Solving and Business crime sections.

Essex's population has increased since the 2021 Census and now stands at approximately 1.9 million within the Force area. Ongoing and planned strategic and local development projects are expected to drive further population growth, increase traffic flows and expand the transient population.

Although Essex Police remain an efficient force, with 1.84 officers per 1,000 population, continued growth is anticipated. Local authorities have been set a government target to deliver 14,088 homes annually, representing a 37% increase on the previous target of 10,316 homes per year. This sustained growth will place additional demand on available resources, with all districts progressing local development plans involving significant new housing and community expansion.

Strategic commercial and industrial developments are also underway or planned, presenting further policing challenges and contributing to transient, construction focused population increases. These developments include the Lower Thames Crossing in Thurrock, the planned Norwich to Tilbury National Grid development, various offshore wind farms, and other road and commercially significant national infrastructure projects.

In some areas, political and social factors, including cost of living pressures, community tensions and wider societal issues, are creating increased uncertainty and additional policing challenges. Local Government Reform, including the creation of a currently undefined

number of combined Unitary Authorities, the introduction of a mayoral role in Essex and the potential transition away from the current Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) function, may further contribute to these challenges. This may include changes to geographical boundaries and associated implications for the delivery of policing services.

Police Reform is also expected to introduce future challenges and ongoing uncertainty regarding its impact on policing in Essex.

Balancing essential proactive activity that maintains public trust and confidence with urgent operational demands presents an ongoing challenge. As a result, NPT may be required to undertake additional duties, including hospital guards, scene preservation and support to force-wide events and prevention operations, as well as providing mutual aid to other forces.

In some parts of the county, some retailers have adopted a zero-tolerance attitude towards shoplifting, reporting all incidents regardless of the value of loss. This change in methodology has led to a disproportionate increase in reported shoplifting. Considering the 'cost of living' situation in Essex and the UK, it is highly likely we will continue to see an increase in offending and the reporting that accompanies it.

Efforts are being made to increase visible policing, target repeat offenders, and work with CSP and other partners to address the root causes of retail theft, often related to substance dependency. Both the BCT and local NPTs work together and otherwise on such issues, and the Operation Steel cohort of shoplifting suspects has really focussed efforts on tackling repeat criminality and a focus on prevention.

Although covered in greater detail in the Engagement section, building public confidence remains a key focus and is subject to continuous scrutiny. This is supported through the development, maintenance and analysis of the Engagement Dashboard, alongside regular governance forums led by an Assistant Chief Constable as strategic lead and a Superintendent as tactical lead. These include the Public Confidence and Engagement Board, the Engagement Oversight Board, and regular engagement with the Engagement Team to better understand challenges relating to public confidence performance.

Recent decreases in public confidence during 2025/26 are subject to ongoing scrutiny within these boards and forums.

Essex Police is still heavily invested in and supportive of innovation, automation and forward thinking and looking, to ensure we can make best use of technology and other innovative measures to equip, train and deploy our policing and support teams.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Over the last 12 months since April 2025, supported by the NPG, Essex Police has seen an uplift and growth of 74 officers into NPTs, following on the 2024 Continuous Improvement Programme which reduced opportunities for movement from LPA to specialist teams and

which combined, has led to increased stability and experience remaining within those teams. This programme also allowed the continuation of employment of Police Community Support Officers in Essex Police.

Supporting and informing both the tactical and strategic oversight of the NPG, Pillar 1 of the NPG considers 'Police Back on the Beat' and a fortnightly scrutiny meeting considers NPT officer headcount linked to government funding for new officers within the NPT environment.

LPAs balanced LPT staff across the districts to ensure they maximised their capabilities against demands and Threat, Harm and Risk.

Since the amendments in April and June 2025, LPTs are receiving a steady flow of new recruits through the pipeline and vacancies are being filled.

Considering the uplift of new probationers into an NPT environment in 2025, a post implementation review is underway at this time and focusses on workloads, training and development, staffing profiles and other themes that will see an April 2026 report make some recommendations around next steps linked to neighbourhood policing.

A revised uplift of additional police officers into Neighbourhood Policing Teams is currently being scoped and developed. This will deliver an additional cohort of officers into Neighbourhood Policing during 2026, aligned to supporting the national uplift under the NPG programme.

With this new 2026 staffing uplift, as completed in 2025, collaboration with Essex Police Estates, Transport Services and IT teams will be critical, to ensure suitable working environments, and in some cases, liaison with local authorities around the same, considering some NPTs are based in Council premises.

NPT performance is measured through various reports and A4E dashboards, all helping to inform LPA command performance arrangements, as well as reporting into strategic performance forums (Deputy Chief Constable chaired Performance Star Chamber being one such example) and currently, the new National Policing Performance Framework is being developed and finalised and Essex Police are part of a national trial within the Eastern Region. The range of metrics is extensive and aside from 'traditional' crime and ASB performance, other matters, linked to the NPG are included such as NPT abstractions, activities linked to SOH publicised policing priorities. Returned public contact within 72 hours of a message being left with an NPT officer are all included and will be subject of Home Office and NPCC scrutiny and force performance. This framework will help shape and develop future performance reporting and governance within Essex Police.

Work is in progress to develop CPD themes and subjects for NPTs.

As with other Essex Police teams and commands, delays within the criminal justice system prove challenging for NPTs to ensure victim engagement, support and sustained offender management.

Special Constabulary
Supporting Pillar 6 of the NPG, and in line with the national trajectory, Essex Police Special Constables numbers have seen a decline since June 2021, however this has slowed in the last year. As of 31 March 2026, the Special Constabulary headcount was 216.

With the introduction of the NPG programme, the Force anticipate that this will continue with a focus on hours contributed towards neighbourhood policing and with a new (2025) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) around support to NPTs and the regular Special Constabulary Oversight Board as well as other activity in place. Essex Police is in a strong position to increase and enhance recruitment and retention of Special Constables and volunteers.

The Essex Police Special Constabulary Vision 2030 is to have a well-trained, motivated, and professional group of Special Constables who feel valued and contribute towards the Force Plan and to bring Essex Special Constabulary into a period of sustained growth. There are seven strands to the Vision 2030. Each strand is led by a volunteer and/or staff member and has a specific area of focus.

In May 2025 Essex Police introduced a Special led Recruitment and Retention Task Force on a trial basis until April 2026, the taskforce is made up of a Special Inspector and three special sergeants, and the focus is to identify and support engagement opportunities for recruitment across the county. Data is to be fully analysed at the end of the trial, but indications so far are positive and has seen an increase in engagement and applications throughout the trial.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
A bespoke College of Policing (CoP) National Policing Programme (NPP) training for NPTs is part of the NPG programme and is linked to Pillar 3 and subject of Home Office and NPCC governance. E-learning (NPP1) has seen close to 100% compliance and completion from within Essex Police NPTs and in 2026, staff are now being trained in-person as part of the NPP2 programme and with the next modules of NPP2 also being implemented in mid- 2026.

The working relationship with the CSP continues to remain strong at all levels, strategic, tactical and operational. Effective joint work between NPTs and council colleagues is evident, with shared spaces and collaborative training sessions and meetings.

Our NPT teams will align and work with the LPSU remodelling under the Affordable Futures programme. Reshaping LPSU into PPEC (Partnerships, Prevention and Engagement Command) and all of the teams and functions that are to be included (Children and Young Persons policing, CSEO, Custody command and Offender Management and more besides)

will bring together offender management and the prevention of offending by children and young people and this will mean that offender management is delivered locally by officers within their communities, who understand their local problems, and know their local offenders. Offender Management officers in PPEC will be able to work collaboratively with NPT and LPT officers to manage and prevent offending by individuals who directly impact their residents. This will improve the ability of LPT and NPTs to reduce and prevent crime and ASB, to be visible in their communities, and to ensure that young people are protected from the most serious offending risks.

Considering the volume of information and data available to help make informed decisions around local policing priorities (and ensuring NPG Pillar commitments are met), new district 'Crime Fighting and Engagement Plans' are being developed which will take cognisance and combine Force Plan and PFCC Plan priorities/local crime and ASB information/public suggestions on priorities and CSP priorities to really focus the activities of the NPTs.

Finalisation around planning for the new Home Office led KCCF is being addressed and new 'hot spots' for pro-active policing are being developed and which will replace the current Operation Guardian hot spot policing zones. These zones themselves combined Operations Grip (violence) and Dial (ASB) in the first quarter of 2025. The new KCCF zones will be subject to targeted policing activity, with analysis and delivery supported through grant funding and the involvement of Neighbourhood Policing Teams. This approach will also include the development and maintenance of bespoke Proactive Management Plans (PMPs).

Linked to this, in May 2025 Essex Police implemented the sole use of the PMP on Athena as the new methodology for overseeing problem-solving initiatives across the Force, previously this had been used by Offender Management focused teams and effectively replacing the use of the Problem-Solving Hub as mentioned in FMS 2025. Currently the force holds over 300 live PMPs across all categories. The enhancement of a problem-solving process for NPTs has seen PMPs created for ASB Nuisance, ASB Environmental, Drugs, Gangs, Knife Crime, Modern Slavery and Hate Crime related concerns. Activity will continue to be monitored around this area of business in 2026 to see how effective they are at managing short/medium/long term problem-solving activities and will likely be a focus of future HMICFRS inspections around neighbourhood policing.

Supporting the NPG and its Pillars and Commitments, in 2026, a new Abstractions Policy and associated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) have been developed. The time NPT officers and staff spend in their communities will be subject of HMICFRS, NPCC, and Home Office scrutiny and data is now available to show what abstraction levels look like. As of March 2026, Essex Police and other forces are involved in NPCC consultation around a national standardised policy linked to Neighbourhood Policing abstractions.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

While the current capacity is sufficient and with NPT staffing establishments set to increase again in 2026 linked to the NPG it is not known what factors may impact future capacity in

the preventative space. Abstractions for policing challenges outside of an NPT area as well as wider changes to the force may impact on capacity. Any future changes around Local Government Reform (and that of the transition from PFCC to Mayor) may also bring about uncertainties and challenges especially linked to work carries out across existing partnerships that will be changed under LGR. These may have a negative impact on wider crime and community safety initiatives.

Similar to the situation that exists with Hate Crime, and considering the huge changes linked to ASB policing and accountability/ governance in the last 12 months, enhancing capacity to manage ASB demand would be beneficial, such as embedding ASB coordinators across the force as being done elsewhere.

In response to changes arising from the Affordable Futures programme, a reduction in CSEOs will present a new challenge from mid-2026 onwards. The transition from a model of one (or, in some cases, more) CSEO per district to one CSEO per LPA, operating in a more coordinating role is likely to create challenges in maintaining public confidence. However, this presents an opportunity for Essex Police to embed and apply the Engagement Toolkit introduced in April 2025, with a focus on directing engagement activity towards locations and venues associated with crime and ASB, where intelligence indicates a need for policing activity or links to existing operations, and to reinforce a 'you said, we did' approach.

There are some uncertainties (and possible challenges) in what policing in Essex may look like over the next four years. Local Government Reform, Policing Reform the continual financial challenge, levels of growth and development and the cost-of-living situation, amongst others will impact local communities and the force.

The NPG governance and support measures in place, many of which were present prior to the launch of the NPG, will continue to be assessed and where needed, refined, to ensure Essex Police can deliver the best possible neighbourhood policing service to its communities.

ASB and Problem Solving

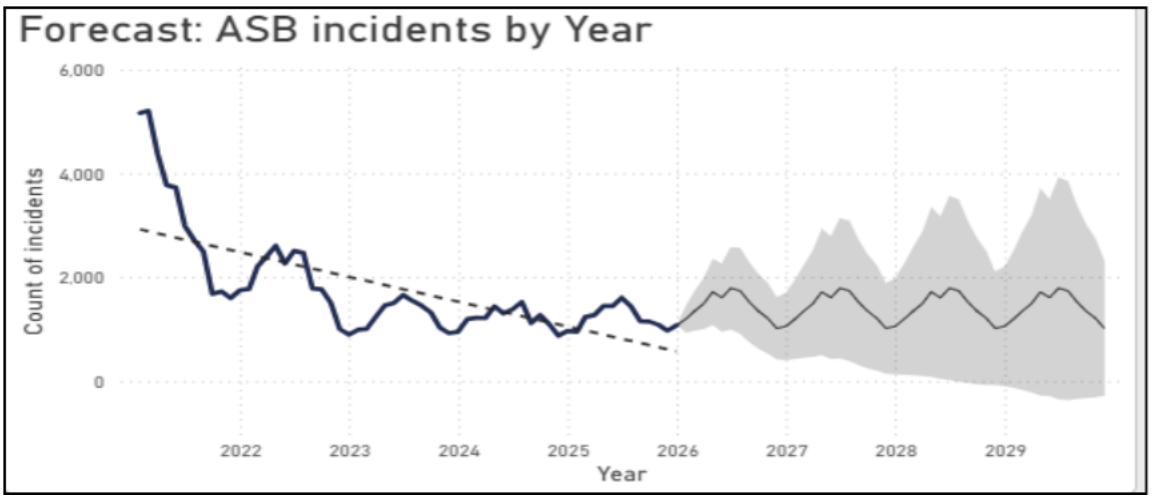
Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) is an umbrella term which encompasses a wide range of behaviours. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 provides a definition of ASB which is conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, harassment, alarm or distress to any person; conduct capable of causing nuisance or annoyance to a person in relation to that person's occupation or residential premises; or conduct capable of causing housing-related nuisance or annoyance to any person.

Following the HMICFRS inspection of Essex Police in 2025 and through the thematic area of ASB, the Force developed new policy and procedures to strengthen the ASB processes.

As part of the NPG, Essex Police in consultation with key stakeholders have developed an Essex ASB Action Plan which aligns the prevention and tackling of ASB across the already strong partnerships.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Looking ahead to the next four years, demand is expected to remain relatively stable, with any fluctuations driven primarily by changes in recording standards, digital reporting pathways, and public willingness to report. While improved detection, risk assessment obligations, and greater public expectations may create additional workload, the volume of ASB incidents in the foreseeable future is projected to remain steady rather than rise significantly.



There are currently 366 active Problem-Solving Plans (PMPs) in place across a range of policing themes. Between January 2025 and April 2026, a total of 314 new PMPs were created. Of these, 60 problem-solving plans focus specifically on addressing ASB affecting local communities.

As the Force continues to adopt the new problem-solving process, it is anticipated that the volume of problem-solving will increase, whilst this is an increase in initial demand, this is heavily linked to crime prevention and therefore should reduce demand in other areas of the organisation.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The LPSU and going forward PPEC, plays a vital role in providing both strategic and tactical leadership for ASB across the Force. The unit is responsible for a wide range of essential functions, including governance checks, ASB dip-sampling, training delivery, policy compliance oversight, and quality assurance throughout the Force.

Performance requirements continue to increase, particularly in areas such as ASB risk assessment, identification of repeat victims, and Problem-solving governance.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Under the affordable futures strategic review programme, LPSU command is transforming into a new Prevention, PPEC, which will be provided with additional resources to support the delivery of crime prevention, anti-social behaviour and problem-solving, including additional leadership positions, this will support the coordination of the thematic workstreams.
The force wide launch of the updated Problem-Solving Policy and new PMP on Athena was completed in April 2025, which provides a digital version of the tool enabling better data, governance and tracking of problem-solving plans.

The Performance Analyst Unit have created PMP data held on the Essex Data Hub for police leaders to track volume, timeliness, supervision and outcomes of problem-solving initiatives.

The Problem-Solving Hub brings together guidance, tactical options, and examples of effective practice, helping officers and staff identify issues, design solutions, and learn from what has worked elsewhere.

NPTs have grown by 74 posts in the last 12 months and with another increase of 39 posts planned, this will strengthen the Force's frontline delivery of crime prevention, ASB and problem-solving.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
With the Affordable futures programme strengthening this area of the organisation, we anticipate that we will be able to meet the thematic, coordination and reporting requirements for the Force.

Integrated Offender Management
The Integrated Offender Management (IOM) function sits within Crime Prevention and Deterrence, reflecting its focus on targeted early intervention and proportionate enforcement to reduce victimisation and repeat harm through partnership led problem solving.

The Force has an effective IOM process in place, aligned with the current government strategy of creating safer communities by reducing neighbourhood crime. There are five IOM teams throughout the Force, each responsible for managing an identified group of local prolific offenders, prioritised using a risk assessment framework that actively seeks pathways out of offending.

The IOM teams focus on early intervention and enforcement, actively gathering and seeking intelligence on offenders. They work with probation services to offer support to prevent reoffending. This work has led to significant interventions to identify offending behaviour and solve crimes.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Essex IOM continues to manage a countywide cohort through a risk- based- selection framework overseen by multiagency case conferences (MACCs), combining proactive contact, intelligence led tasking, and rehabilitative pathways with Probation.

National Guidance Changes
National communications indicate a transition to a simplified “Fixed and Free” model. National and Regional Probation colleagues have emphasised a coordinated approach before local implementation. These shifts reshape who we manage and where the work sits, rather than removing demand. Within Essex this function is likely to remain with IOM Staff rather than other areas of the organisation as the regional approach does not recognise that each Police Force will have different operating models in terms of offender management capability.

Probation and Supervision Context
With the cessation of Post Sentence Supervision, the proportion of offenders without statutory supervision increases.

Prison Capacity and Electronic Monitoring
There is a government drive towards the reduction of those in the prison estate and an increase in the use of Ministry of Justice Electronic Monitoring. This may increase the number of individuals in the community who are at risk of reoffending as well as reducing the length of time individuals are in custody or managed by the Probation Service.

Demand outlook (four year- view).
Effective demand persists via non-statutory cases and EMAC work that will in practice still be owned within IOM but without the same support of The Probation Service or partners.

There is likely to be an increase in the number of eligible individuals for IOM as prison sentences become shorter. At the same time this is expected to align with an increase in electronic monitoring requirements which will create additional workload for IOM officers.

The status of the Force’s workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Essex is transitioning to a unified OMU strand that brings IOM and POET together under single leadership.

This remodel will create a skills gap as the increase in staffing will include new and inexperienced IOM practitioners with a significant learning curve. However, it does positively increase the staffing (noting this includes amalgamating the current POET workstreams)

The increase in staffing will be positive for the delivery of IOM as it will enable the team to formally resource all IOM schemes in Essex to the same level and separate the Thurrock and Basildon schemes again.

At this stage the impact on amalgamating POET work is unclear however it is anticipated this new omnicompetent team will provide additionality rather than a detrimental service to IOM as the workload is distributed as is the work of POET.

Processes and systems. IOM delivery is underpinned by:

- MACCs and MAP (Multi-Agency Practitioner) meetings for joint risk -management planning and supervision adjustments.
- Police systems for casework, outcomes and performance.
- Low friction information sharing with Probation that protects timeliness and auditability alongside free flowing information sharing within the MACC and MAP meetings.

Capacity/capability to meet forecast demand.
If Flex is absorbed into Fixed and a strict OGRS/CSS threshold is applied without local discretion, caseload balance and supervision intensity become harder to maintain in some districts.

IOM has a clear information sharing protocol between Probation, Police and partners that enables seamless discussion of individuals on IOM.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The IOM, POET and OMU remodel is fully underway and at this time it is difficult to assess the impact it will have. However, the increase in staffing levels is anticipated to enable the team to better service the IOM cohort management and to remain within capacity levels. Equally, depending on the assessment of POET workloads, there may be an opportunity to increase the IOM cohort numbers providing an enhanced level of service.

To ensure that the workforce meets the demand, an upskilling and training process will be put in place. This will primarily be undertaken through the IOM training manual and key to this will be mentoring by experienced IOM officers.

In terms of wider demand issues, a significant piece of work was undertaken last year to reduce the number of Information Sharing requests from The Probation Service processed by the IOM Police Officers. This has seen a reduction of around 30% enabling the team to focus on the core operational role of IOM Officers engaging with offenders and partners and a reduction in time carrying out an administrative function.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Based on the current operating picture, planned OMU transition, and expected changes in national guidance, the IOM function assesses that future demand for FMS 2026 and beyond can be met within the remodelled establishment.

Rural Crime

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Overall, rural crime in Essex continued its downward trend to late 2025, with a 3.4% reduction year-on-year and rural crime forming 13.3% of all recorded crime. Rural acquisitive crime fell faster than the total, though shoplifting and bicycle theft bucked the trend.

Hare coursing spiked locally in 2025/26 (a significant rise of 69.9% to 309 incidents in the 12 months to March 2026, driven by a specific locality focus, whereas unauthorised encampments remained broadly stable and low, with proportionate use of police powers and strong partnership working.

Agricultural and construction equipment theft has shown an overall decrease over the latest rolling year, supported by proactive prevention measures, including forensic marking and targeted port activity at Harwich.

Serious Acquisitive Rural Crime and machinery/GPS theft remain high harm national priorities. Linkages to OCGs persist and can rapidly increase offending.

Environmental offending, including fly tipping, is largely led by local authorities and continues to affect public confidence and generate calls for police service. Changes in public expectations and engagement channels, such as the Farm and Rural Watch trial, may increase information flow and tasking demand.

Base demand is expected to remain broadly stable, with overall rural crime projected to stay flat or reduce slightly under the current prevention approach. This includes seasonal variation in wildlife crime and poaching, alongside periodic, location-specific spikes such as hare coursing.

High impact low volume thefts (machinery/GPS/ATVs) and wildlife offences continue to carry disproportionate harm and reputational risk with demand likely to be more complex rather than simply volumetric increases.

Public contact/engagement demand is likely to increases through improved communication avenues such as farm watches, requiring officer capacity to manage and convert inputs into actionable tasking.

Demand (current compared with the next four years):

- Day-to-day volumes are expected to remain broadly stable, with episodic surges in wildlife crime and poaching, alongside targeted serious acquisitive rural crime, which can significantly impact short-term tasking.
- Complexity is expected to increase, with factors such as digital and forensic exploitation, ports activity and cross-border coordination driving greater investigative demand and the need for specialist advisory support, even where overall volumes plateau.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Workforce profile and capacity:

- Specialist capabilities include wildlife and heritage crime, unauthorised encampments, plant and machinery theft, rural road safety and partnership led problem solving. All officers have completed National Wildlife Crime Unit training, and responsibility for wildlife and heritage crime specialisms is now distributed across the team.

Performance and condition:

- Preventive impact is evidenced through reductions in rural crime and targeted outcomes, including fewer equipment thefts and the consistent management of encampments. Localised spikes, such as hare coursing, are addressed through problem solving plans, regional collaboration and bespoke tactical activity.
- The engagement footprint remains strong, supported by activity such as Rural Crime Forum actions and the development of Farm and Rural Watch. However, demand for engagement remains challenging and requires prioritisation. The team typically attends over 260 engagement events annually.

Assets, serviceability and security of supply:

- Forensic marking kits (Operation Glare) are used to deter and identify plant and machinery theft.

Continued port operations at Harwich and cross border working increase capability against organised theft export routes.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

Workforce and Operating Model:

- Tasking is aligned to the Neighbourhood Policing Change Programme, enabling the RET to leverage the uplift and increased visibility of NPTs, launched in May 2025, to support coverage. This approach supports more consistent attendance at hare coursing incidents and improves community reassurance. Performance is monitored through NPT tasking returns and attendance timeliness.
- Shift pattern and efficiency options have been subject to review, taking account of a range of organisational changes. Following these reviews, the current model is assessed as the most effective deployment of available resources.

Prevention and Partnership:

- Farm and Rural Watch will be refreshed under clearly defined terms of reference to expand community coverage. This will support earlier reporting, improve the quality of intelligence and strengthen public confidence.
- Intelligence led operations at Harwich will continue in collaboration with regional partners to disrupt serious acquisitive crime linked to export activity. This approach is expected to

sustain reductions in equipment theft and support asset recovery, with performance monitored through seizures, arrests and prosecutions.

Science, Technology and Innovation:

- Operation Glare – Forensic Marking of Plant and Machinery (Selecta DNA): Increases recovery rates and deters theft.
  Benefits: Reduced victim loss, improved solvability and enhanced confidence.
  Costs: Equipment procurement and officer time for marking activity.
  KPIs: Marked asset coverage, recovery rate differentials and solved outcomes.
- A4E-Driven Forecasting and Dashboards: Supports analysis of rural metrics and seasonal trends.
  Benefits: Improved resource allocation and targeted patrol activity.
  Costs: Analyst resource and ongoing dashboard maintenance.
  KPIs: Forecast accuracy, alignment of demand to resource and harm-weighted reductions.
- Secure Messaging Options Appraisal for Rural Communities (WhatsApp Engagement Paper): Ensures engagement aligns with information management requirements and is not used as a formal crime reporting channel.
  Benefits: Enhanced situational awareness and improved partner reach.
  Costs/Risks: Governance, moderation and data handling considerations.
  KPIs: Tasking timeliness, intelligence conversion rates and compliance outcomes.
  This work is currently being delivered as a pilot and remains in the benchmarking and design phase.

Monitoring and Governance:

Monthly RET performance board inputs covering crime, harm, attendance and prevention activity; quarterly updates to the PFCC Rural Crime Forum; and an annual PESTELO refresh maintained on the team site.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

Even with the actions above, residual challenges are likely to persist in the medium term:

- **Community engagement demand:**
  Requests to attend meetings and events are expected to remain challenging during peak periods. Activity will be prioritised to ensure that engagement is undertaken only where it is effective and delivers measurable outcomes.
- **Partner-led environmental crime (fly-tipping):**
  Demand for police visibility and reassurance will necessitate close working with local authorities, supported by joint problem-solving approaches to achieve successful outcomes.

Business Crime Team

Essex Police provide specialist Essex wide support focused on reducing harm to Essex businesses through the Business Crime Team (BCT) who focus on prevention, partnership engagement, offender management, intelligence development and the enhancement of frontline policing capability. Business crime continues to represent a significant and evolving

challenge, driven by persistent repeat offending, rising confrontational behaviour within retail environments, and increasing evidential complexity linked to digital reporting and modern retail operating models.

While overall business crime volumes have begun to stabilise, the nature of crime is shifting. Retail staff continue to experience aggression and violence linked to shop theft incidents, and commercial robbery and burglary trends remain a concern. Changes in national counting rules have altered classifications within robbery data, but the underlying rise in harm, fear and vulnerability is evident across key retail sectors.

At the same time, economic pressures, increased automation, reduced instore staffing and growing expectations from national retailers are reshaping the landscape in which the BCT operates. These pressures require a coordinated, prevention led and partnership driven approach to ensure Essex Police remains equipped to respond effectively to both current challenges and future demand.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Current demand is characterised by sustained high volumes of shop theft, retail-related violence, repeat victimisation and persistent prolific offending across all districts. Despite this, performance over the past 12 months to March 2026 has strengthened considerably.

Overall business crime has reduced by 3,289 offences, from 25,225 to 21,936, with shoplifting, which accounts for 61.2% of all business crime, also decreasing year on year from 14,326 to 13,429. Investigative outcomes have improved significantly, with solved rates increasing from 25.3% to 34.5%, supported by the introduction of Operation Retail in April 2025, which streamlines case processing for eligible offenders.

Essex Police continue to compare favourably with its Most Similar Group (MSG), recording 7.5 crimes per 1,000 population, compared with an average of 8.1.

However, despite the reduction in overall crime volume, retail offending is becoming increasingly complex and harmful. Daily return data indicates a sustained high baseline of retail demand, with entrenched prolific offenders continuing to drive repeat victimisation and increasing pressure on investigative and partnership capacity.

Looking ahead, most forecasting models indicate a stable overall crime volume, with early signs of a gradual downward trend in shoplifting. However, future demand is expected to shift rather than reduce. Several key factors are likely to shape demand over the next four years:

- Persistent and prolific offenders will continue to create disproportionate harm and investigative workload.
- Growth in digital reporting, including third-party retail platforms and expanded CCTV availability, is expected to increase recorded crime from businesses that previously under-reported. This will raise investigative demand even if actual crime remains stable.

- Increasing expectations from major retailers, driven by national focus and the Retail Crime Action Plan, will require more dedicated problem-solving, partnership engagement and officer training.
- Rising violence and threat within the retail sector, including concerns around robbery, will increase risk and investigative complexity even if volumes do not rise.
- Economic pressures and continued cost cutting in the retail sector, including reduced staffing levels, fewer security officers, increased reliance on automation and larger store footprints, are likely to increase opportunities for theft and heighten the risk of confrontation and disorder.
- Media reports and public narrative continue to amplify fear of retail crime, which in turn increases demand for officer presence, reassurance, and partnership activity.
- National changes to counting rules, recording requirements and mandated responses will further contribute to organisational workload.

From an organisational perspective, the BCT, who spearhead the tactical response, remain a small specialist team facing growing strategic and operational expectations. While crime volume may stabilise, complexity, digital evidence requirements, and partnership responsibilities will continue to increase. Demand over the next four years is therefore expected to become more intensive, more digitally driven, and more resource dependent, even if headline crime figures continue to show reduction.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The BCT remains a small but highly specialist unit, delivering county-wide support, prevention and partnership response to business-related harm. While the team is currently assessed as low risk across all domains, several emerging pressures highlighted in the wider demand profile indicate that resilience will need close monitoring over the next four years.

Performance

The BCT continues to deliver strong operational and strategic performance, evidenced by:

- Significant reductions in business crime, including a fall of 3,289 offences in the 12 months to March 2026.
- Improved shoplifting solved rates, rising from 25.3% to 34.5%, driven by streamlined processing methods such as Operation Retail.
- Effective partnership engagement, with major retailers reporting increased confidence and satisfaction in Essex Police's response.
- Delivery of prevention activity, reassurance visits, training and problem-solving, which enhances frontline productivity by reducing administrative burden and enabling more efficient investigations.

There are no identified areas of underperformance.

Condition

The workforce is in good condition:

- Fully staffed with low sickness and abstraction rates.

- Officers possess strong experience in prevention, partnership work and business crime dynamics.
- Digital platforms (DISC, ShopSafe: ALERT), internal systems, and prevention materials are operating effectively.
- Strong district links and established partnerships bolster resilience and joint problem solving.

However, the team's condition must be considered in the context of increasing complexity of harm, including retail violence, robbery risks, and growing tensions linked to economic pressure on retailers.

Capacity
The team is currently handling demand effectively. Several factors are creating mounting pressure:

- Rising retail violence increased confrontational behaviour, and escalating harm.
- Higher expectations from retailers, driven by national scrutiny and the Retail Crime Action Plan.
- Growth in the Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) portfolio, each requiring ongoing management and monitoring.
- Expanding demand for training delivery, including Conflict Management Workshops and the "Just Here to Work" campaign.
- Increased requirement for professional reassurance and visits due to public and media narratives amplifying fear of business crime.

Forecasted increases in reporting from third-party digital systems are also likely to affect capacity, not only through volume uplift but through additional evidence needs particularly around CCTV and responding to retail partners with updates and guidance.

Capability
The team's capability is strong:

- Officers possess robust skills in crime prevention, offender management, and partnership coordination.
- BCT expertise continues to support frontline teams by removing investigative barriers, refining processes and providing clear evidential pathways.

Capability risk remains low, but rising digital evidence workloads and increasing expectations for crime prevention training will continue to test specialist skills. A minor capability gap exists relating to formal training delivery qualifications but is being actively managed.

Serviceability
Serviceability remains high:

- Staff are consistently deployable.
- No significant issues are identified in relation to equipment, ICT (Information and Communications Technology) systems or procedural processes.

- The team structure supports continuity, and established partnerships provide resilience during periods of peak demand.

Service provision remains reliable, despite increasing external expectations.
Retail sector vulnerabilities, including reduced staffing levels, increased automation, fewer security personnel and larger store footprints, are increasing opportunities for offending. These factors are driving demand for additional problem-solving visits, tailored prevention activity and site assessments, which will influence future resource requirements.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The BCT remains confident in its ability to meet future demand, with risk currently assessed as low. While overall business crime volume is forecast to remain stable, emerging pressures, particularly rising violence, increased reporting from third-party digital platforms, and escalating evidential complexity, require a proactive and structured approach to workforce and asset readiness. Several initiatives are in place to ensure the BCT remains resilient, scalable and capable of meeting these anticipated challenges.

Preparing for Rising Violence, Harm and Seriousness
The BCT is implementing measures to manage the increasing complexity and harm associated with retail offending:

- “Open for Business, Closed for Crime” campaign informs shop workers of acceptable behaviours, encourages proportionate reporting, and improves intelligence quality.
- CBO applications and tagging are used to target violent and high-harm offenders, ensuring robust offender management and breach oversight.
- Quarterly retailer meetings now incorporate robbery and burglary trend data, enabling both police and businesses to understand where violence is emerging and how to prevent escalation.
- Conflict Management Workshops and reassurance engagement support frontline workers in reducing confrontation, enhancing safety and mitigating demand linked to violent incidents.

These measures collectively strengthen our ability to respond to rising aggression and prevent harm before it becomes policing demand.

Strengthening Capacity Despite Operating Near Maximum Workload
Although the team is working close to capacity, resilience is embedded through:

- Clear operational processes (Operation Retail, CBO monitoring, partnership tasking) that reduce friction and maintain efficiency.
- Delegation of localised issues to district policing teams, with BCT retaining oversight to ensure consistency and problem-solving quality.
- Prioritisation of high harm and high impact activity, ensuring capacity is directed where it is most needed.

- Ongoing supervisory oversight to maintain staff wellbeing and ensure resilience is protected in a high-pressure environment.

This model allows the BCT to scale support while maintaining high performance.

Managing Increased Digital Evidence and Third-Party Reporting
To prepare for predicted rises in digital reporting and evidence submission the BCT is working closely with Contact Management Case Teams to:

- ensure evidence requests are routed directly to the appropriate loss prevention managers, reducing delay and administrative burden.
- Contact management Case Teams now have SPOCs that operate for high repeat locations and stores to streamline evidence capture and offender management.
- Engagement with retail managers continues to address procedural issues, avoid evidence loss and improve evidential consistency.
- Processes are being refined to ensure digital evidence uplifts do not overwhelm investigative teams as reporting becomes more automated and accessible.

These measures will ensure future reporting increases are absorbed without compromising investigation quality.

Responding to Growing Partner Expectations
Retailers expect stronger partnership dialogue, transparency and police responsiveness. To meet this:

- Each major retailer now has a dedicated BCT SPOC for county-wide consistency.
- Regular quarterly engagement meetings ensure aligned messaging, accountability and collaborative problem solving.
- The Biannual Retailer Round Table, led by the LPSU, strengthens cross industry learning and encourages businesses to support each other in addressing shared vulnerabilities.

This structured partnership model ensures demand is managed collaboratively rather than solely by police resources.

Adapting to Worsening Retail-Sector Vulnerabilities
Retail environments continue to change due to economic strain and automation. The BCT is mitigating the resulting increase in opportunity for crime by:

- Reporting and escalation of emerging risks, including reduced staffing, self checkout expansion and inadequate security, are undertaken through appropriate channels.
- Conducting prevention visits and environmental assessments to address store specific vulnerabilities.
- Working closely with national partners (National Business Crime Centre (NBCC), NBRA, major chains) to ensure best practice is shared and adopted locally.

This approach helps reduce crime upstream and protects the policing system from reactive demand.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
The BCT is currently assessed as low risk and capable of meeting present demands. However, without targeted action, future pressures linked to organised retail crime, violence, evidential complexity and growing partnership expectations may exceed the team's ability to respond.

Addressing Organised Retail Crime and Rising Violence
The most significant future demand risk stems from the growth of organised retail crime networks, increased violence against shop staff and emerging commercial burglary patterns. These areas require:

- Continued emphasis on campaigns such as "Open for Business, Closed for Crime", which improve reporting, shape public expectations, and reduce normalised aggression within the retail environment.

To maintain momentum, the Force may need to prioritise business crime within future harm focused strategic assessments.

Scaling BCT Involvement in Prevention, Offender Management and Training
Demand for BCT involvement continues to expand, particularly in:

- Offender management (including a CBO cohort exceeding 100 subjects)
- Conflict management and professional standards aligned training
- Crime prevention visits and environmental risk assessments
- Support for rising levels of digital evidence

Strategic decisions may be required regarding which elements the BCT retains, and which should be mainstreamed into LPTs or specialist units with BCT oversight. Clear boundaries will be essential to prevent the team being overwhelmed by demand created by national policy, retailer expectations and environmental vulnerability.

Ensuring Workforce Capability Through Training and Skill Development
To meet future demand confidently and safely, decisions are needed regarding BCT workforce skill development in:

- Designing out crime/Crime prevention qualifications
- Delivery training to enhance the BCT's ability to deliver high-quality workshops
- Artificial intelligence (AI) support, BCT officer granted higher AI access

Investment in these skills will directly support

- Improved problem solving capability
- Better quality prevention visits
- Reduced repeat victimisation
- Increased confidence from frontline officers and retailers
- increased productivity, accuracy and deliver reports and reviews to internal and external partners

Leveraging Partnerships and External Resources
Future success will depend on continued enhancements to:

- Business Improvement Districts and CSP partnership structures
- National retailer collaboration
- Data-sharing with major chains, who increasingly hold high-quality analytics
- Quarterly and biannual partnership governance meetings

There is support at a senior level for these partnership frameworks will be essential to manage demand collaboratively rather than solely through police intervention.
In summary several strategic decisions may be required to ensure the BCT remains capable of meeting future demand without degradation in service:

- Enhanced training and development pathways
- Support for violence reduction and organised retail crime activity
- Continued reinforcement of partnership led prevention models

These actions will ensure Essex Police remains agile, prepared and able to maintain high performance in the face of rising complexity, technological change and evolving retail sector vulnerabilities.

Crime Prevention Tactical Advisor/Designing Out Crime Officer
The Designing Out Crime team aims to mitigate opportunities for crime by creating safe and secure environments. They provide specialist advice on the security, design, and layout of the developments, influencing their design to ensure that the built environment is safe, secure, and inclusive for all, whilst enhancing the health and wellbeing of the residents and visitors. They offer specialist knowledge on relevant industry-approved security standards and specifications to minimise crime, disorder, ASB, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and perception of crime in our communities.

The Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) role is nationally recognised as a specialist policing function. Currently, the team performs a dual function, encompassing both crime prevention and designing out crime roles. Nationally, DOCOs are mandated to achieve a qualification in line with the NPCC's recognition of the role, and the Essex cohort has obtained this qualification. To ensure their licence to practice, the DOCOs are mandated to provide evidence relating to their skill set. This includes relevant learning through the national Continual Professional Development programme (as prescribed by the NPCC via Police Crime Prevention Initiatives (PCPI)) and submission of current portfolio of work. This continues to be undertaken by the team and completed successfully.

The Crime Prevention Tactical Advisor (CPTA) element of the role provides information, advice, and guidance on the delivery of effective crime prevention initiatives; to support the achievement of Force objectives to minimise crime, disorder and ASB. Some of the components of the Crime Prevention role includes delivery of crime prevention through problem-solving activity, crime prevention projects, liaising with media, partnership working and training, and linking in with the thematic pillar leads for the overarching crime

prevention strategy. As per the DOCO requirement, annual CPD is required to undertake this function.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
As of June 2026, due to the Affordable Futures programme, the team will be further reduced by restructuring, removing the DOCO team manager.

During the period from April 2025 to March 2026, the team has submitted 882 planning submissions to the local Planning Departments and conducted 1,014 meetings with planners, architects and developers to identify opportunities to design out crime and promote Secured by Design (SBD) initiatives. Additionally, the team has completed 313 SBD signoffs or site visits.

In addition to their regular work, the team advises on larger national infrastructure and strategic schemes, which require enhanced knowledge and additional due diligence. Current projects include the Lower Thames Crossing, Tendring Colchester Borders Garden Community, Norwich to Tilbury Power Upgrade, Bradford to Twinstead, Tarchon Interconnector Project and Five Estuaries Offshore Wind Farm. More information can be found in the Managing the Organisation section.

Furthermore, in partnership with the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference process and the Southend, Essex and Thurrock DA Board, the team has successfully completed 61 High-Risk DA safeguarding visits. The visits and subsequent reports provide the designated SPOC with the necessary technical details, which are then actioned by partners to help victims feel secure in their home.

The team is often requested to support bespoke projects that do not fit into specific categories but are essential for operational policing. For example, providing security advice for premises housing asylum seekers requires the team's expertise.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Projected Demand: As previously identified within FMS 2025, the team anticipates an increase in demand over the next four years, particularly from a DOCO perspective. Considering the Home Office's proposed schedule to deliver over 1.5 million new homes over the next five years, the DOCO is the linchpin for minimising the opportunity for crime, ASB, and operational demand in those new residential areas.

The Home Office priority to build the 'next generation of new towns' for local people, highlights the importance of the DOCO role to promote crime prevention through environmental design. As of December 2024, when applied to Essex, the revised targets equate to a significant uplift of an additional 14,089 homes per annum, a 37% increase from the previous years.

In addition to new homes, the Force expects growth in industry and commercial developments, as well as town centre regeneration schemes. Major national projects like the Lower Thames Crossing, and various wind farm projects will also come to progress.

Demand upon the DOCO is anticipated to grow significantly considering Recommendation 18 and 23d of the Angiolini Report (part 2). This report identifies the DOCO role as a key component and “an opportunity not fully exploited” in the reduction of VAWG related offences and places an expectation on forces to integrate the DOCO role within their VAWG strategies.

PCPI, an operational arm of preventative policing, continues to lobby on behalf of DOCOs nationally, advocating for greater involvement in various projects such as SBD, ‘Clear, Hold, Build’, Places of Worship schemes, and National consultation. Depending on the agendas of Home Office Agenda’s (as per the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government) alongside PCPI and other regulatory bodies, this could lead to further demands on the team. Please note that these are mandatory as per the discretion of the Home Office.

Collaborative Efforts: The team works collaboratively with a range of partners, with demand varying according to their respective strategic priorities, requirements and organisational focus. While these demands are managed effectively, the high turnover of key partners, including Planning Officers and Housing Developers, requires the team to regularly re-establish relationships and manage expectations.

Projects such as the Harlow Arts and Culture quarter and the town centre regeneration schemes are examples where the role of the DOCO aligns with the Counter Terrorism Security Advisor. Nationally, a revised Memorandum of Understanding is in the final stages of ratification which cements the relationship and details the expectations of both departments. It is anticipated that upon publication, alongside new legislation that this could have a significant increase on demand for the team and partnership working.

National Recognition: The team is widely regarded by peers as national best practice and is recognised as a benchmark for excellence. Work is prioritised in line with national governance requirements and strategic priorities.

For the third year in a row, the team has won various categories at the National SBD Award. This year saw two further winners for the SBD Award for New Small Housing Development award for the Epping High Street development and Development Award for best airport development. Furthermore, a development in Harlow was identified as a case study for the SBD website and featured in an ITV Business Hub Vlog, showcasing it as best practice. Essex has been approached by PCPI to promote the benefits of Designing out Crime through the use of case studies and by adopting our practices as national best practice through the national standardisation workstream.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The team is led by the Strategic DOCO, who oversees all development across Essex. These roles remain active as DOCO practitioners provide resilience within the team as well as professional mentorship to those younger in services.

Following the withdrawal of the DOCO Team Manager post, the team is currently progressing through a restructuring process and assessing the resulting impact on workloads and priorities. This includes a review of key elements within scope, such as the renegotiation of contracts, role requirements, base locations and mileage arrangements.

The roles often merge, and there is a frequent need to backfill for vacancies, meaning the staff often work beyond their job descriptions to ensure the team's objectives are met. This includes conducting environmental audits and managing high-priority crime prevention tasks. With the expected infrastructure and housing growth in Essex and the impact of the Angiolini Report, more resources will be needed to meet the anticipated demand.

All team members have achieved the Level 5 Designing Out Crime qualification and continue to maintain their competency through extended interviews every three years and mandatory annual CPD. Funding for all five DOCOs has been agreed for 2026/2027.

Due to the extensive time required to become a competent DOCO, succession planning remains vital.

The DOCO role requires appropriate safety equipment and clothing as the role involves attending building sites.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
To maintain adequate DOCO provisions, it is essential to budget for mandatory training requirements and PPE, and to support for the team's health and well-being.

The team must be in a strong position to react effectively to emerging crime trends. For example, the use of AI in security, such as biometric thumbprints for door access, management practices etc where security implications are not yet fully understood.

The government's goal to achieve net zero by 2050 will introduce new crime trends and balancing sustainability agendas with crime prevention is challenging and creates potential threats that we need to mitigate.

The team ideally requires two DOCO posts per LPA to ensure resilience and future-proof the sustainability and longevity of the team. Without planning for future vacancies, the Force may not be able to fully utilise important opportunities to shape Essex at both district and strategic levels and to reduce crime and ASB in the future.

With the further reduction of the team, to mitigate unmet demand and risk, the team will need to be prioritised based on threat and risk and as previously alluded to will require gap analysis to identify work streams that can no longer be maintained or amended.

Longer term, ensuring we are running successful recruitment processes to attract the right candidates to meet the job description is vital. The DOCO role is governed by multiple bodies, and if the Force cannot meet the requirements for Secure by Design accreditation or Planning Inspectorate requests, it will present a liability risk to the Force both legally and from a reputation perspective.

Additionally, the team work with all the local authorities on agreeing and expediting planning conditions; failing to fulfil these legal obligations can jeopardise police engagement and accreditation efforts. This highlights the critical need for adequate capacity and resilience to meet these demands.

Licensing

The Licensing Team is a dedicated police staff function responsible for delivering Essex Police's statutory obligations under the Licensing Act 2003. The team manages approximately 5,000 applications annually, representing a 6% increase on the previous reporting year.

In addition to processing applications, the team provides regulatory oversight for approximately 12,500 licensed premises across the county, including pubs, clubs, restaurants, late-night venues, off-licences and temporary events. This broad remit places sustained pressure on the team to meet statutory deadlines while maintaining effective safeguarding and crime prevention outcomes.

Licensing activity is inherently partnership-based, and the team maintains strong and productive relationships with 14 local licensing authorities, Immigration Enforcement, the Security Industry Authority, Trading Standards, Fire and Rescue, and other statutory and voluntary bodies. These partnerships support a coordinated approach to crime prevention, safeguarding and community protection.

The team also supports Pubwatch schemes and oversees the 'Behave or Be Banned' programme, providing a structured mechanism to address violent crime, disorder and alcohol-related harm within the NTE.

A significant component of the team's workload is proactive engagement with licence applicants, including early intervention to support premises in designing out crime and reducing vulnerability. The team delivers NPT training, supports nights of action and acts as a conduit between frontline policing and investigations in relation to incidents at licensed premises. Through structured dialogue and guidance, officers work to minimise risks associated with crime, disorder and vulnerability at the earliest stage of the licensing process.

Where incidents arise, the Licensing Team adopts a graduated and problem-solving approach, prioritising collaboration with premises operators and partners to resolve issues. Enforcement action, including licence reviews, the imposition of additional conditions or revocation, is pursued only where voluntary engagement and partnership activity do not deliver the required improvements. This balanced approach supports the Force's objectives to safeguard the public, prevent violence and reduce vulnerability.

The Licensing Delivery Plan remains current and aligned to local, force and national priorities. Future amendments will reflect updates to the Force Drugs and Alcohol Strategy. All activity remains closely aligned to the Force Plan's focus on victims, violence and vulnerability, ensuring licensing interventions contribute directly to wider harm reduction and public protection outcomes. Demand continues to increase in both volume and complexity, driven by higher application levels, enhanced partnership expectations and sustained pressures within the NTE. The team continues to play a vital role in preventing crime, protecting vulnerable people and supporting safer communities across Essex.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Current demand on the Licensing Team remains predominantly reactive and volume-driven, with officers required to process all Licensing Act 2003 applications submitted. This includes an annual increase in application volumes, alongside ongoing responsibilities associated with safeguarding, crime prevention and oversight of the NTE. The team's preventative work continues to play a critical role in reducing violent crime, mitigating VAWG-related risk and ensuring robust conditions are applied at the point of application.

In addition to application processing, the team is increasingly engaged in problem-solving and enforcement activity. Between April 2024 and March 2025, the Licensing Team facilitated nine licence reviews, all of which resulted in meaningful outcomes, including revocation, reduced trading hours or strengthened licence conditions. This reflects a shift towards more complex, intervention-led demand. Under Operation Bension, the team also provides NPTs with monthly lists of priority venues, with compliance monitored through the NTE Board, strengthening multi-agency governance of high-risk premises.

Looking ahead, demand over the next four years is expected to increase in both volume and complexity. Contributing factors include ongoing population growth, continued expansion within the NTE, and increased expectations from partners for early intervention and evidence-based licensing decisions. In addition, the mandatory NPCC requirement, introduced in April 2024, for all licensing officers to achieve the ProQual Level 4 Certificate for Police Alcohol Licensing Officers, a 122-hour qualification, places significant short-term abstraction pressures on the team. Eight officers have already completed the qualification, with a further officer, recently returned from maternity leave, scheduled to complete it by June 2026.

Additional factors likely to impact the Licensing Team include Local Government Reorganisation affecting administrative boundaries and potential national police reforms, including proposals for regional police forces.

The status of the Force's workforce and assets is assessed against performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability and security of supply.

These vacancies have several consequences:
- Slower processing times and delays for applicants and partner authorities.
- Reduced resilience during training, leave, sickness or urgent operational abstractions.
- Increased workload pressure on remaining staff, raising risk of reduced wellbeing and lower long term retention.

Despite these pressures, the team remains cohesive and sustains strong cross coverage arrangements, enabling a consistent and coordinated approach across Essex. The unit is well regarded by licensing authorities and trade bodies. The two Senior Licensing Officers provide strategic leadership and attend quarterly multiagency forums involving Licensing Authorities, Fire, Ambulance, Trading Standards, Immigration Enforcement and Children's Services. Overall, while the team demonstrates strong capability, professionalism and stability, current resource constraints and increasing demand present a clear risk to the sustainability of service delivery and future resilience.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
To address these challenges, the Licensing Team continues to strengthen partnership collaboration, maintain high professional standards and prioritise activity in line with force objectives.
Key measures include:
- Maintaining strong partnership engagement, enabling early identification of risk and coordinated responses.
- Embedding consistent working practices through a centralised operating model, contributing to a 95% success rate at licensing hearings.
- Delivering targeted training to NPTs and supporting operational deployments to strengthen frontline understanding of licensing powers.
- Preparing for changes in local authority structures and potential regional policing arrangements, despite the current uncertainty.
- Maximising use of existing resources through cross cover, prioritisation models and targeted enforcement.

While resource constraints remain the most significant challenge, the team's professionalism, consistent approach and strong reputation across the partnership landscape provide a solid foundation.

The Force recognises that certain elements of future demand may not be fully met, despite the changes and efficiencies implemented. In particular, the Licensing Team continues to

face unmet demand pressures arising from current resourcing levels and training abstractions.

Investigations

Introduction

This assessment summarises the investigative demand held within Local Policing Areas (LPAs) and the Force's ability to meet current and forecasted core local investigation functions. It reflects recent performance and demand shifts, the workforce and enabling assets available, and the principal change and improvement activity underway to ensure Essex Police remains effective in protecting the public, safeguarding victims, and bringing offenders to justice.

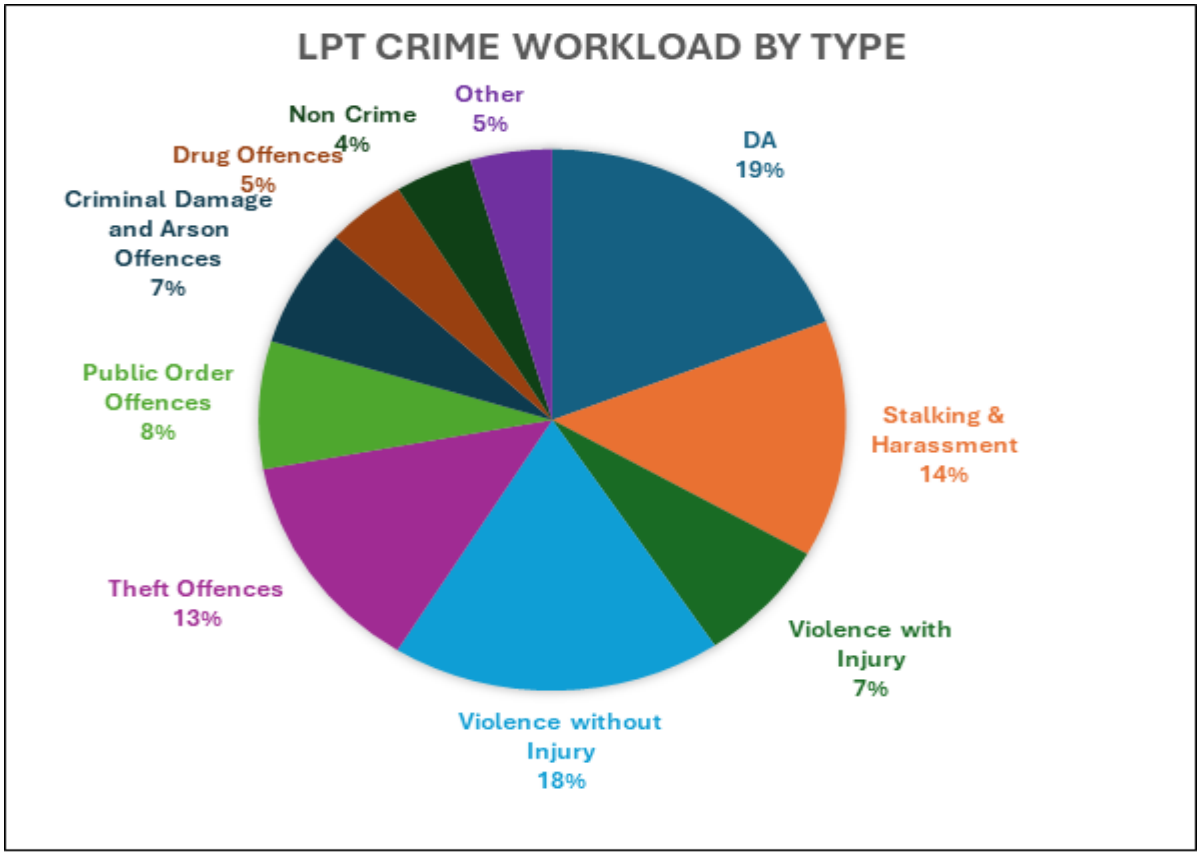
- LPA investigative activity is delivered across three distinct teams: Local Policing Teams (LPTs), Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs), and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), each with differing crime types, complexity, and investigative burden.
- Collectively, LPT, NPT and CID investigate around 82% of Essex Police crime allocated outside Contact Management Command, meaning Force investigation outcomes are overwhelmingly dependent on the effectiveness and resilience of these teams.
- Despite an overall reduction in crime, investigations allocated to LPT, NPT and CID have increased by around 2% over the last 12 months.
- Investigations have been deliberately redistributed from LPT to NPT.
- This redistribution has widened the investigative pool, improved workload sustainability and is contributing to stronger outcomes, with the Force solving on average around 150 more crimes per month.
- Over the next four years, demand is expected to increase primarily through complexity and throughput rather than a dramatic shift in underlying criminality.
- Technology is likely to surface more crime and widen investigative scope: Artificial Intelligence (AI) enabled reporting and contact management (including forthcoming Salesforce-based capability) may lower reporting thresholds and identify offences currently missed by quality assurance processes.
- Greater adoption of live facial recognition across policing and the private sector is likely to increase identified suspects, re-open previously dormant cases and increase investigative throughput requirements although should lead to increased solved levels.
- Public order, hate crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) pressures are likely to remain sensitive to political, media and national tension drivers, while criminal justice changes (including reduced short prison sentences) may increase repeat offending in the community, driving repeat victimisation and investigative demand.
- Workforce experience has improved since the post uplift trough: the proportion of officers in LPT, NPT and CID with five or more years' service increased from 38% (January 2023) to 53% (January 2026), supporting better decision-making, investigative confidence, and retention of learning.
- LPT officer numbers have reduced over the last four years, increasing the importance of proportionality, allocation design, and productivity improvements.

- Victim service remains a key weakness in public experience, with survey feedback indicating communication failures (frequency, clarity, tone, and ownership of updates) as a major driver of dissatisfaction.
- A force led review of crime allocation and reasonable lines of enquiry is underway to strengthen proportionality, improve team fit, and distribute investigative effort more sustainably.
- A task and finish Group is addressing abstractions to preserve frontline capacity for investigation and problem-solving, including work on training abstractions and custody-related demands.
- Productivity is being accelerated through automation: a joint contract with Kent Police is being signed (March 2026) to enable larger robotic process automations (RPAs) and build a Centre of Excellence, with initial automations expected late summer/autumn 2026; local opportunities will also be progressed using existing Microsoft capability (including Copilot).
- Medium-term transformation will be delivered through procurement of a new Records Management System (RMS), designed to reduce re-keying, embed statutory compliance, strengthen supervision, and introduce mature AI-supported capability across investigations, intelligence handling, case building, and search.
- Targeted improvement programmes are in place, including Investigation and Support Team coaching (with measurable quality uplifts) and planned trials to improve victim contact and customer-service standards.

Introduction to LPA Investigations

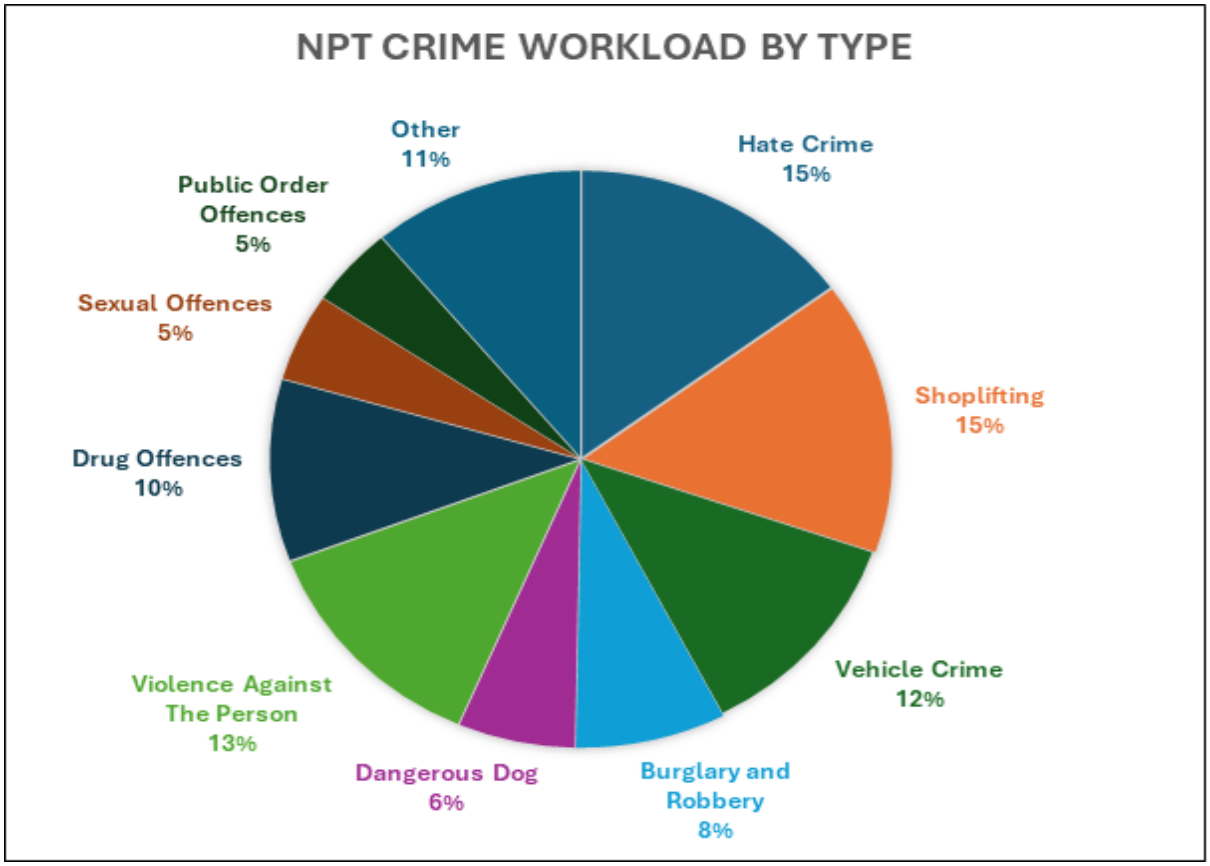
This section will set out the investigative demand held within LPAs. This is progressed across three distinct teams: LPTs, NPTs and the CID. LPTs have a broad and varied remit, of which investigation is one significant component. Their response to priority and emergency incidents often directly supports investigative outcomes, particularly through the timely completion of golden hour enquiries. Many of these offences will then be appropriately allocated to specialist teams for secondary investigation. LPTs are resourced in line with the size, complexity, and demand profile of each district to ensure effective delivery of local policing services.

In LPT, the dominant secondary investigative workload is centred on domestic abuse (standard risk), stalking and harassment, public order, and violence without injury; acquisitive crime forms a markedly smaller share than tradition suggests. These types of crimes, even when apparently routine, generate sustained investigative effort through digital examination, safeguarding, frequent victim updates, and nuanced decision making around reasonable lines of enquiry.



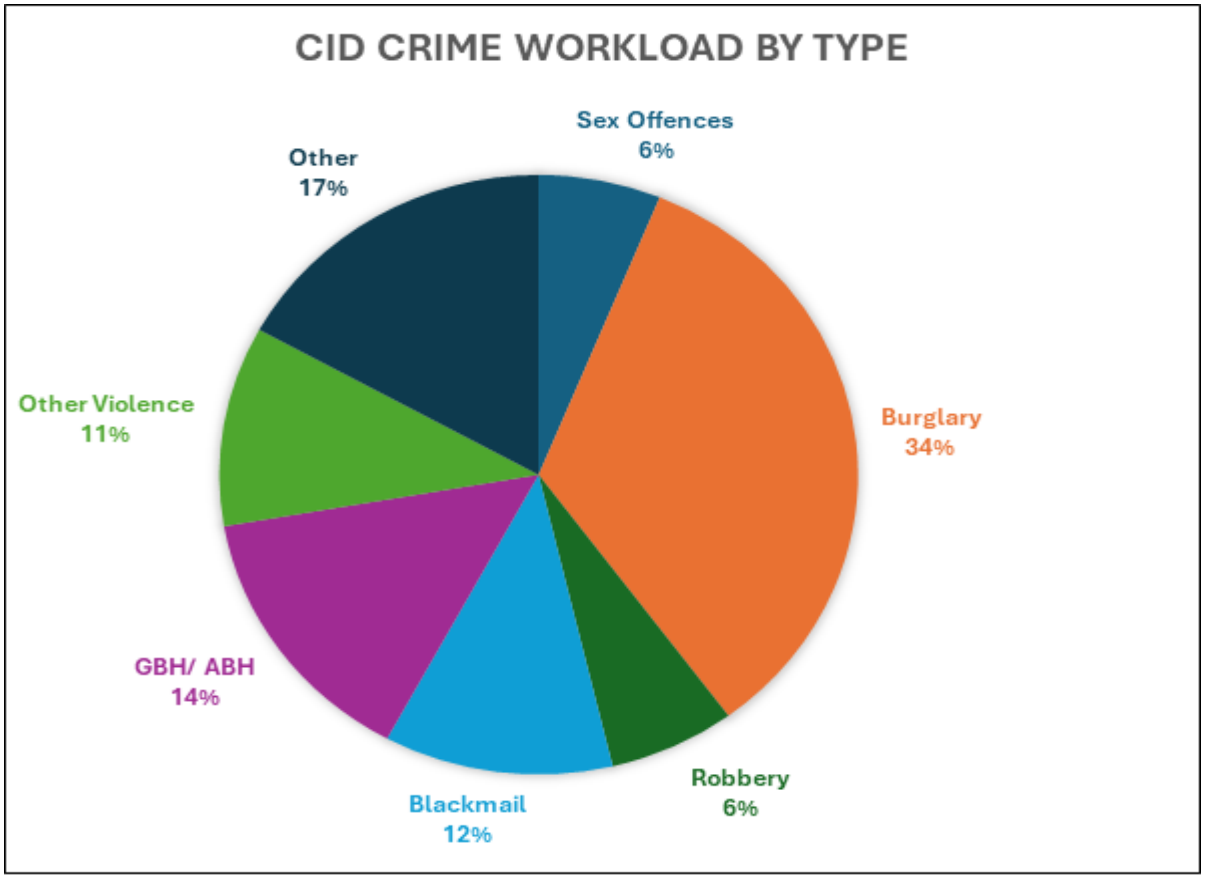
NPTs include general NPT officers, Town Centre Teams, Police Community Support Officers, Community Safety Engagement Officers, Children and Young Person Officers and the central Local Policing Support Unit. NPTs are responsible for visible, community led policing focused on prevention, problem-solving, tackling local crime and ASB, whilst also delivering engagement, partnerships, offender management, and targeted proactive activity.

In NPT, investigative demand comprises shoplifting, vehicle crime, some aspects of burglary and robbery, hate crime and dangerous dogs, alongside some offences of harassment and common assault.



CID takes ownership of more serious or complex offences as identified through policy and discussion. Their main responsibility is overseeing serious criminality that goes beyond the neighbourhood level investigative capacity of LPT and NPT, ensuring specialist investigative handling where required. Unlike LPT and NPT, CID's role is predominantly crime-investigation based.

CID holds the narrowest but most complex caseload—burglary, robbery, blackmail, and serious violence, with single offences frequently carrying multiple layers of evidential work. Investigative burden is driven less by raw volume and more by offence nature, evidential complexity and the safeguarding context around victims and communities.



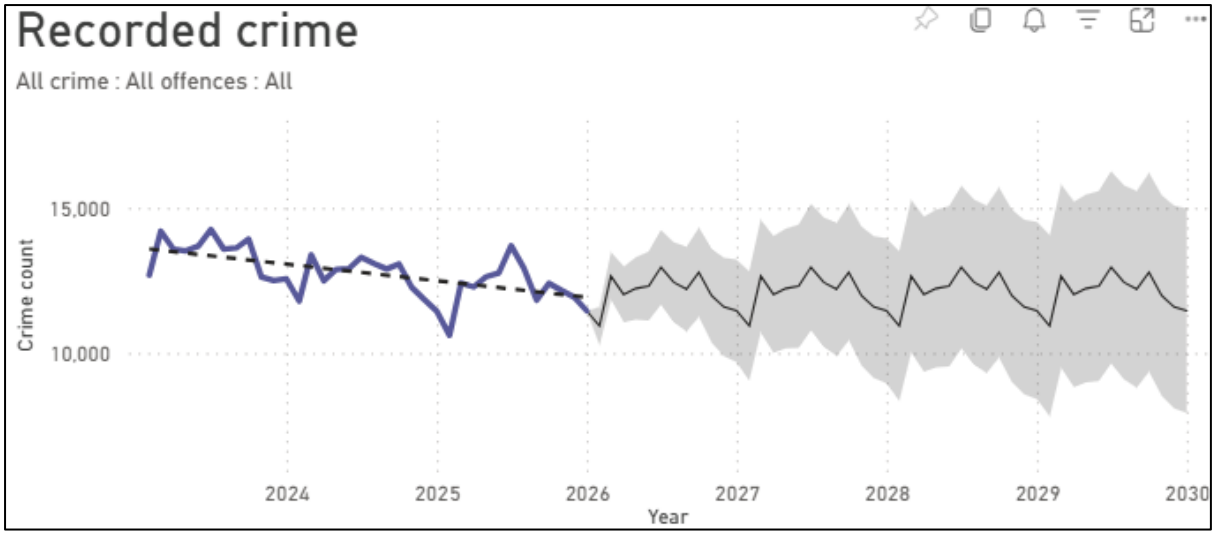
Overall, LPT, NPT and CID collectively are responsible for investigating 82% of Essex Police's crime allocated outside of Contact Management Command. Their combined output forms the backbone of Essex Police's investigation response, meaning the Force's ability to protect the public, safeguard victims, and bring offenders to justice is overwhelmingly dependent on the effectiveness of these three teams.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

In the 12 months to March 2025, despite the overall crime reduction in the Force, investigations allocated to LPT, NPT and CID have grown by about 2%. The key change is the reduction in demand for LPTs and the increase in demand for NPTs; this was part of a conscious decision by the Force to move responsibility for 'neighbourhood crimes' to our growing NPT in an attempt to improve investigative outcomes for victims, this is explained in more detail in the next section.

The following chart demonstrates the predicted overall crime[2] for Essex Police over coming years. This shows a declining trend over recent years that is predicted to level off and stabilise; this is based on data analysis of previous trends.

[2] Source: Crime Projection



Demand is expected to outpace capacity, not because of a significant increase in underlying criminality, but because changes in technology, policy and system design are likely to identify more crime, generate additional solvable cases and widen investigative scope. In addition, AI-enabled reporting, and AI-assisted contact management, including the forthcoming Salesforce based capability, are likely to lower reporting thresholds and identify offences currently missed through quality assurance processes such as NSRT (NCRS Support and Review Team), thereby increasing recorded crime without a corresponding increase in resources.

Wider adoption of live facial recognition by policing and private sector organisations, including retailers, is likely to increase the proportion of investigations progressing from unidentified to identified suspects, thereby reopening dormant cases and increasing case throughput. Political and media attention is also likely to continue influencing reporting behaviour, as seen in previous increases in shoplifting during periods of national focus. A similar effect is anticipated in ASB as forces address historic under recording and national attention remains on neighbourhood standards. Hate crime is also likely to increase and remains susceptible to national polarisation, while protests and public order incidents are expected to continue rising.

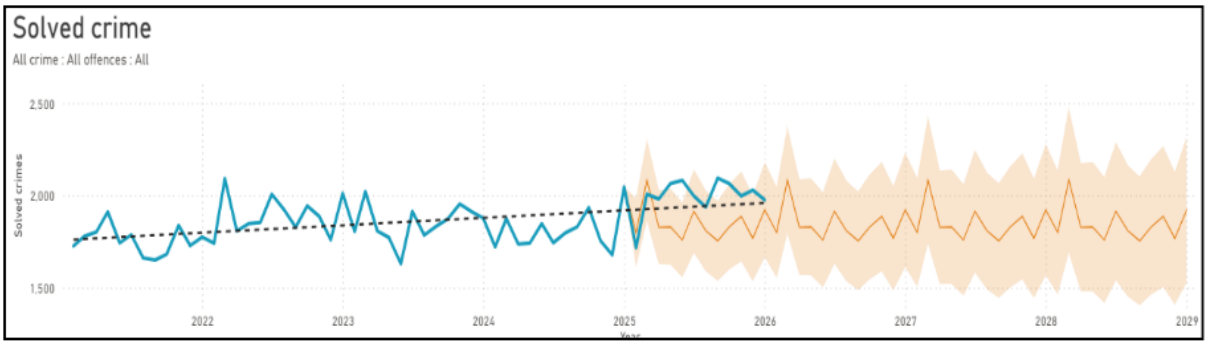
Criminal justice reforms are likely to increase pressure further. Any reduction in prison sentences of less than 12 months is likely to result in prolific acquisitive offenders remaining in the community for longer, increasing repeat victimisation and investigative demand. At the same time, increased proactive policing, while operationally beneficial, generates additional investigative demand through searches, warrants, device downloads, file preparation, and traffic related case files outside Athena that still require full evidential development and court progression.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Workforce experience across LPT, NPT and CID has improved since the post-uplift low point. In January 2023, 38% of officers in these teams had five or more years of service; by the

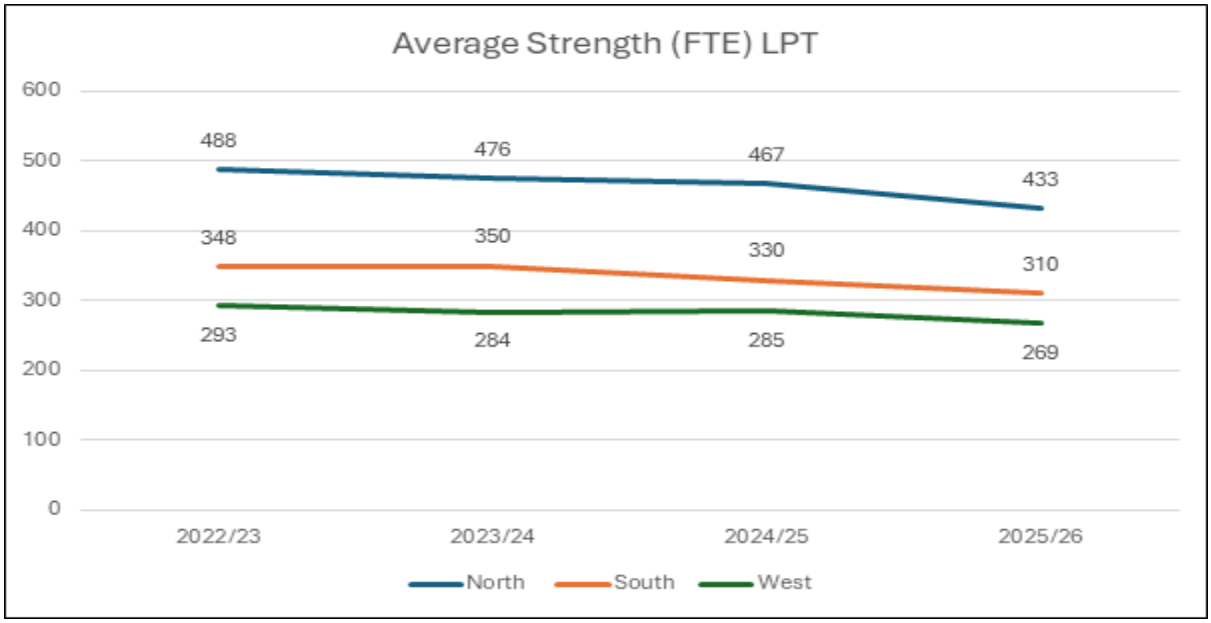
same point in 2026, this had increased to 53%. This strengthens decision-making, supports the retention of investigative knowledge, and improves confidence in identifying reasonable lines of enquiry and golden hour actions. CID also retains comparatively strong detective accreditation levels. However, the future detective pipeline will require careful management, as changes to the Domestic Abuse Investigation Team (DAIT) position from LPAs into Public Protection may weaken a traditional feeder route into CID unless alternative pathways and recruitment strategies are established.

Overall solved outcomes across uniformed investigative teams (LPT and NPT) have significantly improved following the decision to distribute investigative demand more evenly between them. As outlined earlier, expanding NPTs and assigning them greater responsibility for neighbourhood level investigations has driven a substantial shift in workload, with just over 7,000 additional investigations moving to NPT in the 12 months to March 2026. Once the new arrangements have been in place for a full year (June 2026), this is expected to reach approximately 8,400 investigations. By widening the pool of investigators and reducing the disproportionate burden previously placed on LPTs, investigative demand is now more manageable—and as a result, we are solving on average 150 more crimes every month; the recent significant performance uplift can be seen in the below chart.



Between August 2024 and September 2025, the Investigation and Support Team, a small group of highly experienced officers, provided one to one coaching to LPT constables and sergeants. This intervention delivered a measurable improvement in investigative quality, evidenced through compliance audits assessing whether lines of enquiry were identified and pursued and whether Individual Victim Needs Assessment requirements were met. In the South LPA, compliance among sergeants previously assessed as below average improved by +22%, with corresponding improvements of +20% in the West LPA and +19% in the North LPA, which started from a stronger baseline. To sustain these improvements, a process has now been introduced to ensure that all newly promoted or acting sergeants receive a similar structured intervention delivered by locally trained SPOCs (Single Point of Contacts).

Capacity in LPTs has been reduced over the last four years as force-wide change work and resourcing prioritisation in other areas of the Force structure for example Contact Management and Crime and Public Protection.



Local crime analytical capability has also reduced in recent years.

Victim service remains a persistent weakness in public experience. High volume SMS (Short Message Service) surveys show poor satisfaction across LPAs, which is believed driven less by investigative quality and more by communication failures: infrequent updates, limited explanation of decisions, and a tone that can feel impersonal or transactional. Generational differences in communication expectations and an overreliance on digital messaging compound the deficit; without a customer service-oriented approach and explicit ownership of victim contact, improvements are unlikely to be self-sustaining.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The Force has initiated a comprehensive review of crime allocations and reasonable lines of enquiry to ensure investigative effort is directed where it generates the greatest public value. This work, jointly led by Contact Management Command and Local Policing Command and informed by practitioners across both environments, responds to evidence demonstrating a reduction in investigations retained within Contact Management.

The Force has implemented a Task and Finish Group to systematically review and reduce abstractions. The group's approach will allow the organisation to identify and remove demand pressures that erode frontline capacity, thereby preserving more officer time for investigation and problem-solving activity. By establishing clear operating levels, challenging ineffective processes, and commissioning targeted improvements, this work is planned to enhance resilience across LPTs and create the conditions required to meet future investigative demand more sustainably and effectively. Examples of the work being explored include planned prioritisation of training abstractions and a focus on the potential over-use of constant supervision in custody.

The Force has a clear ambition to build productivity through automation. Along with Kent Police we have identified a third-party supplier who will not only enable some larger RPAs that will reduce risk and improve efficiency, but the contract will also develop a Centre of Excellence for both forces to build internal capability to transition to a self-sustaining automation model. This contract is being signed in March 2026, and we should start to see the first automations functioning in late summer/Autumn 2026. In addition, the Force will be utilising existing contracts with Microsoft and the functionality of Copilot to pursue the automation opportunities identified locally that could bring benefits force-wide.

In the medium-term future, the procurement of a new RMS is intended to deliver a transformational leap in how investigations are recorded, managed, and supervised. The requirements set out in the specification describe a system that streamlines crime and intelligence recording, eliminates unnecessary rekeying, and ensures investigative activity is consistently compliant with the Home Office Counting Rules, NSIR (National Standard of Incident Recording), CPIA (Criminal Procedures & Investigations Act), VCOP (Victim's Code of Practice), and wider statutory obligations. It is designed to provide investigators with automated prompts, contextual guidance, quality assurance checks, and Statutory Time Limit monitoring, while significantly reducing friction in day-to-day processes such as risk assessments, suspect management, investigative actions, victim updates, casefile production, and cross force collaboration. The new system will support mobile and offline working while providing a clear, chronological, and auditable record of investigative activity, supporting both operational delivery and supervision.

Crucially, the system will embed mature AI supported capability across investigations, intelligence handling, case building, and search. Collectively, these capabilities directly address the increasing data volumes, digital complexity and analytical burden placed on investigators and supervisors, ensuring investigations remain effective, compliant, and resilient in an era of rapidly expanding AI enabled risk and opportunity.

In relation to forensics, the Force has implemented an authorised Service Level Agreement to focus resources on Force priorities and operate within existing capacity and resourcing but still offering solutions for all crime types.

To address the weaknesses in victim service highlighted by SMS survey feedback, the Force will initiate focused trials within selected teams to test new approaches to customer service. These trials will centre on improving the frequency, clarity, and tone of victim contact, ensuring that updates are meaningful, timely and personally owned by officers. By deliberately reducing reliance on digital only communication and incorporating approaches tailored to different generational expectations, we aim to build a more human, consistent, and reassuring service. The learning from these trials will be captured, evaluated, and scaled across LPAs to embed a sustainable, customer service led model of victim engagement.

Workforce planning is addressing pipeline fragility and mitigating the impact of structural changes in detective distribution arising from the transfer of DAIT to Crime and Public Protection (C&PP). Alternative feeder routes into CID and specialist investigation teams are

being developed, supported by clearer recruitment strategies to offset the effects of DAIT relocation.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
It is not currently possible to quantify precisely which elements of future investigative demand the organisation will be unable to meet. While predictive modelling indicates trends, demand growth remains inherently uncertain due to the combined effects of technology, changes in reporting behaviour, evolving crime types, and criminal justice reform. What is clear, is that emerging pressures will require ongoing, structured assessment and proactive management. Demand will need to be monitored closely through routine governance, analytical products, and operational insight to identify areas where capacity constraints begin to impact service delivery.

The measures outlined above represent the organisation's planned mitigations: redesigning allocation and reasonable lines of enquiry frameworks, addressing abstractions, improving investigative quality, strengthening supervision, modernising digital and forensic capabilities, introducing new and innovative ways of working and progressing the new RMS. Collectively, these initiatives should ensure that as demand evolves, the Force can respond effectively, maintain proportionality, and prioritise public value.

However, until these changes are fully embedded and future demand patterns become clearer, the organisation cannot yet define with confidence which specific areas may fall beyond available capacity. Continued vigilance, honest appraisal, and adaptive deployment of the measures described will be essential to managing this uncertainty.

Introduction to Intelligence
The Level 1 Intelligence assessment for FMS 2026 reflects the current operating picture, the forecast demand over the next four years, and the ability of the workforce and supporting assets to meet that demand. In preparing this assessment, consideration has been given to those areas concerning sustained demand pressures, changes to specialist support structures, and the resilience of Level 1 Intelligence functions. The following sections set out the position using the required four-step process.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Demand on Level 1 Intelligence continues to increase and is expected to rise further over the next four years. Several operational trends have become embedded and now form part of routine business.

Protest activity has become a consistent demand driver rather than an intermittent requirement. Protests are generating significant sustained demand in a way not previously seen within the Force so regularly. Protest activity is expected to remain and is likely to require sustained intelligence support.

Clear, Hold, Build (CHB) operations in the West and South LPA have generated tasking and activity within our Level 1 teams.

Drug parcel activity (Operation Gloss) remains high in volume and complexity. With parcel-based supply chains continuing to evolve, demand is likely to remain high.

Changes to the Tasking and Briefing process pose a further demand risk. Previous versions of the tasking facility within briefings generated large volumes of untriaged tasks, and without tight governance the forthcoming iteration may place substantial administrative pressure on Level 1 teams.

Displacement of work from other departments continues to increase demand.

Vehicle crime pressure has reduced from the previous peak but remains vulnerable to recurrence, particularly given the volume of offender and the cross-border networks operating within this crime type.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE), and sex worker, prostitution related intelligence work continues to increase and leaves a persistent demand on Level 1 officers to develop and maintain intelligence.

Overall, demand is forecast to remain above current capacity levels. Protests, CHB activity, parcel-based supply chains and safeguarding checks will anchor demand over the coming period, with additional pressure during system changes, public order surges, and shifts in specialist team structures.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
There are ongoing pressures on staffing and resilience.

Training has improved in terms of course availability, but learning is still concentrated at the early stage rather than reinforced through practical, scenario-based development. Lone working at night, rapid tasking, source approaches, and investigative support all require skills best developed through regular practical exposure, which is inconsistent across teams. Supervisor development is constrained, and reliance on informal learning leads to variation in capability.

Changes to Tasking and Briefing (T&B) systems are underway, but full impacts are not yet understood.

The connection to the Intelligence Bureau (IB) remains a concern.

Probation and IOM relationships are strong, with shared processes that enable timely information exchange. Demand from prisons and regional units appears to have reduced or is being better managed.

Technology developments have the potential to reduce effort in the long term but have previously generated substantial administrative burden, particularly in relation to population of systems associated with facial recognition. Any reintroduction of such capabilities will need clearer governance to avoid repeating past issues.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Work is underway to strengthen resilience and improve capability.

Training should be rebalanced towards operational scenarios. This includes night turn decision-making, threat to life management, warrant preparation based on real objections encountered at court, rapid triage of parcel related intelligence and structured development of online research skills.

Governance of the new T&B system should be prioritised. Clear acceptance criteria defined service levels, and a capped work in progress model will be applied to avoid uncontrolled task growth. Weekly engagement between Intelligence and Tasking teams will ensure emerging pressures are identified early.

Work is required to clarify the Level 1 role in parcel-based supply chains.

Technology improvements will be utilised where they offer genuine efficiency. These include increased use of national exploitation tools.

Improvements to court warrant processes are being developed, including better sharing of successful rationales, a central repository of exemplars and establishing a clear escalation route for urgent applications.

Efforts should continue to progress CSAS (Cell Site Analysis Suite) upskilling within existing budget constraints through vendor supported training and the production of clear operational guidance for officers.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Some demand is expected to remain unmet even after planned changes.

OCG development and disruption logging will remain constrained until a simplified and properly resourced process is established.

Uncertainty in the flow of port related intelligence may continue to create capability gaps that Level 1 cannot mitigate alone.

Overall, Level 1 Intelligence will continue to face higher demand than capacity allows. Despite planned improvements, the service will carry residual risk across several areas of

demand and will require continued oversight to ensure that the most critical threats are prioritised.

Introduction to the Serious Violence Unit
The Serious Violence Unit (SVU) was implemented and structured to address the complex and evolving nature of serious violence linked to county lines and gangs throughout Essex. Activity will continue to be structured around the 4P framework, with specialist teams aligned to Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare priorities.

The pursue teams work to deter, disrupt, and prevent county lines gangs and to drive down violent crime in Essex. The other area of business focusses on engagement, education, and intervention alongside key partners and stakeholders.

Within the prevent, protect, and prepare area of business is the Drug Liaison Team, a small team of drug experts who provide witness statements evidencing quantities, values and identification of drugs while also interpreting communication and other behaviours in the drug supply environment. They support several force functions surrounding drugs, associated deaths, and analysis.

The Serious Collision Unit also features in this area of business; they are the team of detectives who investigate fatal traffic collisions across the county.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
The SVU's primary focus is on the volume of county lines operating within Essex, targeting those that cause the most violence. In 2025, the SVU handled, targeted, or disrupted 250 county lines cases, this included attributing 170 drugs line packages and seizing 173 drugs lines phones.

There has been an 8% increase in arrests/convictions by SVU in 2025 compared to 2024, the percentage of offenders with two or more High Harm (HH) indicators has increased in every offence category except Sexual Offences. This trend is consistent when compared with both 2024 and 2023. The below table show the number of arrests and convictions over a four-year period.

SVU High Harm Offender Profile – Combined Chart (2022 to 2025)
Total Offenders (Arrested / Convicted)

Offence	2022			2023			2024			2025		
	Count	HH (2+)	HH (2+) %	Count	HH (2+)	HH (2+) %	Count	HH (2+)	HH (2+) %	Count	HH (2+)	HH (2+) %
Offenders (arrested/ convicted)	558	124	22%	497	337	68%	431	298	69%	467	242	52%
ABH	67	51	76%	192	130	68%	171	151	88%	158	135	85%
GBH	36	31	86%	137	123	90%	137	131	96%	115	103	90%
Off Weap	85	63	74%	218	149	68%	199	173	87%	219	159	73%
Sexual Offence	17	15	88%	56	46	82%	51	44	86%	50	44	88%
Possess Knife / Bladed Article	111	83	75%	178	140	79%	170	156	92%	177	152	86%
Possess Firearm	24	22	92%	54	45	83%	48	43	90%	55	47	85%
Robbery	82	67	82%	192	154	80%	185	158	85%	165	140	85%
Affray	37	33	89%	88	77	88%	101	93	92%	91	86	95%
Murder	5	1	20%	29	23	79%	39	38	97%	38	35	92%

- 2025 continues the trend of remarkably high HH concentration across all offence types (80–95%).

A significant proportion of offenders (83%) have a propensity for serious violence, and through definition will be having a negative impact on the community prior to being arrested and conviction for drugs supply offences by the SVU.

When the SVU was first implemented most offenders resided outside of Essex. Since implementation, this has changed and with 56% of offenders now living within Essex.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Capacity and Capability
The SVU are highly skilled in terms of knowledge and experience, in targeting county lines. The unit has had to change in the way it works because of the changes in offender demographics, with a significant percentage of offenders now residing in Essex.

The Serious Collision Investigation Unit (SCIU), which investigates serious or fatal road traffic collisions, is part of the SVU Command. In 2025, the SCIU investigated 59 incidents of road death/serious injury, and by March 2026, they have already been involved in 9 road deaths. Due to the complexity these types of investigations have the SVU uses an external provider, TRL (Transport Research Laboratory), for evidential video footage analysis and to produce investigative evidential packs, specifically around CCTV and driving analysis.

The prevent, protect, and prepare team focuses on safeguarding vulnerable individuals linked to county lines investigations. Demand in this area is large and growing. Their education and diversionary methods are crucial for a preventative approach.

The Knife Crime Violence Model (KCVM) is an innovative approach developed by Essex Police to predict and prevent knife related offences. The KCVM cohort currently contains 50 individuals who are being supported away from committing knife related offences.

Performance
Serious violence is down, which includes a substantial reduction in county lines related homicides. To put this in context, there has been no homicide relating to drug related serious violence since 2022.
Between January and December 2025, Weapons, Adult Exploitation, and Serious Physical Violence were the top three threat markers in serious violence.

From January 2025 to January 2026, the SVU had an average charge and remand rate of 73%. For the same period in 2024, this rate has increased to 71%. Additionally, 59 offenders are currently (March 2026) on Bail or Released Under Investigation, representing 12%. Once judicial processes for these offenders are completed, the charge and remand rate for 2025 is expected to exceed the previous year.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The SVU Pursue Board has been streamlined into a tasking board.

Operation Guardian is a Home Office funded initiative focused on serious violence, knife crime, and ASB. The latest iteration concludes at the end of March 2026, after which this activity will transfer to business-as-usual hotspot policing delivered by NPTs.

Essex Police have been allocated additional funding from the Knife Crime Concentration Fund. This fund follows previous hotspots methodology, to support delivery of at least a 33% reduction in knife crime over the next two years.

Facial recognition has been used within the SVU, specifically from a knife crime perspective, with effective collaboration with the LPAs.

Operation Housebuilder is a national crime agency and public health initiative aimed at providing a response to the increased threat of synthetic opioids, which are significantly more potent than heroin, posing a higher risk of overdose or death. Operation Raptor oversee this for the Force which has so far seen 31 deaths and 11 near misses because of synthetic opioids and has helped established national best practice in our response. Despite a reduction in staff, the SVU addresses the resourcing issues by spreading their resources effectively by prioritising high impact demand and critical areas.

Introduction to Domestic Abuse Investigations
DA remains a national policing priority, with HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) continuing to place strong emphasis on investigative quality and safeguarding effectiveness. Political and legislative reforms, including updates to Clare's Law and evolving Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) principles, continue to increase expectations of police forces, while locally the DA Today programme remains supported through senior command oversight. This sits firmly within the national Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy, to which Essex Police is fully committed, prioritising the protection of vulnerable women and girls and strengthening the consistency and quality of our response. Public sector financial pressures continue to constrain workforce growth, increasing reliance on productivity gains and automation.

Rising Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) demand and manual processing requirements continue to place pressure on the Domestic Abuse Review Team (DART) and Domestic Abuse Problem Solving Team (DAPST), while wider economic hardship contributes to elevated DA risks. Increased awareness of coercive control and digital abuse, alongside mental health vulnerabilities, financial stress and changing family dynamics, has increased case complexity. Although repeat victimisation has reduced through improved safeguarding, overall demand remains high.

Technologically, digitally facilitated abuse is the fastest growing area of demand, with greater use of tracking devices, smart home technology and online harassment requiring specialist attention; delays to TecSafe (a mobile safeguarding solution) limit safeguarding efficiency, though future automation of DVDS and Domestic Violence Protection Notices/Domestic Violence Protection Orders (DVPN/DVPO) processes is expected to reduce administrative pressure. Environmentally, socioeconomic instability, household stressors and post-COVID-19 lifestyle shifts have compounded DA complexity, heightening victim vulnerability and increasing opportunities for offender proximity. Legally, expectations continue to expand across protective powers, transparency, and victim centred safeguarding, with new guidance affecting DVPN/DVPOs, bail, SDASH (Supplementary DASH - a stalking risk screening checklist) and DA related rape investigations under Operation Soteria; updated Clare's Law processes also elevate administrative and evidential demand.

The 'DA Today' rollout is reshaping investigative practice, with improvements in workforce capability but persisting gaps in digital investigation and administrative capacity, while rising DVDS volume continues to challenge specialist teams and variable performance across LPAs requires sustained oversight and structural review.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Demand for DA investigations in Essex remains complex and high-volume. In 2025, the Force recorded 23,055 DA offences, demonstrating continued high demand across all LPAs. While this reflects ongoing pressure, the reduction of 1,284 repeat victims (from 8,630 in

2024 to 7,346 in 2025) indicates that safeguarding interventions are increasingly effective. Repeat victims now account for 37.9% of all DA victims, down from 42.1%, suggesting improvements in early identification of high-risk cases and implementation of protective measures.

DA investigations teams will experience growth under Affordable Futures of 36 constables and 6 sergeants.

The overall DA solved rate increased to 13.5%, demonstrating a 1.8% improvement on last year. High-risk solved rates rose significantly to 34.1% (+3.6%), standard risk outcomes increased to 7.3% (+0.7%), while medium risk saw a slight decline to 17.3% (-1.1%). This varying performance signals that while strides continue in high-risk response, additional focus is needed to strengthen medium-risk investigative consistency.

DA-related deaths decreased to six (rolling 12-months to December 2025), continuing a downward trend from seven in 2024 and nine in 2023. Despite this improvement, these cases highlight persistent vulnerabilities and the need for enhanced early warning detection of escalation factors.

One of the most significant indicators of emerging demand is the dramatic rise in DVDS applications, which increased by 106% from 2,059 in 2024 to 3,098 in 2025. Only 61% met the 28-day compliance requirement, attributed to the administrative burden on DART and LPA DAPST teams. This surge reflects increased public awareness of Clare's Law but has exposed structural capacity constraints.

Digital forms of DA—including online harassment, tech-enabled coercive control, and tracking devices—are rapidly growing. This trend is expected to continue through 2026 to 2030 and represents the single largest emerging area of new crime demand. Each digital element introduces complexity in evidence-gathering, device seizure, online investigation, and safeguarding.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The workforce continues to operate under considerable pressure but has shown strong adaptability. Capacity is supported through daily silver meetings and bi-weekly gold oversight under the DA Today model, which has proven essential in maintaining investigative quality and workload control.

Frontline capability has improved through significant training investment. DA Matters, DA Stalking Flex Training, and the introduction of the Local Policing DA Aide Memoire have increased officer confidence, strengthened incident handling, and improved compliance with risk assessment processes. The updated Safety Plan Form, which now includes mental health and suicide related indicators, further supports early identification of vulnerability.

To address broader demand pressures, the Force intends to increase the use of AI and automation for triaging information and enhancing information sharing. This will support faster risk identification, reduce administrative burden, and improve the flow of safeguarding intelligence across specialist teams and partner agencies.

Growth in digital forms of DA, including online harassment, technology enabled coercive control and the use of tracking devices, has been identified as a significant emerging issue and is expected to increase investigative demand from 2026 onwards.

DVDS volumes have significantly impacted DART and DAPST capacity, resulting in workload redistribution to LPAs. While temporary support has stabilised delivery, it is not sustainable at current demand levels.

DA remains part of the Force Control Strategy, and work is currently underway to refresh the Strategic Intelligence Requirement and develop a new DA Problem Profile to ensure a clear, evidence based understanding of emerging risk, threat, and demand.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
A central part of future demand readiness is the expansion of automation, structural reform, and technological support. The DVDS Automation Tool, now close to finalisation, will significantly reduce manual workload, improve compliance, and create a standardised, quality-assured output. Parallel automation work is underway for DVPN/DVPO processes, which will drive accuracy and speed of safeguarding interventions.

The implementation of TecSafe in 2026 will resolve long-standing inefficiencies in alarm management and risk triage, closing a major safeguarding gap and aligning Essex with good national practice.

The continued rollout of the DA Today model across Essex provides a consistent, suspect focused, victim centred investigative framework. The aim of the model is to deliver improvements in response times, investigative quality, and case allocation.

Other areas of focus and critical workstreams are:

- Activity around the quality and timeliness of investigations, particularly within standard-risk cases, aligned to the Joint Justice Plan.
- Improvements in DA rape processes and investigative structures under Operation Soteria, strengthening victim engagement, evidence-led practice, and supervisory oversight.
- MARAC transformation aligned to the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Review of Policing Principles, requiring enhanced multi-agency coordination, demand forecasting, and meeting structure resilience.
- Transition of DAIT and DAPST into the C&PP Command, which will consolidate governance, improve consistency, and strengthen shared safeguarding capability across DA investigations.
- Further improvements include updated Clare’s Law processes.

Enhanced LPT guidance covering risk identification, counter-allegations, conditional cautions, DVPN accuracy and Operation Encompass notifications. These developments are expected to improve timeliness, consistency, and quality of investigations, supporting the workforce to meet rising demand.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite strong progress, demand growth will continue to exceed capacity in several key areas. Digital coercive control is expected to expand significantly. This includes sophisticated tracking, smart-device exploitation, and emerging online abuse patterns, all of which require specialist digital investigation skills.

DVDS demand is expected to remain high. Even with automation, continued growth will generate sustained pressure on safeguarding teams, requiring ongoing strategic oversight and resource prioritisation.

Investigative resilience will remain variable across LPAs, particularly during periods of exceptionally high volume or operational disruption. Medium-risk investigative consistency is expected to remain an area of challenge without further structural and supervisory uplift. Multi-agency safeguarding capacity is expected to come under increasing strain as MARAC structures evolve in line with NPCC principles. Partner resource limitations may intensify police workload, especially in cases requiring repeated or complex multi-agency coordination.

These gaps indicate that, despite ongoing capability improvements, future demand, particularly in relation to digital and administrative complexity, may exceed what can be managed without wider process improvement and greater automation.

Introduction to Stalking and Harassment
Politically, the national stalking super complaint and its 29 recommendations, alongside forthcoming Home Office statutory definitions and offender focused programmes, continue to raise expectations of policing. Stalking's alignment with VAWG priorities also positions it within a landscape of heightened scrutiny and public interest. Demand growth in digital forensics, Stalking Protection Order (SPO) enforcement and broader safeguarding responsibilities is driving sustained pressure on policing resources, amplified by the wider effects of economic hardship on victim vulnerability. Social drivers remain strong with relationship breakdown continuing to be a key catalyst for stalking. Victims are typically women aged 30 to 39 and perpetrators men of a similar age. Underreporting, particularly in online or digitally mediated relationships, continues to obscure hidden demand.

Technological factors are increasingly influential, with more than half of stalking now involving online behaviour. Social media facilitates persistent surveillance and coercion, while gaps in digital capability, flagging accuracy and investigative skills make it difficult to

capture true levels of threat. Emerging AI enabled methods are likely to accelerate complexity further. Environmentally, patterns of stalking correlate strongly with deprivation and population density. Legally, although SPO utilisation is improving, overall use remains lower than expected given offending levels.

Misclassification between harassment and stalking continues to affect crime data accuracy, though work is underway to improve recording through training, system changes, and clearer investigative guidance. Organisationally, innovation programmes such as BT (British Telecom) Hothouse Project, Operation Atlas and the Essex Call Data Project demonstrate a commitment to modernising stalking response and improving data accuracy, capability, and coordination across the system.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Stalking offences have risen sharply in the last 12 months until March 2026, increasing by 15.2% from 3,069 to 3,537 recorded offences, indicating ongoing growth rather than any reduction in offending. Domestic related stalking remains the predominant driver of demand, accounting for 3,007 offences (85%). Of the 2,606 suspects recorded, 95% of intimate partner cases involved ex partners, representing more than three quarters of all stalking suspects.

The solved rate has improved modestly from 11.9% to 12.7%, though it remains low relative to volume. Non-DA stalking has also increased by 17.5% to 530 offences. Demand growth is most pronounced across Essex North, West and South, driven by population density, vulnerability factors, and persistent district level hotspots. Earlier data indicating fewer cases has now been attributed to improved crime recording practice rather than reduced offending. Nationally, stalking remains one of the fastest growing crime types, and Essex's trend is consistent with this wider trajectory.

Looking ahead, forecasting points to a continued though modest upward trend through 2028. National scrutiny resulting from the Suzy Lamplugh Trust super-complaint is expected to increase reporting and governance workload. Demand complexity will continue to grow as AI-enabled and cyber-facilitated stalking expands, placing sustained pressure on digital forensics, investigative capacity, and frontline capability. SPOs will continue to contribute to safeguarding demand. Government action to reduce pressure on the prison estate, including limits on custodial sentences and greater use of community management, is likely to increase the number of high-risk perpetrators managed under civil orders, transferring additional risk management responsibilities to policing. Demand is already high and will continue to increase primarily in complexity, not only volume, particularly in digital investigation, risk-assessment accuracy, and compliance monitoring.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Investigations remain heavily dependent on victim engagement, with Outcome 16 accounting for 47.5% of results in March 2026, limiting both solvability and safeguarding

opportunities. Capacity is further constrained by the time intensive nature of digital evidence analysis and the resource burden involved in monitoring SPO conditions. Additional governance and partnership requirements arising from the stalking super complaint also add workload for specialist units and command teams. Without significant improvements in digital capability, recording standards, SPO utilisation, identification tools, digital forensic capacity and specialist stalking training, the Force cannot sustainably meet future stalking related demand.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The Force is progressing several initiatives to strengthen its ability to meet rising demand. The NPCC stalking screening tool for first responders has been introduced and embedded into Contact Management Command's THRIVE (Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability, Engagement) assessment to ensure early identification of stalking risk at the first point of contact.

Frontline officers also carry the tool as an aide-memoire to support consistent decision making. Flex training has been delivered to frontline officers around stalking. The Performance Analysis Unit is working with the Force Stalking lead to distinguish stalking from harassment within dashboard reporting, improving demand accuracy and analytical clarity. Capability has been further supported through enhanced SPO training and legal oversight, contributing to Essex becoming the third highest performing force nationally for securing full SPOs. Innovation activity is ongoing, including Project Vigilant (targeting VAWG and nighttime economy risk), Operation Atlas (reviewing digital investigation workflows). Partnership arrangements have strengthened over the last two years, including a monthly Stalking Working Group and the establishment of the Essex Stalking Intervention Panel (ESIP). ESIP acts as the local Multi Agency Stalking Intervention Panel, providing a coordinated multi-agency approach to high risk stalking cases, with flexibility to include medium risk cases where capacity allows. ESIP complements rather than replaces existing safeguarding structures and brings together Essex Public Protection, divisional SPOCs, OICs, specialist advocacy services, Probation, MARAC and wider partners such as Children's Social Care and Independent Domestic Violence Advisor services. This ensures shared problem solving, consistent decision making and enhanced risk management oversight.
Technological capability is also being strengthened. Mobile phone data analytics are progressing through proof-of-concept stages, digitally focused investigation workflows are being adopted more widely, and improvements to online flagging, keyword tagging and digital evidence processes are underway. The Serious Crime Directorate has embedded cyber expertise to support complex stalking investigations, accompanied by targeted training on AI enabled and cyber facilitated harassment. Collectively, these developments aim to deliver a more accurate demand picture, earlier identification of high-risk cases, improved digital evidence turnaround and increased SPO utilisation, enhancing safeguarding outcomes across the system.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

Future demand will continue to increase in several areas. Cyber enabled stalking is expected to grow rapidly, outpacing current investigative capacity unless frontline digital skills increase substantially. Digital forensics could become a bottleneck as the volume of online offending expands. Enforcement of SPOs also requires an increase in dedicated resource, and limitations in LPT capability may prevent the safe transfer of standard risk stalking investigations away from specialist teams. Victim disengagement, reflected in the high proportion of Outcome 16 results (47.5%), will continue to impact solvability and limit opportunities for safeguarding.

Introduction Cyber Crime Investigations
Digital enabled crime investigations are carried out in almost every investigative area of the Force. This section focuses on one of the highest risk areas, the Police Online Investigation Team (POLIT). This team are responsible for responding to and investigating offences relating to indecent images of children, also known as child sexual abuse material. They work to protect and safeguard the needs of children. They are responsible for the investigation of undercover online referrals from the Regional Organised Crime Units and Online Child Abuse Activist Group cases, utilising technology to disrupt and locate offenders. Furthermore, they are responsible for investigations into Community Network activity involving offenders targeting children online and coercing them into harmful activities.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
In 2025 POLIT experienced a 52% increase in referrals from the National Crime Agency (NCA) compared to 2023, doubling their workload. The impact of this increase on demand has made the timely progression of cases challenging.

In addition, the emerging threat of Communication Groups, who target vulnerable children online and incite them to commit harm, has added to POLIT's workload. Based on these calculations POLIT can expect a 104% increase in NCA referrals in the four years from 2025.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Even if fully staffed, POLIT will not be able to sustain the workloads brought about by the predicted increased demand over the next four years without a significant uplift in resources, or different ways of working.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
To maximise performance and continue to make timely progress in investigations, POLIT has forged a more efficient working relationship with DFU meaning that delays in investigations caused by backlogs in forensic analysis have improved.

In addition, a communications campaign in conjunction with BT, developed through the Hothouse Project to help educate consumers around the risk of Deep Fake images was met with acclaim. It is anticipated that the positive impact of this, in terms of public awareness around the risk of AI in online offending, will continue to be felt going forward.

POLIT are working with IT (Information Technology) to explore opportunities to better use technology to manage increased demand.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite the aligning of PPIU intel team to POLIT and the ongoing efforts documented above within POLIT to manage demand, the predicted increase in workload over the next four years will significantly impact their ability to function effectively without a staffing uplift or different working methods.

Introduction to Hate Crime
This report provides an overview of Essex Police's current position regarding hate crime, informed by the annual risk assessment and the accompanying PESTELO analysis. It reflects progress made over the last reporting period while addressing the gaps identified in last year's assessment, particularly around investigation quality, consistency of risk identification, and the sustainability of partnership structures.

This narrative draws on operational data, workforce insights, and strategic developments across the organisation. It identifies areas where the Force has strengthened capability, including improved oversight, closer alignment to national guidance and increased specialist expertise, while recognising the continuing challenges affecting risk, demand, and public confidence.

By following the four step process set out by HMICFRS, this introduction establishes the context for the Force's current performance and outlines the internal and external factors shaping our response to hate crime. It ensures a clear link between last year's findings, this year's assessment, and the strategic direction required to reduce vulnerability, improve investigative standards, and enhance victim experience.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Essex Police's hate crime demand remained relatively stable over the reporting period, with minor fluctuations driven by seasonal patterns, local community tensions, and national or international trigger events. Demand continued to be led by race and sexuality related offences, alongside smaller but proportionally significant increases in transgender related incidents, online enabled offending, and cases involving more complex vulnerability factors.

Forecasting from Power BI (Microsoft software for business intelligence) up to March 2030 indicates a gradual rise in overall hate crime, driven by several identifiable factors. Population growth and increased demographic diversity within key districts are likely to

generate additional reporting, alongside increased public awareness and confidence resulting from national campaigns and improved local engagement. Digital offending is expected to expand, with online hostility forming a larger proportion of cases and presenting additional investigative complexity.

The foreseeable risk picture also reflects a higher probability of short-term demand spikes associated with sociopolitical tensions, global conflicts, high profile criminal justice outcomes, and national protest activity. These events have historically produced noticeable surges in hate related reporting and remain a credible risk within the next four years.
When comparing current demand to projected demand, several gaps become clear. Investigations are increasingly resource intensive due to digital evidence capture, higher safeguarding expectations, and the requirement for improved victim care under national standards. This means that even modest increases in incident volume are likely to generate disproportionately higher investigative volumes. Specialist knowledge within frontline teams may not grow at the same pace as complexity, creating a potential skills gap unless mitigated through training and oversight.

The most significant future demand growth is expected around intersectional vulnerability, public facing digital platforms, and repeat victimisation linked to community tensions. While the overall four-year forecast suggests a manageable increase in volume, the associated complexity represents a greater challenge. Without additional efficiency measures or capability enhancements, the demand to capacity gap may widen, affecting response timeliness, investigation quality, and our ability to maintain consistent victim focused outcomes.

This assessment therefore identifies the need to monitor both volume and complexity based demands, ensuring that operational, analytical, and partnership resources remain aligned to the changing risk environment.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Essex Police's current workforce and supporting assets remain broadly stable, with sufficient capability to meet present hate crime demand; however, capacity pressures and several emerging skill requirements create vulnerability when projected into the next four years. The workforce profile shows a mixture of experienced officers and newer staff, but investigative capability is uneven across LPAs, reflecting differing levels of exposure to hate crime, digital enabled offending, and complex vulnerability. Specialist units, including the Hate Crime Officers and Community Safety teams, continue to perform consistently.

Training compliance for hate crime remains high, but capability gaps persist in frontline confidence, digital investigation skills, and accurate risk identification. These gaps impact investigation quality and can reduce the effectiveness of early safeguarding.

Workforce abstractions for student officer development, mandatory training, and welfare related absences also affect resilience. Without continued investment in skills development,

structured Continuous Professional Development (CPD), and consistent supervisory oversight, the workforce may struggle to meet the increasing complexity.

Technology assets, including digital investigation tools, analytical platforms and mobile technology, are reliable and operationally effective. The security of supply remains stable, but continued financial pressures and competing corporate priorities pose a medium-term risk to maintaining and upgrading key capabilities.

Overall, Essex Police's current workforce and assets are meeting present demand.

Addressing these gaps will require sustained investment in specialist skills, digital capacity, and resilient local structures to ensure the organisation remains able to deliver consistent, high quality outcomes for victims.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Essex Police is implementing a range of measures to ensure the workforce and supporting assets remain capable of meeting the projected increase in both the volume and complexity of hate crime demand. A priority area is the development of frontline capability. This includes enhanced training aligned to national standards, mandatory CPD on risk identification, and structured learning for new supervisors. Updated hate crime e-learning and practical scenario based sessions are being expanded to address identified gaps in digital investigation, online hostility, and safeguarding. These changes aim to increase investigative confidence and reduce variability across districts.

To strengthen specialist capacity, the Force is investing in the Hate Crime Officer and Community Safety functions, ensuring greater resilience during demand surges and abstraction periods. Workforce planning incorporates succession mapping, improved welfare support, and the use of restricted-duties staff in analytical or administrative support roles where appropriate. These measures are expected to provide greater stability and prevent capacity failures during periods of heightened community tension or major national events. Progress is monitored through monthly performance boards, audit data, and dedicated hate crime oversight meetings.

Essex Police is also expanding its use of science, technology, and innovation. Key developments include improved digital forensic capability to meet growing online related demand, investment in mobile first evidence capture, and improved triage tools for social media-based offending. Analytical platforms, including predictive demand modelling and automation of low risk tasks, are being developed in partnership with Power BI and Corporate Services. These innovations are designed to reduce investigative delays, enhance accuracy of risk assessments, and support more timely safeguarding interventions. The Force is also exploring AI assisted transcription and digital statement tools to reduce officer time spent on administrative processes.

Planned improvements to service delivery include tighter supervisory review, clearer standards for risk based investigations, and expanded partnership working—particularly through community tension monitoring, early intervention pathways, and shared safeguarding planning with local authorities and community and voluntary sector agencies. These approaches are intended to improve victim experience, reduce repeat victimisation, and ensure more consistent delivery against national expectations.

A cost benefit analysis underpins all planned changes. Investment in digital tools and enhanced training is expected to reduce overall investigative time, limit investigative backlogs, and improve outcomes without proportional increases in staffing costs. Strengthening specialist capacity is anticipated to prevent the need for more expensive reactive surge measures. Innovation projects are assessed for efficiency savings through the Force's change governance structure, ensuring benefits are quantifiable and aligned to strategic demand forecasts.

Overall, the combination of workforce development, improved digital capability, structured oversight, and targeted innovation is designed to ensure Essex Police remains able to manage both current and future hate crime demand effectively. Progress will continue to be reviewed through performance governance, internal audits, and HMICFRS aligned monitoring processes.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite the planned improvements to workforce capability, digital tools, training, and specialist capacity, Essex Police may experience areas of demand that cannot be fully met over the next four years. These gaps may be driven by the increasing complexity of hate crime, wider system pressures, and the limitations of current resources.

The greatest challenge is the projected rise in complex, digitally enabled hate crime, particularly cases involving multiple online platforms, anonymous accounts, and high volumes of digital evidence. Even with investment in forensic capability and mobile first tools, demand may outpace capacity during periods of national or global tension.

Resource pressures across the wider policing and partnership landscape mean that multiagency demand is another area where shortfalls may persist. Increasing expectations on shared safeguarding, joint problem solving, and partner led interventions may not be fully deliverable if external agencies experience reduced capacity. This could indirectly affect policing workload, victim outcomes, and repeat victimisation prevention.

Finally, digital forensic demand and analytical requirements are anticipated to grow faster than current investment levels. Despite ongoing innovation and automation, analysis-intensive activity, including the mapping of online hostile networks and support to complex investigations, may exceed available specialist capacity.

Taken together, these factors indicate that while Essex Police will be able to meet most routine and predictable demand, gaps may remain in meeting peak digital demand, high complexity investigations, and surge pressure linked to national events. These risks will be monitored through ongoing performance governance, audit outcomes, and demand forecasting, allowing the organisation to reprioritise resources or escalate for additional support where required.

Public Protection

Public Protection
The Crime and Public Protection Command (C&PP) is responsible for some of the most sensitive and complex areas of policing in Essex, including the investigation of serious sexual offences, child abuse (including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and indecent images of children), and the management of violent and registered sex offenders. The Command also provides strategic leadership for domestic abuse (DA), Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), mental health, child sexual exploitation (CSE), 'honour'-based abuse, forced marriage, safeguarding vulnerable adults, missing persons, victims, and Management of Sex Offenders and Violent Offenders.

Essex Police continue to prioritise the protection of vulnerable people. The implementation of Operation Soteria has contributed to improved solved volumes and rates for rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO). Under Affordable Futures, the restructure of the C&PP Command delivers additional investigative capacity for both adult and child sexual offences, with DA investigations moving into the same structure to support more consistent allocation and more dynamic use of specialist resources. The redesign aims to better manage investigative demand and strengthen safeguarding responses. As with all major organisational change, benefits will continue to embed over time.

Changes to local authority structures, from three councils to five, present significant challenges for partnership working and the development of Multi-Agency Child Protection and Transitional Safeguarding arrangements. Unless effectively managed this shift is expected to increase demand on partnership activity within Public Protection.

Technological developments, including enhancements to support Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) and wider disclosure processes, are expected to positively impact demand management and performance during 2025 by reducing risk and offending.

VAWG remains a strategic priority and is reflected across several core areas of vulnerability, including DA, stalking, harassment, rape and sexual violence, and offences committed in public spaces. To drive improvement, Essex Police launched a new VAWG Strategy in 2025,

aligned to the national framework and built around four pillars: Relentless Pursuit of Offenders, Public Spaces, Digital Crime, and Internal Professionalism. Each pillar has clear Chief Officer ownership, with governance through local Commands and the Strategic Vulnerability Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable for C&PP.

Over the last year, from April 2025 to March 2026:

- Recorded VAWG crime increased by 843 offences (from 32,374 to 33,217).
- The VAWG solved rate increased from 11% to 11.8% (3561 crimes solved to 3920 crimes solved).
- Public-space VAWG offences with unknown suspects decreased by 131 offences (709 from 840).

Key priorities for 2025 remain:

- Protecting vulnerable individuals and groups affected by DA, sexual violence, child abuse, and adult safeguarding concerns.
- Strengthening governance and oversight across all areas of vulnerability.
- Full implementation and embedding of the VAWG Strategy across the organisation.

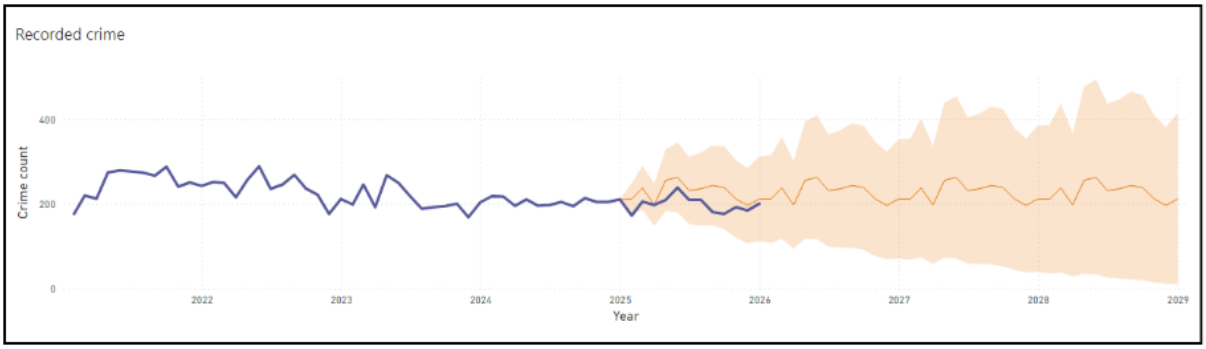
Introduction to Rape and Sexual Violence:
The Public Protection Command has the Adult Sexual Assault Investigation Teams (ASAIT), and the Child Abuse Investigations Teams (CAIT). ASAIT investigates all rape and penetrative offences county-wide, pursuing all lines of enquiry to support victims, and to ensure all opportunities are taken to maximise positive results and bring offenders to justice.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Operation Soteria is changing the way in which rape offences are investigated. This suspect-focused, victim-centred, and context-led approach will result in investigations taking longer and will potentially increase officer workloads. Implementation began in February 2025 and will take two years to fully embed. The work required by the Operation Soteria approach will rise and, while its full impact on resources will not be clear until it is fully embedded within the investigation teams. There is a concern that not only will workloads increase but investigations will become more complex.

In addition to Operation Soteria, the department undertook a review of, and implemented new working practices at the start of 2025, designed to ensure that investigations are dealt with swiftly, while adhering to the Soteria principles, managing risk, and maximising all opportunities for positive outcomes. This has included a change in our approach to investigating DA rape investigations, resulting in the ASAIT team investigating more DA offences than before.

There has been a year-on-year increase in rape offences. However, the new investigative approach has increased pressure on teams while delivering improved outcomes. In the 12 months to March 2026, rape offences increased by 100 compared with the previous year.

The chart below shows the stable position of rape offences, and the forecasted demand:



The changes made have resulted in more rape offences being solved. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, the Force solved more rape offences than the previous two years combined (2023/24 76 crimes, 2024/25 85 crimes, and 2025/26 183 crimes). This has moved the Force from the poorest performing Force in the country for rape solved for a three-year period, to a position where we are starting to outperform some other forces.

To provide context, the solved rate for rape offences was 3% in 2022, 2023 and 2024. Following the changes implemented in 2025, the solved rate increased to 7%.

A similar improvement has been seen in DA-related rape offences. In the 12 months to 31 March 2026, more DA-related rape offences were solved than in the previous two years combined. Although these changes are improving outcomes, they are also increasing officer workload.

It is difficult to assess what future demand will look like. The handling of rape investigations, and the scrutiny over the Force's past performance, means there will always be a need to perform well, and deal effectively with demand in this area of policing. The national obligations under Operation Soteria will place an increase in demand on officers, as it requires a more detailed and thorough approach to the investigation of RASSO offences.

This is evident within DA RASSO offences, historically the forces approach to these has been to split the rape and DA matters, and for them to be investigated by two separate teams. The Force's approach throughout 2025 was to keep these offences together and for the ASAITs to lead, creating additional work for ASAIT, but with better outcomes.

High harm investigations remain subject to substantial scrutiny and will always remain a Force priority. National scrutiny will continue, not only over the delivery of Operation Soteria and how this impacts upon the Force performance, but also from the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection (NCVPP), who have just released national Home Office direction around the introduction of specialist RASSO teams for each force, including how they are resourced, trained and operate. While Essex Police is ahead of some forces nationally through the existence of our ASAITs, scrutiny will continue over the next 12 months to ensure the Force is delivering in this space.

Social and technological developments will continue to increase demand. All RASSO investigations involve the examination of digital devices, and this is expected to remain a consistent feature of such enquiries. Operation Soteria provides guidance to ensure that device examination is proportionate, appropriate and relevant. In addition, the Online Safety Act has introduced new offences, some of which fall within the RASSO category. Demand relating to these offences is also likely to increase, reflecting both their nature and the widespread use of digital devices in society.

Organisational changes and the restructure of the C&PP Command will increase workloads in ASAITs. Under the Affordable Futures Programme, additional constable posts have been agreed for ASAITs.

The headquarters teams were originally implemented to investigate crimes that were considered too complex to be managed within the investigation hubs. They have performed exceptionally well since their inception. The management of more complex investigations in this setting will need close monitoring to ensure they are given the time and investment to progress proportionately and provide the right level of service to victims.

Overall workloads across the hubs remain high.

During 2025, work was undertaken to improve the rape solved rate. This included the development of innovative joint working with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to reduce the time taken to charge suspects. The introduction of CPS clinics has enabled face-to-face case discussions between CPS lawyers and police, reducing the need for additional investigative work and improving outcomes.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Historically the resources within the ASAITs have not been sufficient to cope with the number of investigations they have had. The Affordable Futures Programme will increase the establishment of officers within ASAIT, to a level that will make the workload more manageable. This increase is at constable, sergeant, inspector and chief inspector level. The increase in establishment should ensure that supervision ratios and workloads across the Force are manageable and fair.

As a result of the Affordable Futures programme and the need to increase the establishment numbers within the Investigation Hubs, a decision has been made to disband the HQ teams, and for the officers and workloads to move to the investigation hubs.

While this decision is in line with recent national direction, this will need close monitoring.

All ASAIT officers are required to complete the Specialist Sexual Assault Investigators Development Programme. A robust governance process, supported by L&D, is in place to ensure all officers are either accredited or working towards accreditation.

Wellbeing remains an issue within the investigation hubs, resulting in higher levels of long term absence. This is a theme nationally as it is recognised that this area of policing is particularly traumatic for officers and staff. A lot of work has been conducted over the last 12 months (prior to March 2026) under Operation Soteria, with the implementation of a new wellbeing strategy, focusing on providing additional support to officers. Absence and wellbeing will continue to be a concern over the next 12 months and beyond. It is yet to be seen how the additional growth across the hubs will impact upon this.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
As detailed above, chief officers have agreed an increase in officers as part of the Affordable Futures Programme, to levels that will support the demand better.

Training accreditation levels are monitored through the new performance framework introduced in 2025 ensuring that officers are accredited or working towards accreditation. Fully qualified officers will help support managing the workload within the teams.

There may be opportunities as part of the C&PP Command restructure to design recruitment pathways to improve this.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
The agreed growth by chief officers will enable the team to better meet demands.

Introduction to Child Abuse:
The CAITs investigate all child rape and penetrative offences county-wide, all intrafamilial and position of trust sexual offences, and assaults. They also take the lead in all child death investigations.

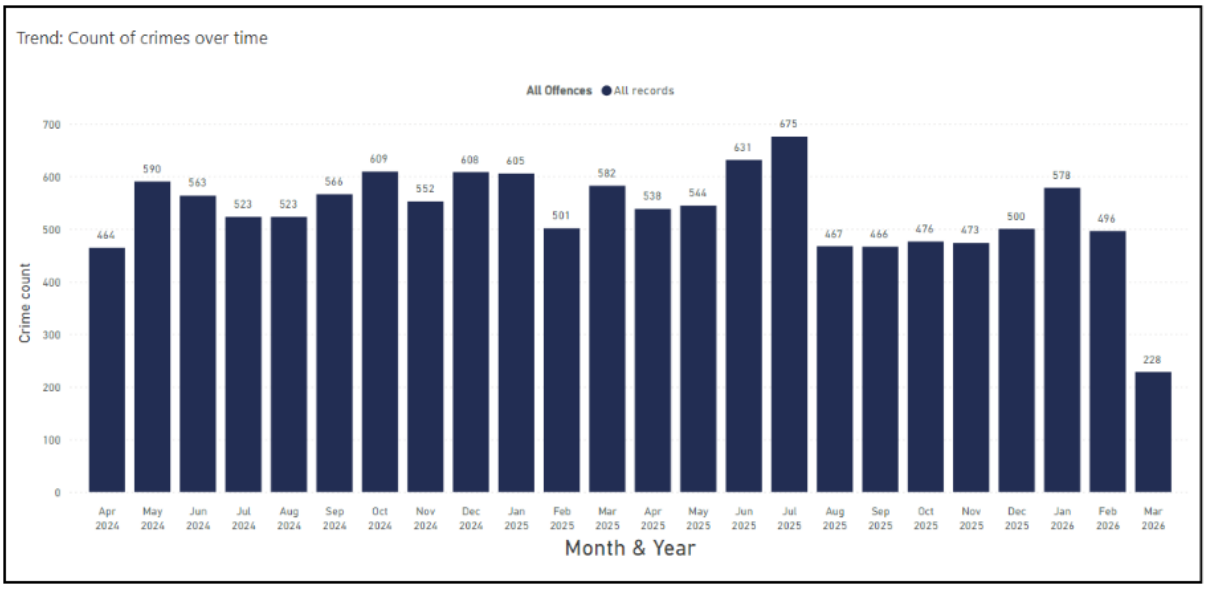
The investigation hubs are currently supported by headquarters-based investigation teams. These manage historical allegations of child sexual abuse where the victim is now an adult, together with complex RASSO offences that would otherwise fall within the CAIT remit but are managed separately because of the complexity of the investigations.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
While Operation Soteria is predominantly aimed at the ASAITs, it will impact the CAITs to a similar degree, due to the RASSO offences investigated within those teams.

As with the ASAITs, the department undertook a review of, and implemented new working practices at the start of 2025, designed to ensure that investigations are dealt with swiftly, while adhering to the Soteria principles, managing risk, and maximising all opportunities for positive outcomes.

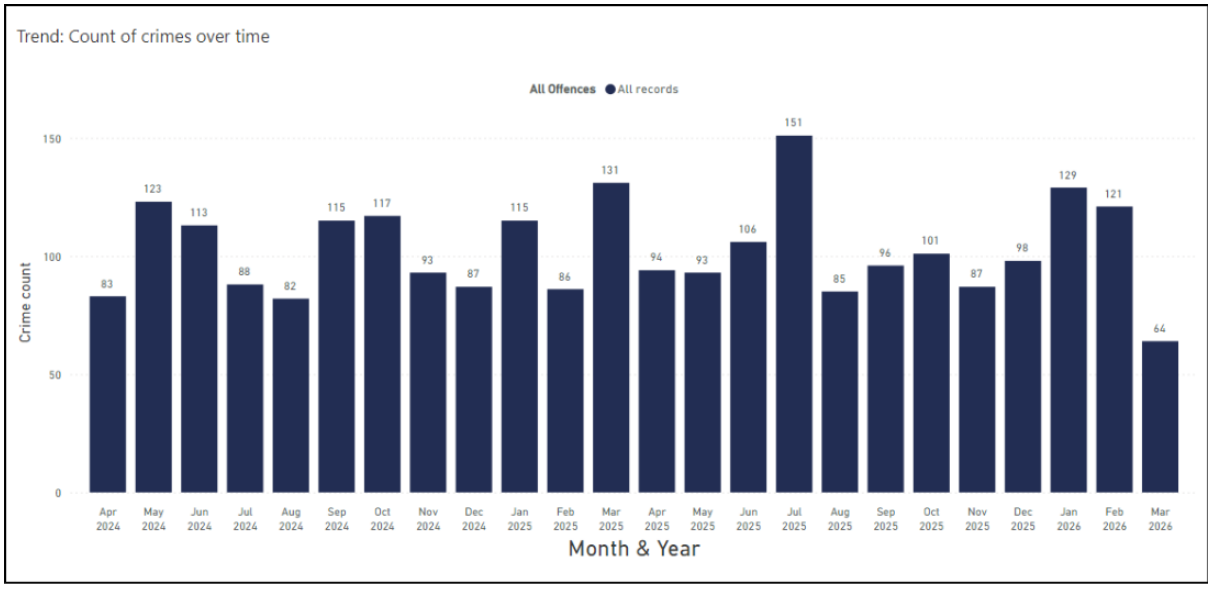
This approach is more complex in CAIT investigations because of the additional considerations relating to social care and third-party material. While the changes have had a positive impact on child RASSO offences, further work is required across the wider range of offences investigated by the team to ensure performance improves at the same rate.

There has been a slight reduction in demand over the last 12 months (prior to March 2026), but overall demand remains high in terms of crimes reported. The chart below shows the demand from reported crime over the last two-year period (prior to March 2026). This shows a slight reduction in that time, but with fluctuations. Most of the crimes reported and investigated by the CAITs are child RASSO offences.



Non-crime demands also impact upon the work of CAITs. While most of these reports will be dealt with by the Operations Centre Triage team, some will impact upon the CAITs. These reports may relate to matters where there are concerns that children may have been subject of a criminal offence, and require a joint visit with Social Care, but enquiries confirm that this is not the case.

The chart below shows the non-crime demand for the hubs:



While work is being undertaken to improve the overall performance of the CAITs, it remains strong with a solved rate of 8% over the last 12 months (April 2025 to March 2026).
It is difficult to assess what future demand will look like. As stated, we have seen a slight reduction in rape offences over the last few years, which will include child rape offences. The high harm area of child RASSO investigations remains subject to substantial scrutiny and will always remain a Force priority. The scrutiny of the Force's past performance means there will always be a need to perform well and deal effectively with demand in this area of policing. The national obligations under Operation Soteria will place an increase in demand on officers, as it requires a more detailed and thorough approach to the investigation of child RASSO offences.

This high-harm area of investigation remains subject to significant scrutiny and will continue to be a Force priority. National scrutiny will extend beyond the delivery of Operation Soteria and its impact on Force performance to include the NCVPP, which has issued Home Office direction on the introduction of specialist RASSO teams in each force, including expectations relating to their resourcing, training and operation. Although this direction is not primarily aimed at CAITs, it includes the crime types they investigate.

Social and technological developments will continue to increase demand. Most child abuse investigations involve the examination of digital devices, and this is expected to remain a consistent feature of such enquiries. Operation Soteria provides guidance to ensure that device examination is proportionate, appropriate and relevant. In addition, the Online Safety Act has introduced new offences, some of which fall within the child RASSO category. Demand relating to these offences is also likely to increase, reflecting both their nature and the widespread use of digital devices in society.

Organisational changes and restructure of the C&PP Command will result in growth of additional officer posts into CAITs, acknowledging the findings of the previous His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) PEEL inspection (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy).

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill introduced a requirement to establish Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPTs). Although the Bill has not yet been enacted, this is anticipated in the first half of 2026. Once enacted, it will place a statutory duty on Social Care, Police, Health and Education to implement local MACPTs. The purpose of a MACPT is to strengthen, professionalise and accelerate multi-agency decision-making where children may be suffering, or are likely to suffer, significant harm.

In essence, MACPTs are intended to ensure that the appropriate expertise from police, health, education and social care is brought together at an early stage, consistently and decisively, to protect children.

The MACPTs will be introduced in addition to the existing Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH) in Southend and Thurrock, and in addition to the Children's and Families Hub in Essex. The difference between these and the MACPTs is that the MACPT is designed to bring expertise together to make decisions around child safeguarding, moving beyond the information and risk assessment focus of the other teams.

While the introduction of MACPTs is expected to place greater pressure on existing resources within the MASHs, Children and Families Hubs, and Operations Centre Triage teams than on the CAITs, CAIT involvement will still be required. Development of these teams remains at an early stage, with local authority-level meetings under way to design the model. As a result, it is not yet possible to assess the full impact on demand. However, evidence from pathfinder forces indicates that workloads increased following implementation.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Historically the resources within the CAITs have not been sufficient to cope with the volume of investigations. The agreed growth under the Affordable Futures Programme will increase the establishment of officers within CAIT, to a level that will make the demand more manageable. This increase is at constable, sergeant, inspector and chief inspector level. The increase in establishment should ensure that supervision ratios and workloads across the Force are manageable and fair.

As a result of the Affordable Futures programme and the need to increase the establishment numbers within the Investigation Hubs, a decision has been made to disband the HQ teams, and for the officers and workloads to move to the investigation hubs.

While this decision is in line with recent national direction, this will require close monitoring.

All CAIT officers are required to complete the Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme. A robust governance process, supported by Learning and Development (L&D), is in place to ensure all officers are either accredited or working towards accreditation.

Wellbeing remains an issue within the investigation hubs, resulting in higher levels of long term absence. This is a theme nationally as it is recognised that this area of policing is particularly traumatic for officers and staff. A lot of work has been conducted over the last 12 months under Operation Soteria (prior to March 2026), with the implementation of a new wellbeing strategy, focusing on providing additional support to officers. Absence and wellbeing will continue to be a concern over the next 12 months and beyond. It is yet to be seen how the additional growth across the hubs will impact upon this.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
As set out above, chief officers have approved an increase in officer numbers through the Affordable Futures Programme to support more effective and equitable management of demand.

Training accreditation levels are monitored through the performance framework introduced in 2025 to ensure officers are either accredited or working towards accreditation. Fully qualified officers will help to manage demand within the teams.

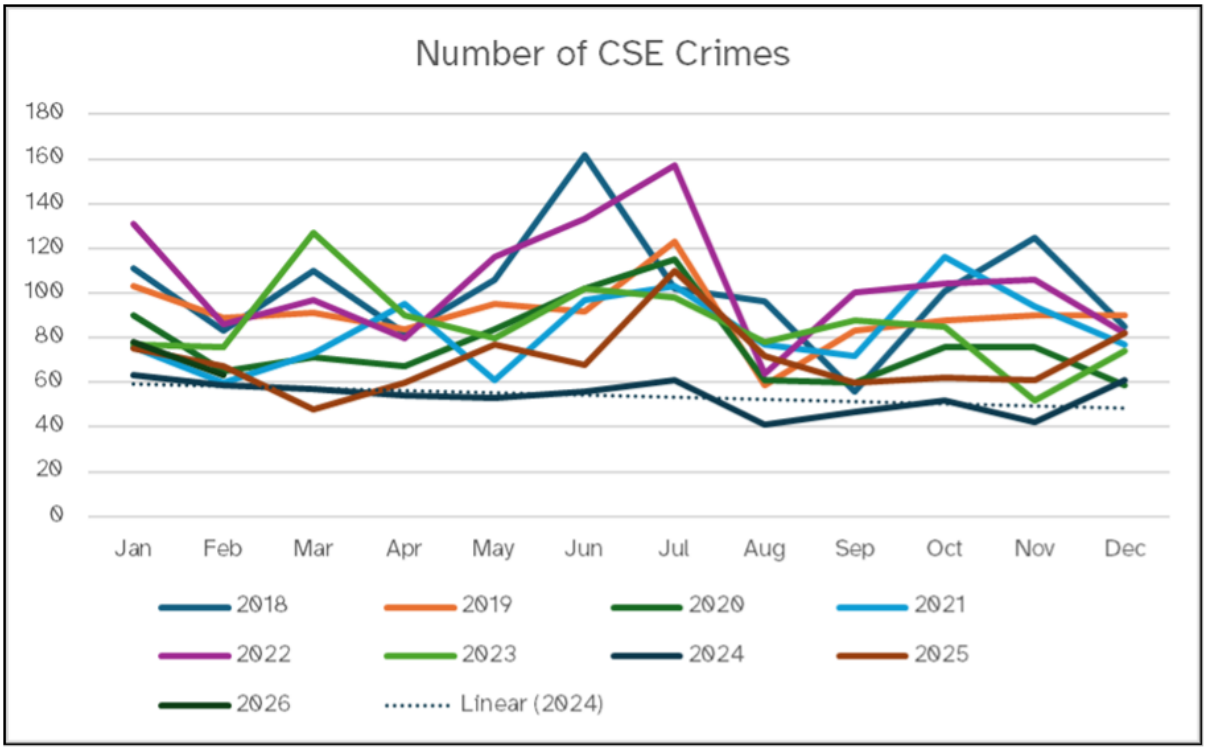
The level of inexperience within the teams, and the number of IF officers, remains a concern. The experience of growth officers may help to address this imbalance, depending on the skills and experience of those joining C&PP Command. Recruitment continues to be challenging, and most vacancies are filled by inexperienced IF officers to maintain establishment levels. This has a significant impact on overall team experience. Opportunities may arise through the C&PP Command restructure to develop recruitment pathways that improve this position.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
The agreed growth will assist in better coping with volumes of investigations.

The new offences introduced under the Online Safety Act have increased the number of offences relating to children, and this is expected to continue. It remains unclear what impact this will have on demand across the wider Force and within the CAITs.
The introduction of MACPTs presents an additional area of demand for C&PP Command. It is anticipated that this can be managed within existing resources; however, the full extent of the demand will remain unclear until implementation by March 2027.

Introduction to Child Exploitation (CSE)
Child Sexual Exploitation remains a high harm, high complexity threat for Essex Police and continues to be a strategic priority within the Force control strategy. Demand is driven by a combination of current victim-led investigations, proactive safeguarding activity, and increasing intelligence and CSE. National scrutiny arising from HMICFRS inspections and the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) findings has further shaped

expectations on forces to identify hidden harm, review historic offending, and demonstrate effective disruption and governance.



Over the past four years, Essex Police has strengthened its response to CSE through enhanced specialist capability, improved governance, stronger partnership working, and greater use of data and technology. These changes have improved investigative quality, victim focus and problem profiling but have also increased demand by identifying additional safeguarding and investigative requirements. The current and future CSE demand profile, together with the capacity and capability of the workforce and supporting assets, indicates that, despite planned changes and efficiencies to improve sustainability.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

CSE demand within Essex Police is high, complex and sustained, driven by both victim-led investigations and a growing volume of intelligence-led and problem profile activity. Current demands are characterised by complex safeguarding needs, overlapping CSE and Child Criminal Exploitation, increased reporting through schools, partners and third-party intelligence, and significant investigative activity relating to historic and group-based CSE, including compliance requirements arising from IICSA, HMICFRS, and national tasking.

The anticipated sustained growth in CSE demand is primarily assessed to be confidence led and practice driven, rather than reflective of increased contemporary offending. Growth is grounded in the rise in recorded CSE offences during 2025, combined with wider national and organisational factors influencing both reporting and identification.

National scrutiny of Group Based Child Sexual Exploitation (GBCSE) including the Baroness Casey review, has consistently been shown to increase victim confidence in reporting historic abuse, particularly where previous criminal justice outcomes or disposals had undermined trust.

In parallel, increased GBCSE volumes are also expected because of improved frontline officer and investigative capability. Targeted training and national learning have strengthened the ability of officers and investigators to recognise and record patterns of GBCSE, rather than treating incidents as isolated sexual assaults. This will result in more accurate classification, linkage and recording of GBCSE offending.

Accordingly, future increases are expected to be driven predominantly by historic CSE reporting and improved identification, arising from enhanced confidence, legitimacy, and professional practice, rather than an underlying increase in contemporary offending. Significant drivers include national scrutiny, expanded definitions of group based CSE, improved intelligence quality, and public confidence leading to delayed disclosures. This will require greater analytical capacity, specialist skills and sustained safeguarding resources.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Essex Police have a specialist but highly pressured workforce responding to CSE, comprising dedicated CSE teams, CAIT, triage functions, intelligence analysts and proactive safeguarding assets, supported by neighbourhood and partnership activity, the SET (Southend, Essex and Thurrock) Child Exploitation Board and Missing and Child Exploitation.

Performance is generally strong in victim-centred practice, intelligence development and disruption activity.

Capability is underpinned by accredited investigators, improving analytical tools, and maturing governance aligned to HMICFRS and IICSA expectations. The Force has invested in data led approaches, including group based CSE problem profiles and large-scale reviews such as Operation Beaconport. While these approaches strengthen identification and oversight, they also increase workload even where crime volumes remain stable, placing sustained pressure on investigative and analytical capacity.

Other assets, including intelligence systems, partnership frameworks and preventative operations such as Operation Makesafe, are serviceable and effective, but rely heavily on consistent staffing and specialist skills.

Overall, the workforce can meet current demand.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Essex Police is taking a planned, multi stranded approach to ensure the workforce and supporting assets can meet rising and increasingly complex CSE workload. This includes

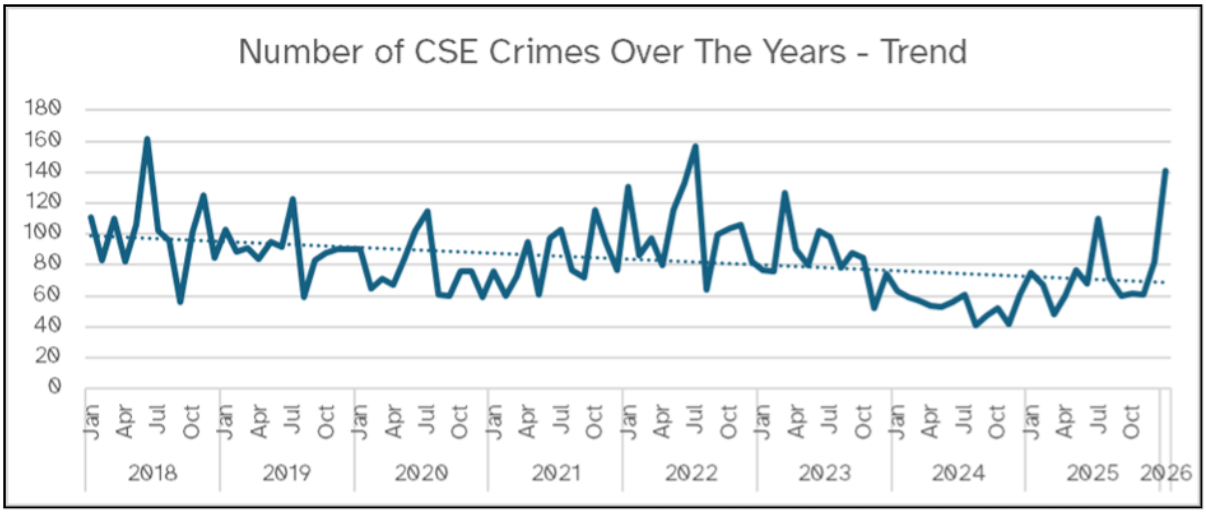
strengthening specialist capability, improving productivity through data and technology, and increasing preventative and partnership activity to reduce future harm.

Workforce plans focus on maintaining specialist CSE and CAIT capacity, improving resilience through prioritisation, and clearer tasking supported by improved governance and compliance oversight. Training products, policies, and investigative frameworks are being aligned to national definitions and HMICFRS and IICSA expectations, ensuring capability remains current and consistent across the Force. Performance and wellbeing are monitored through existing C&PP governance, with demand and abstraction risks actively managed.

The Force is increasingly using science, technology, and innovation, including enhanced data-led reviews, intelligence analysis, and problem profiling, to identify hidden harm and target resources more effectively. While these approaches increase short term workload, they deliver long term benefits through earlier safeguarding, better prioritisation, and reduced repeat victimisation.

Preventative initiatives such as Operation Makesafe strengthen partnership capability and reduce reliance on reactive policing, providing strong cost benefit value by shifting demand upstream. Overall, these changes are expected to improve sustainability, investigative quality, and safeguarding outcomes, with progress monitored through Chief Officer Group, Strategic Vulnerability Boards, and performance reporting.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite planned improvements in workforce capability, governance, and the use of data and technology, Essex Police assesses that there will remain areas of CSE demand that will remain challenging after 2026.



The number of CSE investigations has increased. This rise is predominantly attributable to historic allegations, rather than a sudden escalation in current offending. It also reflects increased public confidence in reporting CSE, driven in part by heightened national scrutiny

and public discourse following the independent review into CSE-led by Baroness Casey. Greater awareness of exploitation, improved victim confidence, and a stronger focus on institutional accountability have contributed to victims and survivors coming forward, particularly in relation to non-recent abuse.

Overall, Essex Police can manage core and high-risk CSE demand.

Introduction to Safeguarding
Safeguarding responsibilities exist across the whole Force. Frontline officers and staff are required to recognise indicators of vulnerability for both children and adults. SETSAF (Southend, Essex & Thurrock Safeguarding Adult Concern Form) and PP57s (Child Safeguarding Referral Form) are used to ensure risks are recorded and shared appropriately. Both forms are submitted to teams within the C&PP Operations Centre. In addition, secondary risk assessments for DA are completed by these teams.

The teams include:

- MASH hubs in Thurrock and Southend involve multiple agencies working together to safeguard children. The goal of a MASH is to improve the speed and effectiveness of safeguarding responses by ensuring that all relevant information is considered and that agencies work together seamlessly.
- The CSE Team focuses on protecting children and young people from exploitation by identifying those children at risk. This may be through referral processes, community reports or proactive investigations.
- The Child and Families Hub forms part of Essex County Council Children's Social Care. Since January 2025, police officers have been embedded within the hub to triage police referrals relating to children at risk of harm and share them with Essex Children's Social Care, in line with assessed risk and any other relevant information held by Essex Police.
- The Child Triage Team responds to requests from Children's Social Care and regularly attends strategy meetings to agree the appropriate level of intervention and support required for a child, based on the risks identified by all agencies involved.
- The Domestic Abuse Response Team carries out secondary risk assessments on all medium and high-risk DA cases. They also process all DVDS applications both in terms of 'Right to Ask' and 'Right to Know'.
- The Adult Triage Team is responsible for triaging all safeguarding adult referrals and sharing with Adult Social Care where appropriate to ensure the safety and protection of vulnerable adults who have care and support needs and who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
- The Multi Agency Risk Assessment Team supports the multi-agency response to high-risk DA cases and work with professionals from various agencies to safeguard victims and their families from harm caused by DA.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Adult Triage Team

Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SETSAF) referrals are completed by officers for vulnerable adults who may be at risk of abuse and/or neglect. The Adult Triage team reviews and triages these referrals, which is their primary activity.

Other work includes requests from social care for individual histories and out-of-force concerns over cross-border investigations. Referrals are received from all three local authorities in Essex.

The triage team processes between 350 and 450 SETSAFs per month (April 2025 to March 2026). Automation introduced in December 2024 replaces the previous process, which relied upon officers actively creating a task on Athena to bring the SETSAF to the attention of the Operations Centre Adult Triage Team. The new automated process ensures all SETSAFs are correctly routed into Adult Triage. The UK population aged 60 and over is expected to continue to rise steadily between 2026 and 2030. This anticipated growth will have knock on impacts for health and social care as well as safeguarding and vulnerability.

Essex already has a large older population, with around 20% of people aged 65 and over receiving some form of social care support, indicating a high baseline of vulnerability. Between 2026 and 2030, demand is expected to increase, including higher volumes of adult safeguarding referrals, multi-agency risk management activity, and greater case complexity involving capacity, neglect, financial abuse and carer stress.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
There has been a significant increase in referrals due to heightened awareness and changes in the risk assessment criteria. Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Conferences have increased from 40 to nearly 50 per week in Essex and Southend, with Thurrock holding eight to ten conferences weekly.

There is a high likelihood of increased MARAC demand between 2026 and 2030. Despite relatively stable prevalence estimates, DA remains widespread and under-reported. National policy, inspection findings and improved professional practice continue to drive greater identification of high-risk and repeat cases. National SafeLives data shows sustained growth in MARAC caseloads, and there is no evidence to suggest demand will plateau in the medium term.

Child safeguarding
Essex Police now operate a single electronic PP57 form across all three local authority areas. Once completed PP57s are automatically routed to Thurrock or Southend MASH, or to the ECC Children and Families Hub, according to the child's place of residence. This ensures each PP57 is reviewed and quality assured by Essex Police staff, enabling faster and more informed safeguarding decisions regardless of where the child resides.

The new process also ensures that Essex Police hold a complete and auditable record of all referrals shared with SET partners. This strengthens accountability and transparency, while also enabling the Force to identify patterns and trends in safeguarding concerns to support

more strategic, data-driven decision-making. In addition, the co-location of staff in Thurrock and Southend MASH, together with the more recent co-location of Children and Families staff within the Essex Hub in Colchester, has further improved collaboration. Feedback from Essex Children's Social Care has been overwhelmingly positive.

The recent focus on identifying children in DA cases as victims will see an increase in PP57 referrals.

Changes to government and local authority arrangements arising from local government reform are likely to affect how social care operates.

Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART)
Performance data from recent years demonstrates sustained growth in DVDS applications, with national volumes increasing by over 300% since 2019 and reaching around 90,000 applications annually. This growth has been driven by statutory changes under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, increased public awareness, expanded recognition of non-physical abuse, and greater use of the scheme as an early safeguarding intervention. Over the next four years, DVDS workload is likely to continue rising year on year, with pressure from 'Right to Ask' applications and associated safeguarding activity, increasing the volume and complexity of the workload.

Essex Police DVDS data shows sustained growth in Clare's Law applications since implementation reflecting national trends following statutory changes under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. DVDS activity in Essex is now embedded within routine safeguarding activity, with a high proportion of 'Right to Ask' applications and increasing case complexity. Over the next four years, demands are likely to continue rising incrementally, creating growing pressure on specialist DVDS resourcing, timeliness, compliance and safeguarding governance unless capacity and efficiency measures (including the introduction of automation) are strengthened.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The Affordable Futures Programme will restructure C&PP with the Operations Centre and the Strategic Vulnerability Centre (SVC) combining into one Vulnerability Team. The Vulnerability Team will be overseen by two detective superintendents, one with responsibility for children and the other for adults, with overall strategic oversight retained.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Artificial Intelligence and Automation are being considered for administrative/research functions within DA. This could help relieve the pressure of researching cases as they come into the DART and reduce the amount of time taken to reach a disclosure decision and/or a decision around risk. Automation could be expanded into other areas of the Vulnerability Team, such as MASH and MARAC, allowing staff to concentrate on the risk assessment and decision making.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

New provisions under the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, recognising children as victims, are expected to increase demand on safeguarding processes. While our current DA and Child Protection policies already require referrals (via PP57) to Children's Social Care where safeguarding concerns exist, this is predominantly applied to children who are present or directly affected during incidents. The legislative change extends this requirement to include children who were not physically present but are nonetheless impacted by DA. This is likely to result in an increase in PP57 submissions, particularly for children who were not present at the time of the incident, for example where they were staying elsewhere or where the incident occurred away from the home.

While this may not represent as large an increase as initially anticipated, it does introduce new complexities. Officers will now need to identify and record information about children they may not have seen or spoken to, which presents challenges in both investigation and referral quality. These referrals are likely to contain limited information, requiring additional research and follow-up by the Children and Family Hub (or MASH teams in Southend and Thurrock), thereby increasing demand on those teams.

Essex Police will continue to monitor the impact of this legislative change and adapt our processes and training accordingly to ensure compliance and effective safeguarding of children.

DART has assumed responsibility for dip-sampling stalking secondary assessments to provide reassurance in relation to non-DA stalking risk assessment. The longer-term plan is to introduce automation within the department to deliver efficiencies and make current demand more manageable.

Introduction to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Forced Marriage (FM) and 'Honour' Based Abuse (HBA)

FGM comprises procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons, often associated with cultural, religious and social norms. It is internationally recognised as a human rights violation and is primarily practised in some African, Middle Eastern and Southeast Asian communities.

Forced Marriage (FM) is a marriage where one or both parties are married without their full and free consent, often due to pressure, threats, or deception. It is a human rights violation, commonly found in African, Middle Eastern, and Southeast Asian cultures.

'Honour' Based Abuse (HBA) is any crime or incident committed to protect or defend the perceived 'honour' of a family or community, involving violence, threats, intimidation, or coercion.

Essex Police have a nominated Force lead for FGM, FM and HBA, supported by a subject matter expert (SME) within the SVC. The Force lead is responsible for ensuring that the strategic and operational response delivers the best possible service to victims. This role is currently held by a Detective Chief Inspector within C&PP. In most incidents involving FGM, FM or HBA, Local Policing Team (LPT) officers will attend in the first instance, with any alleged or disclosed offences investigated by CAIT, ASAIT or the Domestic Abuse Investigation Team.

The UK continues to maintain a zero-tolerance stance toward all forms of FGM, including cases carried out by medically trained individuals. New training initiatives are being developed to help health professionals recognise risks linked to both FGM and 'honour' motivated killings. The Home Office is piloting a nationwide study aimed at uncovering the real scale of FGM and forced marriage, both crimes known to be significantly under-reported.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Essex Police receive a very low number of FGM cases. One reason for this may be the personal risk victims face when reporting. In addition to this, not all victims are aware they are victims of crime, and some affected communities are encouraged to mistrust the police. Over the past year, the SME has actively engaged with the University of Essex and charity groups to raise awareness about the warning signs of FGM, FM and HBA. This initiative has been well-received and should continue to expand in the future.

Any HBA incident reported is automatically referred to the MARAC. Whilst this does create additional demands, numbers are still relatively small across Southend, Essex and Thurrock (SET). There is a well-established SET-wide Multi-Agency Cultural Harms Strategic Partnership, which includes representatives from Essex Police, Children's Social Services, the Domestic and Cultural Abuse Lead Practitioner, and the Clinical Safeguarding Team Lead for FGM, FM and HBA.

A new, clearly defined legal definition of HBA was introduced through an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill, which came into effect in February 2026. It is intended to provide police, social workers, teachers and healthcare professionals with a consistent understanding of HBA, reducing the risk of such abuse being overlooked or misunderstood. It explicitly includes offences such as 'honour'-motivated killings, forced marriage and FGM.
Clearly defining HBA may see an increase in recorded crimes, however this cannot accurately be predicted at this time. 'Honour' will be formally recognised as an aggravating factor in sentencing. This will enable courts to better reflect the coercive, controlling and complex nature of honour-based abuse when determining penalties. Growing attention is being given to how technology, such as tracking apps, spyware, and online monitoring tools are used to facilitate HBA.

Regarding FM, evidence indicates an increase in reported cases of forced marriage, prompting greater emphasis on victim support services and the more proactive use of FM Protection Orders. New CPS guidance focusses on cases where victims are taken abroad and

forced to marry. This guidance aims to improve investigation pathways and increase the likelihood of prosecution. Again, this may result in an increase in demand, but it cannot be accurately predicted at this stage.

A new helpline and a series of school-based pilot interventions are scheduled to launch in September 2026. These initiatives aim to address teenage relationship abuse, which can overlap with honour related expectations and control dynamics.

There is an increasing focus on community based engagement to encourage survivors and at-risk individuals to seek help, supported by specialist organisations such as Karma Nirvana.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The SME's fluency in other languages aids communication with non-English-speaking victims, possibly contributing to officers seeking their support. Empowering officers to make decisions, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging professional curiosity can help to upskill officers, boost confidence, and correctly identify these incidents.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Internal and partner-led training events are regularly promoted through the Virtual Crime Academy webpages. The most recent Continuous Professional Development (CPD) event, hosted by Women of Grace, focused on FGM. In addition, regular Vulnerability Lesson of the Week communications provide updates and additional knowledge to raise awareness of these offences among officers and staff.

The NCVPP is working to strengthen risk assessment processes used by police forces, helping them identify and manage high risk HBA offenders before harm escalates.
The CPS has expanded its guidance to explicitly recognise dowry related abuse, spiritual abuse, and immigration related exploitation (such as threats of deportation) as forms of 'honour'-based abuse.

Mandatory training for frontline professionals including teachers, police officers, and social workers will focus on recognising early warning signs of HBA to ensure earlier, more effective intervention.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Projected demand is expected to be met in the next one to four years.

Introduction to Modern Day Slavery

Sex Work
Essex Police chair a multi-agency partnership board focused on raising awareness of adult sexual exploitation and resolving specific issues. Membership includes representatives from

Essex County Council, Thurrock Council, Southend Council, the National Health Service (NHS) and the voluntary sector, including Carrie's Outreach.

The group is developing a multi-agency training package for police and partners to increase awareness, reporting and intelligence gathering. This will include a video featuring a representative from Carrie's Outreach sharing lived experience.

Essex has also developed a strategy to address the use of properties and complicit landlords in connection with adult sexual exploitation. New cease-and-desist notices will be issued to landlords as well as persistent offenders. In addition, a new operational tool has been introduced to support officers and staff when dealing with suspected brothels and sex workers. This is intended to improve understanding of the issues and support the reporting of crimes.

The overall risk level is currently unclear because reporting remains limited. However, Essex has strong links into the community and effective reporting mechanisms where required.

Introduction to Mental Ill Health
LPTs remain the primary responders to mental health incidents. Essex Police continue to develop a partnership led approach to mental health demand, working closely with health providers to ensure individuals receive support from the most appropriate professionals. The overarching aim of the Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) programme is to remove unnecessary police involvement in mental health incidents and ensure people receive timely care that meets their needs.

The introduction of RCRP has reduced some calls for service within Contact Management Command (CMC) and local policing. More importantly, it has ensured that vulnerable individuals receive the most suitable intervention at the earliest opportunity.

RCRP is delivered across four phases:
- Concern for Welfare
- Section 136 and Section 135 detentions
- Absent Without Leave (AWOL)
- Voluntary attendance and transportation

Memorandum of Understanding is in place across partners to ensure police are deployed only where there is a *real and immediate risk* or a clear requirement under Articles 2 or 3 of the Human Rights Act. A robust escalation process ensures disagreements about attendance or changes in risk can be quickly reviewed.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Right Care, Right Person (RCRP)

RCRP is now embedded as business as usual, and Memoranda of Understanding are formally in place and signed by all but one agency. Current data shows that, although Essex Police initially saw a reduction in attendance at concern for welfare incidents, walkouts from healthcare settings and AWOL incidents following the introduction of RCRP, these have since begun to increase.

Police conveyance remains a significant proportion of transport decisions, with operational pressures on ambulance availability being the dominant factor. There is, however, a lack of transportation data in 33 cases which reduces the ability to accurately assess trends and service needs. A subset of conveyances (approximately 9% of police transports) were due to behavioural or risk-related considerations but with the increasing demand trajectory (41% to 46% rise expected by April), this suggests further strain on both police and ambulance services moving forward.

A joint deeper dive into this data is set to take place with East of England Ambulance Service (EEAST) during 2026.

Section 136 and Section 135 demand

Following an initial reduction in Section 136 detentions post-RCRP implementation, the current financial year is showing a sharp increase. Based on current figures, Section 136 detentions may rise by 41% to 46% by year-end, and this upward trajectory is expected to continue.

Key drivers of increasing demand include:

- Limited community mental health engagement for individuals prior to crisis point.
- Lack of officers contacting Crisis Response Service (CRS) before detaining.
- When CRS is contacted, there are occasions when they are unwilling to attend due to previous concerns around aggression or violence with the patient or they advise officers to utilise 136 powers anyway (where suitable).

In 2025, 150 individuals detained in custody under Section 136 had already been assessed and recommended for Section 2 admission. However, because no bed was available before the PACE detention period expired, or before the grounds for detention under PACE ended, officers were required to use Section 136 powers to safeguard them. Ongoing bed shortages are likely to continue driving these avoidable detentions. Discussions with partners remain ongoing; however, delays in bed flow mean that some patients remain in beds they no longer require because there is no suitable community placement available.

The College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council are exploring a pilot involving the use of private mental health beds for individuals recommended for detention while in custody. Essex Police has put itself forward to participate and is awaiting a formal decision. The proposal is currently under review.

Delays, Handover Times and Bed Availability

Demand for community mental health services continues to increase, and NHS pressures significantly impact police time:

- Increasing numbers of patients are taken to A&E instead of health-based places of safety (HBPoS).
- Tactical and strategic Mental Health Partnership governance boards aim to tackle and overcome issues, but a chronic lack of bed space remains a blocker.

Suicide
There was a small increase in suicides between 2024 to 2025 (+7), but 2025 to 2026 projections indicate a decline to around 132, below 2023 levels. No single cause is identifiable, but the reduction is positive. We provide Real Time Suicide Surveillance data to health partners to enable joint working on suicide reductions by identifying key themes and areas for focus.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The current Mental Health Team undertakes extensive and specialist work, including but not restricted to:

- Managing Section 136 escalations and attending bed management calls.
- Collating and ensuring compliance with all Home Office data for Section 135 and Section 136.
- Providing suicide data to the Home Office and Public Health.
- Liaising with partners, ensuring information sharing agreements are upheld.
- Managing MHT/1 (Mental Health Referral forms) and Operation Beaumont referrals and completing risk/history checks.

In March 2025, the Mental Health street triage car, involving an Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT) nurse and police officer, was replaced by a health-based model with EEAST and EPUT.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The AVT will manage SETSAFS (adult safeguarding referral forms), MHT/1s, Operation Beaumont, and MHRMB (mental health risk management board) subgroups. Increased staffing within the wider AVT should allow better identification of risk and enhanced governance of multi-agency meetings around those who are a risk of causing significant harm to others, or homicide, or are high risk of suicide. In addition, it will enable work processes to be streamlined and remove duplication.

The MHRMB will focus more on strategic issues and change as well as on-going partner challenges. The board will focus on identifying areas for debriefs and learning as well as best practices. This will work alongside crisis concordat.

The mental health team will be training Force Duty Officers on Section 136 escalation processes prior to the Affordable Futures changes to preserve knowledge. They are also working on a new Section 136 e-learning package which has been commissioned

to assist frontline decision-making and reduce unnecessary detentions. This will be created and shared as mandatory training during 2026.

Exploration is currently being undertaken for a “sit and wait” provision (implemented successfully in Kent Police) to help release officers within one hour of Section 136 detention, which could be funded by Integrated Care Board (ICBs). This would cut down the number of hours police are left caring for mental health patients; however, ICB funding may be an issue.

The types and amount of future demand we don’t expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
RCRP is operating as business as usual.

Operation Cavell is a partnership initiative designed to improve staff knowledge, build trust, and strengthen the response to violence, aggression and hate crime against healthcare workers. It is currently led by the Mental Health Team and will transfer to the AVT. The initiative aims to address under-reporting and investigative challenges. Evidence from other regions indicates that its introduction in Essex Police may increase the number of reported crimes, creating additional demand on LPTs. However, this is also expected to improve NHS trust and confidence in policing.

Introduction to Terrorism and Radicalisation
Strategic coordination of counter terrorism activity across Essex is governed by the Essex Local CONTEST Board, a multi-agency partnership comprising the emergency services, the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), strategic partners and Essex Police commands. The Board leads the local delivery of the national CONTEST strategy by maintaining a county-wide counter terrorism strategy, embedding best practice, overseeing the Prevent, Protect, Prepare and Pursue strands, and providing governance for capability assessment, community safeguarding, testing and exercising.

Together, the gold, silver and bronze response model, Specialist Operations functions, and the strategic oversight of the CONTEST Board ensure that Essex Police maintain a coherent, multi-layered and nationally aligned approach to counter terrorism and radicalisation.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Current demands for Prevent within Essex is already increasing, evidenced by higher referral volumes driven by improved awareness, training and national policy changes. Between 2024 and 2026, Essex Police significantly expanded the number of trained Prevent Ambassadors, leading to greater confidence, knowledge and identification of vulnerability, which in turn increased referral activity. This has been further reinforced by the introduction of the new 2025 Home Office Prevent training package for local authorities and delivery partners, particularly within education settings, where younger people now account for the largest source of referrals.

Looking ahead over the next four years, it is expected that demand will continue to rise beyond current levels. The evolving geopolitical environment, including international conflict, polarisation, online radicalisation and heightened national threat levels, is likely to increase both susceptibility to radicalisation and professional vigilance across partner agencies. This is reflected locally and nationally in referral profiles, with no single ideology dominating, a growing proportion of referrals involving young people, and continued concern around extreme right-wing terrorism and self initiated terrorism.

Structural and process changes within Essex Police will also drive increased demand. Additionally, as part of the 2026 Affordable Futures programme, the introduction of two additional Prevent Police Constables working closely with Children and Young Persons (CYP) teams and safeguarding partners is expected to further improve identification, engagement and risk management by supporting better outcomes.

In summary, while current demand is already elevated compared to historic levels, future demand is expected to increase further due to geopolitical risk, enhanced partner awareness, national policy changes, and strengthened local capability. This represents a sustained and foreseeable upward trajectory in Prevent referrals and associated safeguarding activity over the next four years.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

A new training programme for Neighbourhood Policing Teams (NPTs) and other relevant staff was delivered to all CYP officers in December 2025. Essex Police have 170 Prevent Ambassadors and Champions in place, many of whom are based in local policing and in teams most likely to encounter indicators of radicalisation.

Prevent, Protect and Prepare each have a strategic lead within Essex Police and are governed through a six-weekly meeting chaired by the Local CONTEST Board lead at Assistant Chief Constable level.

As part of the 2026 Essex Police Affordable Futures programme, two new Prevent Police Constables will work closely with CYP People officers and staff, actively supporting and supported by Prevent partners (including social care) which will help to further enhance the service this area of business receives. The new Partnerships, Prevention and Engagement Command (PPEC) will also see a whole new Offender Management aspect of the command as well as bringing Custody and Criminal Justice, CYP policing and other functions that can support this area of business into one place within local policing in Essex.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The findings from the first phase of the Southport Inquiry, summarised below, will be considered across UK policing during 2026, and no fundamental changes are expected before the summer. Local Prevent Delivery Groups and the local and regional CONTEST Boards will continue to consider national reviews as part of routine business.

- The failure of any organisation or multi-agency arrangement to take ownership of the risk.
- Poor information management and information sharing between and within agencies.
- Excusing harmful behaviour on account of the presence of autism.
- Limited oversight and intervention around online behaviour.
- The role of parenting.

New Prevent Police Constable roles have been created within the revised PPEC, formerly the Local Policing Support Unit, and will sit within the CYP policing area of the command. These roles will also support the ERSOU–Essex Police handoff process referred to above.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Subject to the learning and recommendations arising from the 2026 Southport Review, and once decisions have been made on the activities to be adopted by Essex Police and other forces, further role and team growth may be required, depending on the scale and complexity of the response and the current limited Prevent structure within Essex Police.
Despite enhanced training, staff awareness and confidence in identifying when a Prevent referral should be submitted remain a challenge. The new Prevent Police Constables can provide additional support where required.

Introduction to Missing Persons:
A missing person is defined as anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established until they are located and their wellbeing, or otherwise, is confirmed.

Missing persons may be reported through the Control Contact Centre or, since November 2024, via Single Online Home (SOH). Reports are allocated to LPTs to attend, risk-assess and investigate. The relevant LPT Inspector oversees the live management of the incident and associated risk.

The Missing Person Prevention Team sits within the C&PP SVC and under the management of the Mental Health Team Detective Inspector.

Part of the MPLO's purpose is to maintain a comprehensive overview of missing people within their defined area, assist with the disruption of criminal influences such as criminal and sexual exploitation and identify those who are at risk of serious harm. They also coordinate the response from internal departments and external partners to reduce the likelihood of harm occurring, as well as play a key role in the execution of the prevention and safeguarding elements. This involves engaging with young people and vulnerable adults within the community. Their role focuses on prevention and is not to investigate live missing cases.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Missing person investigations are initially attended by the LPTs and overseen by the LPT Inspector. MPLOs are present on Districts and on occasion support live investigations, in particular management of COMPACT (Community Policing and Case Tracking System).

However, MPLO's primary focus is on prevention and addressing issues related to repeat missing persons. They attend strategy meetings, professional meetings, partnership 'risk in the community' meetings, and Child Protection conferences. Currently there are between four and ten meetings held a week.



Since mid-2023, the number of missing person reports has shown a moderate decline, generally falling within the range of 380 to 450 reports. Although fluctuations remain, the overall trend is downward, indicating reduced demand.

Online reporting for missing persons started in November 2024 and now receives circa 30 reports per month. There is ongoing work with SOH to streamline online reporting, including scoping for direct integration to enable automatic generation of a Storm report upon receipt of a SOH report, to prevent staff having to manually transfer from one recording system to another.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The investigation of missing persons is governed by the Missing Person Procedure, detailing processes and expectations on LPTs, command teams, Contact Management and MPLOs. All inspectors and chief inspectors have received CPD regarding procedure updates. In addition, a missing person input is provided on sergeants, inspector and the Force Duty Officer courses.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
They are supported through a personal development plan to ensure they are appropriately prepared for the role.

Key initiatives, including the Forcer Protocol (life-saving preventative measure for UK veterans and serving personnel, including reservists), the Force Missing Board and the Force Missing Persons Panel, continue to strengthen the Force's approach to prevention and organisational learning. The Missing Board regularly identifies areas for development, with current priorities focused on improving the consistency of ethnicity recording and enhancing existing IT (Information Technology) applications to support more effective recording and governance.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Projected demand is expected to be met in the next one to four years. However, current compliance to the SOHs SLA does hold risk, albeit a solution is expected by the end of 2026.

Managing Serious & Organised Crime

Introduction
Intelligence Unit
For Essex Police, the Serious Crime Directorate encompasses four key intelligence functions: the Force Intelligence Bureau (Level 2 Intelligence Officers), the Intelligence Bureau (including the International Liaison Officers Team, PND (Police National Database), Caught on Camera and NaBIS (National Ballistics Intelligence Service), the ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) Team, and the Prevent and Protect (P&P) Team.

Level 2 Intelligence (L2 Intel) refers to the proactive, intelligence led investigation of serious and organised crime and major crime investigations. This includes the identification and targeting of individuals or groups operating across multiple geographic areas or jurisdictions.

The Director of Intelligence has overall responsibility for the Intelligence Command and is accountable for ensuring completion of the Strategic Assessment and submission of the Control Strategy and recommendations to Chief Officers.

Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOC)
Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) teams in Essex focus on organised level 2 criminality and organised crime groups (OCGs). These involve the importation or wholesale supply of drugs or weapons, violent or organised acquisitive crime, or the exploitation of individuals through Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) or Organised Immigration Crime (OIC).

Essex has five ports; three seaports and two airports, which presents a unique opportunity for organised crime groups to import and export illicit commodities. SOC teams therefore work closely with the Force Intelligence Bureau and local SOC partners to combat organised criminals operating within Essex.

Serious Economic Crime Unit (SECU)
The Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) manages fraud, cybercrime, and related economic crime through the Serious Economic Crime Unit (SECU). SECU responds to disseminations from the national Report Fraud system, managed by the City of London Police. Report Fraud is the replacement for Action Fraud. The new system has fundamentally changed victim reporting processes, data flows, and local demand profiles. Within SECU, fraud demand is managed across the Fraud Triage Team (FTT), Financial Intelligence Team (FIT), Economic Crime Team (ECT), Serious Fraud Team (SFT), and Proactive Money Laundering Team (PMLT), supported by the Proceeds of Crime Team (POCT).

The Cyber Crime Unit (CCU) manages cyber-dependent offending, primarily offences under the Computer Misuse Act. The CCU forms part of the national Team Cyber UK (TCUK) network, with two police officer posts and one P&P post funded directly by TCUK and match-funded by Essex Police. Demand linked to cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crime has increased significantly and continues to rise. Nationally, the National Crime Agency (NCA) assesses cybercrime as a high-harm and growing threat, with ransomware identified as one of the most damaging crime types due to financial loss, data theft, service disruption, and reputational harm.

Major Crime Department
The Major Crime Department (MCD) handles cases of homicide, attempted murder, manslaughter, crime in action and stranger rape. The Service Level Agreement also includes any other major investigation that requires the specialist skills of a senior investigating officer (SIO) or specialist staff supported by Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) due to complexity, sensitivity, or impact of the offence.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years

Intelligence Unit
The L2 Intel team supports organised crime and major crime investigations. Due to the complex and reactive nature of this crime type, demand forecasting is inherently challenging. However, demand has increased in recent years, particularly as emerging issues, such as certain protest activity, have been brought within the remit of major crime.

The Intelligence Bureau accounts for most of the demand and intelligence submissions. In 2025, Essex recorded 96,896 intelligence reports, an increase from 95,094 the previous year. The Intelligence Bureau operates collaboratively with Kent Police, therefore this increase in demand within Kent also directly affects overall workload. Combined demand across both forces increased by nearly 20,000 reports during 2025.

Projected demand:
The L2 Intel team anticipates demand remaining broadly consistent with current levels. However, this remains difficult to predict due to unforeseen events, which can place sudden and significant pressure on resources.

Over the next four years, demand within the Intelligence Bureau is expected to continue increasing. This is driven in part by the expansion of neighbourhood policing teams, who generate a significant proportion of intelligence submissions, and by anticipated changes arising from the completion of the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Review of National Intelligence Model.

Key factors expected to influence demand include:
- The implementation of improved technology capable of conducting research across multiple systems. Enhanced integration is a key requirement within the high-level design for the next Records Management System following the end of the Athena contract.
- Development of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) within Athena to support intelligence linking.
- National trends and initiatives, including weeks of action targeting specific crime types, which can temporarily redirect resources away from local priorities.
- Increased national focus on OIC.
- Community tensions arising from national events and UK political policy.
- Outcomes and recommendations from the NPCC review of the National Intelligence Model.

Dedicated Source Unit
The demand for the DSU is driven by the control strategy, which varies in size and scope yearly. A significant portion of DSU demand comes from drugs and organised crime. The unit regularly support threat-based operations and assist in the recovery of weapons from public domain. The unit can meet their current demand.

Projected demand:
The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has systematically engaged with all Local Policing Areas, at both senior management and frontline levels, to increase awareness of DSU opportunities.

This has included the introduction of a mobile application to streamline the reporting of potential opportunities to the DSU. The RED plan seeks to further enhance this approach through increased, structured training for probationer officers and local policing teams, which is expected to result in greater awareness and an increase in referrals to the DSU.

Serious Organised Crime Unit
Projected demand:
SOC threats are expected to continue to rise over the foreseeable future, driven by technological advancement, market convergence, and global instability. The rate at which SOC demand will increase cannot be projected numerically due to the proactive nature of this work; however, national, and local indicators consistently demonstrate that as technology advances, the sophistication of organised criminality will increase.

There are several national and local programmes and workstreams in place to recognise and mitigate this demand. These include the National 10-Year SOC Strategy, which is investing £300m over three years to make the UK a more hostile environment for OCGs; the Crime and Policing Bill, which introduces new powers to disrupt SOC.

SOC has also recently reviewed its Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Local Policing Areas (LPAs) and other commands to ensure that the SOC Unit remains fit for future threats while continuing to support LPAs in managing local SOC threats. Collectively, these changes are intended to support Essex Police in tackling increasing and evolving SOC demand.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking
MSHT remains a threat across Essex, with criminal exploitation most frequently recorded. Western Balkan organised crime groups continue to operate across multiple exploitation crime types, reflecting national trends. The success of previous Operation Mille deployments demonstrates the level of criminality operating within Essex across the MSHT and OIC threat space.

Projected demand:
MSHT is historically underreported due to the complex nature of the crime and the vulnerabilities of victims, who are often reluctant to come forward or may not recognise themselves as victims. Essex Police continue to work proactively with partners and stakeholders to increase reporting and intelligence, enabling proactive investigations.

It is not possible to predict a numerical increase in cases at this time, but due to the change in national funding, a measurable increase is not predicted over the next 12-month period but will be continuously monitored through the Tactical Delivery Group (TDG) process.

Organised Immigration Crime (OIC)
Projected demand:
Nationally, organised immigration crime is increasing. Although reporting within Essex remains low, the county's geography and infrastructure, including five ports, creates significant opportunity for facilitation and exploitation.

OIC, as with MSHT, has a low level of recorded investigations and intelligence which means that it is not possible to predict a numerical increase. However, increased national focus and funding, improved partnership working across regions, and heightened public and political awareness are likely to result in increased reporting in Essex over the next four years. This increase is not anticipated to exceed investigative capacity, and demand is continuously monitored through the TDG.

Serious and Organised Acquisitive Crime (SOAC)
SOAC is the second largest demand of SOC threat within Essex Police and makes up 35% of all SOC threats. Successful operations such as Operation Ignition have increased reported SOAC offences, especially in vehicle crime, but have resulted in successful proactive investigations that resulted in a reduction of reported vehicle crime in Essex during 2024/25, against a backdrop of national crime recording increase in this area.

Projected demand:
SOAC, particularly vehicle crime, remains the predominant organised acquisitive crime threat across Essex. This mirrors the national picture, with vehicle crime increasing year on year while other acquisitive crime types remain stable. Burglary levels are also increasing within Essex; however, this is addressed separately within the Force Management Statement.

The predominant SOAC burglary threat originates from organised Eastern European and Western Balkan crime groups. There is an increasing intelligence picture relating to sophisticated chop shops and illicit property markets, including the exportation of stolen vehicles and vehicle parts through Essex ports.

Despite national increases, Essex Police reduced recorded vehicle crime during 2025, contrary to the national trend, due to innovative partnership working and stakeholder engagement. Similar activity is proposed for 2026 to mitigate the anticipated increase in threat.

Notwithstanding ongoing crime reduction efforts, national trends suggest Essex Police is likely to experience increases in SOAC between 2026 and 2030, and currently SOAC is the second largest mapped threat, with 18 scored SOC threats in Essex Police.

Firearms
Firearms continue to present a significant additional threat across SOC investigations, although few OCGs have firearms as a primary threat. More commonly, firearms are used to facilitate other criminality, including drug supply, acquisitive crime, or exploitation.

Essex consistently records high volumes of firearms incidents. These are sightings rather than discharges, but the threat remains significant.

Projected demand:

The competition between OCGs is also likely to increase as the sophistication of organised crime evolves. Combined with advancements in 3D firearm manufacturing, it is conceivable that lower-level SOC threats may gain access to viable firearms. Therefore, an increase in firearms possession and associated threat is anticipated over the next four years. Currently Essex Police have one mapped SOC threat with firearms as the primary threat.

Serious Economic Crime Unit

Cyber Crime

Within Essex, 938 cyber-dependent crimes were recorded in 2023/24, increasing to 1,606 in 2024/25. Although dissemination rates have been reduced following national system changes, complexity of demand remains challenging (Cyber Pursue disseminations 143 for 2023/24 and 100 for 2024/25).

Projected demand:
Over the next four years, cybercrime demand is expected to continue increasing due to growing digital reliance, expanding use of emerging technologies including generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), and sustained financial pressures linked to the cost-of-living crisis. While SECU can currently meet core investigative demand, increasing pressure is anticipated on investigative capacity and P&P activity. National evidence demonstrates that unmet preventative demand leads to higher future crime volumes, creating a compounding risk.

Fraud

Fraud now accounts for approximately 51% of all recorded crimes nationally and is consistently identified by the NCA as a primary enabler of wider serious and organised crime. In Essex, 9,115 fraud reports were recorded in 2023/24, reducing to 8,063 in 2024/25 (Fraud Pursue disseminations: 649 for 2023/24 and 592 for 2024/25). National assessments indicate that this short-term reduction reflects reporting system changes (Report Fraud) rather than a genuine reduction in victimisation.

Projected demand:
Over the next four years, fraud demand in Essex is expected to increase in both volume and complexity, driven by organised offending, cyber-enabled fraud, and increased safeguarding requirements. SCD can meet current demand; however, future pressures are expected to increase investigative and victim-support requirements.

Money Laundering and Illicit Finance

Demand relating to money laundering and illicit finance remains high and persistent. National threat assessments identify illicit finance as a cross-cutting enabler of serious and organised crime. SECU currently receives approximately 1,600 financial intelligence reports per month, a volume that has exceeded serviceable capacity for many years, demonstrating sustained unmet demand.

Projected demand:

Future demand is expected to increase further due to the growing sophistication of laundering methods, including digital banking, cryptocurrency, and AI-enabled identity fraud. The grey economy presents a further growing risk, particularly cash-based high-street businesses. Operations such as Operation Machinize 2 demonstrate both the scale of this threat and the likelihood of increasing offending over the medium-to long term.

Essex faces a sustained increase in economic and cyber-crime over the next four years. While SECU currently meets core investigative demand, future demand is expected to increase in volume, complexity, and harm. Without enhanced proactive capability and capacity, the gap between current and future demand is likely to widen, increasing long term operational risk.

Major Crime Department
Homicides have reduced in 2025/26, which is consistent with the trend seen nationally. The decline in recorded homicide as seen is the lowest number of homicides recorded for many years within Essex. Despite the reduction in homicide, the number of investigations managed within the MCD has risen consistently, with live investigations increasing to from a range of 33 to 46 over the past three years to consistently being above 50.

The SIOs also provide formal and informal guidance to lead investigators across the Force. The SLA includes a formal tiered structure, ranging from SIO advice being provided, to an SIO led investigation in collaboration with the originating department, through to full adoption of the investigation into MCD for ownership. The increase of contact into the SIO cadre has been evident from various ranks and teams to seek guidance on investigations.

Major Crime is a Force resource, therefore have supported addressing investigative demand in other Force priority areas, in recognition of the expertise in the command, but also due to the low homicide rate in 2025/26.

Projected demand:
Future demand remains difficult to predict however the Force has a mature homicide prevention approach. The type of investigation being adopted by MCD, if current trends continue, will see a steady increase in demand against a backdrop of a reducing headcount.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply
Intelligence
The L2 Intel team is operating at its desired establishment.

Both teams are experienced and well led, with appropriately qualified managers and staff. The L2 Intel team is currently able to manage existing demand; however, any sustained increase would present operational challenges.

At L2 Intel, over the past 12 months, Essex Police has enhanced capability through the introduction of new technological approaches. The team are actively developing their capability to respond effectively as online criminality continues to evolve.

The Intelligence Bureau benefits from having highly experienced managers and coordinators. However, staff retention remains a challenge due to the repetitive and high-volume nature of the work, coupled with limited visibility of operational outcomes.

Wellbeing is prioritised across both teams. Regular Performance Development Reviews provide essential opportunities for one-to-one engagement on development and performance. Managers actively promote awareness of internal support mechanisms and monitor performance closely to identify and address underlying issues.

Agile working arrangements are supported; however, staff are encouraged to attend the workplace weekly to promote cohesion, engagement, and a sense of belonging. Open communication and inclusive team meetings support resilience and operational effectiveness.

Overall, current demand is being met at L2 Intel and performance expectations are being achieved. The L2 Intel team has recorded a sustained increase in disruptions compared with previous years indicating positive operational impact.

Dedicated Source Unit
The unit are currently able to meet their demand.

Capacity and capability are sufficient. There are ongoing staff training and development, however there is a need to encourage staff to work on future handler roles, and work on this is being done through the RED plan.

Engagement with the local policing command teams has been key together with encouragement to utilise the tasking process to ensure intelligence is appropriately but proportionately progressed.

Serious Organised Crime Unit
Serious Organised Crime (SOC)
SOC teams, in line with other areas of Essex Police, have recently undergone review under the Affordable Futures programme. While the review does not reduce the Force's overall ability to investigate SOC, it does shift where certain investigations are managed.

This approach maximises investigative capacity while developing capability across the wider workforce.

SOC staff are highly trained, experienced, and motivated, with low levels of sickness absence. Although vacancies exist, active recruitment is underway, with the vacancy rate expected to fall below 10%. Overall, workforce capacity, capability, and performance remain strong.

Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT)
Subject matter experts were retained within the SOC investigation teams and have retained their close working relationships with the MSHT coordinators in the region.

Not having a dedicated MSHT team does present a risk to the Force, however, this crime type is considered and assessed based on threat, harm, and risk alongside other SOC threats. Mitigation is in place through robust management at the MSHT/OIC TDG, by having SPOCs (Single Point of Contact) within SOC who are experienced in this threat area, and by maintaining close working relationships with local partnerships through the strategic SOC board to identify trends or offences and respond accordingly.

Organised Immigration Crime (OIC)
The SLA ensures that any L2 Intel OIC threats identified will be adopted into SOC. OIC and MSHT is discussed at the regional TDG and at the local SOC boards to ensure SOC work with the Force Intelligence Bureau closely and identify offences or trends early.

Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime (SOAC)
SOAC is investigated within the SOC teams, who are well trained and have capability to deliver, as well as LPA CID (Criminal Investigation Department) teams, who will take the 'Level 1' acquisitive crimes – see SOC update above.

SCD played a significant role in Operation Ignition, a force-wide, intelligence-led initiative grounded in the nationally recognised 4P framework (Prevent, Protect, Prepare, Pursue). Central to this transformation was the creation of the TOMV (Theft of Motor Vehicle) Stakeholders Board, a weekly, multi-disciplinary forum that united internal departments, external partners, and national agencies to drive coordinated action and cultural change regarding vehicle crime in Essex.

By October 2025, Operation Ignition has delivered an 11.4% reduction in TOMV offences (645 fewer crimes), the solved rate increased to 6.4% (from 1.6%), a 25.3% increase in main arrests (486 TOMV arrests in 12 months), a 12.9% increase in total arrests (830 compared to 735), the recovery of stolen vehicles worth millions, the disruption and dismantling of multiple OCGs, and a number of significant convictions.

Serious Economic Crime Unit
Economic and Cybercrime / Fraud
The SECU has remained at a static establishment since 2019, despite a sustained and significant increase in demand. Since 2021/22, fraud disseminations increased by 4% in 2022/23 and by a further 70% in 2023/24, before reducing by 8% in 2024/25.
This represents an overall 63.09% increase in demand across the period, with no corresponding increase in establishment.

Some changes are being implemented within the department as part of the Force's Affordable Futures programme, aligned to its overarching objectives. These changes will

result in a modest reduction in investigative capacity within Serious Economic Crime, contributing to the Force's wider work to ensure that policing services delivered by Essex Police remain sustainable in both the short and long term, and within a balanced budget framework.

In addition, the department continues to provide support to the Crime and Public Protection Command through Operation Direction. While this necessitates abstractions from Serious Economic Crime, the activity directly supports wider organisational priorities and enables the Force to mitigate significant risks in other areas of demand, in line with agreed strategic plans.

Vacancy levels across the ECT, SFT, and FTT remain relatively low.

With fraud now being included within the HMICFRS PEEL ((His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) (Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy)) inspections and Essex receiving 25% of the demand in the Eastern region, to reduce capacity of the team takes our position backwards from what is considered a sound structure to meet current demand.

SECU has secured extensive external training through the Proceeds of Crime Fund, covering specialist areas including money laundering and cryptocurrency investigations. This has enabled the unit to deliver a higher level of specialist training than in recent years, despite reductions in the Force's external training budget. Training delivered includes Financial Investigator accreditation, Fraud Managers Courses, and National Cyber Training across Foundation, Protect, Pursue, and Incident Manager pathways.

The CCU is responsible for managing cyber-related criminality, primarily Computer Misuse Act offences. The CCU forms part of the national TCUK network.

There are no nationally mandated performance targets for SECU. However, as one of the larger economic crime units nationally, performance is tracked
against most similar size forces for comparison.

The P&P Team represents the primary public facing element of the Force's work within Cyber Crime and Fraud. Its focus is on prevention, education, and resilience, with officers delivering advice, safeguarding interventions, and targeted engagement across the county. The work spans individuals, community groups, charities, schools, and businesses, ensuring that those most at risk understand the nature of both cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled threats.

P&P integrates national transitions into local practice, particularly the migration from Action Fraud to the new Report Fraud system, which has reshaped how disseminations and victim data are received. Their work is anchored in the Essex multi agency approach to fraud, which allows police, local authorities, and partners to collaborate on prevention, detection, and victim safeguarding. In addition, close relationships with business networks and the Eastern

Cyber Resilience Centre (ECRC) enable Essex to influence organizational cyber maturity at scale.

The P&P Cyber Officers also work closely with the ECRC, referring local businesses that want assistance in developing and maintaining their cyber security. They offer support for recovery following a cyber incident.

Money Laundering and illicit finance
The national fraud strategy of 2026 promotes the disruption of fraud and cybercrime and the ability to utilise financial intelligence and generate proactive work. The proactive teams within SECU are currently in a healthy resourcing position. The Proactive Money Laundering Team hold one vacancy that will be advertised shortly and due to the unique nature of the team it is expected to be of much interest and receive applications when the advert becomes live.

The POCT have been fully resourced consistently over the last 12 months. The POCT through various routes have recovered illicit finance. The performance of the team remains at the highest levels for the past 10 years.

A notable example is Operation Ecuador, recovering £2m through a Civil Account Forfeiture Order, the largest civil forfeiture in Essex Police history. The Proceeds of Crime Team receive significant training which includes MSOIC, national accreditation training and going forward the team will receive interview training. The Proceeds of Crime Team are currently in a strong staffing position.

Major Crime Department
The workforce in MCD consists of highly skilled and experienced investigators with a proven track record of successfully investigating the most complex crime. The level of detail of investigations owned by MCD is regularly commended by Crown Court judges.

Some changes are being implemented within the department as part of the Force's Affordable Futures programme, aligned to its overarching objectives. These changes will result in a reduction in investigative capacity within Major Crime, contributing to the Force's wider work to ensure that policing services delivered by Essex Police remain sustainable in both the short and long term, and within a balanced budget framework.

In addition, the department continues to provide support to the Crime and Public Protection Command through Operation Direction. While this necessitates abstractions from Major Crime, the activity directly supports wider organisational priorities and enables the Force to mitigate significant risks in other areas of demand, in line with agreed strategic plans.

The accredited detective rate on MCD remains higher than most areas of Essex Police, with 91% of posts being held by accredited detectives. The resources within MCD are regularly

called upon by Force Gold Commanders to support local policing investigations and are all trained to use HOLMES.

MCD have developed an internal induction process for new starters to expose each key role within a major investigation, alongside regular continuous professional development events and share learning from investigative de-briefs and reviews, from internal to national. There is a requirement, particularly with the growing demand on MCD to investigate sexual offences, to ensure Operation Soteria training is available to staff.

Sickness absence within MCD is extremely low when compared with other areas of the Force, regularly ranging from 2% to 3% absence on any given day. This evidences the supportive work environment, flexibility afforded to staff and strong supervision in place. The working hours are regularly monitored, and a long-standing absence and welfare governance structure is in place to support SIOs and staff. Yearly psychological screening and access to Occupational Health Services are in place and voluntary occupational counselling is offered annually to support staff wellbeing, recognising the team deal with distressing material.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

Intelligence Unit

The removal of the single linking process for low-level intelligence reports will create additional demand on top of sustained growth in intelligence submissions across Essex and Kent. To address this, Essex Police is proactively pursuing automated solutions to increase efficiency, alongside proposals for workforce growth to support intelligence functions.

Regular Performance Review Meetings are held at SLT Level, to scrutinise team performance and identify emerging risks or pressures. Productivity is further supported through one-to-one engagement with staff to address performance issues and promote development. A strong emphasis is placed on reward and recognition to acknowledge exceptional contribution.

The teams continue to explore opportunities to better utilise technology to streamline administrative activity, enabling staff to focus on higher value work such as research, development, and safeguarding.

Key initiatives include:

- Progression of RPA implementation within Athena to support intelligence linking. In the longer term, the Director of Intelligence has requested that RPA and AI capabilities are embedded within the next-generation system following the end of the Athena contract, enabling automation of administrative processes and greater focus on analytical activity.

- Efforts to improve diversity within the L2 Intel team, where representation from minority ethnic groups is currently limited and management remains predominantly male.
- Continued improvement in information sharing with key partners.

Serious Organised Crime Unit
Serious Organised Crime (SOC)
SCD are actively recruiting into the SOC and Covert teams to reduce the vacancy factor currently experienced within the teams and have adapted our SLA to be able to flex to the projected demand in recognition of the shrinking supervision of the SOC teams.

Data from the Essex Data Transformation Project will be used to maximise opportunity to better understand SOC threats across Essex and respond promptly to prevent matters escalating and becoming more labour intensive. SOC will continue to work with local partners and stakeholders to understand and respond to SOC threats. Local LROs are being trained on the completion and management of 4P plans, and overall OCG scoring and management.

Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT)
Despite the MSHT teams being removed from Essex two years ago now, the MSHT staffing numbers remained and were integrated into SOC investigation teams. Whilst this has reduced the capacity to solely work on, and therefore identify, MSHT, the investigation strength has remained the same. MSHT have retained subject matter experts that are current and credible, to provide support to investigation and intelligence teams when the need arises. There are SPOCs for MSHT and an active TDG which track trends across Essex and the region, ensuring trends in MSHT and OIC are recognised and responded to.

Organised Immigration Crime (OIC)
The workforce continues to be trained in the OIC hydra and online training, monitoring, and tracking to ensure the wider workforce are trained to identify the risks, respond positively to any reported OIC, and investigate robustly where crimes occur. This training is progressing well, expected to meet the training requirements before end of April 2026.

Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime (SOAC)
The SOC department has worked with external stakeholders to address the increased demand in organised acquisitive crimes, by seeking manufacturers support to design out and reduce criminal opportunities, such as our work with Jaguar Land Rover to reduce vehicle crime.

Through the innovative partnership, Essex Police received funding to run dedicated vehicle crime operations, improve our ANPR function, increase the specialist vehicle investigation unit and improve intelligence development. This approach saw vehicle crime reduced by 14.2% across Essex Police in 2025. By maximising crime prevention and reduction opportunities through partnership working, demand is reducing and enabling the teams the capacity to target the higher level of organised criminals orchestrating the SOAC at a higher level. Essex Police will continue this approach into 2026.

Firearms
Despite Essex Police retaining a strong-armed surveillance capability, it is recognised, nationally and regionally, other areas have struggled to maintain their numbers of Armed Surveillance Officers and identifying training opportunities has been difficult across the region. To ensure strong numbers are maintained, retirements and future leavers are proactively monitored, and plans are in place to try and ensure firearms courses are available so that the pipeline remains strong. This assists in combatting and responding to the criminal use of firearm threats faced in the County.

Serious Economic Crime Unit
Economic and Cybercrime
SECU has focused on ensuring that demand is managed effectively at the point of entry and that specialist resources are targeted appropriately. Following the introduction of Report Fraud, the unit has worked closely with Kent Police and the Contact Management Command (CMC) to identify recording issues, resolve problems, and jointly provide feedback to national leads. This has improved alignment with nationally agreed criteria for calls for service, reducing inappropriate recording and unnecessary demand on frontline officers and quality assurance staff.

The unit continues to invest in specialist tools and technology, including financial data management systems, cryptocurrency and blockchain analysis tools, and AI-enabled transcription and case management solutions. These measures improve investigative efficiency, reduce officer abstraction, and support the management of complex and high-volume investigations.

Fraud
Fraud demand is managed through improved triage, call handling, and workforce enablement. A Call for Service working group (CMC and SECU) has provided training to supervisors within CMC and created an agreed process map for all calls for service.

The clear recording standards ensure consistent assessment against national criteria, preventing unnecessary allocation of investigations and protecting limited investigative and frontline capacity.

Frontline officers and staff are supported using a dedicated Fraud Toolkit, enabling them to identify fraud more effectively, secure early evidence and provide appropriate safeguarding and prevention advice without default escalation to specialist units.

To support PIP1 (Professionalising Investigations Programme Level 1) Fraud investigations SECU are providing an input within the Flex training day, a presentation for the Virtual Crime Academy and within the newly created 4P Fraud Governance Summit a review of fraud investigations owned outside of SECU as an agenda item.

This will allow for expert reviews by SECU and targeted case action plans which will support PIP1 fraud investigations. SECU continues to strengthen multi-agency working through established intelligence-share arrangements. This ensures fraud demand is shared where appropriate and that investigative resources are prioritised for the most complex, organised, and high-harm offences.

Illicit Money and Money Laundering
To address current and emerging demand linked to illicit finance and money laundering, the unit prioritises access to specialist financial investigation capability. Where in-house capacity is limited, SECU secures forensic accounting expertise and utilises individuals with specialist financial crime knowledge to support complex investigations.

The Proceeds of Crime Team makes use of specialist financial analysis tools to manage large volumes of banking and financial data efficiently, supporting restraint, confiscation, and asset recovery activity. This approach maximises outcomes while reducing investigation timescales and demand on financial investigators.

SECU continues to work closely with partner agencies while recognising broader capacity limitations across the system. Ongoing focus is placed on technological innovation, process improvement, and effective prioritisation to ensure that illicit finance and money laundering investigations remain sustainable in the face of increasing demand.

SECU are shortly introduced to the Financial Intelligence Development Team which will take a proactive approach to intelligence reports. This team will focus on using intelligence to get ahead of demand by identifying and addressing offenders before they generate reports, thereby reducing overall demand.

The benefits of the Financial Intelligence development team will bring are improving the Essex Police assessment on the National Fraud Strategy in relation to the review of all Suspicious Activity Reports. Establishing the Force as a leading force on Financial Intelligence, increasing our understanding of intelligence and threats, increasing POCA (The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002) returns.

Major Crime Department
Document defender has saved officer and staff time when redacting volumes of material for disclosure, with disclosure schedules often running into hundreds of pages on such investigations.

A close working relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Complex Case Unit, CPS Crown Court Unit and His Majesty's Coroners service has enabled early intervention at managerial level for potential case issues. This prevents the need to formally escalate cases and promotes the co-ordinated judicial approach in conducting high-quality investigations. This has also led to force wide inputs around coronial investigations, the development of an inquest procedure and how to investigate unexpected death incidents to a high standard.

Unexpected deaths are subject of a daily scanning process via criminal analysts, meeting the recommendations from the Port Inquiry. This enables deaths with patterns or intelligence of concern to be escalated to the Head of Major Crime for assessment and allocation. The data also enables to the creation of a six monthly, Essex Loss of Life report, which covers in detail different types of unexpected death. This report is shared with the Greater Essex Partnership for cross comparison of data and assessment of prevention opportunities.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above

Intelligence

Demand within the Intelligence Bureau is expected to continue rising as neighbourhood policing expands and outcomes from the National Intelligence Model review are implemented. Planned staff growth and the implementation of RPA are expected to mitigate this increase.

Due to the nature of L2 Intel activity, no unmet demand is currently anticipated.

Primary mitigation remains the implementation of RPA and more efficient intelligence processing methods. This is being supplemented by pro-actively looking at staff growth opportunities in both Essex and Kent to support the current and projected increases in submitted intelligence in the collaborative Intelligence Bureau.

Serious Organised Crime Unit

Serious Organised Crime (SOC)

With the changes being made to the SLA, the partnership working, and robust commissioning process, Essex Police will be able to meet the increase in demand of SOC threat over the next four years. With the robust governance processes in place to monitor commissioning of new workstreams, if capacity began to outstrip demand, it could be flagged early, and mitigation could be put in place such as flexing resourcing across SCD or wider to accommodate.

Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT)

MSHT and OIC increase in demand is predicted to be manageable, as although increases are likely, they are expected to be small.

The Force has mitigation in place in so far as subject matter experts and specialist boards to drive activity, and mitigations continue through the measures detailed in the sections above.

Organised Immigration Crime (OIC)

Please refer to the above.

Serious Organised Acquisitive Crime (SOAC)

Please refer to the SOC above – with robust commissioning management and good partnership working to keep reducing SOAC where possible, it should be possible

to recognise increase in demand that cannot be met and put mitigation in place to prevent it being unserviceable.

Firearms
Please refer to the SOC above – with robust management increases can be identified and mitigated accordingly to meet demand. The projected ASO leavers are tracked and so a shortage in trained specialist officers to respond to this threat can be proactively prevented.

Serious Economic Crime Unit
Economic and Cyber Crime
There are concerns about the ability to meet the demand in cybercrime as criminals adapt quickly, making prevention and detection challenging. The numbers of victims are growing as increasing digital dependency with the population becoming more reliance on technology and therefore increases exposure to cyber and fraud threats.

Further to this an increasing ageing population will add further demand as those with limited digital literacy remain at higher risk.

Fraud
Frauds continue to represent the highest-volume crime type nationally and a significant and growing demand locally.

The Force continues to evolve and develop effective management and governance arrangements to drive fraud performance, supported by strong partnership working with the City of London Police. Essential training is provided to specialist teams, and while officers and staff outside of the Serious Crime Directorate do not receive dedicated fraud training, this risk is partially mitigated through the Virtual Crime Academy and fraud clinics. All vulnerable victims of fraud are proactively contacted by a dedicated Fraud Coordinator, ensuring safeguarding remains a clear priority.

As part of the Force's Affordable Futures programme, Serious Economic Crime has experienced a reduction in investigative capacity to contribute to the Force's wider financial sustainability. While this has not undermined the Force's ability to manage core fraud demand at present, it does reduce overall resilience.

Fraud demand is inherently difficult to predict. Looking ahead, increases in crime complexity, anonymisation technologies and associated safeguarding requirements may place further pressure on investigative capacity.

Essex Police will continue to prioritise the investigation of the highest harm fraud offences and support vulnerable victims. An action plan is in place to ensure a focused and targeted approach to fraud investigations and victim care, with the aim of maintaining high standards and minimising any emerging or future gaps as demand and complexity evolve.

Major Crime Department

When fully resourced, MCD will be able to meet the demand of incidents within the current SLA. The continued prioritisation of work around submission deadlines set by trial judges will support this.

Major Events

Introduction to Armed Policing

The Force Support Unit (FSU) provide the Forces specialist firearms capabilities. Armed Policing is a critical capability for Essex Police, ensuring public safety and meeting Strategic Policing Requirements (SPR). Whilst not committed to firearms deployments or operations, the unit provide significant support to the Force contributing towards hotspot patrols, road safety and the targeting of outstanding high harm suspects. They also contribute to many firearms licensing checks.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

The FSU continues to provide the service level agreement (SLA) as set out in the Armed Policing Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (APSTRA).

It is expected there may be a rise in the requirement for specialist firearms capabilities, including Mobile Armed Support to surveillance (MASTS), Method of entry (MOE), and support to Killed and Seriously Injured (KSI) enforcement work.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The Force is working with City of London Police to develop a joint firing range, although this is not expected to be operational until the first quarter of 2029.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

An improvement plan is being implemented to attract, train and retain officers. Focused recruitment events are held several times each year to stabilise AFO numbers, and three initial firearms courses are being maintained annually. Agreements are in place with Human Resources and Vetting to ensure officers are posted promptly to armed policing on completion of the initial firearms course.

Cross-border resilience is also being strengthened through the agreed memorandum of understanding for requesting specialist assets from forces within the 7 Force (7F) Strategic Collaboration Programme.

An agreement to collaborate with the City Of London Police on a new shooting range has been agreed, progress is being made at both tactical and strategic levels with an anticipated go live date of April 2029.

The use of digital simulation systems to improve officers' competence is being explored. Exploration of volunteers to carry out deer dispatch to reduce demand on ARVs who deployed on 279 occasions to dispatch deer in the last 12 months.

Introduction to Public Order
Public order skills are additional specialist capabilities that officers attain to perform designated roles or to be deployable for specific policing functions. Essex Police have a continued requirement for these skills to support two airports, two ports, the Lower Thames Crossing (bridge and tunnel), the longest coastline of any county, and the Bradwell B power plant.

In addition to these fixed demands, there has been a notable increase in the requirement for public order resources due to a wide range of protest-related activity across the county, in line with the wider, National picture, influenced by local to global review topics. This includes issues based demonstrations, environmental activism, industrial disputes, and spontaneous community driven gatherings, all of which place sustained pressure on public order deployment.

Public Order assets routinely support numerous large-scale community events and private industry led events throughout the year, providing essential safety, reassurance, and supporting event management capability. This year’s calendar of events further contributes to the increasing demand placed upon Essex Police’s public order-trained officers.

Information disorder is increasingly acting as a demand multiplier within the public-order environment, accelerating mobilisation, shaping protest narratives and increasing the risk of spontaneous disorder. The rapid spread of false, misleading and harmful information, particularly through social media and encrypted platforms, can distort community perception, undermine trust in policing legitimacy and drive low-notice or flash protest activity that outpaces traditional planning and mobilisation timescales. This places additional pressure on Public Order and Public Safety (POPS) command, intelligence and engagement functions, requiring earlier sensing, more frequent reassessment of threat, and closer alignment between intelligence, communications and operational planning.

Sustained investment in intelligence integration, horizon scanning and proactive engagement is therefore critical to maintaining public confidence and ensuring the Force can anticipate and respond to protest related demand in an increasingly contested information environment.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
The Force events planner is maintained by the Operational Planning Department, which enables effective risk-based decision making to ensure that the most appropriate resources are deployed to deliver the most appropriate policing response. The Operational

Planning Team has reduced by one officer following the Continuous Improvement Programme.

2025 saw an unprecedented level of demand placed on POPS resources, primarily due to Operation Kirn, an anti-immigration protest response linked to the Bell Hotel, which houses asylum seekers. The scale and tone of the national impact echoed the demand seen in 2024 during Operation Navette (following the tragic Southport murders), but on this occasion the national, and international focus was on Essex.

Overall, planned public order events have remained stable.

Throughout the year the Force responded to a wide range of planned events and received several requests for Mutual Aid. Requests from the Metropolitan Police relating to protest and football have continued.

2026 is a World Cup year, the summer will see the additional impact of football related demand, although due to the event being held across USA, Canada and Mexico with the England group stages kick off times being between 9pm and 10pm and played on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Saturday hopefully minimising impact.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The Public Order Training Team holds responsibility for maintaining Essex Police's SPR for Level 2 officers through both initial training and continued accreditation. The increase in protest activity across the county has significantly increased demand on training capacity and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements.

Increasing the number of trained officers is expected to reduce overtime expenditure and lessen abstractions across the wider workforce, addressing long standing concerns that excessive deployments, particularly to Silver Reserve, contribute to the high turnover of trained staff. Despite the demand public order remains a sought-after skill, evidenced by a waiting list of 60 constables.

The Force continues to face challenges balancing the number of trained commanders with ensuring they receive enough deployments to remain accredited, although 2025 saw sufficient activity to maintain currency.

In terms of capacity and capability through other skill areas, Essex retains pockets of strength, notably an above requirement number of Level 3 officers and good capability across several specialist skills. Skills such as evidence gathering and de-bonding have declined since 2025.

The Force's training infrastructure also presents an enduring risk, training relies on external facilities at an annual cost, with the hired Sussex venue lacking onsite accommodation and therefore incurring additional hotel costs.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Essex Police is taking a wide range of strategic, operational and developmental actions to ensure that both the workforce and key public order assets remain capable of meeting the rising and anticipated future demand. A central focus of this work is growing capacity, strengthening resilience, expanding specialist skills, and improving the serviceability of essential equipment and training infrastructure.

The Force is strengthening its commander cadre, with targeted development and accreditation processes for Silver, Bronze and PSU Commanders. Identified STRA gaps, such as the shortfall in Silver Commanders, will be addressed through upcoming regional training courses, ensuring a sustainable supply of competent commanders for high-risk or prolonged operations. Additionally, the Force is working to expand critical specialist roles such as PLTs, which proved highly effective during Operation Kirn, with uplift and CPD programmes planned into 2026.

The Public Order Training Team is increasing their capacity to deliver Level 2, Level 3 and specialist training by using associate trainers.

The Force also continues to invest in specialist capability development, to ensure preparedness for more complex protest tactics associated with environmental activism.

To safeguard the long term serviceability and reliability of public order assets, a ten-year replacement programme for the carrier fleet has been implemented, ensuring the Force continues to meet SPR requirements for PSU mobilisation.

Efforts are underway to strengthen early mobilisation and tension monitoring frameworks.

Given the reliance on external training venues, the Force is continuing to secure and sustain out-of-force training estate access, while exploring longer term options for alternative or regional facilities to increase throughput and reduce costs.

The Force is also reviewing structural issues associated with “double-hatting” and is working to adopt a more pragmatic approach to skill allocation.

Learning is being embedded from major operations such as Operation Kirn by strengthening early mobilisation triggers, enhancing intelligence led command planning and improving integration between command teams and tactical advisers.

Public order policing places officers and staff in environments where the risk of assault, exposure to hostility and cumulative psychological stress is elevated, particularly during prolonged or high intensity deployments. Protecting workforce wellbeing is therefore a critical enabler of sustainable public order capability.

Essex Police maintain a clear expectation that assaults, abuse and inappropriate behaviour, whether from members of the public or within the organisation, are challenged, reported and addressed, with officers supported to act as upstanders who intervene early and appropriately to safeguard colleagues. This is reinforced through leadership messaging, post-incident support, and access to structured welfare interventions following disorder, violence or traumatic incidents. The Force also actively promotes the use of internal staff networks and support groups to provide peer support, advocacy and early escalation of well-being concerns, recognising their role in strengthening inclusion, confidence and resilience within public-order teams. Collectively, this approach supports operational effectiveness, reinforces professional standards and ensures officers feel supported, protected and empowered when operating in demanding and confrontational public-order environments.

Debrief processes have been expanded to capture organisational learning more systematically, and recommendations from both spontaneous and planned events are being used to inform future resource allocation, asset planning and capability development. Collectively, these measures reflect a focused and forward-looking approach to strengthening public order resilience, ensuring that the workforce and associated assets are equipped to meet both current and anticipated future demand.

Introduction to Roads Policing:
Following an increase in road deaths during 2025, the highest since 2016, together with a significant rise in drug driving incidents and the links to wider criminality, Reducing Road Death has now been placed on the Force Control Strategy. Roads Policing (RP) plays a pivotal role in reducing risk to public safety, while disrupting those who use the road network for criminal purposes.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Over the next four years, Essex Police is expected to experience a substantial increase in road-related demand driven by population growth, major infrastructure programmes and continued criminal exploitation of the county's strategic road network.

Government targets indicate the construction of a further 120,000 homes across Greater Essex during this period, including several large Garden Village developments.

This level of growth will significantly increase vehicle numbers and traffic volume on both established and newly developed roads. Experience during 2025 has already demonstrated the immediate impact of such development. Newly constructed roads built as part of emerging housing schemes have required early police intervention to enforce speed limits and mitigate collision risk.

These interventions illustrate how new growth areas create additional and unplanned demand that is above and beyond current baselines.

The A12 corridor, which already presents considerable policing challenges, will face further pressure as development continues along its spine, including the planned addition of 6,000 homes in Kelvedon and Feering. This scale of growth is likely to increase collision risk, congestion and journey times, creating elevated levels of reactive demand for Roads Policing.

In parallel with population-driven demand, the Force faces significant pressure from multiple Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP). These include the Lower Thames Crossing, activity associated with Stansted Airport, the Norwich–Tilbury power line upgrade, and three additional windfarms in North Essex.

Each of these schemes will generate sustained requirements for police involvement, including construction related traffic management, abnormal load escorts, strategic route protection and increased safety operations.

Essex's strategic connectivity to London, the Southeast and wider national transport corridors continue to be exploited by individuals and groups engaged in serious and organised crime. This challenge is particularly acute along the border with East London, where increased levels of high risk vehicle pursuits have been observed.

Future modelling suggests these risks will intensify as population density rises, road infrastructure expands and traffic volumes increase, requiring strengthened capability for pursuit management, tactical resolution, intelligence led intercept activity and effective cross border collaboration.

Taken together, these factors represent high likelihood, high impact factors that will materially increase demand when compared with current levels. Over the next four years, RP can expect rising collisions, road disruption and emerging development sites; increased planned demand from NSIPs and abnormal load movements; and higher proactive demand associated with organised crime and criminal use of the network.

Without corresponding investment or workforce realignment, this widening gap between current resources and projected future demand will limit the Force's ability to sustain effective prevention, visibility and response across Essex.

Performance

During 2025, Essex Police recorded 994 road traffic casualties, compared with 807 in 2024, an increase of 23.2%. Excess speed, impairment, and careless driving remained the primary contributory factors.

Drug driving arrests reached exceptionally high levels in 2025, rising to 1,874 arrests, compared with 971 in 2024, when Section 5A of the Road Traffic Act 1988 legislation was first introduced. Alongside cocaine and cannabis, (traditionally the most common drugs associated with driving) 2025 saw the rapid emergence of other illegal substances, including

ketamine, methadone, and opioids. This trend has increased the operational need for officers to carry out Field Impairment Testing to detect broader forms of driver impairment. The rise in drug driving arrests is strongly linked to increased RP arrest activity. Officers recorded 2,168 arrests in 2025, up from 1,572 in 2024. Notably, around 40% of drug drive arrests indicate potential links to Violence Against Women and Girls and Domestic Abuse.

Excess vehicle speed remains the second highest contributory factor in all recorded injury collisions. In 2025, Essex Police processed 115,983 excess speed offences, compared with 122,121 in 2024, representing a 5.0% decrease. However, roadside enforcement activity increased significantly, 29,000 offences were processed at the roadside in 2025, compared with 11,800 in 2024, a rise of 145.8%. The reduction in static safety camera detections is attributable to systems being taken offline for maintenance.

Reducing road deaths continues to be a core priority within both the Essex Police Force Plan and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Police and Crime Plan. This area of risk has now been incorporated into the Force Control Strategy, resulting in strengthened intelligence and analytical support at a force wide level.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
We will continue to work closely with Criminal Justice partners and wider stakeholders to embed more efficient processes for managing minor traffic offences. This will include the adoption of Artificial Intelligence (AI) based evidence review tools, streamlined case progression and more consistent workflows, all aimed at speeding up justice, prioritising victims, and reducing unnecessary administrative demand.

Expected impacts include improved officer productivity, increased enforcement capacity, faster case handling, and better public outcomes. These effects will be closely monitored through performance dashboards, demand and outcome analysis, and regular governance reviews with partners.

A cost–benefit approach will be applied to each planned change, assessing initial investment requirements against projected efficiency gains, time savings, public-safety improvements and enhanced service quality. This holistic approach will ensure that investment decisions remain proportionate, data-driven, and aligned with the needs of the growing Essex population.

The RP workforce and its associated assets are currently meeting existing operational demand, although several emerging pressures are beginning to influence performance, capacity, and long term sustainability.

The workforce remains capable of meeting current requirements; however, projected demand over the next 12 to 24 months indicates an increasing need for enhanced specialist capability.

The RP fleet has improved through the introduction of a mixed-fleet strategy; however, there remains no long term solution for suitable Category 1 electric vehicles (EVs) capable of meeting RP requirements. This restricts future fleet modernisation and limits progress toward the Force's sustainability objectives.

Major national projects, including the Lower Thames Crossing and the regeneration of Stansted Airport, will place extraordinary additional burdens on Roads Policing, particularly across the southern corridor of the county. These initiatives will drive increases in traffic flow, escort requirements, road-related incidents, and strategic movement across the network. Such developments will directly test both workforce capacity and the resilience of fleet and estate assets.

Essex Police continue to work closely with the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) to influence and align wider system activity in support of the shared ambition to reduce road death and serious injury. This includes contributing policing insight, data and professional advice to inform prevention, education and enforcement approaches across the partnership. While the partnership landscape is evolving, with differing governance arrangements, local priorities and wider structural change shaping the pace and consistency of activity, Essex Police remain committed to constructive engagement and leadership within SERP. This approach recognises that sustainable reductions in road harm are best achieved through coordinated, multi-agency action, with policing playing a critical but not exclusive role within a complex and changing road safety ecosystem.

Overall, the workforce and assets remain capable of meeting current demand but are approaching the limits of sustainable performance. Without targeted investment in specialist training, fleet development, and the optimisation of operational bases, future demand, particularly that generated by national infrastructure projects and continued criminal use of the road network, will exceed existing capacity.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The expected growth across Greater Essex, including significant housing development, industrial expansion and strategic locations such as Stansted Airport, will increase demands on Roads Policing, driven primarily by higher vehicle movements and more complex road related risk. To meet this anticipated demand, we will focus on developing both the capability and capacity of our workforce and our policing assets.

A key priority is to equip and upskill our existing officers and staff, ensuring they hold the specialist knowledge and tools required to manage rising demand effectively. This includes expanding technical competencies, enhancing investigative and analytical skills, and supporting continuous professional development to strengthen operational resilience. These measures will ensure we maintain high standards of service delivery while responding proportionately to increased pressure.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite the efficiencies and capability developments outlined earlier in this report, several areas of future demand are expected to exceed the sustainable capacity of RP for FMS26 and beyond. These pressures are driven by rapid housing and industrial growth, significant national infrastructure projects, the evolving vehicle market, rising criminal exploitation of the road network, and the emergence of new transport modes such as e-bikes and e-scooters.

Greater Essex will experience unprecedented expansion over the next decade, intensified by local government restructuring. Government investment is expected to accelerate delivery of major housing and industry sites. This will rapidly increase traffic volumes, collision risk and early enforcement demand in new communities.

Large-scale projects, including the Lower Thames Crossing, powerline corridors, windfarm schemes and continued growth at Stansted Airport, will place sustained and complex demand on RP.

The transition to electric fleet platforms presents a national challenge for Roads Policing. No Category 1-rated EV currently meets policing performance requirements.

Drug driving arrests have doubled in recent years and continue to increase, driven by emerging substances and expanding criminal supply networks.

Across FMS 2026 and beyond, Essex RP will face increasing unmet demand across multiple critical areas: growth corridors, NSIP activity, pursuit-related crime, fleet resilience, emerging vehicle types and impairment-related offending. These pressures will limit RP's ability to sustain proactive visibility, timely response and specialist capability without significant long term investment and enhanced national direction.

Introduction to Specialist Operations:
Special Operations is made up of several specialist functions: The Operational Support Group (OSG), Dog Section, Marine Section, Search, Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear (CBRN) and Drone Team.

The OSG is the Force's primary public order and tactical asset, delivering specialist capability for planned, spontaneous and high-risk incidents while providing significant support around the arrest of suspects who pose the greatest threat, harm and risk to communities.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Looking ahead, the Force can expect ongoing reliance on the skills and flexibility of the unit to meet emerging threats linked to increased protest activity and fluctuations in seasonal demand.

Over the next four years, rising tensions associated with the cost-of-living crisis, antiimmigration sentiment, local reform movements and wider global conflict are expected to generate sustained levels of protest and public unrest. In addition, UEFA Euro 2028, while not hosted in Essex it will take place within the UK, creating significant national abstraction pressures and an anticipated requirement for out of county mobilisation.

Dangerous Dog incidents have stabilised at high numbers, with 736 incidents in the last six months. 73% of these incidents involving injury or fear of injury, but a 5% decrease in dogs seized. Kennelled dog numbers have averaged at 86 over the six-month period.

The XL Bully dog ban has continued to increase investigative demand. The increase in kennelling fees is a cost pressure, which was supported by Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs last year, this funding may not be available in the future.

Efforts to reduce kennelling times are ongoing, including seeking to expedite cases through the courts, the regional lead is addressing this at a regional level. A full review of the dangerous dog procedure and policy is underway seeking to reduce investigation times and kennelling costs.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The OSG remains a highly trained specialist unit, with officers maintaining a broad range of accreditations including advanced driving, Initial Phase Pursuit, Specialist Method of Entry, and Taser. OSG also continues to deploy two general purpose drones to provide capability during operational deployments.

Throughout the second half of 2025, OSG demonstrated substantial commitment and flexibility during Operation Kirn Protests, sustaining high demand specialist support at a time of competing pressures during the busy summer period. Their adaptability enabled the unit to absorb a significant amount of specialist operational demand that would otherwise have required the diversion of additional Force resources. By shifting rapidly between MOE, high harm arrest activity, and wider tactical support, OSG helped ensure that other departmental abstractions were kept at a minimum.

When capacity allows, OSG continues to provide broader operational support to other business areas. Overall, the unit remains sufficiently equipped to discharge its core functions, though vehicle availability remains a persistent constraint consistent with pressures faced across the Force.

The Marine Unit continues to strengthen its operational capability. The new cabin Rigid Hull Inflatable Boat (RHIB), introduced in April 2025, is now fully embedded in service, with a formal naming ceremony during May 2026. Following a recent review of staffing arrangements, including abstraction levels and associated equipment costs, the unit has streamlined its structure.

Training for the team remains ongoing, supported by the Force's own sea school, which delivers much of the required CPD in-house. The unit has also returned the jet skis previously supplied by Maldon District Council due to high maintenance costs and limited operational value. Despite these changes, the Marine Unit will retain sufficient equipment and capability to respond effectively to all maritime challenges throughout 2026.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

The Dog Section is currently evaluating new approaches for managing dangerous dogs, drawing on best practice from Cumbria. The unit continues to meet operational demand, with additional handlers being trained and more dogs being developed in cash, weapons, and drugs detection to enhance their deployment at warrants and critical incidents.

The Marine Unit is meeting current requirements through effective use of the RHIB, and the availability of a second crew should wider deployment be needed.

The CBRN team continues to meet demand, maintaining readiness through ongoing CPD and the training of Armed Response Vehicle officers (ARVOs).

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

The legislative changes surrounding dangerous dogs has created significant and sustained pressure on kennel capacity both within Essex and nationally. As a result, kennelling costs have continued to rise year on year, with further increases expected. This demand is likely to grow, particularly given the extended periods dogs must now be retained pending court outcomes, creating a significant and potentially unfunded cost pressure. Dog training courses, which run for 12 weeks and cannot operate during the hottest summer months, remain on track for completion before the summer.

The Force recognises that wider geopolitical instability and global supply chain pressures have the potential to influence both the cost and availability of specialist operational equipment. Many specialist capabilities rely on niche, internationally sourced assets and technologies, where inflationary pressures, currency fluctuation and competing national demand can increase procurement costs or extend replacement timelines. While Essex Police continue to plan prudently and prioritise investment based on threat, harm and risk, these external factors may affect the pace at which specialist equipment can be refreshed or upgraded in line with evolving operational requirements. This reinforces the importance of robust asset management, regional collaboration and long term planning to ensure critical specialist capabilities remain effective, resilient and affordable within a changing global context.

In summary, the Force will continue to meet future demand across all specialist areas.

Introduction to Policing at Stansted Airport

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Planning permission has now been granted to increase the annual passenger limit up to 51 million by 2040 by extending the current terminal by 16,500m^2. Whilst this is a longer-term plan, the transformation project is well underway with a new Domestic Arrivals building unveiled in 2025 and works ongoing across the airport footprint. MAG have now sold portions of land to the north-side of the airport to private companies, building works, including new road layouts, are underway. It is anticipated that the passenger numbers will continue to grow steadily as the airport develops over the next four years. The policing requirements to mitigate the threats linked to increasing passenger numbers will be reviewed as part of the PSA negotiations through the Airport Security Plan reviews. This forms part of regular airport operator meetings in conjunction with the Common Threat Assessment for aviation.

Despite the increase of passenger numbers in 2025, overall incidents attended have slightly decreased from 6,126 in 2024 to 5,845 in 2025. This number includes incidents following notifications from the National Border Targeting Centre (NBTC) relating to information held on the Police National Computer for persons intending to travel through Stansted Airport who are wanted for offences or where there are concerns for their safety. The number of incidents created relating to NBTC notifications increased slightly from 1,074 in 2024 to 1,095 in 2025. The overall arrests linked to Stansted Airport Police Officers reduced from 359 in 2024 to 339 in 2025. This number does not consider the arrests made by officers from other forces who attend the airport but require assistance from the team to facilitate the arrests. Recorded stop searches have increased from 420 in 2024 to 592 in 2025.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Theft continues to be the focus of recorded crime at Stansted Airport with the bulk relating to offences from World Duty Free and associated airside retail outlets. Due to the security features of the airport and training of staff, we continue to see a high number of positive outcomes for these types of offences. Regular operations and engagement with retail staff ensures a joined-up approach to tackling crime and reducing the financial impact.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand. With the full PSA due for review in 2027, this presents an opportunity to explore and forecast the increasing demand for policing at Stansted Airport over the next five years with the appropriate team sizes and relevant specialisms.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
With the planned expansion and development across the Stansted Airport footprint, there will be challenges as to the policing requirements as part of the PSA and those that are general policing duties that remain the responsibility of the Chief Constable if the team remains at its current size. It is anticipated that any arising concerns will be identified through the

partnership engagement with MAG and the wider National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Aviation Policing Portfolio leads and subject to negotiations as required.

Introduction to Resilience:
The Resilience Department is in place to assist Essex Police in discharging its legal obligations under The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 as a Category 1 responder. It is responsible for creating, reviewing and updating over 134 emergency plans along with 86 Business Continuity plans. The plans are in place to ensure that the Force is adequately prepared to respond in the event of an emergency. Essex Police are also governed by the Control of Major Accident Hazards Regulations; this requires certain sites to have in a place an emergency plan and that it is tested every three years. The department also coordinate and host several plans that are not owned by them, varying from national to specific site area plans, such as Stansted Airport Emergency plans. The CCA also requires Essex Police to work with other Category 1 responder agencies in The Local Resilience Forum, The Resilience Department represent Essex Police at the Operational and Tactical levels.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Emergency and business continuity plan demands are relatively stable, with numbers not varying significantly. The capacity to review has increased in the last six months with the successful recruitment into the vacant Resilience Officer post. Training, Testing and Exercising (TT&E) (also part of the CCA's legal obligations for emergency and business continuity planning) demand is increasing year on year (19 in 2023, 36 in 2024 and 46 in 2025). This is predominantly due to the reintroduction of the TT&E Officer role in 2023. This has allowed specific focus on the TT&E gaps and after two years of tracking and data collation allowing vulnerabilities and risks to be monitored.

The department is now part of several national working groups that has taken away some of its time and capacity, this is likely to increase with The UK Governments push towards society being more self-resilient.

The Essex Resilience Forum (ERF) demand will increase following a restructure of their staff, capability and subsequent increase in workload. The department already chair and vice chair several ERF meetings and will continue to do so, plus providing continued attendance at the meetings as required. It is estimated that currently the ERF demand equates to a minimum of one day a week from the department of work and commitment.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Essex Police play an integral part of the day-to-day function of the ERF. The department represents Essex Police at the forum at both an operational and tactical level and is part of the Programme Delivery Group, the Risk Assessment Group as vice chair, the Risk Assessment Working Groups, The Business Continuity Working Group as chair, the Training and Exercising Learning Outcome Group as vice chair.

Beyond Essex, the department chairs The Eastern Police Region Business Continuity Forum, the vice-chair of The National Police Business Continuity Forum and the Vice Chair of The UK Government's Major Energies Risk Board.

2023 saw the reintroduction of the Testing, Training and Exercising officer which since its introduction has assisted with the backlog of review work and increasing resilience across the department.

The Resilience Manager also has the additional responsibility for managing The Eastern Region Information and Coordination Centre, which coordinates police mobilisation across all six eastern region police forces. Any requests for local / national support are coordinated through the country wide network of Regional Information and Co-ordination Centres that coordinate mutual aid requests and there has been a steady increase over the last year of mutual aid requests.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The Resilience Manager and Officers are now omni competent in both Emergency Planning and Business Continuity, this allows any member of the department to pick up any work that comes in rather than it having to go a specialist individual (as previously structured).

The Resilience Manager completes a horizon scanning function which allows for better assessment and mitigation of any risks. An Organisational Resilience Board has now been launched with a remit to determine resilience against the six main disruptions planned for around business continuity. This has assessed the resilience of estates, Information Technology (IT), and access to fuel.

The overhaul of the business continuity management system, and subsequently the emergency planning process as well, that was started at the end of 2024 is now yielding results. The time taken to reviews plans and business impact assessments has been reduced. The introduction of Quick Reference Handbooks for all ranks at major incidents has also streamlined the emergency plans.

In 2024 the department was tasked to deliver both strategic and tactical emergency command training to Essex Police Commanders. Post training review and assessment has resulted in the department being asked to deliver this each year from now on.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
There is still a significant training requirement on the team arising from the Manchester Arena Inquiry.

The department has had several last-minute requests/instructions for operational plans or incidents to tested and/or debriefed. Whilst there is a justifiable demand for the department

to manage all of these, based on skills and experience, it is on top of the department's role and impacts on their core activities.

Examples of recent local incidents that have necessitated actions, the two fatal air crashes in Essex in 2025, Southend Airport and Hanningfield Reservoir, both these incidents recommended changes to the airport and general aviation plans that are underway now.

Introduction to Licensing:
The Firearms, Shotguns and Explosives Licensing (FSEL) function remains a stable and high-performing area of business, but this is not without its challenges. Over the last year, the team has embedded significant changes introduced through revised Home Office Statutory Guidance following the Keyham tragedy, including enhanced suitability checks, improved risk-identification processes, and strengthened partnership engagement.

Current demand is reflected in rising application volumes. Application complexity, and the time required to process each case, has also increased. This is particularly due to statutory government guidance requiring contact with all occupants and the introduction of mandatory Firearms Enquiry Officer (FEO) qualification requirements adopted by Essex Police.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Current demand shows a slight reduction in the number of shotgun and firearms certificates, influenced largely by economic pressures on certificate holders. As at the reporting period, Essex Police manage 17,588 shotgun certificates, 4,643 firearms certificates, 316 explosive certificates, have oversight of 27 shooting clubs and 82 registered firearms dealers which is down from 112. Although total volumes have reduced, future demand is expected to increase in both complexity and volume. This is driven by:

- National statutory changes requiring enhanced checks, significantly extending case handling times.
- Mandatory new FEO qualification requirements, increasing workload, training abstraction, and validation processes.
- Anticipated growth in risk-based interventions as improved intelligence sharing highlights a greater number of suitability review triggers.
- Ongoing challenges related to workforce vacancies and an ageing staff profile.
- Increasing Grant applications.

Over the next four years, the department anticipates a stable or slightly heightened overall volume of licence holders, and a consistent rise in investigative and administrative intensity per case. There are also a rising number of appeals that FSEL are currently facing. This means that demand is shifting from quantitative to qualitative, with each application requiring more scrutiny, more checks, and more documentation.

Additionally, national and local firearms legislation remains under high public and political scrutiny, and further statutory amendments are likely within the next cycle, increasing future demand unpredictability.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
FSEL continues to perform strongly when compared nationally. The requirement for all FEOs to obtain formal qualification as soon as possible creates additional pressure.

Overall, the workforce is skilled and high performing, but at risk of being over-stretched due to increased workload, investigative complexity, mandatory training abstractions, and legacy IT limitations.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The department is actively preparing for increased complexity by:

- Embedding the full suite of statutory guidance requirements, including enhanced checks, through procedural review and training.
- Supporting FEO qualification requirements, despite unbudgeted costs, to ensure continued compliance with national standards.
- Leveraging automated intelligence tools within Athena and STORM to improve early risk identification and reduce manual checking time.
- Reviewing the storage of seized or surrendered firearms to reduce cost and logistical pressure.
- Transitioning remaining records and processes away from Cyclops onto Phoenix.
- Planning for the implementation of a national cloud-based licensing system, which is intended to replace Phoenix and increase efficiency, improve security, and reduce administrative duplication once implemented.

Science, technology, and innovation play a key role in the uplift of FSEL capability. Increased automation, improved data flows, and systems rationalisation are anticipated to deliver measurable benefits, including:

- Reduced officer and staff time spent on manual checks.
- Greater accuracy in suitability risk assessments.
- Increased compliance assurance with statutory responsibilities.
- Improved data sharing with partners and firearms dealers.

These changes will be monitored through SLA performance, error rate reduction, audit feedback, and case file timeliness.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Despite planned improvements, several areas present future unmet demand risk:

- Increased case complexity (particularly from digital and social media checks) may exceed existing workforce capacity, especially if additional national guidance expands these requirements before automation solutions are fully embedded.

- Mandatory FEO qualification and potential re-certification cycles introduce recurring cost and abstraction pressures that cannot be absorbed without increased staffing or additional funding.
- Delays in the replacement of legacy systems, including Cyclops and the transition to national platforms, pose a risk to business continuity and service delivery.

Overall, although FSEL is currently meeting all demand associated with risk, the volume of new grants, current vacancies, and the combined pressures of legislative change, IT transition, and specialist training requirements mean that future resilience is not guaranteed without significant investment and further process improvement.

Knowledge Management & IT

Introduction

The IT risk is substantial and increasing across cyber security, national technology landscape, expeditious delivery requirements, market unpredictability, and limited funding. The Force plans to enhance resourcing in key risk areas.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Essex Police, in collaboration with Kent Police, has an ambitious, innovative, and enabling technology roadmap extending to 2030, however the speed of technology advancement and need to evolve policing through technology exploitation means an inevitable need for agility, review and change to a medium-term programme. It informs the potential investment requirement for the MTFP. This includes new technology and the replacement of existing end of life solutions, devices and infrastructure, and new technology to meet force, regional and national requirements.

The combined impact of rapid technological change, financial constraints, and an increasingly complex national technology landscape is accelerating the demand to adopt new solutions, while simultaneously reducing clarity for demand planning at a local level. Anticipated reforms to UK policing structures and responsibilities are likely to necessitate a different technology landscape to support local and national operating models, until the outcomes of the structural review are confirmed, local planning remains constrained.
In the interim, the Force will continue to adopt, exploit, and implement national, regional, and locally commissioned technology, taking a proportionate and business value led approach to technology choice and delivery.

The Force is committed to innovation and recognises technology as a key facilitator of policing and as such the local demand and the urgency for new technology saw a significant uptick in 2025/26, with additional funding allocated to expedite delivery.

Key areas of focus are Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI), Contact Management, Digital Forensics and Data Transformation, alongside the Force's technology refresh

programme. Each of the Forces' programmes have progressed significantly over 2025/26 and will deliver in 2026/27 and 2027/28. These are all in line with national strategy, putting Essex in a strong position to support and contribute to national thinking, in areas such as automation, automated audio-visual multi-media, integration and data exploitation through the next period.

The Force also recognises that technology exploitation can be significantly expedited by putting functionality/low code automation in the hands of officers/staff for personal and team productivity.

The Force is enabling and protecting itself through the implementation of appropriate guardrails, prioritisation criteria and governance to ensure the right technology is being used/exploited in the right way, at the right time, by the right people for the right reasons, avoiding inefficiencies of overlapping technologies, increased data/cyber risk and cost and ensuring resources are focussed on the initiatives that will drive highest business value.

A significant resource investment is made into supporting users and maintaining current technology in a secure and performant state, this is ongoing work, which must remain a continuous priority.

It is reasonable to expect the level of cyber security threat to continue to rise, given the current geopolitical unrest. The minimum compliance level for the Security Assessment for Policing (SyAP) will rise (phased), which will significantly increase resource, time and potentially technology investment to meet the new maturity level.

Challenges remain in terms of balancing resources across current and new technology, unclear national project timescales and local activity need, resource levels (capacity), maintaining skill levels in a fast-evolving technology landscape (capability) and quality of suppliers and products, aligned to policing's needs functional, technical, and security.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The significant investment in force assets (devices, infrastructure, data centres, software, and solutions), alongside the hyper focus on solutions which are underperforming is providing Essex's officers and staff with performant and secure technology. The National Wellbeing survey showed Essex as having a higher level of satisfaction against the national average for service, hardware, and software.

The 2025 Information Technology Services (ITS) Staff survey demonstrated a significant (9%) increase in overall satisfaction, however visibility and trust in leaders as well as workload remain the areas of note, a programme of staff engagements has been put in place for 2026.

The need to provide a balanced budget required the Force to take a 7.2% Information Technology (IT) department pay budget reduction and to increase the vacancy factor force-wide in April 2024. The Force has since enabled ITS to recruit over the vacancy factor and has agreed to a number of additional roles to deliver and support new corporate technology platforms, specifically Strategic Automation, Digital Forensics, Data Transformation and Contact Management.

Essex has been able to recruit skilled staff with better work/life balance offerings. However, the risk remains that the Force is not paying market rates for highly skilled roles. Market supplements can and are being used as necessary to retain highly skilled staff, but this is a short-term measure. The other aspect is the demand for new technology skills in the areas of cyber security, automation, cloud, and AI – as policing will be competing with the private sector for this emerging but constrained skill set. To date the Force has been able to recruit into the available roles, however we often need to take the approach of recruit and then train/develop, rather than being able to bring in individuals with a high level of experience and existing skill levels.

Cross skilling, and early recruitment to allow for skills handover are being employed.

The Force has a flexible approach to training, outlined in the ITS Training and Development strategy, using methods including classroom training, online training subscriptions, desktop exercises, mentoring, Continuous Professional Development, and peer to peer. With the pace of technology, new solutions, cloud opportunities etc. the Force's approach of bringing in delivery experts and engaging with key organisations such as Microsoft to expedite delivery and upskill staff is proving effective.

There are no issues regarding the availability of suitable IT assets, systems, and hardware over and above the usual refresh of product models that are part of their usual lifecycle. The Force tracks capacity of core infrastructure
to identify where additional capacity is required to plan investment and delivery.

Security of systems and infrastructure is a priority with significant resource capacity dedicated to Cyber Security Prevention and Detection. This ensures
systems remain available and data is protected. This focus also extends to the Force's mature position against the Security Assurance for Policing framework (SyAP).

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

During 2025 a new prioritisation mechanism better aligned to force priorities has been agreed and is in the process of being launched to ensure the organisational benefits drive IT choice and ensuring that the right solution is selected for each opportunity, assessing functionality, technology compatibility, security compliance and total cost of ownership.

The Adopt, Exploit, implement strategy will ensure the Force considers all options to deliver new technology-based capability or to replace current technology:

Adopt: Looking for solutions already available or in the pipeline nationally.
Exploit: Leverage existing platforms and develop new functionality on them. This can be done internally or with a supplier.
Implement: Look at innovations in policing and the marketplace to bring in the right solutions that meet organisational needs, are technically compatible, and secure.

New Initiatives are assessed to establish the need for additional capacity or capability and ongoing support needs, and those that cannot be met by existing resources are built into the business case.

We continue to establish options to align activities to the most appropriate resources within ITS as well as investigating where automation could enhance delivery of service and solutions, to provide best value to the organisation without incurring unacceptable risk.

As described in section 1 there is a significant amount of 'unknown' potential demand particularly from the national landscape. There are programmes and initiatives which are yet to take shape in a way that will enable local demand or influence on local technology decision making to be understood, including Police Reform 'Local to National', Police AI, National Data Integration and Exploitation Service, and the wider Reform Technology Strategy and Roadmap.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Future demand is difficult to determine due to budget uncertainty, political influence on policing priorities, Police Reform, rapid development and availability of new technology, change to the national programme, supplier driven changes in key platforms and operating systems, and the proactive and reactive cyber activity increasing. This is driven by geopolitical events, the value of policing data and the lack of security compliance across other non-governmental agencies.

The portfolio of technology change will be governed and under strict change control through Chief Officer refreshed prioritisation process. This will enable the Force to have an agile approach to new initiatives if they add considerable benefit, usually by removing or delaying another project on the programme to a later year or establishing funding for additional resources, where appropriate.

The new platforms will require significant resource to deliver over 2026 to 2030; however, they will provide opportunities for further exploitation – most notably where user level configuration or citizen development is appropriate.

Force Wide Support Functions

Introduction to Criminal Justice

The Criminal Justice Command (CJC) comprises the Witness Care Team, Criminal Justice Unit (CJU), incorporating the, Out of Court Resolution Team), Property Officers, the Youth Justice Team. Custody and associated functions are part of the CJC but are dealt with separately in this Statement. The scope of responsibilities in the Criminal Justice (CJ) teams has not changed since the last FMS and can be summarised as follows:

The CJU processes all crime files and all cases that officers are required to submit to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for charging advice prior to entering the court system. In addition, the Unit processes all cases that are resolved through an Out of Court option of caution and has oversight of some but not all Community Resolution outcomes for quality control purposes.

The Witness Care Unit (WCU) manages the care of every victim and witness, including police officers and expert witnesses for all cases that enter the court system. The care will involve updating victims and witnesses at every stage of the court process from the first appearance through to the final court hearing, including any appeals. The team also identify any needs or support that individuals might need to enable them to give their 'best evidence.' This work involves close working with CPS, Magistrates,' and Crown Courts, along with the various support services such as Victim Support, Witness Service, Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs), and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs).

Property Officers manage all evidential property for the organisation, along with certain found items of property that could represent a risk to the public. The property officers will liaise with officers to ensure that property is either retained in accordance with evidential retention requirements, returned to the rightful owner once no longer required or destroyed safely and appropriately.

The Criminal Justice Child Centred Policing Team (CJCCPT) currently sits within CJC but is scheduled to transition to a new command in June 2026.

The CJCCPT provides Force-wide support to police officers on all aspects of youth justice, ensuring alignment with national, regional, and local aims set by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Children and Young People Strategy. Key strategic aims include:

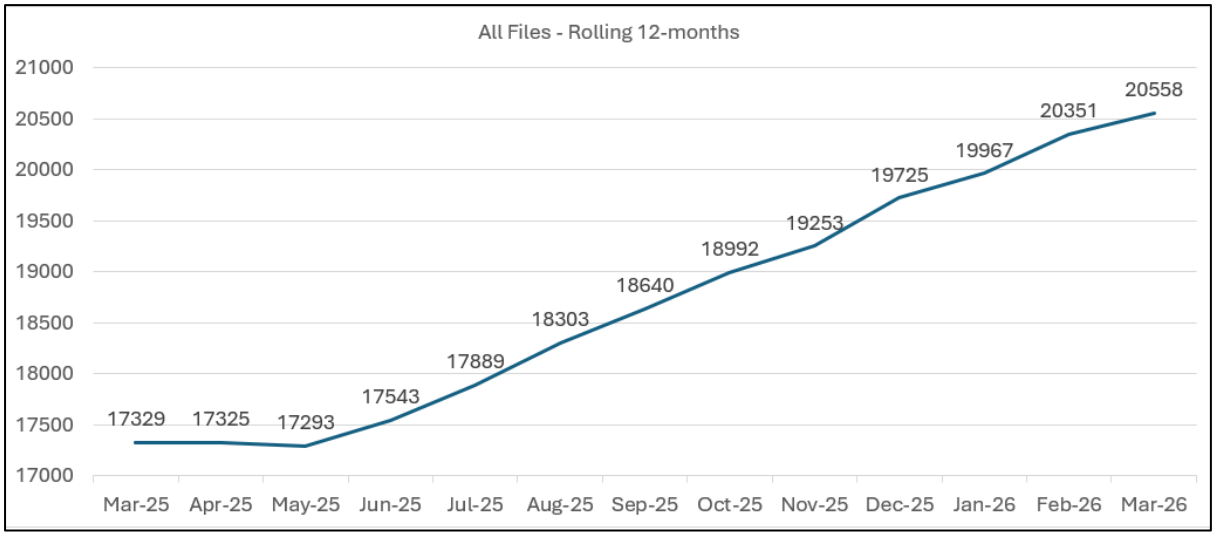
- Preventing harm to children
- Reducing the number of children held in custody
- Supporting vulnerable children
- Reducing offending and the unnecessary criminalisation of children
- Protecting children's rights
- Strengthening relationships between the police and children

The team is the primary partnership link to the three Youth Justice Services (YJS) covering Essex, Southend, and Thurrock. They also maintain strong relationships with educational establishments and the Essex County Council school safeguarding team.

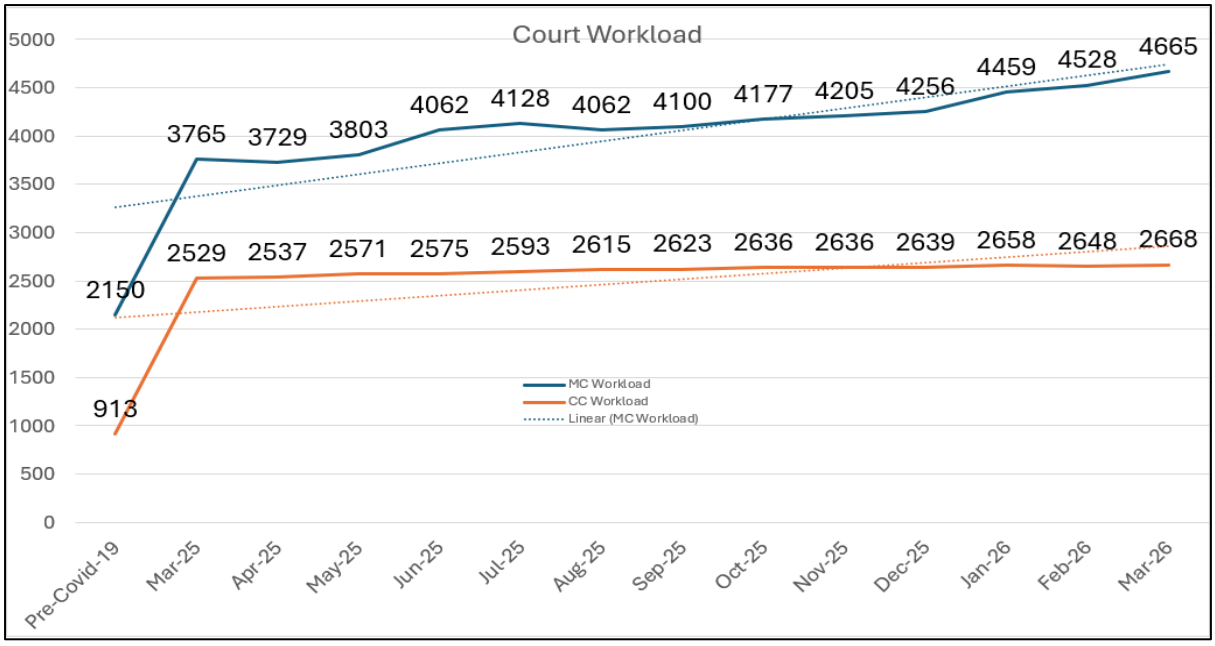
A core function of the CJCCPT is the management of youth out of court resolutions and the provision of diversionary and educational intervention guidance. The team shares relevant police information with partners and acts as a conduit to social care and early help services when investigations are diverted to alternative lead agencies.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years

The CJU workload for March 2025 to March 2026 rose to 19,800 cases which represents 1,650 case files per month and has risen from around 1,500 per month in 2024/25. However, file quality has remained between 61% and 74%.



The WCU currently manages 48,000 victims and witnesses. The volumes, whilst significantly higher than 2020 have been around the 47,000 to 48,000 level for the last two years. However, there are signs that Magistrates' Court volumes are beginning to rise again having been stable through 2024/25. This increased volume combined with increased focus and demand in meeting the statutory requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime will see increased scrutiny and focus on the Unit.



Property seizure and disposal and return to owners is currently maintaining consistent overall volumes with numbers in store remaining broadly consistent in relation to most areas of property retention, except for frozen items and drugs, both of which are showing significant growth in volumes. Whilst the overall volume of property entries remains around 205,000 items, drugs has risen 10% to 16,500 items and frozen from 45,000 to 60,000+ items compared to 12-months ago.

Anticipating future demand on property storage requirements is dependent primarily on factors outside of the control of property.

Managing the volumes in future will depend on volume of investigations combined with the resolution rate and the court backlog. The inability to reduce this backlog has resulted in greater volumes of material having to be retained as part of ongoing cases and investigations.

The last 12-months (to March 2026) has seen developments to assist with managing property more effectively.

- Bar-coding has been introduced to speed up the logging of property into the Electronic Property Management System (ePMS) and the disposal, return, and internal movement of items.

Current demand within CJCCPT is being managed effectively, with the team striving to respond to requests within 24 to 48 hours. Given that YJS partners work with young people within 16 to 20 weeks of an offence, swift action by the CJCCPT remains vital.

The team has a strong focus on supporting officers, especially those less experienced, by offering guidance and improving their understanding of available resources. This not only supports ongoing investigations but also builds confidence and capability for future cases.

Recent Force audits have identified improvements in the quality of community resolutions administered to children.

The overarching aspiration is for all youth justice processes to be subject to consistent scrutiny, both internally and through multi-agency partners, to support quality and continuous improvement.

Demand is projected to increase. Factors influencing this include:

- Continued Ministry of Justice Turnaround funding, which requires earlier identification and referral of vulnerable young people
- Increasing expectations from statutory partners, which may escalate workload
- The expansion of child-focused, holistic, multi-agency approaches to prevent re-offending

A significant anticipated change relates to the potential removal of officers' authority to issue Community Resolutions without multi-agency ratification or Child Centred Policing Team (CCPT) authorisation. The CCPT Manager is preparing for amendments to Force Procedure F0403 to implement this change.

Shaping future practice is also occurring through the 'Outcome 22 Steering Group'. This is a National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) administration code used in the UK to record when police take No Further Action (NFA) against an offender, provided they participate in a diversionary, educational, or intervention activity. This is currently chaired by a member of the PFCC (Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner) Violence and Vulnerability Team.

The team has developed its SharePoint site to provide clear referral pathways for diversionary and educational interventions. Further improvements are planned for 2026, including face-to-face training sessions for all frontline officers. These will cover procedural changes and introduce the 3Rs (Restoration, Reintegration, and Responsibility) intervention, a restorative tool designed to help children understand the impact of low-gravity offending.

In addition, the success of Operation Detour has prompted a proposed procedural change: delaying charging decisions for children under 18.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

In April 2023, the CJC underwent restructuring to address organisational needs, despite facing challenges due to vacancies. This new structure proved resilient and effective across all four areas of business – CJU WCU, Property and Child Centred Policing.

The past 12-months (to March 2026) have seen performance across file quality, victim care compliance and property management volumes maintained. Having experienced an increase in file submissions over the last 12-months it is expected that these volumes will start to reduce in 2026-27 due to changes in bail and sentencing leading to greater use of Out of Court resolutions and alternative diversionary outcomes.

The CJCCPT is a stable and well-established team.

The team works closely with Children & Young Person (CYP) officers across the Force. CYP officers focus on community work and receive regular briefings and guidance from the CCPT.

Termtime training sessions help maintain awareness of key policies and procedures, but there is a recognised need to develop a more formal training framework for new CYP officers to ensure consistency and continuity. The team is highly resilient and adaptable to emerging demands and changes in legislation. Their strength lies in making evidence based, effective recommendations informed by detailed analysis and problem-solving using the OSARA model (Objective, Scanning, Analysis, Response and Assessment - Problem Solving Process).

The Child Gravity Matrix (July 2025) remains a vital tool for consistent and transparent decision making, ensuring adherence to national and local standards.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

The main change in the coming 12-months (from March 2026) is the planned transfer of CJ functions in to other Commands. CJU, WCU and Property moving to Crime and Public Protection and CJCCPT into the new Prevention, Partnership & Engagement Command. These moves will create far closer links and relationships with front line operations intended to ensure that the CJ resources are focused on supporting officers in area of most need. For example, file adjudication functions in specialist Commands will be delivered by first line supervisors leaving the file adjudicators to work with Local Policing Areas.

The CJU will be well placed to meet the administrative demand for file throughput based on the anticipated volumes of charge cases in the coming 12-months and beyond. Changes to bail legislation will, it is anticipated lead to fewer remand files and potentially fewer charge and bail cases, with this work being diverted to Out of Court Resolutions.

CJ are working with existing IT (Information Technology) suppliers and CPS at a national and local level to test AI (Artificial intelligence) generated material for inclusion in file submission. This is being carefully tested using the technology to generate statements, for example, in old cases for comparison by lawyers in relation to the content and accuracy. The DAMS technology continues to develop as does the semi-automated redaction technology.

Property Officers are expected to manage similar volumes in the coming 12-months to the previous two years. The development of new ways of working linked to the recently delivered bar-coding functionality will make booking in, movement and disposal of items quicker and easier, leading to time efficiencies.

The CJCCPT is well positioned to meet increasing demand through:

- Prioritising essential tasks and reducing activity not linked to safeguarding and youth justice outcomes
- Continued availability of Turnaround funding for at least three years
- Strengthened data sharing processes with partners to ensure informed, timely decision making

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above

The capability of officers to submit a file right first time will be pivotal in meeting demand.

The WCU is managing the legislative requirements of the code of practice for victims of crime.

Property officers face a continuing challenge of ensuring officers are duly risk averse in making decision on length of retention and decisions to dispose of or return property items.

Although the risk associated with unmet demand in the CJCCPT remains low, the team acknowledges that workloads are likely to rise due to:

- Increased scrutiny of youth charging decisions
- Greater oversight required for Outcome 22 referrals
- The need to review cases that previously would have resulted in an immediate community resolution
- Expanded training commitments for frontline officers
- Development and delivery of the 3Rs restorative intervention

Despite this, the team remains motivated and prepared to take on these challenges, driven by the shared goal of improving outcomes for children at risk of offending and reducing victimisation.

Introduction to Custody

The custody command comprises the five Essex Police custody suites which are staffed by custody managers at the rank of Inspector, custody officers at the rank of sergeant and police staff detention officers. Additionally, there is a bail management team and a drug test on arrest officer.

The scope of the command has not changed since the previous FMS; however, a change programme was implemented in May 2025.

Custody suites are responsible for the detention of persons arrested and the NPCC key strategic principles which Essex custody command align to are:

- Justice and the protection of the public
- Detention in police custody is safe, ethical, and used when only appropriate
- Custody is non-discriminatory and transparent
- Everyone is treated with dignity and respect

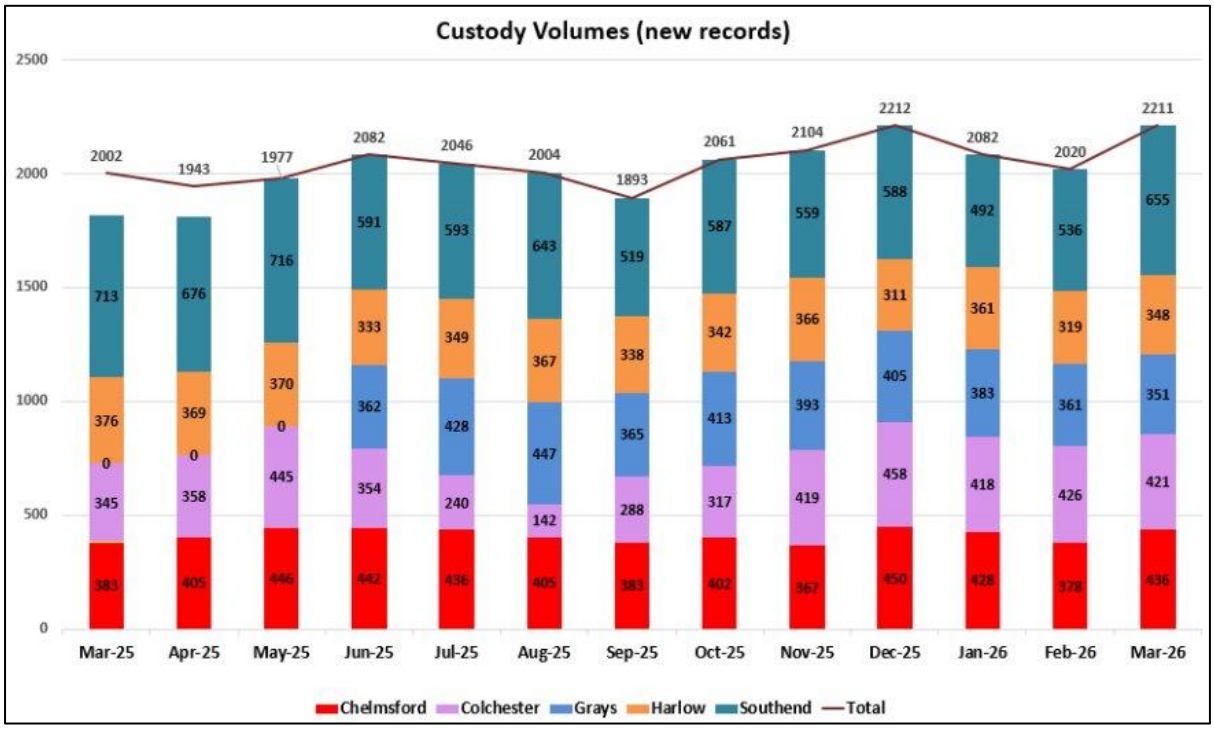
- Custody practitioners are professional experts in their field
- We will continually learn, improve and innovate

In April 2026, custody command moves from the current CJC into the Prevention, Partnership and Engagement Command, the internal strategic aims are as follows:

- Embed a custody operation aligned to wider local policing objectives
- Ensure exacting standards of detainee safety, early identification of vulnerability and appropriate risk management
- Improve performance and legal compliance by strengthening audit, inspection, and complaint handling processes
- Improve timeliness, operational efficiency, and investigation outcomes by reducing delays and improving detainee handling

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

New arrests resulting in detention in an Essex Police custody suite is rising month on month over the past 13 months as shown below:



The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

In May 2025, custody command underwent restructuring to address organisational and staff needs. The custody sergeant establishment was increased to ensure staff and officer welfare and to ensure that the strategic aims of the command could be achieved.

The 2026 Affordable Futures programme will see the removal of the Delegated Identification Officer and this function will move across to custody sergeants to perform whilst adhering to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. Additional training and support are in place to ensure this transition.

Performance is monitored monthly and is of a high standard.

A model to secure custody sergeant rotation out of custody whilst maintaining establishment is being progressed.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

In April 2026, the transition of custody command to the new Prevention, Partnership and Prevention Command will be a change, however, this alignment to local policing offers opportunity to meet demand further with wider resources and far closer links to local policing and front-line operations.

A post implementation review of the Custody Change Programme is underway to ensure that the model has achieved the requirements set out. This will include consideration of increasing the ratio of Designated Detention Officers.

Collaboration with regional and national colleagues will assist in developing innovation within the custody arena.

Professional training in identification procedures will assist in providing a 24 hour per day service within the Police and Criminal Evidence Act, assisting investigators and bringing offenders to justice.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

The command will follow the Sentencing Act review to ensure demand can be met, at this stage there are no amendments to the Police and Criminal Evidence Act with regard section 38, however this is a possibility in the future, and the potential impact could result in increased bail which could increase demand. This will be closely monitored, and the command retain a bail management team for oversight.

Introduction to Forensics

A revised forensic structure was implemented in August 2023 providing a more streamlined and cost-effective operating model across all services.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years

Forensic Services has three strands:

- Forensic Operations – Crime Scene Investigations (CSI), Forensic Collison Investigations and Forensic Quality.

- Digital Forensics (DF) – mobile phone, computer, and digital device examinations.
- Central Forensic Services – Fingerprint Hub, Chemical Enhancement Laboratory, DNA Recovery Unit, Forensic Submissions to external providers, and Digital Imaging.

Scene attendance by CSIs in 2025 is stable, with a slight increase from 3.6% in 2024 to 3.8%. 40% of crimes attended by CSI are burglary dwelling offences in line with recorded crime and CSI tasking. Future demand for CSI attendance and examination is predicted to remain steady for the foreseeable future.

Contracted external forensic services have been stable in 2025 however forensic submissions to external providers have reduced in 2025. Overall, capacity and capability of forensic service providers have steadily improved throughout 2025 yielding improved turnaround times for many activities.

Version 2 of the Forensic Science Regulator's (FSR) Code of Practice was implemented on 2 October 2025 and although statutory requirements have been in place since October 2023, the true impact on the CJ System is yet to be seen. Whilst compliance with statutory regulation remains a source of demand for the foreseeable future, a mature quality management system is well embedded across all internal forensic activities. Version 2 of the FSR Code streamlines the approach in some areas e.g. crime scene investigation so a reduction in demand in this area is anticipated within the next 18 months.

An estimated 90% of crimes now have a digital element and data volumes on digital devices have grown exponentially with new technologies and criminality developing. These factors combined have increased demand on digital forensics in both case volume and amount of data per case. In addition, the complexity and security of digital devices is constantly advancing, making the acquisition of data more difficult and time consuming.

Currently, the impact of National Forensic Reform on future demand is unknown.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply

Forensic staff, equipment, and assets are in good condition, with investment in estates, capability, training, and welfare provided. Staff are issued with laptops and mobile devices to aid their efficiency when remote working.

International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) accreditation of all in-house services necessitates extensive training and professional development programmes for all forensic practitioners with ongoing competency assessments. This ensures the capability and capacity to meet current and future demand. Succession planning for Crime Scene Managers, Digital Forensic Specialists and Fingerprint Examiners is a key consideration and maintains the condition of the workforce.

Supervisory ratios are appropriate and aid effective attendance management and timely completion of professional development reviews. Crime Scene Investigators, DF

practitioners, and Forensic Collision Investigators have frequent exposure to unpleasant incidents and distressing material. Annual wellbeing assessments together with TRiM (Trauma Risk Management) and other Force wellbeing services are used to ensure appropriate support for staff.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

Demand will be met through:

- Full delivery of all functionalities within the new FCMS will ensure the benefits are fully realised across all forensic teams and for officers using the submissions portal.
- Wider use of automation across Forensic Services to improve efficiency and save time.
- Implementation of revised Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Forensic Collison Investigation.
- Full implementation of the national system PDS (Police Digital Service) Digital Fingerprint Capability (Xchange Platform) to streamline fingerprint identification services.

The type and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

CSI attendance will continue in line with recorded crime, CSI tasking and Force priorities and is anticipated to meet future demand.

Delivery of the Digital Forensic Platform and wider use of automation will bring greater efficiency to meet future demand.

The progress of ISO accreditation continues to ensure compliance with statutory regulation and Version 2 of the FSR Code of Practice will streamline the process for crime scene investigation enabling this demand to be met.

Introduction to Transport Services

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Transport Services' demand is primarily influenced by fleet mileage and vehicle specification, particularly for high-performance operational roles.

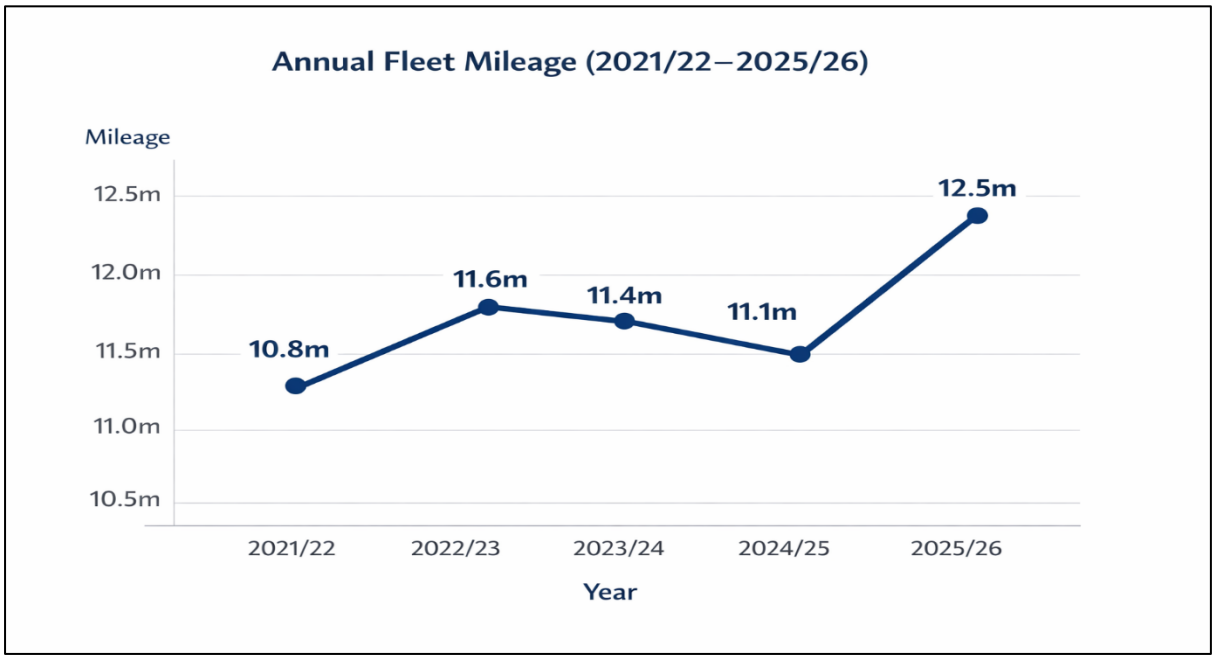
Fleet mileage and utilisation fluctuate in line with operational requirements. To support effective decision making, the Chief Officer led Fleet Distribution Board was established to assess vehicle allocation and usage across Neighbourhood Policing Teams and departments.

Telematics data continues to be used to monitor utilisation, ensuring efficient deployment of resources.

Mileage and accident damage remain primary indicators of workshop demand, influencing repairs, maintenance workloads, new vehicle build requirements, and overall costs.

Force-wide savings can be achieved through reduced mileage, which presents a challenge when set against operational needs.

Annual fleet mileage figures for the last five years are shown below:



The Force acknowledges the significant challenge posed by the Government's commitment to end the sale of new diesel and petrol vehicles by 2035. This is recognised as a strategic risk, particularly as there are currently a limited number of suitable EVs alternatives that meet the performance requirements of units such as Roads Policing or Armed Response Vehicles. Although the deadline may seem distant, manufacturers are already prioritising zero emission technology in their research and development, meaning changes to vehicle availability will occur sooner.

These capability challenges are shared nationally, with work underway through the National Association of Police Fleet Managers (NAPFM) and the NPCC. Several locations across the county already have EV charging capability, and assessments are ongoing to determine operational suitability.

External charging options are being considered.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The NPCC has established national Police Fleet Maintenance Standards to ensure consistency in workshop practice for all Forces. All Essex Police technicians have completed the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI) accreditation to achieve Master Technician status.

The Force also recognises that advancements in EV and autonomous vehicle technology will affect operational and service delivery. Enhanced safety and driver assist features will influence how pursuits and vehicle stops are managed. Work is ongoing with the NPCC

Pursuits Working Group and the Strategic Fleet Portfolio to develop guidance and mitigations for these emerging challenges.

Significant investment has been made in upskilling the team, particularly in preparation for the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) and emerging autonomous technologies. Workshop facilities have also been modernised to support these industry changes.

Retention of technical staff is recognised as business critical due to market shortages, rising recruitment costs, and the increasing specialism required for modern policing fleets. Grades and remuneration are reviewed, and technicians have successfully completed NPCC maintenance standards training and IMI examinations. This ensures capability levels remain aligned to national expectations.

Succession planning remains an area of focus due to an ageing workforce and the specialist nature of the roles. The department has explored the possibility of an apprenticeship programme to build an internal talent pipeline. This would allow bespoke, policing specific training and support the long term sustainability of the function.

Absence levels remain low compared with wider industry norms, supported by proactive welfare management and close engagement with Occupational Health. The physical nature of the work is acknowledged, and appropriate support is in place for staff with musculoskeletal concerns.

Telematics used across the fleet has matured significantly, enabling improved utilisation, allocation, road risk management, and deployment decision making.

Transport Services continues to generate income by providing fleet services to partner Forces including the City of London Police and British Transport Police. These services offset standing costs and increase productivity by maximising workshop throughput.

Vehicle supply chain pressures have eased but not fully resolved. Wider national shortages and price inflation continue to impact parts availability and manufacturer discount structures.

The Force works actively with BlueLight Commercial, NAPFM, NPCC and Crown Commercial Service to mitigate these impacts and consolidate purchasing power.

Operational users continue to hold responsibility for ensuring vehicles have the required equipment and complete daily and weekly checks via the web portal. A vehicle check app is being developed through Cleveland Police, with single point of contacts appointed locally to manage compliance and reporting through the new Microsoft Teams channels where vehicle check reports are uploaded.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

To address current challenges in the fleet industry, the Force has implemented a mixed fleet model for key roles, ensuring there are at least two options for each duty type. This reduces reliance on any single manufacturer or supply chain and enhances operational resilience.

We continue to work closely with procurement partners, including BlueLight Commercial and NAPFM, to leverage national economies of scale and ensure cost effective procurement.

The Force will continue to utilise telematics to manage vehicle allocation and usage efficiently. Telematics provides detailed data to both fleet management and operational supervisors, offering insights into utilisation, supporting improved maintenance regimes, enabling availability dashboards, and providing strong corporate oversight of fleet assets.

The Force is actively involved in developing the next national vehicle framework agreement. NAPFM remains engaged with NPCC portfolio leads to monitor emerging technologies and their implications for policing. BlueLight Commercial continues to facilitate the national procurement process.

A joint Chief Officer led strategic board with Kent Police has been established to oversee the implementation of the zero-emission fleet strategy. This Board manages the transition to zero emission vehicles and the required supporting infrastructure. Its responsibilities include assessing the current fleet, identifying Areas for Improvement (AFIs), and planning for the integration of new technologies. The Board also oversees the development of charging infrastructure to ensure the estate is equipped to support the growing EV fleet.

These proactive steps aim to ensure that our workforce and assets are well prepared to meet the anticipated demands of 2026 and beyond, in line with the Government's 2035 ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles. This approach will help maintain operational effectiveness, enhance sustainability, and ensure continued delivery of high-quality service to the public.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

The Force currently anticipates meeting expected changes related to the Government's transition to zero emission vehicles. However, we recognise that we are operating within a period of significant uncertainty regarding the future composition and capability of the fleet and how this aligns with developments in the wider vehicle industry. These challenges are shared nationally and are being explored collectively across policing.

A critical component of meeting future operational demand will be the delivery of sufficient EV infrastructure and charging capacity across the estate. While initial EV enabled sites will provide valuable insight, uncertainty remains regarding the scale, speed, and distribution of infrastructure required to fully support a growing zero emission fleet.

As vehicle technology continues to evolve rapidly, particularly in relation to electric and specialist operational vehicles, there is uncertainty around the availability of suitable zero emission alternatives for certain policing roles.

National supply chain uncertainty continues to affect delivery times, availability of parts, vehicle replacement cycles, and overall asset resilience. Despite local efficiencies, these

market driven limitations may continue to prevent the Force from fully meeting future demand for timely fleet replacement and consistency in vehicle availability.

Finally, while investment in technical training and exploration of apprenticeship pathways will improve resilience, there remains a risk that specialist technical skills may not grow quickly enough to meet increasing demands. An ageing technical workforce and a national shortage of EV-qualified technicians may result in gaps in advanced diagnostic and maintenance capacity during the transition period.

The Force will continue to work with national partners, share best practice, and engage with suppliers to ensure that policing requirements are understood. However, given the factors outside the Force's direct control, we acknowledge that certain areas of future demand, particularly related to infrastructure, specialist EV capability, business continuity fuel storage, and technical workforce capacity, may not be fully met without wider national developments and support.

Introduction to Professional Standards Department

The Professional Standards Department (PSD) consists of five broad functions: Reactive Investigations (conduct matters and death and serious injury investigations), Service Delivery Unit (public complaints), Counter Corruption Unit (intelligence and investigations), Corporate Vetting Unit and Operational Security. The command has administrative and business support.

The last HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) vetting and counter corruption inspection was conducted in 2022 with a grading of 'good'. An inspection is anticipated in 2026/27 which will include 'Integrity' which has not previously been tested.

PSD engages with other forces regionally and nationally to identify best practice and identify potential areas of concern following publication of inspection reports in other areas.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Expected future demand considers emerging political, social, organisational and legal drivers. Changes in demand may affect its scale, complexity or associated risk.

The difference between current demand and expected demand over the next four years reflects the impact of foreseeable changes in the operating environment. Current demand is largely driven by existing complaint volumes, misconduct cases, vetting activity, and reactive workload. Expected future demand is likely to increase due to new legislation, heightened scrutiny, preventative duties (such as those relating to Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), workforce inexperience, and organisational expectations around early intervention

and learning. This gap illustrates the need for proactive planning to ensure that future demand does not exceed capacity or undermine effectiveness.

Forecasting volumes for the next four years is risky. Significant changes in 2024/25 in both conduct and vetting APP (Authorised Professional Practice) have significantly increased the requirements on the department. With every Force restructure (currently the Affordable Futures Programme) there will be significant volumes of personnel movements which may require some level of vetting requirement. Commitments offered in Police Reform may place requirements on police forces that trigger further movement and/or recruitment, which would also impact volumes. It is difficult to meaningfully interpret data from the previous few years because of dramatic changes to policing during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent recovery period, and then during mass recruitment during the Police Uplift Programme.

In addition, in the last two years, there has been a strong focus on prevention and engagement activity, which has on one hand encouraged reporting of behaviours, but has also potentially deterred behaviour, and prevention is more difficult to quantify. The withdrawal of the Prevent and Engagement team may cause these levels to fluctuate, but at the same time, there is a concerted effort to build processes and governance through a whole Force approach to maintain effort in this area.

It is anticipated that significant media focus on policing (either in response to high profile cases or political changes) will mean the public remain interested and engaged, and this can lead to reduced tolerance and increases in complaints. While public confidence in Essex remains high compared with other forces, there has been a reduction in 2025.

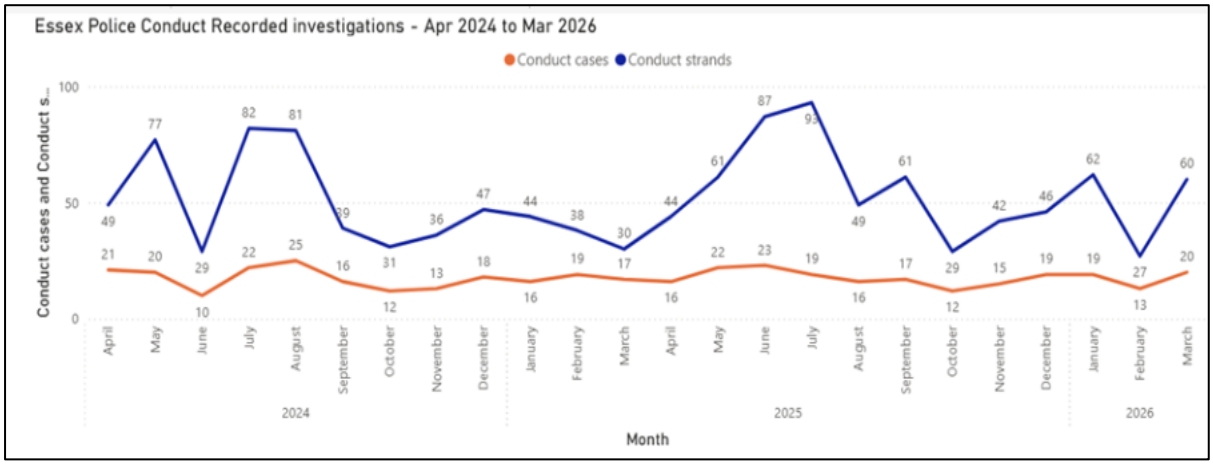
The complexity of professional standards work is expected to increase. Most investigations involve a digital element, and technological advances outside policing often move more quickly than within policing. This can increase the length of investigations, which is impactive for any members of the public involved, as well as any employees involved.

There has also been a marked increase in public, legal, and oversight scrutiny of police decision making. As a result, complaint and conduct matters are increasingly likely to feature legal representation, parallel civil or employment proceedings and more external oversight. This can lead to more time being committed to preparing cases and more appeals, which all impact capacity.

Additional volume and/or complexity increase the risk of delays, poor service, and loss of public confidence.

Year	Strands	Cases
2020/21	237	137
2021/22	316	182

2022/23	340	189
2023/24	706	256
2024/25	566	208
2025/26	661	211



Conduct investigations are reported and governed by financial year. In 2024/25 there were 566 conduct investigations. In 2025/26, 221 investigations have been recorded by the end of Quarter 4.

There was a significant peak in 2023/24 with 706 cases recorded. Prior to that, recorded numbers were lower, but more challenging to interpret during COVID-19 and the recovery period.

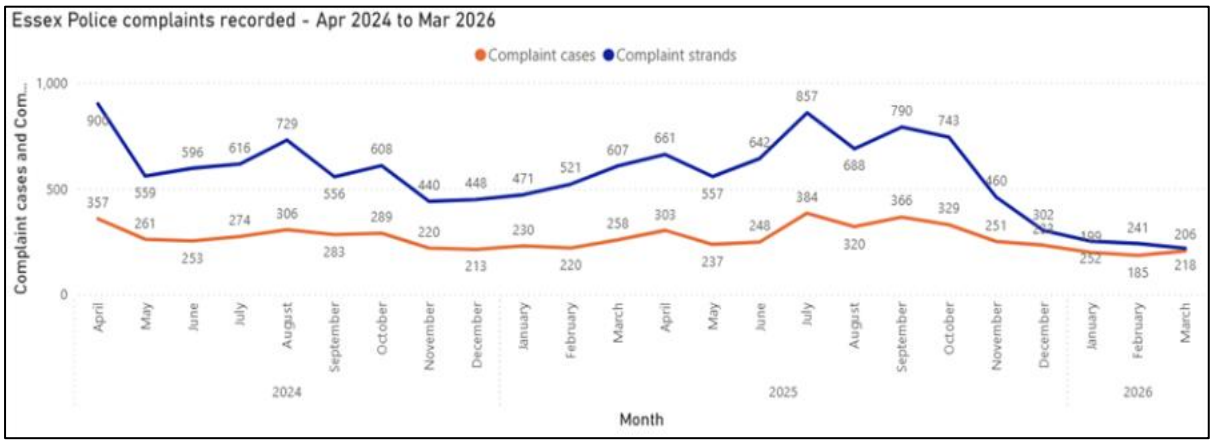
Approximately half of all conduct matters relate to VAWG. This is a wide-ranging category, including behaviour toward colleagues, off duty conduct, domestic abuse, and handling of domestic abuse and other VAWG matters. VAWG is a national priority and is embraced across a broad spectrum of partners. There has been significant investment in upskilling our workforce about this issue, but again, while this aims to deter inappropriate conduct, it also encourages reporting.

Work has been completed to cement 'learning the lessons' at a Force and command level. This includes structured meetings, where individual cases may be considered, or where formal recommendations from Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) have been made. Misconduct hearing outcomes are also published internally and externally, and more recently we publish internally the outcomes of misconduct meetings. This is done intentionally with a clear message on the learning points identified to deter future poor conduct.

Complaints: Complaints formally recorded under Schedule 3 of Police Conduct Regulations have slightly decreased in comparison with last year, however the volume of dissatisfactions outside of Schedule 3 has increased. There was an unprecedented peak in July 2025 which

coincided with protest activity across the county, but notably in Epping. The complaints received during this period did not relate to the protests specifically; the working assumption is that when there is more media coverage relating to policing raises levels of interest and scrutiny.

Given the current political context and police reform, public interest in policing remains high, and we may therefore see increases moving forward. We have intentionally sought to be accessible to all people with diverse needs across the county, rightly so, which makes it easy and quick for people to make complaints. Evidence suggests people are also using AI to support their reports, and accessibility may mean that more people are raising their dissatisfaction than previously. It is important that we understand and respond to the concerns of the public, but this places increased demand on the Force.



Vetting volume has been higher in 2025 than in 2024 because of new requirements prompted by changes in APP. During Police Uplift Programme and volume recruitment processes, this also greatly increased the volume of applications for the Corporate Vetting Unit (CVU) to process. It is not anticipated that there will be further volume increases in recruitment. The additional demands arising from APP have been responded to, and the team has adapted.

In summary, while overall volumes of conduct, complaints and vetting requirements are expected to remain broadly stable, the difference between current demand and future demand over the next four years is a marked increase in complexity, scrutiny and risk per case, driven by legislative change, preventative expectations, digital evidence requirements and heightened public and legal oversight.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The investigations arm of PSD currently comprises of two core teams, and a third which prioritises more simple investigations for quicker resolution. This is in the process of being restructured to two core teams, to provide better supervisory resilience across all functions. In addition, there is a team dedicated to death and serious injury investigations (DSI's).

Performance across the investigations function is strong. Timeliness of investigations is improving, with a strong focus on progressing accelerated misconduct hearings where appropriate. The work of the DSI team has improved quality and timeliness of such matters and has improved relationships with coroners. The Detective Inspector (DI) for the DSI team also oversees the Reflective Practice Process for the Force and supports the delivery of learning from conduct cases.

Retention within this area is good and absence levels are low. These teams are at full establishment, with all officers being accredited detectives. Morale is strong, but a new health and wellbeing strategy is being developed to provide more structured support. We remain mindful of vicarious trauma for our investigators. There are no current or foreseeable concerns about the capacity or capability in this area.

Changes in APP now require Chief Officers to chair misconduct hearings, which is a significant commitment and requires careful planning and management to avoid building in delay. The investigations team has a meetings and hearing coordinator who supports this function, and who is utilising different options to improve both timeliness and cost (i.e. holding hearings on Teams where appropriate). After each hearing (beyond the appeal period), the chair meets with a member of PSD to debrief the case. This includes practical considerations in terms of the logistics, any observations about how the case has been presented, and any learning opportunities, especially where there may have been missed intervention opportunities. Any learning is captured through learning the lessons processes, either at a Force level if broadly relevant, or local boards if the issue is more bespoke.

The CCU is performing well and has only modest gaps in strength against establishment. The team prioritises against the areas identified in the National Counter Corruption Control Strategy. The level of experience and relevant expertise is strong, and again, absence is low and morale is high. There has been a focus on driving positive culture across the Force, and some areas have been identified as appearing more prone to higher volumes of complaints and conduct. CCU have supported in completing problem profiles to inform remedial activity.

The Prevent and Engage Team that fall under CCU are being withdrawn under the Affordable Futures Programme. This is an area of focus, as there was an historic AFI related to prevention which was discharged with the creation of this team. PSD are closely engaging with the Professionalism Lead to identify processes to transition. The team has been very successful and there has been a clear shift in understanding that professionalism is a whole Force responsibility, and that there is a clear duty to be an upstander. Governance processes are being reviewed to ensure there is clear accountability across the Force.

Compliance against mandatory requirements is being met and changes brought about by APP continue to embed.

The Force Vetting Manager participates in HMICFRS inspections and provides assurance that processes in CVU are fully compliant with requirements. This has been evidenced

through the national Operation Jorica review, which considered historic vetting practices including the period incorporating the Police Uplift Programme. The review identified in some forces there had been a decline in the volume of vetting failures, and that some forces had made changes in their vetting processes to accommodate the additional demand. Subsequently there were several high-profile conduct cases where it was identified the officers should not have passed vetting. Many forces have subsequently been required to review the vetting of numerous officers, which has resulted in numerous dismissals. Essex did not change processes or deviate from APP at any point and has therefore avoided this significant issue.

Due to the vacancy factor, the vacancies have not been filled, however a recent Chief Officer Group (COG) agreement to recruit CVU to 100% means this is not anticipated to be a long term issue. The staff that have left the team have broadly done so for promotional opportunities or desirable lateral moves, but morale in remaining team members is being closely monitored during this phase of increased pressure.

We continue to operate an independent advisory group which addresses a wide range of issues, which provides assurance of the quality and consistency of decision making, and offers an opportunity to inform the public about challenges, processes, and decisions, which assists with building confidence. The Independent Advisory Group (IAG) will often be presented with several anonymised case studies and asked their views on whether they feel the initial assessment or outcome of the cases was appropriate. There are also examples where the views of the IAG have been sought on live (anonymised) cases to assist with the public perception elements and to support decision making on how cases will progress. All IAG members are offered training, so they have a basic understanding of the regulations.

Overall, PSD remains effective and compliant, but with clear pressure points that require continued prioritisation, mitigation, and organisational support to remain sustainable.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

In relation to investigations, conduct volumes are stable and this is not anticipated to change dramatically, though they are anticipated to remain high. Cases where there is a parallel criminal investigation may be more protracted due to ongoing challenges with delays in the judicial system. Continued focus on professionalism and encouraging reporting is essential but means increases in volume are more likely than decreases.

Our approach therefore focuses on sustaining resilience, maintaining quality, and managing risk, rather than attempting to absorb demand indiscriminately.

Nonetheless, as resilience in the team is currently strong and anticipated to remain so, the investigations team is supporting wider PSD activity. They now have ownership of adverse incidents occurring in custody, providing some relief for the SDU, and can support with initial complaint handling if required. To support the resilience challenges in the SDU and CVU,

various actions have been taken. Some short-term funding for overtime has been used in a targeted way to stabilise pressure points, but this is not relied upon as a sustainable solution.

All teams are optimising the use of Copilot where possible, which has seen some benefits for SDU and CVU in particular. Vetting will be a priority area for any future automation opportunities, but this is not a short-term fix.

Three operational risks have now been formally recorded, and each has clear mitigating actions identified with defined owners, reporting into governance processes to ensure the mitigations remain relevant, effective, and proportionate. The risk management team are supporting monitoring and auditing of these risks.

In relation to vetting capacity, COG agreement has been provided to recruit the CVU to 100% which is being progressed at pace, providing reassurance that the current challenges in this area will not be enduring. There are various workstreams for vetting which have increased with APP amendments. They include initial recruitment, upgrades in vetting levels, Non-Police Personnel Vetting, and role changes. The monitoring process of backlogs is complex as for new recruits, there are interdependencies with the recruitment team.

The Central Disclosure Unit has developed a new performance framework with a keen focus on productivity. It has been confirmed that there is no requirement for an Appropriate Authority (AA) to endorse a complaint that is recorded as 'otherwise than by investigation,' which accounts for a high volume. This will expedite the overall timeliness, providing a more efficient outcome for the complainant, and giving some capacity to local AA's that can be invested in supporting wider professionalism activity. Options are also being explored to revise the logging of dissatisfactions falling outside Schedule 3, which may create capacity within the team. This is important as delays in complaint handling are impactive for the complainant and perversely can lead to more complaints being made. It inevitably impacts on wider public confidence. This approach would be subject to clear guidance, audit, and escalation safeguards to ensure transparency and fairness.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.

The political landscape presents uncertainty about the future, and it is not possible to meaningfully predict how this may affect PSD. Regulations and APP are complex to navigate and may be subject to further amendments. Recent changes have informed working practices and have increased requirements that have been especially impactive for the CVU and investigation teams. For example, changes in vetting APP now require continuous screening rather than one-off reviews. There is now a positive obligation to proactively monitor changes in circumstances, not just respond to intelligence. There is also a requirement for at least a year integrity screening process. Amendments in the conduct regime mean that hearings are now chaired by Chief Officers rather than legally qualified chairs, which has significantly changed how hearings are planned and managed.

Risks and benefits of any changes under the Affordable Future Programme have been carefully modelled in business cases, but the true impact will not be understood until any changes are made and fully embedded.

It will be important to differentiate between what we cannot meet and what we should not meet. Maintaining a disciplined approach to scope, identify best practice and continually assess the necessity and proportionality of activity will assist this.

As technology constantly evolves the complexity of work increases. The use of AI in reporting complaints has increased the initial handling time for the SDU. Nearly every investigation has digital elements, and more people have multiple devices per household. Digital forensic enquiries can be protracted, negatively impacting on the timeliness of investigations, which is impactive for the employee in question, any victims, the wider Force, and the public. In some cases, the officer or staff member will be suspended while under investigation, and they are paid for the duration. Others are restricted or allowed to continue their usual duties, however the impact of being under investigation often lead to long term psychological absence. All absence impacts the wider workforce. Extended periods of suspension or restriction present ethical, financial, and reputational risks, particularly if an individual is later exonerated.

Significant delays in the judicial system are problematic as usually a conduct investigation will be held in sub judice until criminal matters are concluded. This can mean officers and staff are suspended on full pay for significant periods of time.

Similarly, IOPC investigations are backlogged and typically take longer than a PSD investigation to conclude. Backlogs in other agencies are a challenge as the police have limited influence. We seek to mitigate where possible, by completing accelerated misconduct hearings ahead of criminal proceedings if the option is available. We also work collaboratively with the IOPC and other partners and escalate concerns when necessary. There is also a keen focus on ensuring proportionality, while maintaining ethical and fair investigations.

Nonetheless, accepting the uncertainties outlined, performance across all departments is strong and there is confidence in the overall capacity and capability of the workforce to meet demand. Proactive work, horizon scanning, and preventative assurance activity are the area's most likely to be impacted if reactive work increases. The effectiveness of prevention activity is not easy to quantify, but volumes of conduct referrals are monitored, and if there are any significant reductions, this will prompt further exploration.

Introduction to Estates

The Estate Services department serves as a unified Force function, addressing both reactive and strategic development needs across the Force estate.

The Force estate continues to be a critical enabler of policing activity and remains under sustained pressure due to historic underinvestment, growing operational demand, and

increasing statutory compliance requirements. The Estates Strategy 2023 to 2028 sets a clear direction to modernise, rationalise and decarbonise the estate while ensuring operational resilience and compliance, and this remains a core area of strategic focus for the Force.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Current demand on the estate remains high and is likely to continue, driven by these principal factors:

Operational growth and change: Increased workforce numbers, specialist capabilities (e.g. firearms), and evolving ways of working continue to place pressure on accommodation, custody provision, training facilities and enabling infrastructure.

Sustainability and decarbonisation: The Force must respond to national Net Zero legal commitments and the electrification of the fleet, requiring significant upgrades to electrical capacity and site infrastructure across the estate.

Estate transformation and rationalisation: The need to release inefficient buildings, invest in priority sites and recycle capital receipts remains integral to funding wider transformation activity.

Estate Services is fundamentally involved in major projects and strategic planning. There are a range of current projects and work streams underway and ongoing including:

- Collaboration with City of London Police to deliver a new firing range
- Ongoing programme of work to manage and review planned maintenance agreements
- Sexual Assault Referral Centre extension to support ISO accreditation

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

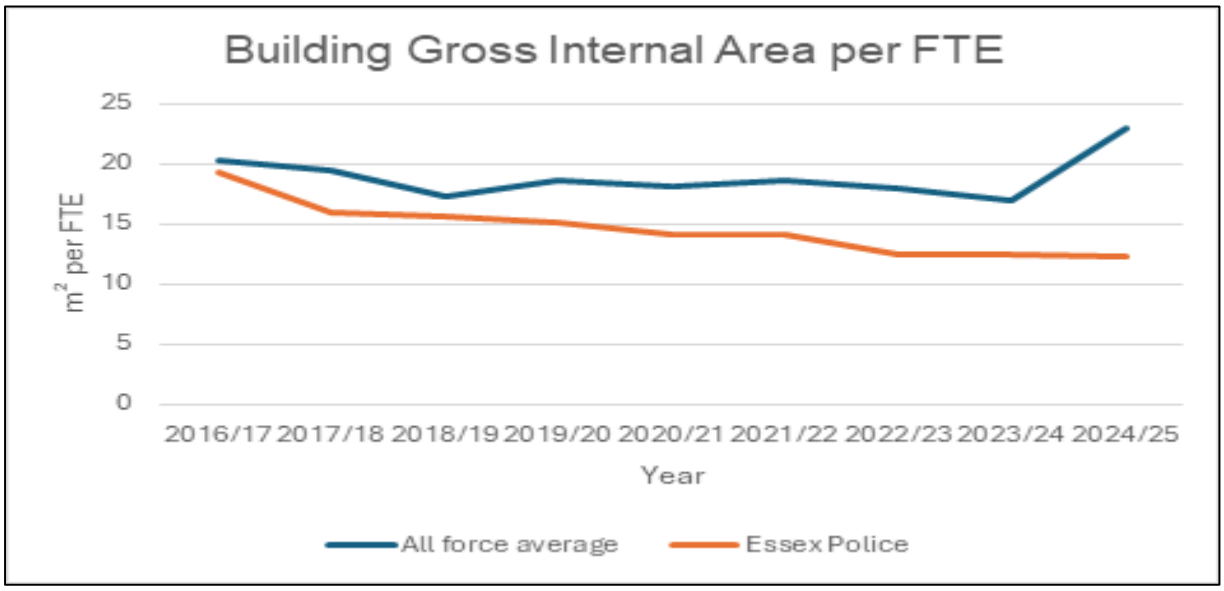
To deliver our projects effectively and realise our ambitions, it is essential that delivery is as efficient and effective as possible. This requires the early and ongoing involvement of other departments as key stakeholders.

Estate Services will continue to work collaboratively with core functions including Continuous Improvement & Analytics, Procurement, Corporate Finance, and senior stakeholders. Timely, efficient, and well informed decision making remains fundamental to enabling effective delivery and achieving our objectives.

Estate Services continues to support the Force in addressing identified AFIs, ensuring that maintenance regimes are up to date and that the estate remains safe, compliant, and fit for purpose. This enables officers and staff to deliver against the Force Plan. All refurbishment and newbuild projects will incorporate disability access requirements, accessibility standards and align with the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.

Our building efficiency can be baselined against other forces by calculating our building internal gross area as a metre squared (m^2) against our full-time employees which we are sixth lowest against 30 Forces as of 31 March 2025 (*Figure 1*). Our reduction of assets has contributed to the increased space efficiency.

Figure 1



Source: National Police Estates Group Interforce Benchmarking (30 Force returns)

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand

The Estates Strategy 2023 to 2028 provides a clear framework to modernise, rationalise and future-proof the Force estate. While delivery of the strategy will initially increase activity and demand on the service, this is expected to reduce over the medium to long term as the estate becomes smaller, more efficient, and easier to maintain.

A significant programme of disposals has and continues to reduce the overall footprint of the estate, driving more efficient use of space and better alignment with operational need. This rationalisation is already delivering benefits through reduced revenue expenditure and lower reactive maintenance demand, with fewer and more efficient buildings requiring ongoing support.

The need to invest into the Estate has never been higher and there is a clear program of investment. We have changed our approach to be able to meet this demand and deliver the needs of the Force and wider estate. We continually review our resources and use of external professional services partners where appropriate.

Alongside estate rationalisation, the Force has approved a joint Carbon Management Plan with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service, providing a strategic pathway towards the transition to electric vehicles and the delivery of net zero carbon buildings by 2050. This long term

approach ensures that estate decisions support sustainability, resilience and future operational requirements while reducing environmental impact and whole life costs.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above. The Force expects to see a reduction in revenue/maintenance costs with the continued disposals programme. Furthermore, efficiencies in investment in more carbon neutral solutions for existing estate will reduce associated revenue costs.

- **Resources** - While in the long term the strategy should bring about a reduction in demand, implementation and delivery will be extensive and protracted.
- **Funding** - Provisional funding has been identified but there is a risk that the delivery of the strategy may cost more than anticipated and/or an unexpected increase in maintenance costs may put a further strain on resources particularly with the current economic situation. Major projects will incur significant capital investment, and an affordability assessment is required.
- **Ageing Estate** - Steps are being taken to modernise and improve the estate.

Collaboration

Introduction:

Essex Police collaborative working drives efficiency, demand reduction and innovation through close working with local, regional and national partners. Initiatives developed in conjunction with a range of local authorities, private sector organisations, industry, academia, and emergency services allow the Force to reduce crime, identify and develop new evidence-gathering techniques and share best practice from across sectors.

A collaborative working culture is thriving across the Force built on strong working relationships and results achieved in areas ranging from Serious and Organised Crime investigation to planning for housing and infrastructure growth, trailblazing innovation with industry, and embedding research partnerships into the way we work.

The Force works with partners to safeguard the public and reduce crime through prevention initiatives, and community engagement for more information please see the Partnership section.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Essex Police will continue to face the challenges of a changing demand landscape where strong collaboration is a key enabler, however there are some particularly significant upcoming changes where this becomes vital.

Specific to Essex, the Strategic planning department works closely with partner agencies including local authorities, private developers and Government departments to identify and plan the police response to the significant housing growth, Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and Critical National Infrastructure within the county.

Large scale development across Essex is anticipated to have a significant impact upon residents, businesses and Essex as a whole. Modelling and analysis indicate population growth, changing traffic patterns and public attention to major infrastructure projects will place increased demand on Essex Police in the coming years.

Collaborative planning with public sector partners, surrounding Police forces and other emergency services has allowed the Force to highlight risks and make public safety representations early in the consultation process for projects such as The Lower Thames Crossing and The Norwich to Tilbury Grid Upgrade. This early engagement also provides an opportunity to secure agreements for crime prevention measures, shared resources and additional funding for the Force to ensure that future demand can be mitigated or met.

With activity increasing as the impact of Local Government Reorganisation takes effect, the Force will need to enhance even further our strong links to partners across the system. To ensure our collaborative efforts continue to have a positive impact in the new Essex structure, shared ambition and commitment to delivering joint outcomes will be key.

In addition, there are several significant joint projects currently underway between Essex and Kent, reflecting our commitment to shared investment and strategic alignment.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

The continued funding challenges and cross-system issues experienced by Essex Police and partners underscore the benefits of shared efficiencies enabling the best possible value for money and service the public. Essex Police continuously look for opportunities to work with partners to share evidence and data to form a more complete picture to the benefit of all parties in delivering excellent service.

Essex and Kent Collaboration

The Kent and Essex Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) continues to operate as a genuinely unified command, bringing together the strengths, expertise, and resources of both forces to tackle the most serious criminality affecting our communities. This collaborative approach ensures we deliver an efficient, effective, and resilient service for the people of Kent and Essex, fully aligned to organisational plans, control strategies, and force priorities.

Fraud remains one of the fastest-growing crime types in the UK, disproportionately affecting vulnerable people and often hindered by fragmented multi-agency responses. In response, Essex Police, working closely with public, private and voluntary sector partners, developed the Multi-Agency Approach to Fraud (MAAF). This innovative, digitally enabled model was

designed and delivered entirely in-house, without external funding. Winner of the National Police Chiefs' Council Collaboration in Furthering Digital, Data Science and Technology Award 2025, the MAAF now provides a scalable, sustainable and victim-focused framework for real-time collaboration, secure information sharing and streamlined operational workflows across agencies. Its impact and innovation have been recognised regionally, nationally and internationally, demonstrating the value of collaborative policing in an increasingly complex threat environment.

Our intelligence bureau demonstrates effective cross-force collaboration, using shared resources to manage rising intelligence demand across both counties. By pooling capability and expertise, the team ensures emerging threats are identified promptly and responded to effectively.

In support of each force's savings requirements, several SCD departments have restructured to create a financially sustainable operating model fit for future delivery. All decisions surrounding structural change or service redesign are approved by both forces through a collaborative lens. This ensures that opportunities for shared learning, improved efficiency, and alignment of best practice are fully explored before any changes are implemented.

Regional Collaboration

Essex Police and City of London Police have agreed to collaborate on the construction of a state-of-the-art firearms training facility. This joint facility will strengthen the resilience and interoperability of firearms training, both operationally and financially.

The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU) operates across the seven police forces within the eastern region. It includes a Regional Organised Crime Unit and a Counter Terrorism Policing Unit, providing specialist intelligence and investigative capabilities in areas including undercover policing, cybercrime, economic crime, Counter Terrorism Border Policing at regional ports, and the four pillars of counter terrorism policing: protect, prepare, prevent and pursue.

Essex contributes resources to the regional Proactive Economic Crime Team, which proactively investigates money laundering and criminal finance and fraud networks linked to serious organised crime and supports the restraint and confiscation of criminal assets. Essex also has access to a Cryptocurrency Asset Recovery Team, which uses powers under the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 to recover crypto-assets as proceeds of crime.

Essex Police utilise the Eastern Region Innovation Network (ERIN) to strengthen collaborative innovation alongside regional partners, academia and industry, supporting the Force's wider approach to shared learning and capability development. Building on an established culture of collaboration, ERIN provides a structured mechanism to identify emerging technologies, develop data-driven approaches and trial innovative solutions to complex policing challenges. This complements existing partnerships across the eastern region, enabling Essex Police to access specialist expertise, reduce duplication and scale

successful initiatives. Through ERIN, the Force enhances its ability to respond to evolving demand, improve service delivery and embed innovation within operational and strategic practice.

Local Collaboration
The Essex Police Contact Command has alignment with Kent Police for the onboarding of a suite of tech products designed to deflect secondary and non-value demand. This will make new reports easier to assess and improve service responsiveness. The suite includes projects such as Victims Journey, Bobbi agentic AI (Artificial Intelligence), a Customer Relationship Manager and the National My Police Portal.

Significant challenges persist with Health, particularly around contact from East of England Ambulance Service and the rise in mental health related contact being received by police which continues to grow exponentially.

The Eastern region contact management group has been restarted during the last period to share best practice, examine shared challenges and new opportunities to tackle this growth.

Essex Police also co-ordinates the multi-force arrangement that oversees the shared Athena crime reporting and intelligence system.

Essex Police collaborate through academic partnerships including Nottingham Trent University, contributions to joint analytical programmes, and wider collaboration with the University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University through research activity, officer evidence-based projects and academic-practice integration. Initiatives such as Project Minerva, the Safer Essex Roads Partnership (SERP) and the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA) deliver a coordinated, data-driven approach to prevention and problem solving. Project Minerva combines analytical capability and partnership delivery to address violence against women and girls in public spaces through a public health model, while SERP brings together multi-agency expertise to reduce road harm through education, enforcement and engineering. As a paying member of ECDA, Essex Police contribute operational insight and benefits from cross-sector analytics, ensuring that innovation, evidence and shared data are effectively translated into targeted interventions and improved outcomes for communities.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Essex Police continue to place strategic importance on collaboration at all levels and across all sectors, ensuring that we can maximise the delivery of shared ambitions, and capitalise on different ways of sharing insight and resources to achieve individual and shared goals. This helps us to better understand and respond to emerging priorities and challenges, and ensures our staff and officers are working within a system that can work together to adapt to changing demand.

At a local level, project Minerva is a collaborative programme focused on reducing violence against women and girls and related harm in public spaces through advanced hotspot

mapping, partnership problem solving and a public health approach. The Performance Analysis Unit plays a central role by supplying and integrating police data, designing analytical products, and supporting the transition of the Minerva approach from project status into business-as-usual delivery. The work is delivered in partnership with Nottingham Trent University, Essex County Council, Fire and Rescue, Community Safety Partnerships and operational policing leads, ensuring analytical outputs are directly linked to intervention and prevention activity.

The analytical contribution to Operation Minerva goes beyond identifying high harm locations. The Performance Analysis Unit supports the development of thematic workstreams including VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls), antisocial behaviour, road safety and serious violence, alongside benefits realisation and evaluation frameworks that demonstrate impact over and above business as usual activity.

Essex Police is a paying member of the Essex Centre for Data Analytics, supporting cross sector data science and analytics initiatives that address shared challenges and present frequent opportunities to share skills and resources. Within ECDA, Essex Police provide insight into the wider impacts of crime, analytical leadership and practical delivery, particularly where partner organisations intersect with crime, vulnerability and place-based harm. This includes contributions to ECDA operations boards, developing insight on the development of data platforms and governance, and collaborative development of shared analytical approaches that can be reused across partners to respond to system-wide demand.

Specific ECDA workstreams supported by Essex Police include strategic data mapping, and exploration of advanced analytics and AI use cases where policing data can add value within strong ethical and governance frameworks. Our involvement ensures that partnership data projects remain operationally grounded, proportionate in data use, and aligned with Force priorities and national performance frameworks, while also benefiting from academic and partner innovation.

Essex Police continue to drive collaboration with BT through our joint Hothouse project with recent innovations focusing on preventing stalking and harassment, using digital evidence, early intervention, and targeted safeguarding to reduce risk and improve outcomes for victims.

One of our most significant BT Hothouse innovations was the 'Fake or Real? Know the Deal' campaign which launched in 2025. This joint campaign aims to educate and protect the public from deepfakes and online harms, with a focus on awareness, reporting, and prevention. EE stores in Essex will roll out in-store bookable appointments and Essex Police will continue discussions with the Department for Education to get the campaign and toolkit circulated to all schools. The Force is in discussion with other forces and organisations to further promote the toolkit, develop conversations with Crest Advisory to establish potential research opportunities and monitor success with the aim of delivering the campaign nationally.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
As a result of Essex joining the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, there will be a change in the structure of local governance within the county. This signifies a significant change in the operating environment for all partners within the Essex system. Whilst clarity on timelines and impacts are being understood, Essex Police is ensuring engaging with stakeholders so that opportunities to consider the impacts on public safety are maximised and that existing strong collaborative practices aren't lost.

Local Government Reform will also require a restructure of system-wide governance arrangements when fifteen principal councils are replaced with five unitary councils. These changes will necessitate amendments to the structure, governance and delivery of effective processes such as Community Safety Partnerships and the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's Emergency Services Collaboration programme, and we will continue to work closely with relevant partners to support smooth transition.

Public Confidence

Introduction
Essex Police adopt a comprehensive, force-wide approach to enhancing and maintaining public trust and confidence. With its own dedicated section, demonstrating the importance for our Force, we cannot police without the consent and confidence of our communities. Numerous issues continue to affect trust and confidence in policing, including but not limited to national and local focus on behaviours and cultures within policing; national and local focus on the policing of events, incidents and protest which have a polarising effect within communities; a local, national and international climate of socio-political instability and division and associated community tension.

The most recent census for Essex, conducted in March 2021, recorded a population of 1,503,521 but, as of early 2026, the population is now estimated to have grown to 1.9 million. Essex remains an efficient force with 1.9 officers per 1,000 head of population, but the county's population continues to grow due to domestic migration and an ever-increasing older population. Under revised government targets, local authorities in Essex have been tasked with building 14,000 new homes annually. The exponential growth of the population/housing will continue to place additional demand on policing resources.

The Force has seen some predicted dips in public confidence. In the 12 months to Q3 (the third quarter (October to December 2025)) 2025/26, 69.8% of respondents surveyed felt Essex Police is doing a good or excellent job. This is a significant decrease of 5.3%. In the 12 months to Q3 2025/26, 55.4% agreed they have confidence in the local police – this is the lowest point since tracking began.

This may reflect a combination of factors. Over the past eight months, Essex, and Epping in particular, has become a focus of national media and political attention in relation to the asylum and immigration debate. This has been linked to the use of the Bell Hotel as asylum accommodation and the arrest and conviction of a resident for a sexual offence against a child in the local community. Epping has consequently become, and remains, a hotspot for related protest and is now associated with wider political and media debate on this issue. Alongside this, the Force's perceived impartiality—both in policing asylum-related protest and protest more generally—has been questioned, including through associated information disorder across social and traditional media and in some political forums. Wider context includes negative local and national reporting on police budgets, policing conduct and culture, and extensive coverage of the government's policing white paper, with some commentary suggesting that regional policing models could distance officers from their communities. These issues sit within an increasingly divisive and polarised public discourse and a broader sense of anxiety and instability linked to the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing international conflict, contributing to a growing erosion of trust and confidence in public institutions.

The Media & Communications Team continues to support the building and maintenance of public trust and confidence in Essex Police. Every month the team tells hundreds of positive stories focusing on operational activity, criminal justice outcomes, victim advocacy, crime prevention activity, and policing visibility within the community to ensure the public continue to see our officers working hard to protect and serve the people of our county. The public appetite to hear from their local police force is demonstrated by the continued year-on-year growth of Essex Police owned channels (including our website and social media) which now has an aggregated reach of more than 1.3 million. Our positive, proactive storytelling is underpinned by our campaign activity which aims to prevent crime; raise awareness and educate our communities around thematic crime types; encourage reporting of crime; encouraging behaviour change amongst perpetrators living within our communities. All these efforts continue to help the Force to drive up and maintain trust and confidence in our Force.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

The Force continues to focus efforts upon driving up public confidence which, as set out in the previous section, has seen some challenges in the most recent quarter. The disparity between victims of crime and non-victims continues to show a downward trend.
Victims' perception of crime and policing were significantly lower than other respondents to our SMSR survey (survey undertaken by SMSR, an independent Market Research Company). In the 12 months to Q3 2025/26, 37.8% of victims agreed they had confidence in local police. The feedback from victims who responded to the survey shows that communication (from officer to victim) is key to improving confidence levels. Victims value regular contact and updates and those who provided positive feedback focused on clear communication and empathy. We need to ensure a unified approach to public contact and engagement to ensure the service matches the expectation, but the service also matches the gold standard often reflected in our positive storytelling (which in turn creates a level of expectation).

The Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has placed a renewed focus on accessible and visible local policing, with Neighbourhood Policing Teams in every local area focusing on local priorities and problems, including anti-social behaviour, shop theft, safer town centres, and the types of issues often communicated to us a top concern by local people.

The governmental focus on Neighbourhood Policing was further underpinned in January 2026 with the long-awaited release of the government's white paper proposing a new model for policing. An independent panel has now been appointed to conduct an independent review of police force structures as a result, and it is expected to report in the Summer of 2026.

Amongst things recommended within the paper are the creation of a new National Police Service to absorb functions currently held by Counter Terrorism Policing, the National Crime Agency, and Regional Organised Crime Models. Aligned with this, Neighbourhood Policing is expected to move to a regional force model – or "Super Local Policing Areas." Policing funding is to be reviewed in the short-term ahead of longer-term alignment to regional organisation.

In short over the next four years, with the possible implementation of the white paper recommendations, policing in Essex and beyond may change beyond all recognition. The white paper implementation may also run in parallel with local government reorganisation and devolution in Essex which equally will have ramifications for our Force and in particular ways of working with public sector partners.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Crime continues to fall in Essex. In the 12 months (12m) to the end of March 2026, there were 141,619 crimes recorded, which is a 1.0 per cent reduction compared to the previous 12m. The solved rate increased by 2.08 per cent for the 12 months to March 2026 compared to the 12 months to March 2025 with a solved rate of 17.26 per cent in March 2026. The Force continues to target and arrest prolific criminals while also working with the consent of all neighbourhoods and communities to make Essex even safer. We continue to innovate to ensure we are doing all we can to prevent and detect crime including but not limited to: our Project Vigilant patrols to ensure women and girls can enjoy our night-time economy safely; Operation Minerva to work with our partners to create safe spaces in our community; the use of hotspot policing more broadly; 'DA today', our rapid investigative response to domestic abuse incidents; the use of new and emerging technology to improve productivity; and constantly upskilling our officers and staff.

Our Affordable Futures programme will see us making changes from the Summer of 2026 to our Force structures that, as well as delivering a balanced budget, will: strengthen our investigations around protecting vulnerable people; strengthening our neighbourhood policing; ensuring a more joined-up focus in offender management; strengthening custody;

and developing a more joined-up approach across the Force to work with young people and youth offending.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
The Force continues to maintain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing public confidence in Essex Police and policing more broadly.

Visibility of officers and engagement with their local communities are paramount in building and maintaining public confidence. But we need to ensure our priorities have a unified approach in relation to media, engagement, external affairs, public contact and that the service meets the expectation.

The Force is continuing to grow existing communications platforms and throughout 2026 will seek to grow them and invest in new channels to ensure we continue to reach all our audiences across the county. We are also continuing to build our capability within media and communications to ensure we are equipped to deal with the ever-growing challenge for pre- and de-bunking information disorder with a solid foundation build upon audience insight and belief systems. We also continue to grow the capacity across our Force for our people to be the best advocates for our Force and the policing profession.

The Media & Communications Team delivered media training Continuous Professional Development to more than 900 officers of all ranks and roles across 2025. We continue to:

- Provide bespoke media training to: Detectives, Family Liaison Officers, Senior Investigating Officers, Force Duty Officers, Firearms officers, Gold Commanders, Public Order officers, colleagues undertaking the 'Be the Change' course and new probationer officer, District Commanders, and Local Policing Area inspectors.
- 121 training and media assessments are also provided for those undertaking promotion boards at Chief Inspector rank and upwards.
- Operational guidance around social media and engagement.
- Sentiment analysis to support Community Impact Assessments and critical incident handling.
- Provision of crime prevention and promotional materials.

The Media & Communications Team also shares professional knowledge through the Association of Police Communicators and the College of Policing.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Local government reform may impact policing in several ways. Once introduced a new Mayor for Greater Essex could impact current ways of working and policies within Essex Police. Partnership working may also be impacted, and our Force may need to remove or add responsibilities from other agencies as things evolve.

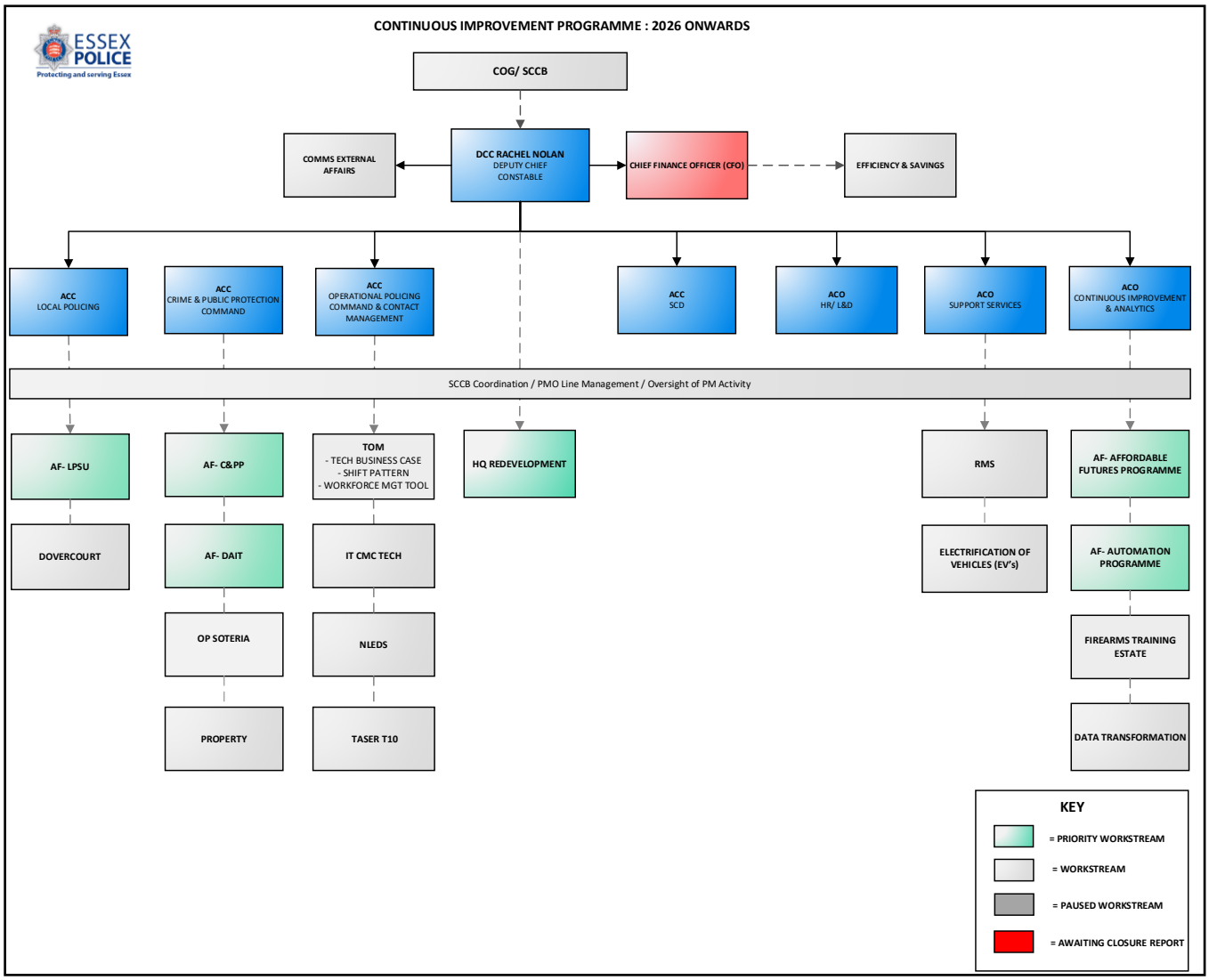
The findings of the independent panel, exploring police structures as part of the white paper/policing reform could also lead to a wholesale change in the structure of Essex Police and policing more broadly.

Over the course of the last financial year, and in advance of the current year, the Force has faced significant budgetary pressures, resulting in both realised and proposed reductions in police staff and changes to operating arrangements. As changes to the Force's structure and ways of working are implemented from Summer 2026, there may be consequential impacts on service delivery, which could lead to dissatisfaction in some areas of the business.

Managing the Organisation

Introduction to Operational Change:
Operational Change is a multi-dimensional team embedded in the Continuous Improvement and Analytics (CI&A) Command. This section describes the Force approach to planning and managing strategic change and investment decisions. The team supports all forms of transformation to maximise investments and future innovation opportunities. Operational Change is a central point for implementing and reviewing change activity, identifying efficiencies, and providing support and guidance across a variety of technical and operational areas. The team also provides appropriate governance, monitoring, tracking, and oversight of Force change, including the savings and growth programmes. The teams support a large and complex programme of change from inception through to accountability at Assistant Chief Constable, Assistant Chief Officer, Deputy Chief Constable, and Chief Constable level.

Project Management
The Projects team manages the Force Strategic Change and Co-ordination Board (SCCB), which oversees the Force change programme and the Affordable Futures Programme (AFP), supporting an operationally and financially sustainable future, while ensuring sufficient co-ordination with the technology change programme. The team include project managers assigned to strategic priority projects providing skilled capability in the planning and delivery of major change and systematic reviews, with support being provided by the Project Support function.



Programme Management

As well as supporting the Force change programme, this team also leads the Efficiency and Savings programme for the Force, alongside Corporate Finance, including the co-ordination and oversight of all Force business change cases, establishment moves and changes to our operating model. The team work collaboratively with Corporate Finance and Human Resources Specialists to support commands in the identification and delivery of savings and efficiencies that will deliver against Force priorities and the Force Plan and then monitoring our delivery of those changes to track through our strategic governance arrangements.

Within this space, the benefits realisation function coordinates a Force-wide approach to early identification, measurement, and tracking of benefits through the Force's benefits realisation tool. As well as generating evidence of the success of project activity, this also supports the Force budget setting process and wider strategic planning process where cashable, non-cashable and time saving efficiencies are considered alongside risk management, service delivery, increased legal and policy compliance, and core performance outcomes to determine the overall success of the programme.

At the end of the change process, the Operational Review team are commissioned to carry out Post Implementation Reviews (PIR) of areas where significant organisational or operational change has taken place, to review the delivery of the project against original change objectives and the success of benefits realisation. In addition, they complete reviews in support of Force performance areas of interest and provide recommendations for improvement. The Force Plan and priorities are the focal point of all work completed by the team.

Several significant PIRs are due to conclude for the Force, focusing on Contact Management TOM, Custody and Neighbourhood Policing.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
As highlighted above, the largest source of demand for the teams is the Force change programme, which includes the AFP, bringing together the coordination of several significant projects to ensure dependencies can be identified and mapped to maximise efficiencies and benefit realisation.

Affordable Futures Programme
The AFP is a key component of the Force change programme, and is underpinned by the following overarching change objectives:

- Strengthening our approach and delivery of Protecting Vulnerable People investigations – Public Protection investigations, DAIT investigations.
- Strengthening Neighbourhood Policing and delivering the Guarantee by developing policing of local communities.
- Streamlining Offender Management to ensure a joined-up prevention focus.
- Enhancing how we Protect Vulnerable People.
- Strengthening Custody by aligning with Local Policing.
- Developing a preventative and cross-force joined-up approach to young people and youth offending.
- Increasing Efficiency and Effectiveness by reviewing duplicate functions and roles.
- Delivering Efficiency and Effectiveness through a strategic approach to Automation.
- Improving victim and public confidence.
- Delivering a balanced budget for 2026/27 and as resilient and sustainable Mid Term Financial Plan.

Future demand
Managing this breadth and scale of operational and organisational changes will continue to be professionally led and supported by the Operational Change team, directed by the strategic planning process through which all risks, priorities and emerging themes are considered. Project resourcing is necessarily agile and is determined by the relative priorities within the programme with project support spanning several delivery years in some instances.

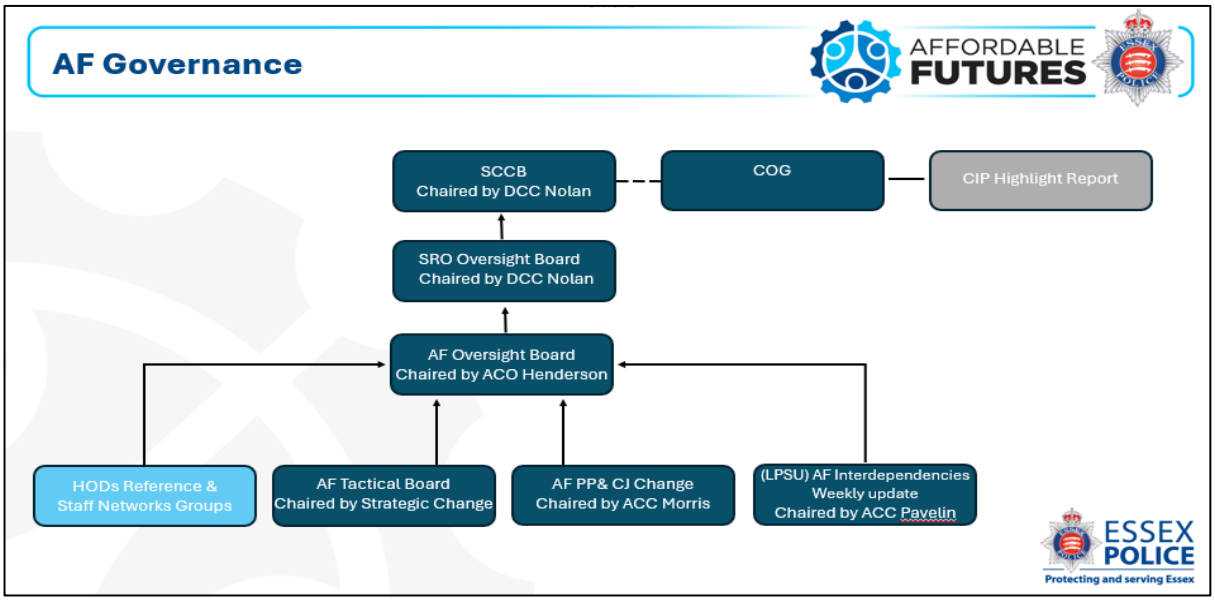
The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The overall capability of the team is high, with project manager skillsets aligned to recognised and valid training such as Prince 2 (Project Management accreditation). There are no specific training requirements for the remaining members of the Programme and Projects team, however, continued Continuous Professional Development opportunities are scoped and offered where appropriate, including areas of benefits realisation and review work.

The Programme and Projects teams have been impacted by savings requirements in the last two financial years and whilst future resourcing will be dependent on the financial position of the Force, the team are delivering to an extremely high standard with current resourcing levels. The level or change that requires their support will also continue to be directly impacted by the Force's financial position and our requirement to achieve further savings or other efficiencies in future years.

There is an established and consistent workforce within these teams, which, having drawn them together under the Programme and Projects function has broadened understanding and overlap of skills across projects from inception to completion and final review, working collectively towards the objectives of the Force change programme and AFP.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
As well as being flexible in our resourcing of priority projects, we are adapting our reporting processes to ensure they are as streamlined and effective as possible. Our primary programme reporting process has been completely transformed in the last 12 to 18 months, with a new Microsoft Office 365 (M365) shared workspace replacing previous heavy, manual information processing. The new approach not only generates administrative efficiencies, it now provides a dynamic programme overview which includes financial and benefits monitoring, but it also provides a single point of truth to support all programme oversight.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
The future demand expected on the team is driven by the budget position outlined in the earlier section. There is no expectation of not being able to meet demand and our already agile resourcing approach is further enhanced by a series of measures to support with this such as dashboards, and refined commissioning and governance of projects. The focus of the work will be determined by Chief Officers based on resources available and priorities, rather than an inability to meet demand.



Introduction to Automation:

The automation programme, led by the Innovation team, has a clear ambition to build productivity and efficiency and reduce risk for the Force through introducing strategically aligned automation solutions in areas of priority focus. Our aim is to seek opportunities with, and to learn from, policing and other partners in developing a growing number of automations, whilst also being the first to develop new solutions of our own. With a delivery partner, the Force is building an in-house Centre of Excellence that will enable this activity and will ensure Essex Police can be self-sustaining in automation utilising our existing contract with Microsoft and their products, including tools such as Microsoft Copilot and Power Automate, whilst being agile enough to adopt automations on other platforms. The Force has invested heavily in this programme, both financially and practically, by growing resources to drive this forward including a new Superintendent role as our strategic lead. A crucial aspect of achieving our ambition is to develop a framework to support citizen developers from within the organisation and to promote and harness the innovation of our people, and we are ensuring they have the right capability through access to technology and training.

The automation programme will collaborate with third party providers to identify opportunities outside our programme and across a spectrum of sources (e.g. with providers of technology we have already commissioned) to meet our ambitions. The programme will provide clear strategic direction and ambition with an ethical and compliant approach at its core, and we will deliver this through well-defined processes that take us from idea generation through to technical delivery and benefit realisation.

The automation programme is an investment for the Force, anticipated to provide return on investment many times over, within two to three years. It will be overseen through the investment of a Superintendent as head of Innovation and Automation, bringing both

previous experience of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and experience of different operational roles.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.
Demands are noticeable but remain manageable with effective prioritisation and planning. This has remained primarily achievable on the basis that new projects and activity have continued to remain within the gift of the team and management structure to determine timescales for delivery. Careful planning, decision making and timescales are consciously managed.

Automation and AI are relatively new to policing; however, the use of these tools is growing exponentially across the public and private business sectors and are fast becoming a norm across society. There is little historical data to be able to predict demand but the rise in use is substantial. The Office for National Statistics states that around 25% of UK businesses are now using some form of robotic process automation (RPA) or AI and that this is at 44% across larger firms. The Alan Turing Institute estimates that 41% of public-sector time is spent on tasks amenable to generative-AI support, highlighting substantial scope for service productivity and efficiency improvements. The most tangible value from AI and RPA (including intelligent automation) comes in document workflows, agent assistance, research/summarisation, quality checks, and data integration.

The direction of travel is clear, AI and automation adoption is expected to continue to rise, supported by funded programmes, investment and improving capability. The near-term (one to two years) growth story is primarily about wider deployment and measurable productivity wins (faster handling and document processing) rather than complex and slightly speculative further-future (two to four years) automation.

More broadly, for the Innovation team there remains an ambition to incorporate a Future's Thinking approach and methodology to further enhance our recognition and adoption of innovation opportunities, ensuring we are investing time and resource in the most impactful places for the future. This is time intensive but an important step in our future planning and continues to become more widespread across policing, from both within the Eastern Region Innovation Network (ERIN) and the Office of the Police Chief Scientific Adviser, so there is an expectation that forces will increasingly draw on this or adopt this position themselves. Through the well-established R&I Board, alongside the recently introduced Automation Programme governance structure, enhanced reporting and oversight of innovation activity are now embedded. We are also using digital tools to manage the programme as effectively as possible.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
The Innovation team establishment has experienced growth to the wider structure due to establishment of the automation programme. Once all posts are filled, we are of the view that

we will have sufficient resources to meet expected demand, with the ongoing support of a delivery partner and the national automation programme team.

Alongside recruiting into additional roles, we are also enhancing our skills and knowledge throughout the Force. The Innovation team have received virtual training to upskill in business analysis techniques so that they can support essential process mapping for the automation pipeline. In addition, co-pilot training has been arranged for the entire Force at different levels dependent on whether users have a basic or full licence. This will be rolled out between April and June 2026.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Whilst the model we have adopted for delivering strategic automation is designed to be self-sustaining, the scale of delivery will be dependent on the resources within the model. As returns on investment begin to be realised, there will be opportunities to align any additional resourcing to emerging demand. The automation programme will develop as technologies change and the Force become more organisationally competent to develop and deliver automations independently.

Our automation Centre of Excellence will help us mature in our knowledge and skill sets required for keeping abreast of new technologies and modernise our infrastructure to bring efficiencies and better operational practices.

The automation strategy stresses the need for a robust development pipeline with clear prioritisation, benefits tracking, and alignment with strategic objectives. This will be delivered through an agile model that encourages engagement with our own workforce, our system partners, and industry to understand opportunities for development.

The ERIN provides a well embedded collaborative structure for tactical and strategic focus on innovation opportunities. ERIN's pipeline of activity is approved by the 7 Force (7F Strategic Collaboration Programme) Chief Constables and their regional approach to innovation supports forces to evidence investment in innovation in an informed and evidence-based manner, adapting initiatives to meet local priorities. Essex Police's proactive, consistent, and effective engagement with ERIN enables enhanced links to the national space, specifically the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) Science and Innovation Co-ordination Committee, NPCC, National Science and Innovation Board, and the NPCC RPA Programme.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
There is substantial interest in, and demand for, strategic automation, which has generated a high volume of ideas and requests to support a range of policing functions across Essex. To identify those with the greatest priority for development, we have introduced a triage tool that assesses the key factors determining whether a concept should be prioritised, including relevance to Force risk, Force priorities, potential efficiencies, and service improvement.

Delivery of some of the more complex automations will require dedicated technical resource, including that of delivery partners. Where an automation is not considered complex, and it can be delivered through existing tools such as co-pilot and M365, the strategic automation model is to support and guide our workforce to be citizen developers where it is safe to do so. We are already seeing the benefits of this as the Force begins to deploy home-grown solutions to high volume, information-gathering tasks.

Introduction to Research and Analysis

The Research and Analysis Department has undergone significant restructuring this year and now comprises the Criminal Intelligence Team and the Performance Analysis Unit (PAU), which includes the Data and Insights Team, the Performance Team, and the Strategic Team. Collectively, these five teams provide essential analytical, data and intelligence support, helping the organisation understand its demand, performance, and risk.

Alongside this structural development, the Force has made substantial progress in strengthening its research activity. This has been underpinned by the R&I Strategy and strongly supported by the R&I Delivery Board and Executive Board, which introduced robust governance, aligned activity to organisational priorities, and created a consistent, coordinated approach to R&I across the organisation.

Our partnerships with academia and external experts have continued to develop, providing valuable insight, independent evaluation, and specialist expertise. These collaborations have enriched our evidence base, accelerated the adoption of evidence-based practice, and ensured a truly collaborative approach that draws on diverse perspectives. Essex Police now routinely problem solves using academic research opportunities, embedding evidence informed thinking into everyday practice.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

The demand for research and analysis across the Force continues to rise and is expected to increase further over the next four years. This growth is driven by a stronger national and local push towards data driven, decision making, a heightened need to demonstrate productivity with constrained resources, and the introduction of the new National Police Performance Framework (NPPF) and the Tiered Policing System (TPS). The NPPF introduces a more detailed and closely monitored performance regime, requiring substantial internal alignment, assurance, and reporting activity. This will be reinforced through the HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service) TPS, which will place forces into tiers based on their level of performance risk. Tiering will be informed by NPPF data, HMICFRS inspection findings, and subsequent follow-up activity, and will determine the level of scrutiny, support, and intervention applied to each force. This will sit alongside the already significant volume of reporting for internal and external governance structures, placing sustained pressure on the Data and Insights and Performance teams within the PAU.

Across the Force, there is an increasing reliance on data scientists. Over the past year, internal analytical capability has strengthened through the successful upskilling of two analysts into data scientist roles, who delivered key Guardian products and materially enhanced the Force's advanced analytics capacity. This represents an important foundation rather than surplus capacity, as demand for sophisticated modelling, hotspot analysis, and predictive insight is expected to increase significantly. Sustaining and scaling this capability will therefore be critical to meeting future performance and operational requirements.

This capability is further strengthened through academic collaboration with Nottingham Trent University (NTU) via the Minerva programme. This approach expands internal capability and helps ensure the Force can sustain increasingly complex analytical requirements as business as usual.

Demand for advanced mapping, modelling and predictive analytics is also growing across operational and strategic policing areas. Ongoing data science collaboration with fire, ambulance and the Essex Centre for Data Analytics (ECDA) provide access to additional expertise and shared development opportunities, an essential strategy in the context of limited internal resources.

The introduction of the forensic codes of practice in October 2025 has already created a substantial organisational requirement. Analysts must rapidly interpret technical guidance, contribute to new Standard Operating Procedures, and support the creation of a sustainable quality management framework. Analysts are also absorbing expanded operational responsibilities, particularly through the Agency Partners Management Information System and nationally mandated Serious and Organised Crime Systems Tasking. These processes are essential for assessing threat, harm and risk and cannot be deprioritised. They have been added to existing workloads, creating a cumulative demand picture that limits responsiveness, reduces flexibility, and places pressure on resilience and wellbeing.

These pressures are compounded by the changing nature of crime. Technology enabled offending is increasing rapidly, including deepfake-related harms, misogynistic abuse, and child sexual abuse and exploitation, all of which present complex safeguarding and evidential challenges and require specialist analytical approaches. Alongside this, emerging 'comms group' offending is characterised by fluid, loosely organised networks that fall outside traditional threat models, making them more difficult to identify, anticipate and disrupt. Crime is also becoming increasingly digitally enabled, fragmented and complex, requiring analytical capability to develop through specialist expertise and sufficient capacity to remain operationally credible and compliant.

To respond to these changes, the Intelligence Analyst Team has adopted a more flexible model. This improves the Force's ability to address a broader and more dynamic spectrum of threat, harm, and vulnerability.

The demand generated by Freedom of Information (FOI) requests has also grown significantly. Sustained media scrutiny has created unprecedented volumes of FOI activity, diverting analyst time to meeting statutory deadlines, managing complex queries, and undertaking extensive data validation. In 2025 the team serviced 640 FOI requests, an 11% increase on the previous year; a trend which is expected to continue. The rise of Microsoft Copilot and other AI tools in the public domain has changed the nature of FOIs, making them more technically demanding, often requiring multi-dataset analysis, extended time series, or bespoke analytical interpretation. No dedicated FOI capacity exists within the Force, creating a long term structural challenge.

Together, these developments highlight a persistent and widening gap between current capacity and future analytical demand. Addressing this gap will require continued investment in skills, restructuring, collaboration, and technology to ensure analytical functions remain effective, compliant, and able to meet the evolving needs of the Force.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Anticipated growth in demand means that the capacity and capability of our analytical teams must continue to evolve. Flexibility within the analyst workforce has strengthened through staff movement across teams, restructuring and enhanced collaboration between the PAU and Intelligence. This progress has supported greater adaptability, but further development is needed to meet rising organisational expectations.

The data transformation programme continues to place significant pressure on limited resources, while the organisation becomes increasingly reliant on high-quality analysis and robust data to function effectively. As the programme matures, improvements in force-wide data literacy will gradually reduce the burden of basic interpretation work. This will allow analysts to focus on high value activity such as modelling, insight generation and advanced analytical outputs. However, this represents a substantial cultural shift and will take time to embed.

The Intelligence Team has undertaken extensive Power BI (Microsoft software product for business intelligence) training to prepare for the future analytical environment. The Head of Research and Analysis continues to work closely with command leads to negotiate demand and manage prioritisation. Both the PAU and the Intelligence Team have implemented automated work request processes, providing a more agile approach to tasking, clearer visibility of workloads and more efficient tracking of progress.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
Upskilling remains a priority across the RAD, with intelligence analysts continuing to complete their basic accreditation. Despite these pressures, the department continues to make strong use of the DatCamp platform (online learning platform), developing skills in

Power BI dashboard design, data science techniques and the technical capabilities required for transition to the Microsoft Fabric environment.

We are now beginning to recruit to several key posts that have been vacant for some time, which will have a positive impact on overall capacity as these roles are filled. We have already undertaken a structural review of the Research and Analysis Department, which led to the introduction of a Strategic Team on a pilot basis. A review after six months concluded that this was not the right operating model as a discrete team. However, the principles underpinning the pilot will be embedded into the business-as-usual approach to working.

A further review will take place later this year as part of wider workforce and capability planning. The likely next phase is the consolidation of analytical functions into a single analytical capability, with defined specialisms in strategic analysis, data analysis, and intelligence analysis. Alongside this structural evolution, it is increasingly important to build and retain specialist data science expertise. This will be critical in shaping the future use of artificial intelligence and machine learning across the department, including tools such as Microsoft Copilot, machine learning models, and natural language processing. While these technologies have the potential to significantly enhance capacity and improve demand management, the timescales for implementation remain uncertain.

We have sought alternative ways to meet demand through creative collaborations, including internships and external partnerships. For example, we hosted an ECDA internship to deliver analytical work required by the Force but not resourced internally. We have also engaged in several Anglia Ruskin University ‘Students at the Heart of Knowledge Exchange’ projects, which provide rapid research and consultation. Additionally, we have maximised the contribution of Force students, including master’s students and Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship officers, ensuring their learning and problem solving skills are directed towards Force priorities.

We continue to utilise all available opportunities and remain committed to identifying new approaches to strengthening analytical capacity across the department.

Introduction to Information Management:
The Information Management Department (IMD) has a strategic vision to provide a single centre of excellence that is appropriately skilled, equipped and enabled to deliver a highly professional service, transforming how Essex Police values, uses and exploits data for the public good. IMD comprises three units: Information Compliance and Assurance, Operational Data Disclosure, and the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Information Management sits at the centre of the Force’s ability to operate lawfully, efficiently and with public trust. National expectations are rising: the Police Information and Records Management Code of Practice now set the statutory standard for managing all policing information across its lifecycle, requiring forces to evidence robust creation, retention, review, and disposal practices. Alongside this, evolving national guidance on data

ethics, AI, and data driven policing reinforces the need for transparent, responsible, and well governed use of technology.

Digital transformation across policing continues to accelerate, driven by the National Policing Digital Strategy 2025–2030, which emphasises modernised core data, interoperability, improved risk and security, and a whole-system approach to information sharing. This creates increasing demand for high-quality information governance, resilient records management, and strong data quality frameworks to enable operational effectiveness and lawful decision-making.

Externally, scrutiny of information rights is intensifying. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has taken enforcement action where public bodies have failed to meet FOI obligations, highlighting the reputational and regulatory risks of poor performance. The Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 also brings new legal requirements for organisations handling personal data, adding further compliance expectations across policing.

The landscape is further shaped by rapidly increasing data volumes, growth in digital evidence, and the rising cost and complexity of maintaining legacy systems and storage. National guidance stresses the need for proportionate retention and deliberate disposal decisions to maintain lawful processing and control escalating demand.

Against this backdrop, Information Management provides the governance, assurance, operational resilience, and professional standards that underpin lawful and trusted policing. Its role is critical to maintaining public confidence, enabling digital transformation, and ensuring the organisation meets its statutory duties across information rights, records management, and data protection.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Statutory information rights, including Subject Access Requests, FOI, Early Deletions and Court Orders, are all forecast to rise sharply. Right of Access is expected to double, Early Deletions to more than double, and Court Orders to increase by over two-thirds. This upward trend is driven by the accessibility of Single Online Home and broader public expectations of transparency.

Additional growth pressures are emerging beyond statutory rights. Requests under the Common Law Police Disclosure (CLPD) Scheme, and Data Protection-based employer notifications where individuals may pose a risk at work, are increasing year-on-year. These require rapid, accurate assessments, and place further demand on already stretched information-handling processes.

Demand is also increasing in Data Assurance and Design as the organisation moves towards being data-driven by design. New and emerging systems, particularly RMS Gen 2, will require early specialist input from Higher/Digital Data Officers and Information Asset Owners to ensure that data structures, standards, metadata, and quality controls are established

correctly from the outset. This work is essential to ensure future systems produce high-quality, compliant data that can support lawful sharing, analytics, automation and good service, and outcomes, for our communities.

Over the next four years, the combined effect of rising statutory demand, increased CLPD and employer-risk disclosures, and the expanding need for data assurance work on major system programmes, especially with the growing demand to adequately assurance AI technologies, will further stretch IMD's ability to meet its legal duties. Without targeted intervention, including automation, improved cross-departmental responsiveness, stronger data design capability and more stable resourcing, the gap between current and future demand will continue to widen, increasing compliance, operational and reputational risk.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.
Workforce capability remains strong in terms of professional expertise, but the condition of the workforce is strained, with backlogs, elevated workloads, and increasing pressure affecting serviceability and sustainability.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.
To ensure the workforce and supporting assets can meet rising statutory and operational demand, the IMD is delivering a targeted programme of capability, process and technology improvements designed to improve productivity, resilience, and compliance.

We are also reviewing and simplifying Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIAs) and the personal data breach process, ensuring both are more user-friendly while capturing higher quality information. This will support more accurate forecasting, strengthen organisational learning, and improve early identification of risk trends.

As the organisation shifts towards being data-driven by design, we are strengthening capability within Data Assurance and Design. Digital Data Officers will work more closely with Information Asset Owners to embed data standards, metadata structures, and quality controls into new systems from inception. This is essential to ensure RMS Gen 2, and other digital programmes produce high quality, compliant data that can support lawful sharing, analytics, automation, and operational insight.

To guide these changes, the current force-wide Information Management Strategy is due to be evaluated, with findings informing the next strategic cycle (2027 to 2031). This review will identify the highest priority areas for investment and ensure the department's future resourcing model is aligned to projected statutory demand, technological change, and organisational risk.

Performance and benefits will be monitored through Independent Monitoring Board oversight, updated Key Performance Indicators, risk register tracking, and programme-level reporting. Collectively, these interventions will strengthen resilience, improve statutory

compliance, enhance data quality, and ensure IMD's workforce and assets remain capable of meeting the increasing demand expected over the next four years.

The types and amount of future demand we do not expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Based on current plans, including the introduction of RPA for person-based research, redesigned ISO27001 governance, and improvements to DPIAs and breach processes, the department is well placed to meet much of the forecast increase in statutory demand. Automation should materially reduce manual workload and improve turnaround times, placing us in a stronger position to manage rising volumes across Subject Access, FOI, Early Deletions and Court Orders, which are all forecast to increase significantly.

Additional growth areas such as CLPD, employer risk notifications, and increasing Data Assurance and Design requirements (particularly for RMS Gen 2) will also draw on specialist capacity. While these demands may be manageable within the new operating model, they will require close monitoring to ensure workload remains sustainable.

In summary, the planned changes place us in a strong position to meet expected demand, but the balance is finely poised, and achieving full compliance will depend on timely delivery of automation, stable staffing, and continued process optimisation.

Despite the planned efficiencies, there remain specific areas of future demand where the department may face limitations. Legislative change continues at pace, most recently through the Data (Access and Use) Act 2025 and associated updates to information rights, policing codes of practice and data ethics frameworks, creating a sustained requirement for rapid interpretation and operational adaptation that may exceed specialist capacity.

At the same time, the implementation of RMS Gen 2 will generate an intense, frontloaded requirement for expert data design, assurance, and governance to ensure the system launches with the standards and structures on which the Force's future data strategy depends.

In addition, partners across safeguarding, health, justice and local government are increasingly expecting faster, more consistent, and more sophisticated data sharing. Future demand may exceed the department's ability to respond at the required pace unless wider organisational improvements and cross system support continue to strengthen.

Partnerships

Introduction to Partnerships

The Force continues to enhance its cooperation with partners, as outlined throughout this Force Management Statement (FMS). Partnerships are integral to addressing service demand and reducing requests that extend beyond policing responsibilities. These joint initiatives are essential for fostering safer, more supportive, and cohesive communities, implementing effective safeguarding protocols, and delivering comprehensive support to victims to facilitate their recovery.

In the past two years, Essex Police has asked partners to take part in an annual survey aimed at identifying the challenges their organisations face. For FMS 2026, the Partnership section has been expanded by including neighbourhood policing team Partners, Safeguarding Partners, Criminal Justice, and Health Partners in the survey. This broader approach helps the Force to better understand how major events over the next four years could impact partners' ability to meet current and future demands.

Partners consistently describe growing challenges linked to reduced funding, workforce pressures and slower decision-making as they prepare for structural change. Several agencies have already experienced budget reductions, recruitment constraints, and deferred investment decisions while awaiting clarity on future governance arrangements. These pressures limit partners' ability to plan long term, sustain preventative work or commit resources to joint initiatives, and this in turn is already affecting the capacity and resilience of the wider partnership landscape Essex Police relies upon.

Greater Essex has been accepted onto the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, with His Majesty's Government confirming in July 2025 that the statutory tests had been met. A Combined County Authority for Greater Essex is expected to be created during 2026. However, following a Written Ministerial Statement on 4 December 2025, the first mayoral election has been delayed from May 2026 to May 2028, due to the overlap with Local Government Reorganisation. During this interim period, the new authority will operate as a Strategic Authority without mayoral powers. The Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) has been invited to join as a non-voting, non-constituent member. Government planning assumptions now confirm that the PFCC's functions, powers and assets will transfer to the Mayor in May 2028, aligning Essex with national policing governance reforms.

Local Government Reform will also see a full restructure of the existing fifteen principal councils in Essex, with work now underway to develop new strategic unitary authorities. Partners report that these reforms are already creating uncertainty around future responsibilities, service footprints and strategic priorities. This is driving caution in financial commitments and contributing to slower progress across multi-agency programmes. While partners remain committed to safeguarding and statutory responsibilities, they identify clear constraints in their ability to innovate or deliver early-intervention activity at previous levels. For Essex Police, these pressures are expected to have direct operational implications.

Reduced capacity within partner agencies increases the volume and duration of demand that remains with policing, particularly in mental health crisis response, vulnerability pathways, community safety, and safeguarding structures such as the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment

Conference (MARAC), Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA), and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation meetings (MACE). Delays in partners' decision-making and service availability also mean cases remain open for longer, more risk is retained by the Force, and opportunities for shared problem-solving can be limited at times of highest demand.

As structural reforms continue between 2025 and 2028, further delays to major system-wide investment and transformation programmes are expected. Future changes to the roles of the Mayor and the PFCC, together with any changes to local authority configuration, may further reshape the partnership environment in which Essex Police operate. Maintaining strong multi agency arrangements will therefore remain critical throughout this period of transition.

Neighbourhood Policing Partners

Neighbourhood policing in Essex is strengthened through a partnership approach that brings together agencies to support community safety, crime prevention and early intervention. Community safety hubs, joint operational activity and information sharing arrangements enable coordinated responses to local threats, risks and vulnerabilities. This multi-agency approach, supported by collaboration with local authorities, the fire and rescue service and voluntary sector organisations, enhances the force's ability to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, including through targeted activity such as hotspot policing. Further detail is set out in the Crime Prevention and Deterrence section of the FMS.

The Independent Advisory Group comprises community representatives who provide feedback to Essex Police, discuss incidents, inform policy development, and raise community concerns, supporting continuous improvement and public confidence.

Criminal Justice Partners

In Essex, the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) is attended by senior leaders from across the Criminal Justice System (CJS). Members represent their respective agencies and work collaboratively to improve services.

The Board covers the administrative areas of Essex County Council (ECC) and the unitary authorities of Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock. It includes representatives from Essex Police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS), the Probation Service, the Youth Justice Service, and Victim Support.
The Youth Justice Service and Essex Police work together to rehabilitate young offenders, reduce reoffending, and safeguard public safety.

Victim Support incorporates additional support services, including the Witness Service, Independent Sexual Violence Advisers, and Independent Domestic Violence Advisers.
The Reducing Reoffending Board also incorporates health and social services from the County as part of the discussions to identify the interventions that might serve to break the cycle of re-offending impacting on the Essex CJS.

Health Partners

Essex Police collaborate with health partners to provide the most appropriate support to members of our community who need it. These partnerships address health-related issues, including mental health, sexual violence, and domestic abuse enabling Essex Police to work with partners to provide a whole system approach to health and wellbeing, ensuring that individuals receive the necessary support.

Each local authority in Essex runs Approved Mental Health Professional services for assessments and crisis support and offers community mental health services to help individuals remain in the community. Essex Police and the North Central London Integrated Care Board (ICB) collaborate ensuring young people receive the most appropriate care, particularly in mental health crises.

Health partners, including Essex Partnership University Trust (EPUT), are regular contributors to the MAPPA process described below. EPUT support the multi-agency risk management of MAPPA nominals and provide data and engage in the development of risk management plans.

Safeguarding Partners

Essex Police and safeguarding partners collaborate closely ensuring the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable individuals. They are responsible for delivering social services and support to children and families by protecting these groups from harm and abuse, while also promoting health and well-being. This collaborative approach guarantees a comprehensive and effective response to safeguarding issues, making Essex a safer place for everyone.

Safeguarding partners comprise the three statutory agencies, the Local Authority, the ICB, and the Police, who share responsibility for protecting vulnerable children and adults. Together, these organisations form both Safeguarding Adults Boards and Safeguarding Children's Partnerships within each local authority area, providing strategic oversight and governance of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements. Through this structure, partners coordinate safeguarding activity, commission and review learning, and ensure that agencies work collectively to identify risk, intervene early, and improve outcomes for those at risk of harm.

Safeguarding partners work together to develop and implement safeguarding strategies, improve multi-agency collaboration and, conduct local reviews to ensure effective safeguarding practices by creating a coordinated approach to safeguarding, ensuring that children and families receive the support they need in a timely and effective manner.
Essex Police and MAPPA work together ensuring public safety by coordinating the management of high-risk offenders. Criminal justice agencies and other bodies work together in partnership with these offenders to share information and develop a risk management plan that seeks to reduce the risk of harm posed by that individual, to the wider public.

His Majesty's Probation Service manage and support offenders under MAPPA arrangements, ensuring public safety and effective community supervision. The probation service ensures

that all MAPPA qualifying offenders under statutory supervision are recorded on the Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) in partnership with the police, with records regularly reviewed and updated according to probation instructions. His Majesty's Prison Service ensures that all MAPPA offenders in custody are identified and requests their inclusion in a ViSOR record.

The Youth Justice service and Essex Police work with children, their families, and their support networks to prevent and reduce both offending and reoffending creating safer environments for everyone.

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) safeguards children in Southend and Thurrock. The ECC Children and Families Hub receives safeguarding referrals for children in Essex. Work to develop a consistent MASH approach aims to improve the speed and effectiveness of safeguarding responses by ensuring that all relevant information is considered and that agencies work together seamlessly to keep children safe.

The difference between current demand and expected demand in the foreseeable future or next four years.

Neighbourhood Policing Partners

Demand on neighbourhood policing partners is projected to increase steadily over the next four years as structural, social and organisational pressures converge. Findings from the Partnership Survey 2026 indicate that most partners anticipate a slight increase in demand, driven by resource constraints, growing community need, and the wider effects of devolution and local government reform.

Partners have also reported emerging local pressures that are intensifying neighbourhood level demand. These include:

- Perceived increases in anti-social behaviour, particularly in town centres and rural localities.
- Increasing youth vulnerability, exploitation risk and early-stage need.
- Growing domestic abuse, family related harm and safeguarding concerns.
- Harm linked to housing pressures, temporary accommodation, asylum related placements, and protest related tension.
- Projected population growth of around 100,000 people over the next five years.
- Increased transient movement linked to the Lower Thames Crossing from 2028 which is expected to elevate baseline demand across partners.

Partners report that the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee has had mixed system effects. While strengthened neighbourhood presence and improved crime outcomes are recognised as positive, several partners report unintended consequences arising from the expansion of investigative responsibilities.

These factors, combined with ongoing Local Government Reform, are expected to reshape local partner responsibilities, reduce capacity in the short term, and slow decision making through transition phases. Looking ahead to 2030, partners anticipate steadily rising demand across all neighbourhood strands, safeguarding, exploitation, community

tensions, vulnerability and anti-social behaviour, with partners expressing concern about their ability to match demand growth.

Criminal Justice Partners

Criminal justice partners across Essex anticipate growing system pressure over the next four years, driven by national backlogs, rising complexity of cases, and structural reform. The Partnership Survey 2026 shows that partners expect increasing demand and cite resourcing gaps, along with delays in the CJS and higher demand increasing their response times arising from their own capacity constraints.

From a local perspective, the LCJB brings together senior leaders from CPS and HMCTS, Probation and other agencies covering Essex, Southend and Thurrock. These partners collectively report increased pressures linked to case volume, court recovery, victim requirements, and complexity of offending, with several emerging trends identified.

National trends reinforce this picture. Criminal justice demand is rising, with:

- A 6% increase in the number of individuals dealt with by the CJS in the past year.
- A growing flow of serious indictable offences into the courts.
- Probation caseloads increasing to 246,502 (up 2% in the latest period).
- High levels of early release from prison (Standard Determinate Sentence – 40%, which is a national early-release initiative introduced by the Government in 2024 to manage severe prison overcrowding) placing additional pressure on probation and community-based management.

An Institute for Government article published in October 2025 confirms that court backlogs remain a defining driver of demand. The Crown Court backlog has increased by a factor of 2.8 since 2019, reducing throughput and delaying justice. Magistrates' Courts have seen a 62% increase in backlog since 2019.

Together, these system wide pressures mean Essex's criminal justice partners expect sustained, rising and increasingly complex demand, with direct consequences for policing of extended case progression timelines, increased rework, and greater demand for multi-agency liaison to maintain victim engagement and risk management.

A further emerging pressure relates to national changes in sentencing policy. Any increase in the number of offenders receiving community-based outcomes, shorter custodial terms, or earlier release points will place additional demand on probation, local authorities and wider criminal justice partners. As partner capacity becomes further stretched, more offenders are likely to remain under policing oversight for longer, particularly where risk management, safeguarding considerations or compliance issues arise. This shift will extend the volume and duration of demand held by Essex Police and may limit opportunities for partners to intervene early or effectively at points of escalation.

Health Partners

The Partnership Survey 2026 indicates health partners anticipate rising demand over the next four years, driven primarily by increasing levels of clinical need, sustained mental health

pressures, and the fragility of local health systems. They consistently cite major resource gaps and delays caused by unmet needs in healthcare.

Demand for mental health services continues to grow, with partners reporting increasing clinical unwellness nationally and locally, and pressure across inpatient, crisis and community mental health pathways.

Partners report that national expectations linked to Right Care, Right Person (RCRP) continue to reshape roles, responsibilities and thresholds across health and police pathways.

The Section 136 pathway is a significant and growing pressure. Health partners also anticipate further demand growth linked to structural change. The announced changes around NHS England and evolving system governance create uncertainty, potentially increasing demand on local health systems during transition.
EPUT's demand profile reinforces this trajectory. They deliver mental health, community health, learning disability and urgent care services to over 3.2 million residents, operating limited inpatient and Section 136 capacity. Rising crisis volume and bed pressures create additional downstream demand across the whole system.

Safeguarding Partners
Safeguarding partners across Essex are expected to face sustained and increasing demand over the next four years due to rising complexity, increased vulnerability in communities, and significant system change across local authorities, health and social care. Organisational restructuring, including Local Government Reform and wider service changes, is likely to create inconsistency in information sharing and decision making, increasing the risk of delayed responses and unmet safeguarding needs.

The Families First Programme, and changes under the Children's and Families Wellbeing Bill will introduce new Multi-Agency Child Protection Teams (MACPT). These will be dedicated teams working across safeguarding partners to focus on early intervention for children at risk of serious harm. Development of these teams are being explored with partners but will involve existing resource being diverted to meet this requirement.

Demand is growing across both children's and adult safeguarding, with partners reporting increases in domestic abuse, child-on-child harm, exploitation, mental health-related vulnerability, and self-neglect. Reduced early-intervention capacity and workforce shortages across health and social care mean more cases will reach crisis stage, initiate more referrals and place greater reliance on multi-agency safeguarding processes. Adult safeguarding requirements are also rising, particularly around self-neglect, substance misuse, chronic mental ill-health and complex co-morbidities. Local Authorities report that reduced community health capacity and increased acuity among adults with care and support needs are driving more Section 42 enquiries and increasing expectations for police involvement in joint visits, risk assessment and urgent safeguarding interventions.

MAPPA demand is expected to increase significantly due to legislative changes that widen eligibility, including coercive and controlling behaviour and revised recall arrangements. MARAC demand continues to rise.

Overall, safeguarding partners should expect continued pressure, increasing referral volumes, higher case complexity, and greater operational risk across multi-agency processes. These pressures are likely to persist for the foreseeable future, with no meaningful reductions expected before 2030.

The status of the Force's workforce and other assets: their performance, condition, capacity, capability, serviceability, and security of supply.

Neighbourhood Policing Partners

The Partnership Survey identifies consistent resourcing gaps across community safety partners. A notable proportion of respondents highlighted significant or critical shortfalls in their ability to meet rising demand over the next 12 months.

Neighbourhood relevant partners, including community safety partnerships (CSPs), local authorities, youth services, housing providers, education settings, Voluntary and Community

Sector organisations, Fire and Rescue and, Probation all report:

- Reduced capacity resulting from financial constraints and organisational restructuring.
- Pressure on early intervention roles, limiting their ability to maintain preventative activity.
- Slower operational coordination linked to reform related uncertainty and transitional governance.

This alignment with national findings from the CSP Review suggests a system level pattern, where demand is rising faster than statutory and voluntary sector capability.

The combined effect is that partners' current assets, especially community-based prevention teams and outreach focused roles are increasingly stretched, limiting their ability to contribute consistently to multi agency neighbourhood problem solving.

Criminal Justice Partners

Criminal justice partners report significant constraints across their operational capacity, affecting their ability to meet future demand.

Survey responses show significant resourcing gaps among partners, limiting service throughput and contributing to delays.

- Court listing capacity remains the primary external pressure, with Crown Court sitting days unchanged and insufficient to reduce the backlog.
- Magistrates' Courts have potential capacity but are hindered by a shortage of legal advisors, limiting ability to expand listings.
- Probation faces rising caseloads combined with workforce pressures following national reforms and the need for enhanced rehabilitation pathways.

At the national level, structural issues persist:

- A 30% decline in permanent criminal court staff since 2010/11.

- Chronic pressure on prison capacity, leading to high numbers of recalls and increased demand for community supervision.

Collectively, these issues demonstrate that criminal justice partners operate within a fragile and capacity strained environment, limiting their ability to absorb forecasted demand increases. This has direct implications for policing's ability to progress cases efficiently and maintain compliance with victim focused obligations.

Health Partners

Health partners report ongoing challenges with workforce and asset stability, noting that capacity, capabilities, and infrastructure are consistently stretched. They highlight "significant resourcing gaps" and express worries about handling future demand, referencing financial limitations, staff shortages, and rising complexity as contributing factors.
Acute hospital partners report continued pressure in Emergency Departments, where individuals presenting with mental health conditions experience extended waits for assessment or transfer due to limited specialist staff availability. These delays increase police abstractions, prolong handovers and create additional operational risk at times of peak demand.

Local concerns include:

- Insufficient Section 136 beds across Essex, leading to delayed transfers and extended police attendance.
- Limited trained crisis staff, impacting the speed and quality of responses during peak demand.
- Ongoing financial and structural uncertainty within NHS organisations, including changes associated with the abolition of NHS England, which risk slowing decision making and constraining investment.

EPUT's asset profile demonstrates a system stretched beyond intended operating capacity. Despite providing inpatient wards and urgent care hubs, demand continues to outstrip availability.
Workforce pressures within health services reduce the timeliness of joint responses, increase the duration of custody related mental health interventions, and limit alternative diversion options that would otherwise reduce police demand.

Safeguarding Partners

Safeguarding partners forecast rising and increasingly complex demand over the next four years. The Partnership Survey 2026 identifies a slight increase in expected demand but highlights significant resourcing gaps and an expectation of delays and elongated response times, particularly where early intervention capacity is already stretched.

Wider evidence shows that safeguarding pressures across children's social care remain on a long term upwards trajectory, with increases in referrals, early help assessments, child protection plans, and complexity of needs. Local Authorities continue to experience

sustained demand from families with multiple, overlapping needs, particularly where parental mental health and cost of living pressures heighten risk.

National reforms, including the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill, will further reshape safeguarding structures and expectations, placing additional responsibilities on multi agency child protection arrangements.

Knock on impact to policing:

- Higher safeguarding caseloads requiring police partnership involvement.
- More multi agency meetings (MACE, Risk Management Meetings, MARAC, Child Protection Conferences with increased volume and complexity.
- Greater demand for timely information sharing, risk assessment and joint decision making.
- Development of MACPTs.

What we are doing to make sure our workforce, and other assets will be able to meet the anticipated demand.

Neighbourhood Policing Partners

Partners continue to implement a range of mitigation measures, although these remain limited by workforce capacity and wider structural uncertainty. Current activity is centred on protecting statutory responsibilities, focusing remaining resource on mandated service areas. Partners are also reshaping local pathways to preserve joint problem solving despite constrained capacity, and several community safety functions are being restructured in preparation for Local Government Reform to safeguard essential capability.

National developments are beginning to influence this landscape. The forthcoming CSP guidance is expected to strengthen accountability, improve alignment, and support more coherent local partnership working. Similarly, the addition of partnership in this FMS reflects a broader shift toward earlier identification of systemic risks across partnership arrangements.

Neighbourhood policing partnerships now benefit from enhanced analytical and community insight through tools such as Community Mapping and the Community Engagement Dashboard. These platforms improve governance, increase visibility of local concerns, and enable more targeted activity. However, they also raise expectations for timely engagement, proportionate tasking, and transparent performance oversight.

Despite these adaptations, partners remain clear that current mitigation activity will not be sufficient to absorb rising demand, particularly in areas of complex youth need, community tensions, antisocial behaviour, and housing-related vulnerability.

Criminal Justice Partners

Criminal justice partners are taking a range of steps to stabilise service provision and manage demand growth, though progress is hindered by systemic constraints.

Local partners continue to work through the LCJB to strengthen collaboration, coordinate recovery planning, and improve system flow across Essex, Southend and Thurrock.

Key mitigation themes emerging from local and national sources include:

- Court Recovery Measures such as targeted listing improvements and strategic engagement with the Ministry of Justice to address backlog management.
- Probation System Reform, focusing on rehabilitation, early intervention, and workload management, supported by national workforce strategies and local partnership alignment.
- Enhanced partnership communication, with criminal justice partners expanding engagement through the FMS survey and wider governance forums to improve forecasting and joint planning.

Health Partners

Police support to health partners continues across operational, training and governance activity. Officers provide ongoing training within mental health hospitals to ensure that staff understand their responsibilities, duty of care, and legal obligations when managing individuals in crisis. This shared approach strengthens consistency across the system and improves outcomes for patients.

Regular engagement takes place with health services to review pressures, address recurring issues and maintain alignment in crisis care pathways. Established escalation processes allow cases to progress more quickly and help resolve barriers as they emerge. These arrangements sit within wider multi-agency governance under the RCRP structure, which operates at both tactical and strategic levels and retains senior oversight at Assistant Chief Constable rank.

The Mental Health Risk Management Board continues to play a key role in preventing serious harm where mental health is a factor. Recognised as a promising practice by the College of Policing, it brings together police, health and local authorities to share information, manage risk and strengthen safeguarding in both community and clinical environments.
Health partners are implementing mitigations to stabilise performance despite significant financial and structural pressures. Work is under way to strengthen collaboration with EPUT to improve access to appropriate care at the right time, particularly within mental health crisis pathways. Efforts to improve Section 136 processes continue, although progress remains heavily dependent on staffing levels and bed availability. Partners are also responding to changing national expectations, including updates to the National Partnership Agreement, though future enforcement of this framework is uncertain.

Including the Partnership Survey for Health Partners in this year's FMS is anticipated to improve forecasting, provide greater system insight, and support more effective strategic alignment. Health agencies also maintain active roles within MAPPA, MARAC, Safeguarding Boards and other key safeguarding structures, ensuring that risk management remains robust despite wider system pressures.

While these mitigations support joint working, they do not materially reduce demand on policing. Sustained improvement remains dependent on increased capacity within the health system, which has not yet been secured.

Safeguarding Partners
Safeguarding partner organisations report capacity constraints across social care, health commissioning functions (ICBs), and probation services. Workforce shortages, financial pressures and structural uncertainty (including local government reform) continue to affect service stability.

Core safeguarding partners, Local Authorities, ICB, Probation and MAPPA, are responsible for statutory protection functions. Their reduced capacity impacts the timeliness of assessments, early help responses, and the ability to manage cumulative risk. Social care teams are required to manage increasingly complex harm indicators, and demand frequently exceeds the pace at which cases can be progressed.

The safeguarding system is further affected by major structural change, with new requirements for MACPTs and national expectations for strengthened multi agency capability and decision making.

The types and amount of future demand we don't expect to be able to meet, having made the changes and efficiencies outlined above.
Neighbourhood Policing Partners
Partners anticipate that significant elements of demand will remain unmet, even after mitigation. Survey responses highlight risks including:

- Delays and elongated response times, resulting from insufficient partner capacity.
- Reduced preventative work, especially early help, youth engagement, and community-based safeguarding.
- Erosion of local insight, particularly where CYP officers and early intervention roles are centralised or reduced.

Local partners caution that reduced early-stage engagement may increase the likelihood that unaddressed or emerging issues, youth risk, vulnerability, anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood tensions, re-enter the system later at a higher level of harm, placing sustained pressure on policing and statutory services.

These concerns mirror national CSP review findings, which warn that structural reform and resource constraints may narrow partnership capability unless matched by strengthened governance and clearer expectations.

Across the period to 2030, neighbourhood policing demand is therefore expected to rise in both volume and complexity, driven by increasing investigative workload, reduced partner resilience, and deeper structural change across local government and community services. Residual unmet demand will continue to place sustained pressure on neighbourhood

policing functions unless partner capacity stabilises and early intervention capability is rebuilt.

Criminal Justice Partners

After accounting for planned mitigations, criminal justice partners report significant residual risks, many of which are expected to persist through to at least 2030.

Survey responses highlight the risk of unmet demand, with partners anticipating that delayed processes, limited capacity, and structural challenges will continue to impact service delivery. This includes ongoing delays and elongated case timelines due to partner constraints.

Key residual risks identified include:

- Sustained criminal court backlogs, increasing the risk of weakened victim engagement, reduced prosecution viability, and increased policing rework.
- Increasing complexity of cases, driven by serious violence, sexual offending, fraud and exploitation, intensifying demands on CPS, HMCTS and victim services.
- Delayed justice outcomes, reducing public confidence and requiring extended police involvement in case progression and safeguarding.
- Reduced ability to remand in custody under the Sentencing Act will mean an increase in lengthy periods of managing offenders on bail.

Local documentation emphasises that these residual pressures are expected to continue shaping the strategic environment across Essex's CJS, with partners recognising the need for ongoing collaboration to manage harm, support victims and maintain system integrity. Overall, despite mitigation activity, the CJS is forecast to face enduring unmet demand, with direct and sustained consequences for policing in terms of workload, safeguarding, investigation progress and public confidence.

Health Partners

Even after planned mitigations, partners anticipate significant unmet demand across health pathways, with direct operational consequences for policing.

Survey findings reflect expected ongoing delays, elongated response times, and structural barriers preventing partners from meeting rising demand.

Local evidence identifies core residual risks:

- Continued workforce shortages across mental health and community health services, limiting capacity for crisis response and safeguarding engagement.
- Ongoing uncertainty around the enforcement and future structure of national health agreements, affecting stability of joint pathways.

Policing is expected to face sustained pressure, including longer abstractions, greater frontline involvement in crisis care, repeated attendance for unresolved health needs, and increased safeguarding workload where health partners cannot intervene promptly.

Safeguarding Partners

Despite mitigation efforts, partners anticipate ongoing unmet demand driven by workforce shortages, increasing complexity, and system reform pressures.
The Partnership Survey 2026 shows partners expect continued resourcing gaps and delayed responses, signalling that core safeguarding services may still struggle to meet future demand.
Long term data shows sustained increases in:

- Early help assessments.
- Children in care.
- Complex family presentations and parental mental health–driven safeguarding risk.

Local Authorities may also face transitional disruption as devolution and Local Government reform impacts on safeguarding partnership design, introducing new governance, geographies and statutory responsibilities.

The anticipated implications for Essex Police are as follows:

- Continued high demand for police safeguarding involvement.
- Increased number of repeat incidents where partner intervention is delayed.
- Greater police involvement in managing exploitation, missing children, domestic abuse and cumulative risk cases.

Appendix A: 15 Year Predictions/Future Operating Environment

Appendix A - 15 Year Predictions 2026.docx

Appendix B: PESTELO

Appendix B - PESTELO Summary.docx

Appendix C: Partner Survey Results

Appendix C - Partner Survey Results.pptx

Appendix D: Strategic Demand Assessment

Appendix D - Strategic Demand Assessment26.docx

Appendix E: Drivers of Demand

Appendix E - Drivers of Demand_26.docx

Appendix F: Force Plan

Appendix F - Force Plan.pdf

Appendix G: Links to Police Crime Plan Priorities

Appendix G - Links_to_Police_Crime_Plan_Priorities.docx

Appendix H: Strategic Risk Assessment

Appendix H - Strategic Risk Assessment.docx

Glossary

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