

Key improvements and initiatives 2015-16

- The Council distributed over £200,000 of Voluntary Welfare Funding to ‘not for profit’ organisations that help the Council to meet its equality and safeguarding objectives. In 2015-16, the following organisations received funding: Age Concern; Colchester Citizen’s Advice Bureau; Colchester Community Voluntary Service (CCVS); Colchester and Tendring Women’s Refuge; Emergency Nightshelter; Grassroots; Rural Community Council of Essex (RCCE); and SHAKE Colchester Furniture Project. .
- The Community Initiatives Team co-ordinated two Crucial Crew events in 2016 in order to deliver increased community safety. In June, awareness sessions were delivered to over 100 adults, and presentations covered Falls Prevention, Trading Standards and Council Zone services. In June, 2000 ‘Year 6’ pupils attended presentations covered healthy relationships, knife crime, internet safety and drug and alcohol awareness.
- It has also worked in partnership with CCVS and other agencies to promote its [Winter Warmth Scheme](#), targeted towards older people. This included information on the Council’s [Warm Homes Project](#) and its [Emergency Heater Scheme](#). The Council continues to chair the [Older Persons Forum](#), which is well attended by local partners which support and provide services to older people. The Council also continues to host and support the Migrant Agency Forum which works with Essex County Council and local organisations to “promote community cohesion through the successful integration of vulnerable migrant groups within Essex”.
- The [Good Gym](#) was launched in 2016 to help promote a healthier lifestyle and reduce loneliness and isolation. Funded by the Council and CCVS, local ‘runners’ pay a visit to a Community Group Hub as part of their route in order to do odd jobs for vulnerable older people. “You run there, fix the problem, and run back again”.
- The [SOS Bus](#) treated 825 people over the period 2015-16 with a smaller proportion requiring hospital attendance compared with the previous year. Funded by the Council and its partners, the service particularly benefits people aged 18-24. Drawing on the skills of the Emergency Doctors Medical Service, more sophisticated procedures can now be used which include the suturing and gluing of wounds, thereby bypassing the need for A&E attendance. The Bus also acts as a place of safety for vulnerable people.
- The Syrian VPR ([Vulnerable Person Resettlement](#)) Programme has continued during 2015-16. Working alongside our voluntary sector colleagues at [Fresh Beginnings](#), the Council has helped to welcome and resettle eight families in the Colchester borough as part of its five year programme, with two more families due to arrive in September 2016. All eight families have settled in well and local communities and neighbourhoods have been welcoming and helpful. Children are attending local schools and adults are attending English classes as part of the programme. The Council has also continued to work with Fresh Beginnings on the resettlement of Afghan Nationals who had been employed as translators, and their families. To date, a total of 55 individuals have been resettled as part of this [Special Immigration Scheme](#).
- In partnership with Thurstable School, Zone Wardens have re-invented the traditional ‘Tea Dance’ as a multi-agency learning experience. It included group interactive singing, the use

of 'Retro-boxes' and a quiz. The team implemented strategies to help ensure the safety and wellbeing of participants across a variety of different age ranges and cultural backgrounds.

- A number of initiatives that help to meet our safeguarding objectives have been co-ordinated by the [Safer Colchester Partnership](#) including support and intervention for vulnerable individuals: A Domestic Abuse Awareness Day was held in November 2015, at which 2-300 people were seen and 100 awareness packs were distributed; During 2015-16, 62 'Home Security Reports' were passed by Essex Police to the Colchester Sanctuary Scheme (which operates to protect high risk, repeat victims of domestic abuse from harm); Partnership working has also delivered a pilot 'Drive Project' for which three case workers have been recruited to work intensively with high priority perpetrators of domestic abuse to implement behaviour change.
- In September 2015, the Partnership initiated a project to help support repeat victims of ASB through local organisations including Beacon House, Open Road and Catch 22. In addition, the Keep Safe Scheme has been extended to provide additional security to over 200 vulnerable adults through more than 20 venues. Officers are working on extending the scheme to more vulnerable groups and introducing a mobile App.
- In 2015-16, [The Big Garden](#) has provided therapeutic placements for 50 volunteers many of whom have mental health support needs. In 2016, its volunteer group *The Big Friendly Gardeners*, was chosen to benefit from the Co-op's Community Token Scheme in May, June and July.
- The Council's work in supporting vulnerable groups extends beyond the borough boundaries through the [Colchester and Ipswich Museums Service](#). 'Cultural Heritage in Mind' is a project working across museums in Suffolk to offer courses targeted at people dealing with mental ill-health. The initiative involves developing art and other skills over a seven week period to reflect upon 'place' within the community. In 2015, Museums officers received training from [Vocal Eyes](#) on making museum venues and collections more accessible for visually impaired visitors. The Museums Service is currently hosting a trainee from the British Museum's [Learning Museum](#) programme, part of the Heritage Lottery Fund's 'Skills for the Future' funding. The programme is aimed at creating a more diverse and representative museums workforce, and the diverse group of trainees not only learn many valuable skills but also assist host museums to attract visitors and participants from non-traditional museum audiences.
- Customer Services has continued to target resources towards vulnerable groups. The refurbishment of the [Library and Community Hub](#) incorporates the use of clear signage and new technology, and includes knowledgeable and dedicated staff on hand to provide one-to-one support to customers. The new 'Customer Support Team' is made up of officers dedicated to providing a holistic and specialist service to more vulnerable clients that includes administering Discretionary Housing Payments and Exceptional Hardship Payments. The team has benefited from a substantial programme of training provided by local organisations including One Support, Colchester Mind, Colchester Food Bank and Dementia Friends - to whom officers refer customers for specialist support.
- The team succeeded in securing a £10,000 funding grant from [Colchester Catalyst](#) for its [Transformation Project](#). This means that the new Library and Community Hub will include a sensory area in the children's library.

- The new Go-Online Team has assisted vulnerable groups and enabled people to become more confident in accessing Council and other services online over the past year. The [Digital Skills for Life](#) course has proved particularly popular with older people; workshops at [Beacon House](#) have targeted assistance at homeless customers; and services have been targeted at Black and Minority Ethnic customers at C CVS.
- Specific progress has been made in delivering the Council's [Homelessness Strategy](#). The Council works closely with its partners to reduce homelessness and increase support. In 2015-16, this has included: additional 'drop-in' services provided by One Support including at the Library and Community Hub (increasing the total of referrals to 260 per month); setting up a 'Bridging the Gap' service provided by [Beacon House](#) to help enable people to secure and maintain accommodation; YES ([Youth Enquiry Service](#)) joint working with Social Care to prevent homelessness.
- The Council provided 56 Disabled Facilities Grants totalling £470,587 (2015-16) for the provision of private sector housing adaptations to sustain independent living. This is targeted at people with physical or mental disabilities, across all age ranges. It is a fully assisted service with a visiting case worker and direct access to a CBH contractor.
- The Council has also provided Disabled Facilities Assistance Loans to help fund housing adaptations or alternatives that do not fall within the 'DFG' program. These are provided for sensory rooms and for assistance to move for those with physical or mental health disabilities. In addition, the Council has also provided Home Repair Loans to a value of £72,050 to remove hazards, and discretionary financial assistance where the occupier is the victim of domestic abuse or otherwise vulnerable.
- The Council's housing stock is managed by Colchester Borough Homes. Whilst it is a separate 'ALMO' organisation, it contributes significantly towards the Council meeting its equality and safeguarding duties. CBH has achieved much during this period including: an initial self-assessment towards meeting the Social Housing Equality Framework (SHEF) prior to full assessment in 2017; creating a training workshop titled 'Respect Difference' in partnership with Colchester Institute which culminated in attendees scripting and producing their own myth-busting films about social housing. For this work, CBH was shortlisted in the Excellence in Equality and Diversity category at the TPAS Central Region (Tenant Engagement) Awards in 2016.
- The Council's 'Enterprise, Skills and Employment Grant' funding has enabled a number of initiatives over the period 2015-16. This has included funding for the [Small Steps Big Change Programme](#) (a six week course providing support to women looking to start-up a business) and [Signpost](#) (which provides Digital Skills Workshops).
- Following the adoption in 2016 of a new platform to manage and analyse customer complaints, the Council now routinely collects equality monitoring information on age, sex, race and disability. As more data becomes available, it is anticipated that useful equality analysis will help deliver better equality outcomes across the 'protected characteristics'.
- As part of the Learning and Development Plan, the Council commissioned Mental Health Awareness training for managers, facilitated by the charity *Rethink*. The purpose of the training was to give managers a better understanding of mental health and illness and its impact upon staff and included practical advice on how to identify potential issues and provide support.

- [The North Essex Parking Partnership](#) recognises its responsibilities to protect staff from harassment through both its 'duty of care' and through the PSED 'general duty'. In 2016, it introduced body worn cameras for all NEPP staff to help prevent violent and aggressive behaviour. The cameras provide video and audio evidence that can be used at court.
- The Council's Licensing Team has worked hard to raise awareness of CSE for taxi drivers. In 2016, Barnardos provided specialist training to private hire and hackney carriage drivers. This has helped to ensure that drivers understand the issue, can recognise possible signs of CSE and know how to report concerns. Key safeguarding information approved by Essex Police and the local Safeguarding Boards is also provided to staff.
- The Council has implemented actions arising from various multi-agency Domestic Homicide Reviews and Serious Case Reviews over the period which have included providing specific training and advice to staff around meeting the needs of Roma Gypsies and Irish Travellers.
- Council leaders across the political parties united to denounce Hate Crime in June following an apparent rise in racially motivated attacks in the aftermath of the EU Referendum. Full Council approved the following statement:
 - *We are proud to live in a diverse and tolerant society. Racism, xenophobia and hate crimes have no place in our country. This Council condemns racism, xenophobia and hate crimes unequivocally. We will not allow hate to become acceptable.*
 - *This Council will work to ensure local bodies and programmes have support and resources needed to fight and prevent racism and xenophobia.*
 - *We reassure all people living in the Borough of Colchester that they are valued members of our community.*

Training Resource 2016: Improvements and Initiatives 'At a Glance'

