



Crown
Prosecution
Service

A decorative graphic on the left side of the slide consists of several overlapping, semi-transparent circles in shades of green, teal, purple, grey, and light blue, arranged in a fan-like pattern.

Annex A: Reporting delivery against RASSO 2025 commitments, and new or in progress commitments

February 2022



Annex A: Reporting delivery against RASSO 2025 commitments, and new or in progress commitments

Contents

Introduction	3
Our people.....	4
Outcomes:.....	4
Work delivered.....	4
Work in progress.....	5
What we will do next (new actions)	7
Digital Capability	7
Outcomes:.....	7
Work delivered.....	8
Work in progress.....	9
Strategic Partnerships.....	9
Outcomes:.....	9
Work delivered.....	10
Work in progress.....	10
What we will do next (new actions)	11
Casework Quality.....	12



Outcomes:.....	12
Work delivered.....	13
Work in progress.....	14
What we will do next (new actions)	14
Public confidence.....	15
Outcomes:.....	15
Work delivered.....	15
Work in progress.....	17
What we will do next (new actions)	18

Introduction

These tables provide an overview of work we have delivered and work underway against each of the CPS themes. Of the 26 actions we committed to in RASSO 2025 for 2020/21, we have completed 17. On each of the remaining actions, work is underway and progress has been made against each. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has meant we have all had to adapt to unprecedented circumstances. We have adapted our delivery of certain actions, focusing on the same outcome, against the context of the pandemic.

Since the publication of RASSO 2025, we have also gone beyond our existing commitments and made new ones to help us achieve our strategic aim of significantly increasing the number of cases we bring year on year, working with our criminal justice partners. We have launched Operation Soteria in partnership with the police, developed a national RASSO enhancement programme and published the Joint National Action Plan with the police. As a result of this work, we have 8 additional actions to reflect this new activity to drive forward further improvements in the way we manage rape and serious sexual offences prosecutions.



Our people

Outcomes:

- National and local leaders are visible and passionate in their delivery of the RASSO programme.
- Guidance, training and learning support improves casework standards and drives close joint working across the CPS and Policing.
- Prosecutors and advocates understand the complexities connected with rape and victim behaviours and feel confident and trained in trauma-responsive communications with victims.
- The wellbeing and support offer for RASSO staff is prioritised and enables them to thrive.
- Specialist RASSO resources are consistently deployed across the CPS.

Work delivered

1. Ensure that the CPS's wider advocacy strategy reflects the RASSO perspective, including issues around capacity, instruction and oversight in RASSO cases.	We launched the CPS Advocacy Strategy in March 2021. The Strategy reflects the "Right Advocate for the Right Case" approach and includes oversight of advocacy standards and performance.
2. Revise and publish updated legal guidance on RASSO to support the work of our prosecutors.	The CPS published refreshed Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) legal guidance for public consultation in October 2020 and finalised it in May 2021, delivering on our ongoing commitment to make the prosecution of these crimes reflect today's rapidly changing society.
3. Provide further training for RASSO prosecutors, advocates and managers on proportionality and disclosure in RASSO cases, as well as additional training on trauma.	The CPS has delivered training on proportionality and disclosure and recently launched a standalone training course for all prosecutors entitled "RASSO: impact of trauma". The course was written with the input of two clinical psychologists.



4. Review the recruitment, development and support strategy for RASSO Units.	In 2021, we launched a programme of national RASSO enhancement work which is being implemented in our Areas. We reviewed our workforce plans and prioritised recruitment in our RASSO Units through the 2021 Spending Review awarded to the CPS in later 2021. Several recruitment exercises are currently taking place; we are also considering alternative solutions, such as secondments from the external Bar.

Work in progress

5. Develop a leadership strategy on RASSO focusing on the work of the Director of Public Prosecutions, Chief Executive Officer, Chief Crown Prosecutors, Heads of RASSO Units and other senior colleagues.	<p>The CPS has an ongoing review into RASSO governance to ensure we have the right structures to manage our ambitious RASSO programme. In October 2020, RASSO was incorporated into the Joint Operational Improvement Board (previously National Disclosure Improvement Board) chaired by the DPP and Assistant Commissioner Ephgrave to ensure oversight at the most senior level. We are establishing a new Programme Board on RASSO, which will manage programme delivery across the organisation.</p> <p>The leadership strategy will be owned by this new governance arrangement and will sit across all levels of the organisation. It will be built on the commitments of the Rape Review, Joint National Action Plan and this RASSO strategy, and ensure delivery of these commitments is driven right across the CPS and through our partnerships with the police and across the criminal justice system.</p>
--	--



<p>6. Jointly with the police, and following the cross-Government review, host a national conference and regional workshops to deliver specialist training to our investigators and prosecutors, including on taking an offender-centric approach and a trauma informed approach. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape)</p>	<p>The police and CPS jointly held a series of national webinars in summer 2021 providing updates and delivering training and learning for frontline investigators and prosecutors to support the RASSO work. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to hold a national in person conference. We instead delivered a range of webinars to support ongoing learning for police and prosecutors including on the working with ISVAs, special measures and casework quality. The webinar programme had over 830 registrations.</p> <p>A national face-to-face conference is being planned for summer 2022.</p>
<p>7. Finalise guidance on pre-trial therapy following consultation.</p>	<p>We published draft guidance on 30 July 2020 and consulted on for a period of 12 weeks. The large response to the public consultation has taken considerable time to review and consider; this was done in conjunction with a professional lead. Since then, the Attorney General's Office (AGO) has published new disclosure guidelines and is currently carrying out its first annual disclosure review. We will ensure any changes to the AGO disclosure guidelines are reflected in our new guidance and have published a fundamental principles document on our website to provide clarity for stakeholders in advance of the publication of the full guidance.</p>
<p>8. Rolling out wellbeing programme, including counselling, peer support and Schwartz rounds, and support for managers in managing their teams and themselves across RASSO units. (NEW)</p>	<p>We updated the Wellbeing Training for RASSO staff in 2021 to better reflect the needs and focus of our people dealing with traumatic material. This updated training has been successfully piloted from October 2021 and forms part of a more holistic approach to support and learning, which includes a tailored RASSO Wellbeing Toolkit, Counselling, Mental Health Allies, Line Manager Check-ins and culminates with Schwartz Round (this supports the management of work related trauma and stress in a safe</p>



	<p>space, where peers can speak freely about the emotional impact of their work through the sharing of experiences).</p> <p>Following the pilot of the new RASSO Wellbeing Training between October and December 2021, the course is being evaluated and adapted by our new Employee Assistance Provider for a national roll out before the end of March 2022.</p>
--	--

What we will do next (new actions)

<p>9. Training on victim communications and trauma-responsive communications, informed by victims' needs research.</p>	<p>Since the publication of RASSO 2025, we have commissioned an extensive piece of research into what victims need from engagement and communication with us so that they can better understand the role of the CPS, how we make our decisions and what their rights are.</p> <p>We will publish the findings from this research, engage stakeholders on it, and design an improved approach to victim engagement and communication that is more two-way, proactive and better fits the diverse communities we serve and the needs of the victims within the criminal justice system.</p>
--	---

Digital Capability

Outcomes:

- The need to balance the requirements of the investigation and the right to privacy in a digital age is understood and respected by investigators, prosecutors, victims as well as the wider public.



- Data drives insight into points in the criminal justice system where improvements can be made, enabling swift and cross-agency action to ensure improvement (new outcome for 2022/23).
- Prosecutors understand the implications of new technology for rape prosecutions.
- The benefits of new technology are harnessed to support effective rape prosecutions.

Work delivered

<p>10. Provide guidance, jointly with the police, on the gathering of data from different digital devices and social media platforms. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape).</p>	<p>We produced Social Media and Reasonable lines of Enquiry guidance in November 2020. This guidance was developed for prosecutors on what can be obtained from different devices and digital platforms.</p>
<p>11. Evaluation of early case planning conferences to ensure police and prosecutors agree a clear strategy for the case at an early stage.</p>	<p>In September 2021, we evaluated the use of Early Case Planning Conferences (ECPC), which take place shortly after the case has been charged. It provides the prosecutor and investigator an opportunity to agree a strategy for the development of the case.</p>
<p>12. Support to the police to pilot a new Information Management Document to record the approach that they have taken to reasonable lines of enquiry from the outset.</p>	<p>The Investigation Management Document (IMD) was introduced on 31 December 2020 by the NPCC. This will see that the reasonable lines of enquiry and digital strategy of a case are documented and explained by investigators at the outset of the investigation. The CPS are using the IMD to inform the Disclosure Management Document (DMD).</p>
<p>13. Respond to the Information Commissioner’s Office report on mobile phone data extraction and ensure that our practices are compliant with the Data Protection Act.</p>	<p>These are being taken forward by a Home Office chaired working group, which includes representatives from the CPS, Police and College of Policing. We have updated the CPS RASSO legal guidance on the approach to reasonable lines of enquiry and cases involving digital communications. We have updated our guidance and provided training on the changes in the</p>



	<p>Attorney General’s Guidelines on Disclosure (2020). We have also worked with the police to update their Digital Processing Notices. The College of Policing has now published key guidance on the extraction of material from digital devices to ensure the way police obtain material from digital devices complies with legislation and balances people’s rights to privacy against the right to a fair trial.</p>
--	---

Work in progress

<p>14. Provide tools to increase the understanding and use of forensic evidence in RASSO cases. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape)</p>	<p>Jointly with the police, we have established a project group comprising of experts and front-line practitioners. Work is progressing on the development of a forensic evidence toolkit covering issues relating to forensic science and forensic medicine.</p>
--	---

Strategic Partnerships

Outcomes:

- There is a shared understanding across the sector on the causes of the disparity between reports and criminal justice outcomes.
- The CPS and police through joint leadership and governance work collaboratively at a national and local level to deliver a joint RASSO action plan.
- CPS operational insight is recognised as valuable and informs Government RASSO strategies, action plans, policy and legislation.
- Stakeholder expertise and insights inform CPS strategy, policy and guidance on RASSO and external feedback is valued and encouraged across all levels of the CPS.



Work delivered

<p>15. Implement the joint police-CPS Rape Action Plan.</p>	<p>The CPS and police launched our Joint National Action Plan on RASSO in January 2021. We have committed to working closely together to increase the number of rape cases that go to court and are jointly delivering the actions in the plan.</p>
<p>16. Create a cross-agency RASSO working group to consider how best to collect, share and analyse data from different parts of the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>The CPS and police set up a cross-agency RASSO working group in August 2020 to develop a cross-criminal justice system (CJS) rape data tool to collect, share and analyse <i>joined</i> end-to-end rape data. Data sharing agreements across the CJS were established for the first time. Jointly with police, we have successfully tested a proof of concept rape data analytics tool in Avon and Somerset. The police/CPS section of the tool was completed by autumn 2021, illustrating the innovative way to connect rape data and provide analytical insights. Court data will be added by early 2022.</p>

Work in progress

<p>17. Implement recommendations from the cross-government Rape Review.</p>	<p>The cross-government review was published in June 2021. The Government published a Rape Review progress report and the first quarterly criminal justice scorecards later in 2021.</p> <p>We are already taking forward CPS actions in the Rape Review that are embedded in this rape Strategy update and our joint work with police. For example, our National ISVA Framework, produced with the police, will ensure effective communication and liaison with service providers, thereby supporting victims through the CJS process.</p>
---	---



	<p>The Rape Review also launched Operation Soteria – joint police and CPS pathfinders – to test innovative ways for the police and CPS to investigate and prosecute rape cases. We initiated these pathfinders in six CPS Areas in September 2021.</p>
<p>18. Launch an updated joint rape protocol.</p>	<p>We have started work with the police to update the joint protocol. As the protocol is designed to highlight current policies and best practice, publication will be timed to ensure that key improvement work under the CPS-police Joint National Action Plan on RASSO and this Rape Strategy has been completed.</p>

What we will do next (new actions)

<p>19. Introduce a comprehensive learning and development programme on stakeholder engagement across the CPS.</p>	<p>This programme will develop a structured, consistent and outcomes-focused approach with system partners to drive up performance and support improved public confidence.</p>
<p>20. Expand Operation Soteria into more CPS areas, independently evaluate existing pilots and work underway and use this evidence to develop a new operating model for RASSO cases.</p>	<p>Operation Soteria is an ambitious programme of work to transform the way that we and the police handle rape investigations and prosecutions, with a focus on the suspect as opposed to the victim. It sits across all stages of the case and will be the foundation, following evaluation, of a new operating model for CPS Areas.</p> <p>We launched this initiative in five CPS Areas in September 2021 alongside five corresponding police forces, and added a sixth CPS Area in November 2021. We are working with police and government colleagues to establish the next phase for expanding this initiative into more areas.</p>



21. Finalise the cross-CJS proof of concept rape data tool to collect, share and analyse joined end-to-end rape data.

In 2021, the police and CPS jointly developed a rape data analytics tool to act as a 'proof of concept' that rape data can be joined across the criminal justice system for the first time. The tool provides insights into attrition points and where improvements can be made to support victims and ultimately close the gap between reports and criminal justice outcomes.

We will now support cross-system plans to expand this data capability into more areas.

Casework Quality

Outcomes:

- The Code Test is clearly understood and continues to be correctly applied in all RASSO cases.
- RASSO unit enhancement activity across the CPS brings all CPS areas to a minimum required level through key activity in areas expected to have greatest impact on efficiency and quality of casework. **(new outcome for 2021/22)**
- Communication and working relationship with the police is improved and supported by effective processes, most notably through Operation Soteria.
- Our action plans are proportionate and clearly explained to and executed by the police, and provision of early advice to enhance casework quality is well understood by partners.



Work delivered

<p>22. Implement a new process for providing early advice in RASSO cases. This will include consideration of effective progression of RASSO investigations and an effective system between the police and the CPS – including for cases returned to the police pre-charge. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape).</p>	<p>The 6th Edition of the Director’s Guidance on Charging (DG6) came in to force on 31 December 2020. It strongly recommends that early advice is provided in rape and other serious sexual offence cases.</p> <p>Jointly with the police, we launched an Early Advice Memorandum of Understanding in July 2021, which sets out the approach to obtaining and providing early advice.</p>
<p>23. Refresh the list of advocate panel members for 2020-2024.</p>	<p>We refreshed the list of advocate panel members in April 2020 and the panel will be in situ until 2024. The aim of the Panel is to appoint advocates who have met the selection criteria and have relevant, up to date skills and experience. All advocates appointed must be able to deliver high quality prosecution advocacy services and have a commitment to meet the aims and objectives of the CPS.</p>
<p>24. Launched Operation Soteria pathfinders in the CPS. (NEW)</p>	<p>Following the publication of the cross-government End-to-End Rape Review, the CPS launched Operation Soteria initially in five Areas: London South, West Midlands, North East, Wales-Cymru and South West from September 2021. We have further expanded the pathfinders into London North in November 2021.</p>
<p>25. Launched national RASSO Unit enhancement across all CPS Areas. (NEW)</p>	<p>We have commenced a key programme of national enhancement and improvement work across the CPS to make sure all Areas are meeting the same high standards. To ensure consistency of casework quality and approach in our handling of RASSO, we conducted analysis of each Area’s RASSO Unit workload, how they manage their work and how they work with</p>



	their police counterparts. As a consequence of that analysis, we have identified elements of best practice that will support national improvements in how we handle RASSO.
--	--

Work in progress

26. Implement the recommendations in the HMCPSI Rape Report.	We have completed eight of the 12 HMCPSI recommendations. We are progressing the remaining four as part of the Joint National Action Plan.
--	--

What we will do next (new actions)

27. Monitor impact of the RASSO Unit enhancement activities on minimising Area variation across the CPS.	We will establish mechanisms to monitor the outcome of work to enhance our RASSO Units to ensure consistency of casework quality and approach in our handling of RASSO.
28. Analyse and share findings from the RASSO advocacy survey and develop an associated workplan to improve our response to RASSO cases based on these findings.	We have undertaken an extensive survey of members of the external RASSO advocates list and our in-house RASSO advocates and are in the process of analysing the results.



Public confidence

Outcomes:

- Public understanding of the role of the CPS in RASSO cases is improved aided by proactive and diverse communications from the CPS.
- Public trust in our approach to RASSO cases is improved.
- Communication with RASSO victims and witnesses is timely and sensitive to the needs of vulnerable individuals.
- Diverse groups and communities feel confident in the work of the CPS to meet their needs and feel treated fairly by the organisation.
(new outcome for 2022/23)
- The CPS works effectively with partners to inform and support victims.

Work delivered

29. Publish a RASSO public policy statement.	We published our RASSO policy statement for consultation in October 2021. This provides victims with information about how we charge and prosecute rape cases.
30. Publish a Commitment to RASSO victims. (NEW)	We published for consultation our new commitment to rape victims in October 2021 alongside our rape policy statement. This commitment explains to victims of rape how we promise to handle the case, their rights and where they can get further help.
31. Launch a digital walk-through of the process for victims of rape and serious sexual offences, including an explanation of the CPS's role.	We published our new guide for victims of rape and serious sexual assault in October 2021. The walkthrough outlines all the steps involved in the prosecution process.



<p>32. Improve communication and liaison with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs). (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape)</p>	<p>Jointly with the police, we published a National ISVA Framework in June 2021, outlining a set of standards around multi-agency partnership working, effective processes and supporting victims in order to improve our communication and liaison with ISVAs and support providers.</p>
<p>33. Improve communications with victims in RASSO investigations and prosecutions, including reviewing Victim Communication and Liaison training and on issues such as section 41 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act. Explore additional support and training to ensure empathetic communication. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape)</p>	<p>As part of Operation Soteria, all CPS pathfinder Areas are enhancing communication with victims and increasing engagement with ISVAs. Areas have already set up regular engagement meetings with ISVAs to improve communication with victims and understanding of case progression through the CJS.</p> <p>As a first step to improve our communications with victims, we have implemented refreshed new victim letters. To make further improvements, we have commissioned victim needs research, which will inform a fundamental re-design of our approach to communicating and engaging with victims.</p>
<p>34. Continue to consult with victims' group including through the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) External Consultation Group, the Forum for Male Victims of VAWG Crimes and, locally, through Local Scrutiny and Involvement Panels.</p>	<p>We have established a regular pattern of quarterly meetings with the national consultation groups, including the VAWG External Consultation Groups and the Forum for Male Victims of VAWG Crimes. Their expertise and insight have informed important areas of work including the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rape Legal Guidance for our Prosecutors• RASSO leadership strategy• National ISVA Framework developed jointly with the policy <p>We also set up and continue to hold regular meetings with the Victims' Commissioner, London's Victims' Commissioner and the Domestic Abuse Commissioner.</p>

	<p>Last year we launched a data-specific consultation group, allowing scrutiny of and transparency into our published data. These are now held quarterly on the date of our data releases.</p> <p>We have also publicly consulted on a number of our pieces of work to improve the way we handle RASSO cases, including our legal guidance, pre-trial therapy guidance, rape policy statement and our commitment to rape victims.</p>
--	---

Work in progress

<p>35. Ensure effective use of a range of special measures.</p>	<p>We have set up a special measures sub-group, including an Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) and, as a result, we will shortly be piloting refreshed guidance on Special Measures Meetings (renamed Victim Familiarisation Meetings).</p> <p>The CPS and National Police Chiefs' Council have published a Section 25 Information sheet on increasing awareness to clear the public gallery.</p> <p>Section 28 – pre-recording of the cross examination for RASSO or modern slavery victims – is currently being trialled in seven courts. A pilot is underway in three locations where victims can record their cross-examination (s.28) from a sexual assault referral centre (SARC). If the victim or witness is under 18 or is an adult with mental or physical disorders or disabilities or an impairment of social functioning, they can access s.28 in any Crown Court.</p>
<p>36. Pilot new model for communication with victims. (Joint police-CPS action plan on rape)</p>	<p>The CPS is carrying out victim needs research to inform a fundamental re-design of our approach to communicating and engaging with victims. As</p>



	<p>part of the police/CPS Joint National Action Plan on RASSO, several products have been developed including improved letters to victims, a guide for victims of RASSO, an ISVA Framework and familiarisation meetings.</p> <p>We will publish the findings from this research, engage stakeholders on it, and design an improved approach to victim engagement and communication.</p>
--	---

What we will do next (new actions)

<p>37. Finalisation of the digital walkthrough / rape policy statement and statement of commitment following publication under public confidence in this table.</p>	<p>The consultation on these documents closed on 23 Dec 2021. Work is now underway to analyse the responses and finalise these resources.</p> <p>Following consultation, these documents will be translated into Welsh, British Sign Language and the top ten most commonly spoken languages across England and Wales to ensure that victims from as many communities as possible have access to this vital information.</p>
<p>38. Victims needs research published to inform a new model of communication and engagement with victims.</p>	<p>Since the publication of RASSO 2025, we have commissioned an extensive piece of research into what victims need from engagement and communication with us so that they can better understand the role of the CPS, how we make our decisions and what their rights are.</p> <p>We will publish the findings from this research, engage stakeholders on it, and design an improved approach to victim engagement and communication that is more two-way, proactive and better fits the diverse communities we serve and the needs of the victims within the criminal justice system.</p>

2025

