



Police-CPS Joint National Rape Action Plan

Refresh 2022



Police-CPS joint national rape action plan – refresh 2022

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Foreword

Rape is a truly devastating and life changing crime. We are committed to significantly increasing the number of cases going to court and sustaining this year on year. We are determined to see justice for more victims¹ of rape and serious sexual offences, and as leaders we pledge to be visible, accountable and transparent as we work towards this aim.

The Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) when it was launched in January 2021 set out a clear joint commitment by policing and the CPS to work together to deliver improvements in how rape cases are investigated and prosecuted. It was a crucial step in our journey. The JNAP is a key foundation in how we'll get to our new operating model for investigating and prosecuting rape offences delivered under Operation Soteria.

We have seen an increase in volumes of referrals and volumes of charges since the launch of the JNAP. Since January 2021² we have seen a 53% increase in adult rape referrals (this includes referrals for early advice or for a charging decision) from the police to the CPS and an increase of 58% in charge volumes for adult rape. The energy and effort of our colleagues is bringing about change. We want to take this opportunity to recognise and thank our people for their continued hard work and dedication. We know that change will not always be linear, and we will continue to monitor our data to ensure this trajectory is sustained as we continue towards our strategic aim to significantly increase the number of cases going to court.

These improvements are built on strong partnership at all levels of our organisations and a sharing of best practice, skills and expertise across the CPS and policing and crucially the victims support sector, most notably Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) services.

We have further to go. This publication is a milestone for us. A step on a journey that will take time to build back public confidence and particularly the confidence of victims to report rape and feel supported to continue with the criminal justice process with the right support available to them.

Since the launch of the JNAP we made choices that have driven improvement:

- Prioritised early advice and improved relationships between our organisations earlier in the timeline of a case to build strong cases as early as possible
- Delivered improvements in how we communicate with victims, and launched ambitious plans to deliver a new and enhanced engagement offer for rape victims
- Adopted a critical-thinking approach to data through establishing joint meetings to review local data and identify areas that need renewed focus
- Delivered work to further strengthen the vital relationship between police, CPS role and ISVA to provide better support to victims through the launch of the national ISVA framework

¹ Language and terminology are important when discussing rape and serious sexual offences. Throughout this report, the term 'victim(s)' is used to refer to those affected by alleged rape and/or sexual assault. It encompasses other terms such as 'complainant(s)', and 'survivor(s)'. The term victim as used also encompasses both sexes and all genders, whilst explicitly recognising that females make up most victims.

² This data relates to comparisons between Q3 2020/21 (before the launch of the original JNAP) with Q1 2022/23.

Through the JNAP we have developed progressive policies and guidance reflecting current understanding of societal issues surrounding rape, we are testing different approaches of joint working and the next phase is about consistently putting policy into practice across different geographical areas through the launch of our new operating model. We are concentrating on embedding these changes, ensuring we have the right culture to do this work well and applying the policies we have created. We will deliver this alongside focusing on how we can build stronger cases as early as possible through a suspect-centric approach. We want to learn from the rich independent academic insight available through Operation Soteria in CPS and policing, and through piloting and evaluating new approaches to the way we work. As we do so, we will continue to engage with our partners and the third sector to share knowledge, identify good practice and be rightly held to account for our work, identifying opportunities to improve further.

We have come together to jointly reflect on what we have learnt, how we have delivered improvements and what we have achieved to date, with a renewed commitment to deepen our partnership working to improve our service to victims of this most devastating of crimes and to pursue justice in every possible case.

Our Senior Responsible Officers for the JNAP

Baljit Ubhey, Director of Strategy and Policy, Crown Prosecution Service

I am very proud that the CPS and our colleagues in policing have made rape a strategic priority and invested resources into improving our collective response to rape.

We make a big difference in people's lives and recognising the enormous privilege of the work we do is really important.

Innovative work such as the digital guide for victims and our revised guidance on rape myths and stereotypes demonstrate that we are keen to support rape victims and improve outcomes. We know we have a lot of work still to do to gain the trust of the public in this important area, and are committed to driving forward our transformative work in this area.



My commitment to victims:

I know that supporting a prosecution is not an easy step and we are absolutely committed to being clear and open about what you can expect. We will continue to work with wider support agencies to ensure you have the support and information you need.



**Chief Constable Sarah Crew, National Police Chiefs Council
Lead for Adult Sexual Offences**

I am determined to deliver transformational change in the way policing supports victims and investigates rape. Great innovations and leaps forward often come at the bleakest of moments. We saw this with the Vaccine Programme in the face of a deadly pandemic. We are using the same approach to counter this critical challenge to our Criminal Justice System, by bringing together leading academics, investigators and prosecutors in a unique coalition working collaboratively under the title of Operation Soteria Bluestone. I truly believe we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to bring about lasting change, justice for victims and safer communities.

My commitment to victims:

Courage and empathy must be at the heart of everything we do – in every interaction with victims; at the core of every investigation and in our relentless pursuit of justice. I am committed to doing everything in my power to ensure victims of this most devastating of crimes feel heard, involved, informed, empowered, respected and, above all, they have the best possible chance of seeing justice done.

Sue Hemming, Director of Legal Services, Crown Prosecution Service

I'm extremely proud of our people and their unwavering commitment, professionalism and passion for what they do. Through the challenges of a pandemic, they have worked hard to improve the way we, and the wider criminal justice system, deals with rape cases. It's important their good work does not go unnoticed.

We have developed ambitious strategies and action plans, refreshed our training, and updated our legal guidance, in order to improve the way we work and communicate with victims. There is still a long way to go, but we cannot deliver the change that is needed without the hard work and dedication of our people.



My commitment to victims:

I want victims and survivors to know that we hear you and we care. We want you to feel supported – coming forward is hard and the process that follows can feel cold and dispassionate. We are working hard with our partners to build strong cases and to improve the service that we provide to you.

Leadership statement

We believe great leadership is about openness, integrity and accountability. It is about enabling innovation and reform by setting the right culture and ethics for our people and giving them the right tools and environment to be successful. We are determined to together drive and influence progress.

Our people are delivering change on a daily basis, investigating and prosecuting often complex and difficult cases with a relentless pursuit of justice and living by the values of our organisations to protect and serve the public and deliver independent and fair prosecutions. We thank them for all the work they do and reaffirm our commitment to support them in their daily work and the reflective practice that we know is so important to adopting a critical thinking approach to how investigate and prosecute rape offences.

As leaders in the criminal justice system, we are committed to listening and learning – recognising that different organisations and people bring their own unique knowledge and experience to bear. It is about recognising that as individual organisations we won't have all of the information needed to continuously improve the services we provide.

By working together we can provide a criminal justice system that we can all be proud of and one that the public have confidence in.

Operation Soteria

The JNAP is part of a wider transformation initiative to improve the way we investigate and prosecute rape cases. It is a system wide effort to improve the way we handle these cases.

Operation Soteria is an ambitious programme of work to transform the way that rape investigations and prosecutions are handled and progressed, with a focus on the suspect rather than the victim.

It is a joint programme between Home Office, NPCC, CPS and a team of renowned academics. We originally launched Operation Soteria in five CPS Areas and five pathfinder police forces areas. We have now expanded this innovative work to cover 19 police force areas and nine CPS Areas.

Operation Soteria brings together police and CPS practitioners and academic experts to inform the development of this new national operating model. Initially focused on the policing response, the academic team will now be working closely in concert with academics commissioned by the CPS to work on case building and case presentation. One of its core deliverables is the development of a new operating model for investigating and prosecuting rape by June 2023.

The JNAP refresh provides a foundation upon which to build the new national operating model, through joint working by police and CPS in a way that is truly collaborative and informed and evaluated by leading academics in their respective fields.

Our joint work delivered through this Action Plan

We continue to be encouraged by the steady increase in rape referrals and charges since we published our JNAP in January 2021.

The police and CPS have necessary and different roles in the criminal justice system. The police are responsible for investigating reports of rape and for gathering evidence. The CPS is responsible for reviewing the evidence in cases sent to them by the police and deciding whether we can bring a prosecution. These roles are unique and different, but to work they need to be complimentary and built on strong local partnerships. This starts early in the journey of a case.

This section details our key work to date under the JNAP, and an accompanying Annex lists what we have delivered so far in greater detail.

Our people

Our work begins with our people who are dedicated to working to secure justice in rape cases and who need the right support, training and wellbeing to thrive in their roles. We know that the relationship between investigators and prosecutors is critical to bringing about justice for rape victims and how those victims experience in the justice system.

All rape and serious sexual offences cases referred to the CPS are handled by highly trained prosecutors working in specialist units. We are committed to growing resource in this area to deliver on our strategic aim to see more cases investigated, charged and prosecuted. In the last financial

year staff in our Rape and Sexual Offences (RASSO) units in the CPS have increased by 20% (from 360 to 433 FTE), and we are committed to recruiting an additional 194 RASSO staff in 2022/23.

The Police Uplift Programme will bring twenty thousand additional officers into police forces in England and Wales by the end of March 2023, creating the opportunity to rebuild specialist capacity and capability in the investigation of RASSO. Operation Soteria is helping to define the shape and scale of the investment required.

Continued professional development and training is crucial in investigating and prosecuting rape offences. It supports the importance of specialism in these highly complex cases and shows our commitment to staff who work on the frontline to deliver justice in these cases. We know that whilst it is right that our own organisations have their own specific training programmes, there is much we can learn from each other, and our people benefit from learning together.

CPS Areas and local police forces regularly come together to share learning, promote good practice and share reflections on how we can continue to improve our joint working. In the South West CPS Area in 2021 a joint reflective conference was held to explore and discuss how the CPS and police work together, consider the barriers to joint working, and agree the commitments needed to strengthen relationships between police and CPS. This included focus groups for officers, two-hour sessions on specific topic areas, and sharing learning videos, which are now mandated in all forces for all RASSO police officers. In December 2021, this was followed by joint training for officers and lawyers on the suspect-centric approach.

CPS South West and Avon and Somerset Police

Vicky Gleave, Senior District Crown Prosecutor, CPS South West:

“An early focus was on investment in relationships; to improve the partnerships both at a strategic level and crucially operationally case by case. This began with an away afternoon with police officers and lawyers attending, with leaders, to reflect on some of the challenges we face, what the barriers were to our working relationship and what commitments we wanted to make to one another going forward. It was a positive event in demonstrating how hard everyone is working and how we should use that to pull in the same direction rather than apart. Thereafter we have prioritised building our relationships. We attend one another teams’ meetings, organise joint training, and conduct early advice face to face on Teams to ensure the connection between the prosecutor and officer is tangible from that first interaction.

“We have begun to establish a genuine culture of open feedback, whether through joint NFA scrutiny panels, reflective practice sessions on live cases or post case reviews on concluded ones. We have joint newsletters and bulletins. We have regular management / performance meetings and keep each other cited frankly on key challenges and current performance. These are just some of the examples of how we have invested in working well together, and we won’t stop. As to the successes so far, we have seen a significant increase in referrals to the CPS from the police and this is beginning to translate into increased volumes progressing to court.”

Detective Superintendent Ed Yaxley, Senior Responsible Officer for Avon and Somerset's Project Bluestone:

"In Avon and Somerset, we have long recognised that change in the investigation of rape is required but the deep dive brought that into sharper focus. The rigour with which the research was conducted, and the huge experience of the academic team, mean that we have a detailed evidence base, a clear implementation plan, and a robust means of evaluating new ways of working as they are brought into operational use. Our new specialist investigation team, Operation Bluestone, is forming and its every step is informed by the work of Operation Soteria. Green shoots are starting to emerge, and we're determined to nurture them in the coming months and years."

Sarah O'Leary, CEO of Safe Link ISVA Support services:

"Being able to share what survivors were telling us about how they were being treated with the Police and CPS signalled a shift in Avon and Somerset Police and CPS South West. From this point on our working relationship, which has been built on honesty, trust and a commitment to improve the CJS's response to survivors, has meant that the victims' voice has been central to implementing change. Improved partnerships developed under the JNAP means that we are now a key partner in informing victim scrutiny panels, reflective practice case reviews, development of CPS contact letters and victim engagement with the Police. We have contact routes within the CPS and Police, meaning we can update victims quickly and escalate any concerns directly. We still have a long way to go, but initial feedback from survivors about the improved care, understanding, respect and kindness they have received has been remarkable, and we are seeing an increase in reporting and CPS charging as a result."

This area has seen an improvement in its data since the launch of the JNAP, with the number of cases the police send to the CPS for a charging decision increasing from 19 in Q4 2020/21 to 59 in Q1 2022/23 and the number of charged suspects increasing from 10 in Q4 2020/21 to 34 in Q1 2022/23.

The CPS and NPCC have recently created two webinars, one focusing on reasonable lines of enquiry relating to digital devices and the second on applying reasonable lines of enquiry to third-party material. These products have been launched amongst all RASSO investigators and prosecutors. Last year joint conferences across CPS and policing were held in Wales, the North East and the West Midlands, alongside a range of local learning events jointly attended by CPS and police. In June we came together at a national Police and CPS Rape Conference attended by 250 colleagues from across policing, CPS and ISVA providers.

Operation Soteria, and the academic evaluation of both the policing and CPS parts of this innovative programme, are forming the basis for future learning. National Learning Network events have been held outlining the themes and insights from the five academic deep dives completed by the Operation Soteria/Bluestone academics, with these learning outputs shared across policing and CPS to inform good practice.

As we move into the next phase of the JNAP delivery we will go further in this area, with the CPS rolling out a 12-month programme of applied learning in areas such as use of bad character

evidence, learning from Victims’ Right to Review and engaging with victims. Following academic evaluation of Soteria we will also deliver more joint training packages on the findings further embedding the suspect-centric approach to investigations and prosecutions.

Our future work in this area

Impact: We commit to ongoing learning and development to continually improve our practice and evidence-base, enabling critical thinking and reflective practice.

Activity	In the next 3 months	In the next 6 months	In the next 9 months	In the next 12 months
12 month learning and development programme delivered across CPS to deliver continued professional development for our people.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 learning sessions held. • Evaluation report produced.
Develop lessons-learnt guidance across our organisations to be built into quality assurance processes to enable learning from cases, including cases that have gone well, and embed reflection points to aid learning and development.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a national adverse outcome report for CPS Areas to aid analysis and maximise the value of the feedback received from advocates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint guidance produced between CPS and Policing and aligned to the new JOIM structures to support reflective practice and sharing best practice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To complete an annual national review of adverse outcomes reports in rape cases and to commit to the dissemination of learning arising from those reports.
Deliver work in partnership between CPS and NPCC work to improve data quality on protected characteristics to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPS attendance at the NPCC working group on protected characteristics and input into new police guidance on protected 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To scope and commence further research into the need of vulnerable victims and intersectionality

enable deeper insight and continuous improvement across our organisations.	characteristics data.			
Continue to hold quarterly discussions with the Senior Responsible Officers and the Victims' Commissioner, Domestic Abuse Commissioner and London Victims' Commissioners - so that senior stakeholders can inform and scrutinise our work.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All meetings take place.
Hold discussions regularly with the police's National Rape Working Group and the CPS's external consultation group to inform and scrutinise our work.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All meetings take place.

Building a strong case as early as possible

Quality partnerships between the CPS and policing, formed early through the seeking and provision of early advice, help ensure strong cases are built at an early stage and high-quality cases are referred by police to CPS for a charging decision.

Together the police and CPS launched an [Early Advice Memorandum of Understanding](#) in July 2021, which sets out the approach to obtaining and providing early advice and outlines how the CPS and police investigators will work together more closely. The early advice model promotes closer joint

working during the investigation process and we are testing further models of early advice through Operation Soteria, in advance of the rollout of a national operating model.

Early advice and early case discussions and planning between police and CPS is key to a fair investigation and prosecution and ensuring the right balance between both the requirements of an investigation and an individual's right to privacy by agreeing reasonable lines of enquiry.

Having complementary documents and approaches to disclosure across our organisations is vital to public confidence. In December 2020, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) introduced the Investigation Management Document (IMD), which documents and explains the reasonable lines of enquiry and digital strategy at the outset of the investigation. The CPS uses the IMD to inform the Disclosure Management Document (DMD). Disclosure Management Documents outline the prosecution's strategy and approach to disclosure and sets out how disclosure responsibilities have been managed, what lines of enquiry have been pursued and outlines timescales for disclosure and any third-party material. These documents are living documents updated during the life of a case and enable and support a fair and just process.

CPS Mersey-Cheshire and Cheshire Constabulary

A teenager reported to Cheshire Constabulary that she had been sexually assaulted by a man in his fifties. The victim was young and vulnerable, so the focus for police and the CPS was to resolve this case as swiftly as possible.

Police and the CPS had a strategic discussion about the necessary lines of enquiry when the police approached the CPS for early advice in January 2022. A concise set of actions was agreed to strengthen the case and these were completed swiftly with the defendant appearing in court in April 2022, where he pleaded guilty to sexual assault.

Jo Lazzari, Head of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences at CPS Mersey-Cheshire:

"We're always conscious of the impact rape and serious sexual offences have on the victims we work with, which is why our focus is on bringing cases to a conclusion as swiftly as we can.

"That was especially true here, where we knew the victim was vulnerable and wanted the case resolving quickly. With the police we made the decision to focus on a very concise set of actions that would strengthen the case and enable us to bring the prosecution before court in a very short space of time.

"Our collaborative and dynamic approach resulted in a guilty plea, saving the victim the additional burden of waiting for, and going through, a trial. This is one of many examples of our specialist prosecutors working collaboratively with the police to deliver justice for victims of these horrendous crimes."

Detective Superintendent Myra Ball, RASSO lead, Cheshire Constabulary:

“It is essential that detectives and lawyers truly understand how the timeliness of investigations and the decisions they make impact directly on victims.

“This case study highlights the benefits of JNAP, demonstrating how through effective case management, conversation and collaboration with CPS Mersey-Cheshire we can ensure that victims are at the forefront of our decisions and the relentless pursuit of perpetrators means justice is swift.”

CPS Cymru Wales and South Wales Police

In Wales, CPS aim to provide early advice on cases within 24 hours of it being requested by the police. This early engagement is helping to cement working partnerships between police and CPS, and it means reasonable lines of enquiry can be set right from the outset, stronger cases can be built, and a charging decision can be made swiftly.

Janine Davies, Head of the CPS Cymru-Wales Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Unit:

“We are confident that our partnership with South Wales Police will help us build stronger cases, that enter the system more quickly for victims right across Wales. There have been many benefits from stronger working relationships right from the outset and since the launch of the JNAP, we have seen nearly an eightfold increase in the number of early advice consultations completed in cases involving adult rape in CPS Cymru-Wales when comparing Q4 2020/21 with Q1 2022/23.”

Detective Superintendent Phil Sparrow, South Wales Police (SWP):

“South Wales Police are committed to working with our partners at the Crown Prosecution Service, to provide the best possible quality of service to victims of rape and sexual offences. The investment by the CPS in providing additional lawyers to work on rape cases has been matched by SWP making a similar investment in dedicated teams of officers to investigate these offences. The impact of the JNAP and the closer working relationships between SWP and CPS, along with the commitment to early advice, improved process to reduce delays, and the offer to victims to meet a CPS lawyer, are very positive developments. These positive developments ensure robust, suspect focused investigations, and provide the best possible chance of successful outcomes.”

As well as the early advice commitment, a Case Progression Officer has been appointed to monitor and manage pre-charge cases to make sure any issues are escalated and where possible resolved quickly. This work is helping investigations to progress more diligently through the system and reduce delays between report and charge.

The welfare of victims has also been given a high priority. To support victims further, from December 2021, all rape victims have been offered a meeting with a CPS lawyer so they can ask questions about the court process. They can raise any concerns and discuss whether special measures – such as screens to mean they cannot see their attacker in court – could help them provide their best evidence.

CPS East of England and Essex Police

This case involved a young male who was making repeated contact with under-age girls, many with significant vulnerabilities, via Snapchat. He used the map feature to track the girls, who lived locally. He then proceeded to commit both online and contact offences against many girls. His offending continued after his initial arrest, using a new device, and police became aware that his offending behaviour was ongoing prior to his final arrest and remand into custody.

The reviewing lawyer and the officer in the case worked together to develop a case strategy and agree reasonable lines of enquiry at Early Advice stage. It was agreed that there would be a planned arrest of the suspect, with a conference one week before the arrest date to ensure the case was fully prepared. The reviewing lawyer and officer kept in regular contact as the case developed so that the lawyer could react swiftly to developments. This gave the lawyer confidence in the progress of the investigation and time to prepare for a lengthy priority charging decision on the day of arrest, ahead of time.

This case involved a significant amount of third-party material that needed to be handled proportionately and fairly; a robust strategy was required and the reviewing lawyer's guidance was essential to provide a framework for obtaining and reviewing that material and recording it on the relevant disclosure documents. There was co-ordination with the ISVA to support the complainants and prepare for section 28 hearings. Prior to these taking place, the defendant offered acceptable pleas due to the strength of the evidence against him and received a sentence of 20 years – 12 years extended by 8 under the dangerousness provisions.

The positive joint work exhibited in this case reflects the excellent relationship between police and CPS in Area RASSO work, developed over nearly four years of governance through the strategic RASSO Governance Board and the Operational Board. This is replicated at all levels with RASSO District Crown Prosecutors providing support to police inspectors through monthly Case Progression Clinics and training inputs and lawyer meeting with OICs for Early Advice. The Area also has an ISVA liaison group in which we promote and support mutual understanding between CPS and ISVAs and provide a forum for ISVAs to meet the prosecutors dealing with case on which they are assigned.

Operation Garnet – CPS South East and Surrey Police

The police received a report relating to a violent relationship where the offences of rape, assault and controlling and coercive behaviour were alleged. Using an offender-centric approach, the defendant's phones were analysed which helped evidence these behaviours. Additional victims were identified, and the predatory behaviour of the perpetrator demonstrated, highlighting the risk he presented to women in Surrey. Operation Garnet was launched, and the CPS provided advice at the earliest stages through a pre-charge case progression clinic. This case had the benefit of an early

consultation with a CPS prosecutor in relation to potential new charges arising from these extensive investigations.

The police and CPS worked together to develop a strategy to guide the investigation, which included proportionate requests for information related to digital data and third-party material, as well as the strategy of joining the additional charges relating to other victims to the matters involving the first complainant. Between CPS and policing a joint digital strategy was agreed so that a dedicated officer/digital forensic technician could deal with all digital downloads. These meetings and the appointment of a police strategist were crucial in the presentation of this case in court. Regular meetings were held between the police and the same CPS lawyer, who had been assigned to the case to further inform the investigation before the case was charged. Joint strategy meetings considered how best to present digital evidence, resulting in iPads being provided in court to assist the jury. The defendant was found guilty of 18 offences including Rape, Assault Occasioning Actual Bodily Harm and Controlling and Coercive Behaviour. This case is a good example of police identifying early a case that would benefit from early advice and thereafter excellent collaborative working.

Our future actions in this area

Impact: Police and prosecutors maximise opportunities to work jointly from the earliest stages, leading to increased confidence in the justice system.

Activity	In the next 3 months	In the next 6 months	In the next 9 months	In the next 12 months
Early advice and case conferences take place across police forces and CPS Areas to drive our commitment to building strong cases as early as possible.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Day in the life of’ series launched to support improved relationships across investigators and prosecutors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning podcast launched on early advice as part of the development of the new national operating model across policing and CPS. 	
Further review the terminology and process to significantly reduce the number of cases pending response further investigation (PRFI) following an action plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review figures following disaggregation of referrals for a full charging decision to consider the PRFI trajectory for those referrals for a full charging decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share good practice in reducing the number of PRFI cases nationally. 		

Our future actions in this area

Impact: A suspect-centric approach is embedded at the centre of a new operating model for RASSO.

Activity	In the next 3 months	In the next 6 months	In the next 9 months	In the next 12 months
Expand delivery and learning on the suspect-centric approach through Operation Soteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onboard new CPS Areas and police forces as part of Soteria governance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly advocate panel communication on new policies, training, and cases. 		
Testing and developing the new national operating model through Operation Soteria.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish the final findings from the research conducted in the core police forces participating in Operation Soteria. CPS Soteria academic interim position paper released. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPS Academic Learning & Engagement events to present findings to stakeholders Phase 1 Soteria academic (CPS) Briefing Report released. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New national operating model for the investigation and prosecution of adult rape available. 	
Further embed bad character applications into training and development materials across our organisations.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning programme featuring bad character delivered as part of the 12-month learning programme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disruption podcast as part of building a suspect-centric case strategy with a focus on prevention.
Update the joint police and CPS National Protocol on the investigation and prosecution of rape cases and test it aligns with the relevant file standard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protocol updated and disseminated.

<p>guidance in order to promote consistency of approach to rape investigations and prosecution across England and Wales.</p>				
<p>Improve understanding and use of forensic evidence in rape cases including through the development of a forensic evidence toolkit and increased prosecution team engagement with forensic medical examiners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forensic evidence toolkit produced and disseminated. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a forensic trial strategy to drive an increase in early prosecution team engagement with forensic medical examiners in rape cases.
<p>Deliver further work to update guidance, training and compliance to reflect the Attorney General's guidelines on disclosure and improve practical application of the principles alongside producing an</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compliance programme developed by JNAP governance. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information for victims on disclosure produced. 	

information sheet for victims on this important issue.				
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Working together to improve our engagement with victims

We know that the way victims experience the criminal justice system is critical to public confidence. We are improving the way our organisations engage directly with victims, making it more streamlined and straightforward, including how we work with ISVAs whose role is so vital in supporting victims through the journey to justice. The relationship between ISVA, police investigator and prosecutor need to work well and be built on trust for victims to feel supported. We have [launched a new framework](#) for the way we work with ISVAs. The framework includes a range of minimum standards, including single points of contact across the police, CPS and ISVA agencies to forge stronger working relationships and seamless communication between partners.

Operation Soteria is using the concept of Procedural Justice to develop and design how the new operating model will involve, inform, empower and serve victims through their criminal justice journey. Pilot products for testing and refining are already in use within pathfinder forces and they are showing a marked improvement in victim engagement and satisfaction.

The CPS is delivering a significant three-phase programme of work to improve communication with victims that will deliver an enhanced and differentiated offer for rape victims. In the first phase, this has led to:

- new letters, pre-charge and at the point of charge, to introduce the prosecutor, explain the work underway and ensure the victim knows what support is available to them and what their Rights are under the Victims’ Code.
- a [guide for victims](#) to help victims understand what to expect throughout their CJS journey and what support is available to them, which is currently being updated following a consultation period. This guide includes a list of available special measures to help support victims and explaining what provisions may be available to help them give their best evidence in court.
- ‘Familiarisation meetings’ for rape victims when a not guilty plea is entered are being piloted under Operation Soteria. These build on special measures meetings and provide the victim with the opportunity to meet the prosecution team, discuss special measures, raise any questions victims may have about the process, and share any concerns they may have about giving evidence.

The second phase, between September 2021 and December 2021, involved extensive independent research, working with victims, their supporters, CPS staff and criminal justice partners, to understand what victims want and need from the CPS to feel better supported, informed and engaged. CPS have [published the findings](#) from this research alongside plans for the service redesign and will be testing a new enhanced model of support for rape victims from October 2022. As part of

the work to improve our engagement and support for victims, it is important services are culturally sensitive and free from bias. This has been a theme fed back to the criminal justice system and we will work with our partners and groups in the voluntary sector representing victims from diverse groups to improve our practice in this area.

Ensuring victims are supported to give their best evidence is critical to our work under the JNAP. In December 2021, the CPS and National Police Chiefs' Council published a Section 25 Information sheet for ISVAs and police on increasing awareness to clear the public gallery. As we move into the next phase of the JNAP we will focus on delivering high quality 'Achieving Best Evidence' (ABE) interviews for victims of rape and serious sexual offences. This will build on work we have already started under the JNAP to date piloting new approaches to psychology-led ABE interviews in partnership with the Lighthouse.

Information sharing agreement

An information-sharing agreement has been developed between CPS East Midlands, Nottinghamshire Police, Northamptonshire Police, Derbyshire Constabulary, Lincolnshire Police and Leicester Police and Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVAs) and Children and Young People's ISVAs (CHISVAs) to ensure that when a report is made to the police, the police automatically offer ISVA support and share these contact details with the CPS upon referral for a charging decision. This means that the CPS can liaise with the ISVA/CHISVA and invite them to special measures meetings, seek their advice and support regarding any additional victim communication needed, and use their skills to keep the victim updated in the best possible way.

Our future actions in this area

Impact: Victims experience an increased level of support.

Activity	In the next 3 months	In the next 6 months	In the next 9 months	In the next 12 months
Launch and evaluate pilot on capturing evidence of psychological injury. This will raise awareness of the existence of psychological injury at an early stage of the investigation to inform case-building and decision-making.				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conclude delivery of the pilot. Report produced on the impact of the new psychological injury report on different stages of the criminal justice process.
Design and deliver a new and enhanced communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New CPS service offer for rape victims piloted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Victim experiences' and feedback 		

offer for victims of rape and serious sexual assault.	from October 2022.	<p>research commenced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To identify the development of a process for communicating updates to victims on the outcome of sensitive pre-trial legal applications including Section 41 YJCEA 1999 (evidence or questions about complainant's sexual history). 		
Pilot and evaluate new approaches to improve the quality of ABE interviews.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued work on delivery of different approaches to ABE interviews (Lighthouse Project psychology-led ABE interviews, North West ABE pilot and PIPPA project). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim learning paper from the projects produced. Operational learning event on ABEs.
Pilot, test and evaluate the use of Victim Familiarisation meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New service offer for rape victims piloted from October 2022. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phase 1 Soteria Academic (CPS) Briefing Report released. 		

A joint commitment to scrutiny of our decisions and learning

Reviewing decisions and opening these decisions up to scrutiny provides an opportunity for learning for both our organisations.

A particular focus of scrutiny is where our organisations have taken the difficult decision to not charge or progress further with a case. This decision may be taken by the police or by the CPS. The police may make the decision before anything has been shared with the CPS, or after seeking early

advice. Both our organisations actively invite scrutiny of our No Further Action (NFA) decisions from each other, expert practitioners, and community members. NFA scrutiny happens in every CPS Area and in every police force and new approaches to scrutiny are being piloted in Operation Soteria police forces and CPS Areas. Following an independent evaluation NFA scrutiny will be part of our new national operating model from June 2023.

Alongside scrutiny of NFA decisions, it is important that we scrutinise our data and proactively work to improve data quality to enable further and more nuanced insights. Following an extensive review undertaken by the College of Policing, CPS and NPCC in February 2022, Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIMs) were launched. JOIMs create an opportunity for Areas and forces to refresh existing local governance structures and work to improve casework performance through strong working relationships, sharing and solving issues and discussing good practices. Each Area and their forces will identify priorities and drive strategies to deliver improvements based on local context. Rape specific JOIMs have been created and are being embedded.

Scrutiny Panels

In the West Midlands multi-stakeholder scrutiny panels are held where NFA decisions take by both the police and CPS are scrutinised. These panels are attended by CPS, policing, the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner and the third sector.

In CPS South West scrutiny panels are held with Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Avon and Somerset police forces where both CPS and Police NFA decisions are reviewed.

Dr Katrin Hohl, Co Academic Lead, Operation Soteria Bluestone, City University of London:

“Working with Avon and Somerset, and CPS South West, I helped frame the approach to the NFA panels back in September 2021. I joined the first session, along with a representative from the local ISVA service, and found that she and I raised different, challenging questions about the investigation and charging decisions. Nine months later I joined the panel again, as we have been asking Operation Soteria Bluestone academics to attend each monthly panel. I am so impressed with the maturity of the discussions in the NFA panel now. I was struck also by how different the questions the police and CPS representatives asked of the NFA cases. I found these questions of the different parties were informed by the principles of suspect behaviour focused investigations, and a clearer understanding of rape in the context of a pattern of coercive control. Inspirational.”

Across the Metropolitan Police Force Area, a number of scrutiny panels are held. In policing, a pan-London police NFA panel is held with CPS representation. Within the CPS, scrutiny panels are held every quarter alternating between a rape and a wider VAWG focus. Both panels are attended by senior police colleagues and a selection of third sector groups.

Using data to give insight and support improvement

We are committed to continuing to improve the quality of and access to data to enable us to develop deeper insights and continually improve. 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. Using currently available data from Avon and Somerset police and CPS, from the period 2016-2020, the tool provides end-to-end data analysis of the key stages in rape cases from report to court. The tool allows us to explore and understand attrition and timeliness in the cases at each stage using different timeframes, demographics of suspects and victims and type of cases, for example domestic abuse rape cases or non-recent cases.

The CPS and policing have both supported the development and design of Government’s commitment to create and publish regular criminal justice scorecards, which show how the whole system is performing. The aim of the scorecards is to shine a light on performance, increase and promote transparency in the criminal justice system, and improve collective cross-system accountability.

The CPS also continues to publish quarterly data on our national website alongside holding specific stakeholder sessions on the day of publication to discuss the data with the third sector. In addition, both our organisations are committed to improving the quality of data on protected characteristics for victims and defendants.

Durham Constabulary and CPS North East

Under the JNAP Durham Constabulary and CPS North-East have built upon strong existing relationships and have put an increased emphasis on early engagement between officers and prosecutors. Rape-focussed Joint Operational Improvement Meetings (JOIM) have been established whereby police and CPS jointly scrutinise and challenge performance data, discontinued or no further action (NFA) cases and action plans, as well as consider detailed feedback from trials with a not guilty verdict. This activity has further embedded a learning environment where improvements are jointly identified and acted upon. An ISVA forum between local ISVAs, the CPS and Police has also been developed which has enhanced support for victims by ensuring lines of communication – such as through post-charge meetings to discuss the provision of special measures. The Area’s Enhanced Early Advice pilot has seen prosecutors supporting investigators with advice from the very earliest stages of an investigation on suspect and victim interview strategy. In addition to this, Early Case Planning Conferences (ECPC) now take place shortly after charge, during which early discussion takes place between investigators and prosecutors on the presentation of complex evidence, key material is prioritised and unnecessary lines of enquiry are avoided.

Our future actions in this area

Impact: Police and CPS take a holistic approach to offending, recognising the link between domestic abuse, rape and the wider work on VAWG.

Activity	In the next 3 months	In the next 6 months	In the next 9 months	In the next 12 months
Develop joint learning and				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key messages and key content pieces

<p>training products reflecting the findings of Operation Soteria learning and academic evaluations.</p>				<p>that must be included in local training packages developed.</p>
<p>Use insight from the Rape Data Tool and Operation Soteria academic deep dives to design a programme of work recognising the distinct circumstance apparent in cases of domestic abuse rape and develop policy proposals using that insight</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CCB and Stalking CPS legal guidance updated to include guidance about DA and RASSO. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to consider DA and RASSO overlap in the new operating model for RASSO. 	
<p>A programme of workshops on VAWG across NPCC and CPS leaders to shape the work in this area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded attendees list of the regular commissioners' meetings to include NPCC VAWG and DA leads. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPS VAWG strategy launched. • VAWG summit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All VAWG meetings take place.

The next steps in the Joint National Action Plan

We made 32 commitments in the JNAP. We have completed 24 and eight are in progress.

In the development of this refreshed Joint National Action Plan, we have applied a theory of change model to consider where we can go further, building on what we have delivered to date, and aligning our future activity to measures of impact. We have consulted with police, prosecutors, legal representatives, ISVA services and the third sector to shape and inform our priorities. We have tested ourselves on ensuring we're prioritising the right actions going forward, learning from the findings to date in Soteria Bluestone, independent inspectorate reports, data analysis and third sector feedback. We also held a specific session at our joint national conference seeking feedback on our priorities and future activity.

We have 20 actions in the refreshed JNAP (this includes the eight 'in progress' actions that are being rolled into our future delivery plan), detailed throughout this strategy. This will be delivered through joint governance led at a senior level by our Senior Responsible Officers and reporting into the Joint Operational Improvement Board (JOIB) co-chaired by Assistant Commissioner Nick Ephgrave and Director of Public Prosecutions, Max Hill KC. We will be integrating ISVAs, the third sector and other partners into our governance arrangements to drive forward delivery.

We will focus on the next phase of the JNAP on embedding the policies, procedures and guidance launched to date, whilst recognising areas where we need to go further. We have articulated five outcomes we will be working towards over the next 18 months and we will structure our work programme accordingly to ensure that.

- Victims experience an increased level of support.
- A suspect-centric approach is embedded at the centre of a new operating model for RASSO.
- Police and CPS take a holistic approach to offending, recognising the link between domestic abuse and rape and the wider work on VAWG.
- We commit to ongoing learning and development to continually improve our practice and evidence-base, enabling critical thinking and reflective practice.
- Police and prosecutors maximise opportunities to work jointly from the earliest stages, leading to increased confidence in the justice system.

Of particular focus in the next phase of the JNAP will be piloting and learning from different approaches to delivering 'Achieving Best Evidence' interviews, embedding and ensuring compliance with the Attorney General's Guidelines on disclosure – alongside communicating our work in this area compassionately and fairly to victims and defendants, and using data and insight to further examine the link between domestic abuse and rape offences; we will then design policy and practice solutions in this area. Our thanks in advance go to colleagues and partners working with us to put these new programmes of work into action.

We are proud of the work delivered by colleagues and with partners through the Joint National Action Plan. We know we still have a long way to go and we are committed to delivering on these new actions to help command public confidence in how we investigate and prosecute rape offences, and bring about meaningful change.