

Royal Navy Police

Rape, serious sexual assault and
domestic abuse investigations

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

Royal Navy Police: Rape, serious sexual assault and domestic abuse investigations

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 321B of the Armed Forces Act 2006

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 15 June 2022

HC 354



© Crown copyright 2022

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence

Where we have identified any third party copyright information, you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/official-documents and from our website at www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at HMICFRS, 8th Floor, 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham B2 4BJ

ISBN 978-1-5286-3475-5

E02760841 06/21

Printed on paper containing 40% recycled fibre content minimum

Printed in the UK by HH Associates Ltd. on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

Contents

Summary	1
Introduction	5
1. The offences, the service justice system, the service police, their responsibilities and environment	8
2. Strategic leadership and governance	14
3. Prevention and encouraging reporting	23
4. Handling calls and first reports of crime	25
5. First response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents	28
6. Investigations after first response	50
7. Victim contact	72
Annex A – Recommendations	76
Annex B – Areas for improvement	79
Annex C – Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms	81

Summary

This inspection focused on how well the Royal Navy Police ('the RNP' or 'the force') prevents domestic abuse¹ and rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), and how well it investigates these incidents. Our terms of reference also asked us to examine how well the RNP supports and safeguards victims of these crimes and how well it provides governance for these activities.

Given the Royal Navy's composition, purpose and operating environment, such incidents are infrequent. But they can and do occur from time to time. In particular, a legal definition extends the ambit of domestic abuse far beyond what might be considered a traditional view of such abuse, as simply being abuse perpetrated in the marital home. Naval personnel at shore bases and on board vessels at sea aren't at high risk, but they aren't immune either.

We conducted this inspection at the same time as inspecting the Royal Military Police and the Royal Air Force Police against the same terms of reference.

While the three service police forces have unique operating contexts, they all form part of the UK Armed Forces, fall under the remit of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and have some of the same important processes and capabilities. Therefore, some of our findings and recommendations relate to all three service police forces.

Strategic leadership and governance

The MOD and the Royal Navy should strengthen the oversight and governance arrangements they have in place for the RNP. This would hold the RNP more to account and promote improvements in its performance. We are satisfied that there is

¹ The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) established a statutory definition of domestic abuse for the first time. Domestic abuse is behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other that is either physical or sexual abuse; violent or threatening behaviour, controlling or coercive behaviour, economic abuse or psychological, emotional or other abuse. For the purposes of this Act, two people are personally connected to each other if any of the following applies:

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child or
- (g) they are relatives.

sufficient governance and oversight by RNP of its investigations to support the resourcing and assessment of those investigations.

The MOD has produced a domestic abuse strategy for the military called [*No Defence for Abuse*](#) and an associated action plan. But it hasn't set the RNP, or the other service police forces, any actions relating to this.

As for RASSO, the MOD hasn't produced an equivalent to *No Defence for Abuse*. This means that the MOD has few means available to hold the RNP to account on matters such as prevention and victim care.

The Royal Navy hasn't made arrangements to set performance measures or objectives for the RNP, and there is no governance of these issues by Navy Command.

We were, however, pleased to find that the Provost Marshal (Navy) has appointed senior officers as strategic plan owners for domestic abuse and RASSO. They have created separate strategies for domestic abuse and RASSO, which provide comprehensive guidance for the RNP. This makes the force able to better respond to cases of domestic abuse and RASSO.

The RNP produces an annual strategic threat assessment, which allows it to prioritise activity and to target education and intervention. However, several factors limit the force's understanding of the scale of offending:

- The ICT systems used by the RNP, and the other service police forces, have significant problems making it difficult for users to report data and statistics accurately and highlight cases of domestic abuse. A replacement programme is underway, but it won't be operational before autumn 2023.
- Home Office police forces (CIVPOL) are instructed to inform the military of any incidents in which the suspect or victim is a member of the military. We aren't convinced that this is happening in all cases.

This results in the RNP setting its priorities with insufficient and poor-quality data, which will affect its ability to respond appropriately to incidents.

The capacity and capability of the force intelligence bureau (FIB) (a Royal Military Police asset used by the RNP) also limits the force's ability to analyse domestic abuse and RASSO intelligence and to produce strategic and tactical analyses.

Prevention and encouraging reporting

The RNP has a role in preventing domestic abuse and RASSO and encouraging the reporting of these incidents. While it has developed a RASSO awareness campaign that focuses on sexual consent, neither this, nor domestic abuse awareness training is mandatory for all Royal Navy personnel. This means that crime prevention opportunities are being missed. We therefore recommend that the MOD should support the RNP by mandating domestic abuse and RASSO prevention and awareness training for new recruits to the Royal Navy, and for regular refresher training.

Handling calls and first reports of crime

The procedures and systems that the RNP, and the other service police forces, use to record first contact about incidents need to improve. They don't use a centralised contact centre. As a result, calls can be missed, insufficient detail is often recorded, and police response can be delayed or ill-prepared. This adversely affects the level of service received by victims of domestic abuse and RASSO.

First response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

It is essential that first responders and their supervisors have the skills they need to do their jobs properly. We found that RNP personnel who received their initial training before 2020 weren't trained to the same level as current students on domestic abuse and RASSO. Therefore, they may lack the skills to respond as effectively to such incidents. What's more, first responders conduct domestic abuse [risk assessments](#) in most but not all of the few cases they deal with. The force should start monitoring risk assessment completion rates as part of an improved governance process, once the replacement for its current ICT is in place. The force should also monitor how consistently these assessments are completed; this will ensure that the force responds appropriately to victims who are at greater risk.

We found that RNP personnel made early arrests in some, but not all, of the cases we reviewed where such action would have been proportionate and justified. This may put some victims at greater risk and means that some opportunities to secure evidence from the suspect, such as a forensic examination, are missed.

Not all Royal Navy vessels have an RNP presence on board. On submarines and mine countermeasure ships (MCMs) coxswains conduct a discipline function, but they have very limited training on how to respond to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents. They aren't police officers and don't have a policing role. For the reasons we explained on page 3, there is the potential for domestic abuse and RASSO incidents to occur on board these vessels. If this occurred on a ballistic missile-armed submarine, trained RNP personnel couldn't conduct an investigation or provide victim care until the vessel ended its operational deployment. We recommend that the RNP and Navy Command should examine whether policing arrangements for submarines and MCMs could be improved.

Investigations after first response

Some RNP domestic abuse cases are investigated by general police duties (GPD) personnel and some are investigated by the specialist investigation branch (SIB). All RASSO cases are investigated by the SIB.

During our case file review, we concluded that most SIB investigations were of a comparable or higher quality than in many CIVPOL forces. This is partly a result of investigators having a lower caseload than their counterparts in CIVPOL.

Given the greater experience and training among SIB investigators compared to their colleagues in GPD units, and their capacity for additional work, we recommend that all criminal domestic abuse cases retained by the RNP should be investigated by the SIB.

RNP investigators compiled investigation strategies in all the investigations we reviewed. Most were produced at the outset of investigations and had regular updates, with appropriate lines of enquiry. But we found that some strategies in complex investigations could be improved. The absence of an overarching strategy and decision-making policy for important areas in such investigations means that lines of enquiry can be missed and evidence can be lost.

One of these domestic abuse cases we reviewed had been discontinued by GPD personnel, while it still had outstanding lines of enquiry that should have been completed. The force should improve oversight of decisions to take no further action in investigations.

Forensic evidence collection should be done by specially trained crime scene investigators (CSIs). As the force only has nine CSIs, their arrival at crime scenes can be delayed for several hours. We recommend that the Provost Marshals of all three armed services and the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) (NPCC) lead for forensics should jointly agree on procedures for CIVPOL police force CSIs to support service police investigations. This will provide opportunities for service police CSIs to gain further operational forensic experience and to speed up the initial forensic evidence-gathering.

We recommend that Provost Marshals for all three service police forces should introduce 'cyber kiosks' to quickly gain access to and download material held on mobile digital devices. This will speed up investigations and allow the force to return such devices to victims and suspects sooner.

Victim contact

As part of their responsibilities to the people under their command, COs are responsible for appointing a victim support officer (VSO) to victims of domestic abuse and RASSO. We found that this doesn't happen in all cases. Sometimes the victim can be left without the support they need in the days and weeks after the offence. It can also deny the victim protection from intimidation and further abuse.

Victims from the three services confirmed that in the cases where a VSO was appointed, most didn't support them as they should. We recommend that the MOD reinforce compliance of COs' responsibilities for VSOs, and monitor such compliance by reviewing data from COs and feedback from victims.

We were unable to assess the quality of [safeguarding](#) provided to victims after the initial safeguarding actions were carried out by the RNP. COs have responsibility for this, which is largely outside the control of the service police. Many interviewees, including senior officers and managers from the RNP and welfare services, were concerned that nobody has oversight of the totality of safeguarding measures different parties conduct in a case. We also found this to be a cause for concern.

We made a total of 30 recommendations and identified 13 areas for improvement. They appear at annexes A and B respectively.

Introduction

About HMICFRS

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services in the public interest. We conduct statutory inspections of police forces and other law enforcement agencies in England and Wales. We also inspect the service police (Royal Navy Police, Royal Military Police and the Royal Air Force Police) on invitation from the Secretary of State for Defence.

In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that citizens would ask, and publish the answers in an accessible form, using our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

Our commission

In 2020, the Secretary of State for Defence invited us to inspect the service police forces. Our terms of reference were to examine how the three service police forces deal with rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), and domestic abuse. Within this, we were asked to examine how the forces:

- prevent domestic abuse and RASSO;
- investigate domestic abuse and RASSO incidents;
- support and safeguard victims of domestic abuse and RASSO;
- pass on relevant information and intelligence to relevant agencies; and
- provide governance for these activities.

Limits to this inspection

- All three service police forces have important roles in each of the areas highlighted in the terms of reference. But the forces operate as part of broader military structures and don't have the same wide-ranging responsibilities as civilian police forces in, for example, crime prevention and [safeguarding](#) victims. Responsibility for these activities lies primarily with the commanding officers (COs) of units across the wider military. As we don't have the statutory authority to inspect the broader military, this inspection focused on the service police's activity. Our inspection, therefore, examines only one important aspect of how the three armed services deal with domestic abuse and RASSO.
- Throughout this report, we highlight issues that we believe should be examined as part of broader reviews of the military's approach to domestic abuse and RASSO.

- A review of the actions carried out by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the broader military to prevent domestic abuse and RASSO is needed in order to properly assess their effectiveness. Similarly, there needs to be a comprehensive review of how domestic abuse and RASSO victims are safeguarded. This would need to examine the roles of COs, discipline units and welfare units, among others. And to determine why many reports of domestic abuse and RASSO don't result in prosecution would require a review of COs, the service police, and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA). We don't have the remit to undertake these reviews.

Our methodology and approach to this inspection

Our fieldwork for this inspection took place in late 2020 and early 2021. As a result of the pandemic, most of our fieldwork was conducted remotely. During our fieldwork, we:

- spoke to victims of domestic abuse and RASSO offences investigated by service police forces;
- conducted more than 80 interviews and focus groups of service police personnel at all levels of the three forces, based in the UK and abroad;
- interviewed more than 50 other interested parties, including personnel from other parts of the military, the MOD and civilian police forces;
- attended forces' governance and performance meetings; and
- reviewed the three service police forces' domestic abuse and RASSO investigation case files.²

We also reviewed more than 300 documents provided by the forces. These included self-assessments, policies, procedures, minutes of meetings and agreements with other organisations.

In reaching our judgments, we have, where appropriate, drawn on the College of Policing's guidance to police forces, known as authorised professional practice (APP). We also refer to findings from other inspection reports.

However, each of the three service police forces has a unique role, which is very different from that of civilian police forces. As such, we can't expect them to adhere to all elements of the APP, which was designed principally for civilian police forces working in different policing environments. We have, therefore, inspected the service police forces in their context. And we have been pragmatic when developing our recommendations and areas for improvement.

² This included all investigations that began in 2019 and a random selection of cases that were investigated by service police forces in 2020. We chose to review 2019 and 2020 cases because investigations into newer cases wouldn't have progressed as far and wouldn't have provided us with evidence of the full investigative process.

The report

This is one of three reports we have produced for this inspection and focuses on the Royal Navy Police. All three reports also include our findings relating to issues that affect all three service police forces and collaborative activities.

The report has six chapters. The first chapter provides a background to the Navy Police, the service justice system (SJS), domestic abuse and RASSO.

The other chapters address the terms of reference, examining in turn:

- the relevant governance arrangements at the MOD, force and unit level;
- how the force tries to prevent domestic abuse and RASSO offences;
- how well the force responds to calls for service and records domestic abuse and RASSO offences, including passing on information and intelligence;
- how well the force conducts first response to domestic abuse and RASSO offences, including the quality of initial investigation and safeguarding, and
- how well the force conducts domestic abuse and RASSO investigations after first response.

We are grateful to those who gave their time freely and willingly to help us understand the full range of issues across the military.

About the terminology we use in this report

We recognise that there are discussions over the use of the terms ‘complainant’, ‘victim’ and ‘survivor’, and of ‘suspect’, ‘accused’ and ‘defendant’.

Throughout this report, the term ‘victim(s)’ is used to refer to those affected by rape. It incorporates other terms such as ‘complainant(s)’, ‘client(s)’ and ‘survivor(s)’, as referred to by focus groups and interviewees.

We have used the term ‘suspect’ to refer to a person accused of rape. It incorporates ‘offender’, ‘perpetrator’ and ‘defendant’. Other terms may be used when referring to published data or in quotes to maintain consistency with the original source.

The Service Police forces operate alongside other territorial police forces in the UK: the 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, Police Scotland, the Police Service for Northern Ireland, as well as foreign police services. In this report we use the service police term ‘civilian police’ (CIVPOL) to refer to the UK territorial police forces.

1. The offences, the service justice system, the service police, their responsibilities and environment

In this chapter we provide a background to:

- rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO), and domestic abuse;
- how the service justice system (SJS) operates;
- the structure of the service police;
- the RNP and SJS;
- the service police forces' jurisdiction; and
- other recent independent reports about the service police forces and the way they deal with domestic abuse and sexual offending.

Rape, serious sexual offences, and domestic abuse

Rape and serious sexual offending (RASSO) are among the most serious crimes. Rape is the offence contrary to [section 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003](#) and sexual assault (by penetration) is the offence contrary to [section 2 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003](#).

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) established a statutory definition of domestic abuse for the first time. Domestic abuse is behaviour between people aged 16 or over who are personally connected to each other³ that is either:

- physical or sexual abuse;
- violent or threatening behaviour;
- [controlling or coercive behaviour](#);

³ For the purposes of this Act, two people are personally connected to each other if any of the following applies:

- (a) they are, or have been, married to each other;
- (b) they are, or have been, civil partners of each other;
- (c) they have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (d) they have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated);
- (e) they are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other;
- (f) they each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child or
- (g) they are relatives.

- economic abuse; or
- psychological, emotional or other abuse.

Except for controlling or coercive behaviour, domestic abuse isn't a specific criminal offence. Police forces record offences that relate to domestic abuse under the respective offence that has been committed (for example, assault with injury). But the police must also record that an offence is domestic-abuse related.

The service justice system

The service justice system (SJS) establishes a legal framework that makes sure service personnel are subject to a single disciplinary code that applies wherever they serve. The disciplinary systems of the three services – the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force – were drawn together under a common system by the [Armed Forces Act \(AFA\) 2006](#).

The SJS is responsible for investigating and prosecuting the full range of offences against military law. Such offences include:

- discipline offences (for example desertion, mutiny and assisting the enemy) that can only be committed by members of the armed forces, or civilians subject to service discipline;⁴ and
- criminal conduct offences, which includes anything done anywhere in the world that, if done in England and Wales, would be against the civilian criminal law.

The SJS comprises commanding officers (COs), the service police, single service legal advisory branches, the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA), and Military Court Service.

Royal Navy COs – of commander or captain rank – have wide-ranging responsibilities for the operational output, training, welfare and discipline of the personnel under their command (for example those serving on a naval ship or at a shore establishment).

The AFA 2006 places COs at the centre of the SJS. The COs administer justice for most disciplinary offences and some criminal conduct offences through the summary hearing process, in which they investigate the allegation and determine whether the accused is guilty. A CO can also refer their cases directly to the SPA for court martial. COs can use their discretion about how most cases are handled. The exceptions are offences listed in Schedule 2 of the AFA 2006 or those that are committed in prescribed circumstances (such as death in custody). Generally, such offences are referred to as Schedule 2 offences. The CO must refer any such offences to the service police. Schedule 1 offences in the AFA 2006 are “criminal conduct offences that may be dealt with at a summary hearing”.

Almost all sexual offences under Part 1 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 are Schedule 2 offences. COs must therefore always report them to the service police. We explore this issue in detail in the next chapter.

⁴ An accused person may also elect for a trial before the court martial rather than a summary hearing.

Service police

In their police duties, the service police are independent of COs and the chain of command by virtue of section 115A of the AFA 2006, which prohibits interference or attempts to direct investigations by persons outside the service police. The service police must investigate and record the results in an initial disclosure of the prosecution case to the CO or the SPA.

In the Royal Navy, all offences, criminal and disciplinary, are investigated by the RNP; this isn't the case with the RMP or the RAFFP.

Each service police force includes general police duties (GPD) units, which provide, among other things, first response, and the special investigation branch (SIB), which investigates most serious offences.

Based near Portsmouth, the service police crime bureau provides specialist support, such as intelligence, forensic and information management to the service police.

The RNP

The RNP is headed by a Naval officer of commander rank, who holds the title Provost Marshal (Navy), and is appointed by Her Majesty the Queen. The Provost Marshal (Navy) is responsible to the Defence Council for the conduct and direction of all RNP investigations.

The Provost Marshal (Navy) leads an organisation of approximately 230 staff and is responsible for policing the fleet and shore establishments.

RNP personnel are commissioned officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned ratings, including leading hands, petty officers, chief petty officer (masters-at-arms and warrant officers (WOs)). RNP commissioned officers are lieutenants, lieutenant commanders and a commander (the Provost Marshal).

In addition to a central headquarters function (HQPM(N)) there are:

- Three GPD regions (within which there are GPD units). Headquarters Eastern (RNPHQ(E)) is based at Portsmouth, Western (RNPHQ(W)) in Devonport and Northern (RNPHQ(N)) in Faslane. Each region is led by a Regional Police Commander (RPC) of lieutenant commander rank. GPD personnel provide the general policing function for other units of the Navy. Their activities include patrol and first response. RNP personnel on board ships and at overseas bases (including in Diego Garcia and Bahrain) also fall within RPCs' areas of responsibility. Some regions have established unit investigation elements (UIEs). In those regions, UIE personnel investigate some criminal offences, that is, those that aren't referred to the SIB (see section 6 below, [Investigations after first response](#)), while the remaining GPD staff conduct the other GPD functions. In other regions, GPD personnel investigate some criminal offences.
- The Royal Marines Police Troop (RMPT). Based at Plymouth and with detachments of troops at commando training establishments and main bases in England and Scotland, the RMPT polices Royal Marines both at home and when deployed overseas.

- The SIB. The SIB has two offices, at Portsmouth and Devonport, and is led by a lieutenant commander, who is directly supported by a warrant officer, and two deputies located in the Eastern and Western regions. Investigative resource consists of seven investigators in the Eastern region and nine investigators in the Western region, each supervised by a team leader (a chief petty officer and a colour sergeant respectively). The SIB provides investigative capability for serious or complex cases, or others that need to be investigated by specialists.

RNP personnel are sailors as well as police officers, with all the responsibilities and duties that entails. On board ship, all RNP personnel have operational executive functions (for example being the ship's flight deck officer). As a Royal Navy division, the RNP is bound by the operational structure of the Royal Navy and military doctrine, which makes its policing role more difficult.

Throughout this report, we highlight problems caused by the military concept of mission command: most decision-making is delegated to the lowest level officer. This makes it difficult to guarantee that all sections approach training, assurance and other activity consistently.

The military personnel assignment process also poses difficulties, which we highlight in detail later in this report. Under this process, personnel are posted into roles for a few years and then posted on to another role. This affects the experience and capability of specialist units and leads to 'skill fade', where operational knowledge is lost when people leave their post.

The SPA and the Military Court Service

The Director of Service Prosecutions is the head of the SPA. He and the SPA are independent of COs and the chain of command and operate under the guidance of the Attorney General. The SPA receives cases either from the service police or from COs and can prosecute these cases before the court martial. The SPA also advises the service police on the conduct of investigations before they are formally referred to the SPA.

The court martial has global jurisdiction over all service personnel and civilians who are subject to service discipline (for example, family members, civilian contractors, teachers, administrative staff when serving abroad). It hears all types of criminal case, including murder and serious sexual offences. In all cases, a judge advocate calls the defendant before a court and conducts the trial, which is similar to a civilian crown court trial, even for minor disciplinary or criminal offences.

Jurisdiction

The law and rules that set out the relative jurisdictional boundaries of service police, CIVPOL and law enforcement agencies in other jurisdictions are complex and at times confusing to some interviewees in the service police and CIVPOL.

In many cases, there is concurrent jurisdiction, meaning that cases could be investigated by the service police, CIVPOL or foreign authorities. Decisions about who has jurisdiction must take into account the principles contained in relevant protocols, in the Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) and in memoranda of understanding.

The jurisdictional issue must be addressed before an allegation or offence can be investigated by the service police.

The [Prosecutors Protocol of November 2016](#) (which deals with prosecutions rather than policing) at paragraph 2.2(b) establishes that:

“offences alleged only against persons subject to service law which don’t affect the person or property of civilians should normally be dealt with in service proceeding.”

Therefore, in the UK the service police have jurisdiction for investigating all RASSO or domestic abuse offences in which the victim and accused are subject to service law. But in practice, this isn’t as straightforward.

In England and Wales, [Home Office Circular \(28/2008\)](#) underlines the jurisdiction of Home Office police forces, but it states:

“A flexible approach, based on consultation and agreement at local level, is encouraged, where the respective police forces discuss who is best placed to take action based on availability of resources, jurisdiction and the public interest.”

So, in some places these offences are dealt with by CIVPOL and in others by the service police. It also means that for some offences such as domestic abuse, the service police can cede jurisdiction even if the case involves just service personnel.

Service police forces have broader jurisdiction outside the UK. In other countries, the service police’s jurisdiction extends to include those offences conducted by persons subject to service law, where the victims are UK nationals who aren’t subject to service law. For example, CIVPOL would normally have jurisdiction if a civilian reported domestic abuse conducted by a service person based in the UK. But if the same civilian reported abuse by the same service person in a military base overseas, the service police would have jurisdiction.

While this is a basic explanation, there are many more complexities.

Other reviews

The SJS has been subject to many reviews in the past few years. Similarly, the effectiveness of the service police forces’ investigations of rape and serious sexual offending have also been subject to external scrutiny.

Between 2017 and 2019,⁵ three independent reviews of the SJS took place. These made recommendations to improve processes and structures. In the *Service Justice System Policing Review*, potential areas of vulnerability were identified in how the service police investigated allegations of domestic abuse and RASSO. In this report, Sir Jon Murphy stressed that he was not criticising the forces for poorly investigating allegations, but that the forces’ approaches and processes were inconsistent.

⁵ [Service Justice System Review Part 1](#), HH Shaun Lyons, 29 March 2018; [Service Justice System Policing Review Part 1](#), Professor Sir Jon Murphy; and [Service Justice System Review Part 2](#), HH Shaun Lyons and Professor Sir Jon Murphy, 29 March 2019.

As a result of the Murphy review, there was a separate independent *Process audit of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences investigated by the service police*.

The audit found that the service police:

- conducted their investigations quickly and efficiently, showing professionalism and flexibility; and
- were focused.

But it also established that some processes and procedures could be improved. It didn't make any specific recommendations for the RNP, aside from those for the service police as a whole.

Our commission wasn't to review the MOD and service police progress against the SJS reviews, SJS policing review and process audit recommendations, but there is inevitably some overlap between some of those recommendations and the areas examined in this report. We were surprised and concerned that the MOD couldn't provide us with a document that outlines what actions it has taken in response to each recommendation. It only gave us updates about what has been done in response to some of the recommendations.

2. Strategic leadership and governance

This chapter evaluates:

- the governance arrangements in place for service police forces' domestic abuse and RASSO activity, at ministerial, individual armed service and service police levels; and
- how the RNP prioritises domestic abuse and RASSO activity.

The Ministry of Defence

The MOD is responsible for the care and protection of the 29,010 people who serve in the Royal Navy/Royal Marines, the 73,470 in the Army and the 29,860 in the Royal Air Force. The MOD is the government department responsible for all the UK armed services and therefore has responsibility for domestic abuse and RASSO policy for the military. It sets the strategic vision for tackling domestic abuse and RASSO for all three services.

Domestic abuse and RASSO

The MOD has policies in place for the military on domestic abuse and sexual offending. Its *JSP 913 Tri-Service Policy on Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence* is the overarching policy. It contains instruction and guidance for the armed forces, the MOD and supporting welfare organisations that are responsible for dealing with violence and abuse within the military, both in the UK and overseas.

JSP 913 establishes the MOD's robust commitment to tackling domestic abuse and sexual offending, stating:

“Any form of domestic violence, domestic abuse or sexual violence committed by Service personnel isn't to be tolerated under any circumstances, nor should it be treated as a purely 'private matter' which is of little or no concern to the Service/MOD.”

The MOD is revising the policy to reflect recent legislation and to improve guidance. However, we found the MOD doesn't monitor the three armed services' compliance with it.

Domestic abuse

There is scope for the MOD to provide stronger governance on domestic abuse to the service police forces.

The MOD has established a workplace domestic abuse strategy called [No Defence for Abuse](#). It outlines the MOD's commitment to reducing the scale of domestic abuse

and to increasing the safety and wellbeing of all those affected through prevention, intervention and working with relevant agencies. The strategy establishes that:

“tackling domestic abuse requires a collaborative approach across Defence including the chain of command, welfare, medical services, service police, chaplains and policy makers.” (page 13)

It also establishes that the service police should be:

- supporting the criminal justice process, especially where the MOD or the service police have jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute; (page 5) and
- engaging the Service Justice Review to ensure high standards and improve consistency of approach across the service police (page 11).

But it doesn't define the service police's role in achieving the strategy, nor are the service police mentioned or given a clear indication as to how they should carry out the strategy. And as we explain later, a lack of relevant data has limited the strategy's effectiveness.

The MOD has established a domestic abuse working group to oversee the armed forces' progress against the strategy. This working group has created an action plan. Service police forces and representatives of policy and specialist welfare units sit on the working group. But since the service police don't feature in the action plan, their activity isn't scrutinised by the working group. And the MOD also doesn't set any performance targets or objectives for the service police in relation to domestic abuse.

This is an oversight, given the important role that the service police have in tackling domestic abuse through intervention, prevention and victim care.

Recommendation 1

By 1 January 2023, the MOD should define the role of the service police in its *No Defence for Abuse* strategy and set clear actions for all three forces to achieve.

RASSO

For sexual offending, the MOD hasn't produced an overarching strategy equivalent to *No Defence for Abuse*.

Sexual harassment and sexual offending were examined as part of a [2019 MOD review](#) of inappropriate behaviours in the military. The report made 36 recommendations, but none was given to the service police. This means that the service police lack direction from the MOD and are absent from and have no defined role in bringing about change, particularly in how they can reduce offending or prioritise policing enforcement activity.

Recommendation 2

By 1 January 2023, the MOD should develop an overarching strategy for sexual offending and within it, define the role of the service police and set clear actions for all three forces to achieve.

Royal Navy

Unlike the Army, the Royal Navy has not established a group similar to the sexual offences prevention working group. Consequently, the Royal Navy is unable to direct what the RNP needs to do, sets no performance measures or objectives for the RNP and doesn't provide robust governance for the force about how it deals with RASSO.

This places an unreasonable burden on the RNP to take responsibility on behalf of the Royal Navy to manage RASSO. The establishment of a service-based group to manage RASSO across the Royal Navy would bring additional expertise as well as promote actions more widely.

Recommendation 3

By 1 June 2022, the Royal Navy should develop a RASSO steering group and working groups to promote improvement through the Royal Navy. Without interfering in the operational independence of the Provost Marshal (Navy), these groups should set, in agreement with the RNP, performance expectations for the force and hold it to account against these expectations.

Data problems

The service police and MOD lack the data that would give them a strong understanding of the scale of domestic abuse and RASSO in all three armed services (see section 4 below, [Incident and crime recording](#)). This means they can't effectively prioritise and focus prevention and enforcement work.

The service police forces, the MOD and the independent *Process audit of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences investigated by the service police* have all established that a lack of data has prevented them from developing wholly effective domestic abuse strategies, initiatives, governance and performance management at service police, single service and MOD level. We found the same.

Many factors make it difficult to quantify the scale of domestic abuse in the military.

Under-reporting

As in civilian life, many domestic abuse victims in the armed forces suffer in silence and don't report abuse to the authorities. This serious issue is further discussed later in this report.

Incidents reported to chain of command

As RASSO offences are Schedule 2 offences, COs are already required to refer all such incidents to the service police. However, the Royal Navy doesn't have a mechanism in place to make sure that this always happens.

It is also important that the Royal Navy introduces a checking or auditing process to make sure that COs refer all domestic abuse incidents appropriately. Without this, there is potential that COs won't refer domestic abuse incidents if they don't identify them as such.

Currently, the Royal Navy is unique among the armed services in requiring all Schedule 1 offences as well as Schedule 2 offences to be referred to the service police. The *Process audit of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences investigated by the service police* recommended that COs in all three services should refer all domestic abuse cases to the service police. The MOD plans to implement this change in the redraft of JSP 913. This would bring the other two services in line with Royal Navy practices.

For cases reported to the service police, the forces' databases don't facilitate accurate data reporting. The service police forces use a system called COPPERS to record notification of incidents. Unlike systems used by CIVPOL forces, COPPERS doesn't include a mechanism for users to highlight incidents as domestic abuse. And COPPERS wasn't designed to provide statistics. For a service police force to report how many domestic abuse incidents it recorded, someone must trawl through all the recorded incidents and tally them by hand, looking for mention of domestic abuse or indications of a domestic element in the free text. The same applies to domestic abuse investigations, as the database that records service police investigations, REDCAP, draws information about incidents from COPPERS.

There is a clear difficulty when it comes to generating data from the databases, and we witnessed this when requesting data for this report. We requested lists of all domestic abuse and RASSO cases the three service police forces investigated between 2017 and 2020 for our crime file review and to inform reporting on case outcomes. When we compared the numbers of domestic abuse and RASSO cases on these lists with the [figures published by the MOD](#), they were different.

Clearly, the inability of COPPERS and REDCAP to highlight domestic abuse and easily report statistics is a major problem. It prevents the service police and the MOD from generating accurate data to properly assess the scale of offending. It also makes it difficult for the service police forces to identify repeat victims of domestic abuse and as a result, they can't accurately assess the risk posed to victims.

At the time of our inspection, work was being done to procure a system to replace COPPERS and REDCAP. Whichever system is chosen, it needs to be able to highlight cases of domestic abuse and repeat victims and produce accurate data quickly and easily.

Recommendation 4

With immediate effect, the MOD, in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Navy), Provost Marshal (Army) and Provost Marshal (RAF), should satisfy itself that its replacement ICT system will be able to highlight incidents of domestic abuse and repeat victims, and produce accurate data quickly and easily.

Incidents reported to CIVPOL

On many occasions, victims report domestic abuse or RASSO incidents to the local CIVPOL force. We established that CIVPOL don't always inform the service police of such cases.

Home Office Circular 28/2008 requires CIVPOL to inform the military when the suspect or victim of an incident they deal with is a member of the military. Of the Home Office police forces we interviewed about this, most said they would inform the military, but some said they wouldn't. Some didn't know about Home Office Circular 28/2008.

This is another problem that prevents the MOD or service police from developing an accurate understanding of the scale of domestic abuse. More importantly, it also could present a significant risk to victims and to others.

Recommendation 5

With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) should remind all Home Office police forces of the requirement in Home Office Circular 28/2008 to inform the RNP when the suspect or victim of an incident they deal with is a member of the Royal Navy.

We have also heard that some foreign police forces don't always inform the military quickly about incidents they respond to that involve members of the UK armed forces.

The RNP

Priority setting

Every year, the RNP sets out its priorities in its strategic threat assessment.

We examined the most recent version and found that it contained tables showing the number of offences by year and type, however there was no analysis of times, locations, persons, or repeat events. This limits the force's ability to target its approach to education and intervention. We were told that the force is working to better understand future demands, particularly in relation to the increase in female personnel in submarines and in the Royal Marines and the potential for a subsequent increase in sexual offending.

Given the data problems outlined above, the force sets its priorities against insufficient, poor-quality data. We are pleased to see the force has determined that sexual offending is its highest priority. Domestic abuse is fourth on its priority list.

After priorities are set, the Provost Marshal (Navy) requires regional commanders to produce policing plans that align their activity to the stated priorities. Regional commanders are then regularly held to account for activity within their regions.

Control strategy and strategic intelligence

Police forces should produce control strategies for their priorities that describe prevention, enforcement, and intelligence actions to reduce the volume of offences.

The force has produced a control strategy which describes how it will tackle domestic abuse and RASSO. We examined two comprehensive action plans which outlined 'pursue, prevent, protect and prepare' activity.

The force hasn't produced problem profiles for domestic abuse or RASSO. All CIVPOL forces are required to produce problem profiles, and we found that the RAFP also produced them for domestic abuse and RASSO. Such profiles would help the RNP to define the patterns and trends of priority crimes and help it to focus its efforts. This could help the force to prevent, disrupt and deter crime, rather than merely react to it.

While the data quality problems hamper the force's ability to produce problem profiles, difficulties with the force's intelligence capability are another hurdle.

The force intelligence bureau (FIB) at the service police crime bureau (SPCB) provides intelligence support for the RMP and the RNP. It has four teams that focus on force priorities, including sexual offending. But there isn't a domestic abuse team.

We were told that domestic abuse falls within the sexual offending team's remit. But we found that this team doesn't have capacity to focus on domestic abuse. Without a specialist team for domestic abuse, nobody is analysing patterns of repeat offences, serial offenders, concentrations of offences in locations or at set times.

There is also a problem with the FIB's capacity. The FIB is small and, as extracting data from REDCAP and COPPERS is painstaking and time consuming, staff don't have time to focus on strategic intelligence. There is also a capability problem. As with most military postings, FIB staff are on three to four-year postings. Often people leave sooner than this if they are promoted out or posted out. When they leave, their knowledge and experience goes with them and they are usually replaced by someone with no intelligence experience. This is a significant problem that limits the force's intelligence capability.

Although FIB is a Royal Military Police capability, the RNP posts officers to it. In recent years, the force has tripled the amount of RNP personnel in the FIB, but this is still insufficient to meet demand.

Recommendation 6

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (Navy) should address the capacity and capability problems in the FIB.

To improve their understanding of problems, forces should identify gaps in their knowledge (intelligence requirements) and develop plans for filling them. We were told that an intelligence requirement, called Bannerman, had been set by the service police to improve knowledge and understanding of the scope and scale of domestic abuse and RASSO.

Few of the personnel we spoke to across the three service police forces knew about it and we were later told that it had fallen into disuse.

Governance meetings

We examined minutes of regular RNP governance meetings and attended one. RNP senior officers asked questions about units' progress against priorities using crime data, intelligence and action plan documents, but there was no information about victim care, safeguarding or policy compliance among the minutes or associated papers. This is a missed opportunity. Examining data for trends and themes in policing helps forces to better manage risk and performance.

Area for improvement 1

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should define expectations of performance against priorities that better illustrate qualitative activity and outcomes for victims.

Strategic leads

The Provost Marshal (Navy) has appointed senior officers to lead work on domestic abuse and RASSO.

The Regional Police Commander (RPC) at RNPHQ(E) is the strategic plan owner for RASSO and their counterpart in RNPHQ(N) is the strategic plan owner for domestic abuse. Both officers have produced detailed strategies for their respective areas of responsibility. These include prevention campaigns that involve raising awareness among staff, training ships' companies and shore establishment staff (with a specific focus on providing training to those at training establishments), getting first response right and improving the management of victims.

They told us that they were given authority to liaise with organisations outside the Royal Navy and to request the production of analytical documents. However, they told us they weren't able to mandate processes, activity or training for personnel in other regions. While some senior managers challenged this view and told us that plan owners can mandate training, this was not widely understood.

Recommendation 7

With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should empower the force's strategic plan owners for domestic abuse and RASSO to mandate activity relating to these roles across the whole of the RNP.

Other assurance mechanisms

We were told that all incidents of domestic abuse and RASSO are included on a daily crime briefing document distributed to the Provost Marshal (Navy) and senior leaders. RPCs are expected to carry out a detailed review at 3 months or 100 days. These reviews examine the supervision and progress of the investigation and make interventions where necessary.

We are satisfied that there is sufficient governance and oversight of investigations to support the resourcing and assessment of those investigations. However, with relatively few offences compared to other forces, the investigative experience of some supervisors and officers will be understandably limited. Care needs to be taken to ensure lines of enquiry are not missed and quality standards such as victim care are maintained.

The RNP professional standards department (PSD) conducts police performance inspections of each RNP unit every year. These inspections focus on:

- units' compliance with policy and procedures such as victim support;
- units' performance in relation to objective criteria; and
- pre-sea exercises for ships.

We assessed this process and found it to be largely effective. However, while the PSD can conduct detailed reviews of units, it has not conducted thematic reviews of domestic abuse or RASSO activities or the extent of first responder training.

Any themes identified by the PSD can be disseminated across the RNP through changes to policy and training, as well as update notes circulated to regional commanders and articles in the RNP's 'round-up' briefing.

We were told that there used to be a 'lessons learnt' meeting with the SPA, as outlined in the *Protocol between the Royal Navy Police (RNP), Royal Military Police (RMP) the RAF Police (RAFP) and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) relating to the provision of legal advice during investigations*,⁶ but that it hadn't met for three years.

⁶ See "Guidance on the investigation and prosecution of allegations of rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO)", Annex C to *Protocol between the Royal Navy Police (RNP), Royal Military Police (RMP) the RAF Police (RAFP) and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) relating to the provision of legal advice during investigations*, Provost Marshal (Navy), Provost Marshal (Army), Provost Marshal (RAF) and Director of Service Prosecutions, 2016, p7 and "Guidance on the investigation and prosecution of allegations of domestic abuse", Annex D to *Protocol between the Royal Navy Police (RNP), Royal Military Police (RMP) the RAF police (RAFP) and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) relating to the provision of legal advice during investigations*, Provost Marshal (Navy), Provost Marshal (Army), Provost Marshal (RAF) and Director of Service Prosecutions, 2016, p7.

At that meeting, feedback would be given about rates of victim withdrawal and discontinuation, numbers of referrals and prosecutions and the rate of rape trials resulting in convictions. This information wasn't available to us. We were pleased to hear that the meeting has been resumed since we completed our fieldwork and now meets quarterly.

We were also told that the RNP is represented on the Hampshire Sexual Assault Partnership Board. This board reviews sexual offence strategies, policies, improvement plans, campaigns and initiatives. We consider the RNP's involvement with this board is good practice.

3. Prevention and encouraging reporting

Preventing domestic abuse and RASSO is, by far, better than having to investigate it once it has occurred. Both the [Wigston report](#) and *No Defence for Abuse* highlight the value of prevention and recommend actions to prevent domestic abuse and RASSO.

In the absence of a RASSO working group similar to that established by the Army, the Royal Navy relies on the RNP to instigate and co-ordinate prevention activity across the fleet and shore establishments. For example, the RNP developed a RASSO awareness campaign focused on the issue of consent. It has delivered this training to personnel at all ranks across the Royal Navy. In addition, senior RNP officers regularly provide training to COs on how to deal with RASSO incidents. However, none of this training is mandatory.

It is not easy for the RNP to reach over 29,000 sailors and marines, especially when the training isn't mandated, and some COs do not invite the RNP to train their personnel. But, unlike the Royal Military Police, locally-based RNP personnel can give awareness training to personnel at training establishments for young sailors. This is good practice.

However, we were told that the Royal Navy recently suspended all forms of consent training after receiving a complaint about the training from a participant on the course. We also found that the pandemic led to far fewer training opportunities in 2020 than in previous years.

No Defence for Abuse describes stressors associated with service life that affect family life and make victims more vulnerable to domestic abuse. The same factors may also create barriers to seeking support. These include frequent separation, high levels of family mobility, dependence on service housing and social isolation.

To address this, the RNP has started to run clinics at naval bases and in married quarters. It had also supported wider national domestic abuse initiatives, and provided domestic abuse training on ships and at shore establishments.

We also found that the RNP uses CIVPOL to supplement training on domestic abuse and RASSO, for example Hampshire Police's 'Safe at Home' initiative. This is an efficient use of resources. Similarly, when local CIVPOL forces run domestic abuse and RASSO prevention campaigns, the RNP publicises them to local units using the same posters, booklets and other material. This increases the reach of those campaigns and is an efficient use of resources.

The force also uses other means to raise awareness of domestic abuse and RASSO issues among Royal Navy personnel, including messaging on television screens on board ships, articles in in-house magazines, and utilising the RNP website and the My Navy app.

This is all very positive. But the MOD should empower the RNP to reach a wider military audience and approve appropriate training material for both domestic abuse and RASSO.

Recommendation 8

By 1 January 2023, the MOD should develop appropriate mandatory domestic abuse and RASSO prevention and awareness training for new recruits in the Royal Navy and develop regular refresher training in the form of a mandated naval competency training requirement.

We found that a collaborative partnership between a charity based in Hampshire, [Aurora New Dawn](#), and the armed forces was in the final year of a three-year contract to develop an armed-force advocate project.

The main aim of the project is to give military personnel and their families access to specialist independent support about domestic abuse and RASSO. It also gives specialist training to armed forces personnel, especially those in policing and welfare related services, to raise awareness and improve their understanding of domestic abuse and RASSO.

Since 2018, the charity has given specialist training to over 500 military personnel across the armed forces and specialist support to over 130 victims and their children. A recent independent evaluation of this service noted its success and the need for it to continue. Representatives of Aurora New Dawn put us in contact with several victims. We echo the findings of the evaluation and commend the work done by the charity.

4. Handling calls and first reports of crime

First contact

The RNP gets reports of domestic abuse and RASSO incidents from many sources, including victims' chains of command, SSAFA (the armed forces' charity), victims' friends or the victims themselves. Whoever reports the incident, it is crucial that the person receiving the report:

- is professional and polite and builds trust and confidence in the caller;
- gets as much information about the incident as possible from the caller;
- records the incident accurately both to support the police responding to the call and to any later investigation;
- searches force information systems to help them understand any previous victimisation and assess risk; and
- makes a first assessment of risk to the victim and other parties.

When a victim makes the report, the person receiving it must advise the victim how to stay safe while waiting for the police to arrive and what to do to preserve evidence.

In CIVPOL, staff at each police force's contact centre are the first point of contact, either by a 999-emergency call, 101 call or other means. Procedures differ from force to force, but usually:

- staff at these contact centres are trained in receiving such reports and in identifying criminal offences;
- calls to contact centres are recorded and there are supervisory and auditing processes in place to evaluate the quality of call-handlers' activity;
- call handlers enter details of incidents immediately onto a dedicated computerised call-handling system that prompts them with questions to ask the caller, depending on the type of incident they are recording;
- call handlers complete an initial risk assessment on the system and prioritise the response accordingly;
- call handlers provide support and advice to the caller; and
- call handlers research databases for details of repeat offences and suspect details.

The service police forces don't use a centralised contact centre and lack most of the important processes that would underpin it. There is an operations room at the SPCB, but it isn't used as a contact centre and doesn't have the resources to act as a centralised contact centre. Instead, incidents are reported, in person or over

the phone, to the forces' personnel at their police stations or posts, or to the chain of command.

Personnel haven't had specific call-handling training. In inspections of CIVPOL, we have found that where untrained, inexperienced people engage first with victims of domestic abuse and RASSO this often leads to repeat traumatisation. It is therefore important that calls are answered by trained professionals.

Where calls are made, these aren't recorded. The absence of voice recording made it impossible for us to assess how well the first contact is handled. We couldn't evaluate how professional and polite call handlers were, how well they built trust and confidence in the caller, or how thoroughly they elicited information from the caller. The lack of audio recording also prevents the service police forces from auditing the effectiveness of first contact and can lead to the loss of evidence.

The service police forces don't have a dedicated computerised call-handling system, or readily accessible lists of questions specifically for domestic abuse or RASSO incidents. In some instances, the person receiving the call enters details of incidents while they are on the call into COPPERS, while in others handwritten notes are then typed into COPPERS later.

In our case file review, we also found that personnel record little information about the first contact. While they record information about the incident on COPPERS, we found little detail about actions they took, or advice provided.

COPPERS and REDCAP don't have domestic abuse markers. It is therefore difficult for the person taking the call to identify quickly whether the victim is a repeat victim.

Personnel can search COPPERS and REDCAP to see if there are similar previous reports and can ask SPCB to conduct intelligence checks on the Police National Database. But we didn't find evidence that either is done consistently. We were told that they can't always get checks returned from SPCB quickly enough. Consequently, first responders are dispatched without all the information they need about the incident or enough to inform the safety of the first responders.

The procedures and systems that the service police forces use to record first contact about incidents need to improve. Developing a centralised service police call centre would address these problems. It could also serve as a single reporting hub for incident reports, which, when the replacement for COPPERS is introduced, could streamline data analysis. There are some essential characteristics for any such call centre:

- People reporting incidents should be referred to the call centre, rather than details being taken by personnel at local stations. This should apply to those people reporting incidents to the service police in person, as well as over the phone. Call centre staff should get the right training, like their CIVPOL counterparts do.
- The centre should use a dedicated call-handling system like those used by CIVPOL. This should have the ability to:
- link to incident recording systems and intelligence systems;
- identify repeat domestic abuse victims and repeat suspects;

- provide question prompts for different types of incident;
- audio record calls; and
- allow performance management data to be produced.

Recommendation 9

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should carry out a feasibility study for the establishment of a joint contact centre that reflects, as far as is reasonably possible, the capabilities of Home Office police forces. If the outcome of the study isn't for the establishment of a joint contact centre, the Provost Marshal (Navy) and the provost marshals of the other service police forces should implement another solution that resolves the call-handling problems explained in this report.

Incident and crime recording

When CIVPOL forces are informed about incidents, they have to record details in accordance with the [National Standard for Incident Recording \(NSIR\)](#). The principal aim of NSIR is to provide a common approach to be followed by police forces in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland in classifying calls. The service police don't have to comply with NSIR, but doing so would make sure that incidents are categorised consistently.

Similarly, CIVPOL forces in England and Wales must comply with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and [Home Office counting rules \(HOCR\)](#). This is designed to make sure that crimes are recorded consistently and accurately. But the service police don't have to comply with NCRS or HOCR. Under NCRS, a force is required to record all offences reported at the same time as separate offences with their own crime reference number. In the service police, if a victim reported three offences at the same time they would be recorded as one crime, with one crime reference number.

Consequently, if the same offences were reported to CIVPOL and to a service police force, CIVPOL would record more offences. As the service police don't comply with NCRS, it is difficult to compare their offence rates with those in CIVPOL. It also means data published by the MOD, such as [Sexual Offences in the Service Justice System](#) isn't comparable with similar Home Office publications. Accurate recording also helps make sure that personnel don't downgrade cases or record them as 'no crime' arbitrarily.

The *Process audit of domestic abuse and serious sexual offences investigated by the service police* recommended that the service police forces review REDCAP and establish a system that complies with NCRS. Since that report, the three service police forces have agreed to fully comply with NCRS, HOCR and NSIR, once the replacement for COPPERS and REDCAP is introduced. The forces should make sure that this new system complies with all three, and once this is in place, introduce effective auditing procedures.

5. First response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

The police's first response to victims of domestic abuse and RASSO is critically important. The main objectives for the first responder at this stage are to:

- make sure that the victim is safe;
- secure and preserve evidence; and
- identify and arrest (or, if appropriate, voluntarily interview) the suspect.⁷

In this chapter, we outline the force's first response to domestic abuse and RASSO cases, examining:

- who conducts first response to domestic abuse and RASSO cases;
- the quality of first investigative response and [golden hour](#) investigative actions in domestic abuse and RASSO cases;
- what training, experience, and support first responders have to conduct their role;
- what guidance general police duties (GPD) personnel receive on how to conduct first response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents;
- the use of body-worn cameras; and
- the quality of initial safeguarding of victims of domestic abuse and RASSO incidents.

Who conducts first response for domestic abuse and RASSO incidents?

The RNP receives reports of domestic abuse incidents in many ways. Some take the form of phone calls from victims or are from victims attending police stations. Others come through other police forces or are referrals from commanding officers. Some of these reports relate to crimes that are occurring at the time, while others relate to historical abuse. Incident reports can be made in the UK, on board ship or at military bases throughout the world.

These factors influence the type of first policing response to these incidents.

⁷ See [A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action](#), HMICFRS and HMCPSP, 16 July 2021, p22.

Domestic abuse incidents at shore establishments

The RNP doesn't have a 999-emergency response capability. In cases where it is informed about an ongoing or recent domestic abuse incident in the UK, CIVPOL provides the immediate emergency response. Where an emergency response is not required, RNP personnel would arrive at the scene to conduct the initial investigative actions, risk assessment and safeguarding in those cases where they have jurisdiction, or CIVPOL may refer the case to the RNP after this stage.

In those domestic abuse cases where the RNP provides first response, and initial investigative actions, GPD personnel conduct these duties.

RASSO incidents at shore establishments

Sometimes, a special investigations branch (SIB) investigator will be the first person to receive a report of a RASSO incident, for example, when a commanding officer reports the incident directly to the SIB office. In such cases, the SIB investigator is usually the first to arrive at the scene. Aside from these cases, GPD personnel are usually first responders to RASSO incidents.

In most CIVPOL forces, several response officers are trained sexual offences liaison officers (SOLOs). They usually provide first response to RASSO incidents. But they aren't always available and other response officers sometimes have to take on this role.⁸ Unlike CIVPOL forces, the service police forces don't have SOLO-trained first responders. Instead, they have a team of SOLO-trained investigators. In the RNP, all SIB personnel are SOLO trained.

So, typically, a member of GPD personnel will inform the SIB duty officer of a RASSO incident, then dispatch to the incident and deal with the initial actions until an SIB SOLO can arrive to take over. These arrangements differ from location to location depending on how far the nearest SIB unit is from the incident. Before SIB personnel arrive at the scene, they usually direct the GPD first responders over the phone.

On board ship⁹

When a domestic abuse or RASSO incident occurs on board ship, the first response and initial actions are conducted by those RNP personnel on board.

On larger Royal Navy vessels, there are at least two RNP personnel who could perform this role. The RNP doesn't require there to be SOLO-trained personnel on all the ships they police. As RNP personnel are deployed into and out of the SIB, inevitably some ships will have RNP personnel who have received SOLO training, but this isn't guaranteed.

⁸ As before.

⁹ RNP personnel posted to ships are responsible for policing the ship's company from the point they are posted to the ship to the point they are posted elsewhere. Therefore, these RNP personnel are responsible for performing first response, initial actions and investigation of offences (until handover to the SIB in some cases) for incidents that occur both at sea and while the ship's company is at shore in the UK (the situation is more complex when they are ashore abroad). When we refer to 'on board ship' in this report we mean both on board at sea, and when posted to the ship and in the UK.

If there are SOLO-trained RNP personnel on board, they can also perform all the initial actions for Schedule 2 incidents. When a RASSO or other Schedule 2 incident occurs on a ship that doesn't have a SOLO on board, the onboard RNP personnel can conduct initial actions and a shore-based SOLO will either advise by telephone, or deploy to take over if needed. In recent years, the RNP has more frequently used a so-called 'long screwdriver approach' whereby SOLOs provide advice by telephone, rather than deploying to the incident.

Coxswains

Not all Royal Navy ships have RNP personnel on board. The RNP has no presence on mine countermeasure ships (MCMs) or within the Submarine Service's fleet (attack submarines and ballistic missile submarines). On these craft, coxswains are responsible for discipline functions of the ship's company.¹⁰ If a domestic abuse or RASSO incident occurs on an MCM or on an attack submarine, the coxswain are mandated to contact their home port's RNP regional crime manager (RCM) for advice, conduct basic first actions, secure the scene, and await RNP personnel to come on board at the earliest opportunity. This can often happen quite quickly as many MCMs operate in UK coastal waters or near bases with an RNP presence. Service police can also quickly take control at incidents involving MCM or attack submarine crew that occur in UK shore establishments.

However, this approach isn't possible on board the ballistic missile and attack submarines, as they can't surface or head to port for anything but operational military reasons. If a domestic abuse or RASSO incident occurred on one of these boats, RNP cannot interview victims or conduct an investigation until the vessel returns to port. This could be several months after an incident occurs.

Behaviour and attitude of first responders

The way police behave when they arrive at the scene of domestic abuse or RASSO is vital. It is crucial that they support the victim and are empathetic to gain their trust. We haven't been able to evaluate how well GPD personnel do this in our case file reviews or in interviews with practitioners. The RNP also doesn't currently have processes to monitor this. We therefore suggest that the force adds questions about first responders' attitude and empathy to its victim survey (see section 7 below, [Victim feedback](#)). The force could also dip-sample footage from its body-worn video cameras (BWV) as another way to monitor behaviour of first responders.

Quality of the GPD personnel's golden hour enquiries

In our case file review, we found evidence that officers responding to incidents conduct appropriate, timely golden hour enquiries in most but not all cases.

RNP SIB personnel told us that, at the time the incidents we reviewed occurred, there were inconsistencies in the quality of GPD personnel's first response to RASSO incidents. But we have heard from the SIB and others that this has improved recently, since the force circulated a training aid.

¹⁰ Both while on ship and shore-based.

In the cases we reviewed, we didn't find any evidence to suggest that poor-quality first response actions resulted in failed investigations. This isn't to minimise the importance of getting first response right. If immediate actions aren't right, it can lead to investigative opportunities being missed and cause delays that affect investigations and victims.

Training, experience, and support for GPD personnel responding to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

For domestic abuse and RASSO incidents, all police forces should dispatch personnel with the right training and experience. This will enable them to act appropriately in the first hour, secure and preserve evidence and provide victim care.

As many RNP shore-based GPD personnel lack this, this can potentially cause problems at first response.

GPD personnel don't get consistent training on how to deploy to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents as first responders.

Defence School of Policing and Guarding (DSPG)

New service police recruits get adequate domestic abuse and RASSO first responder training as part of their Joint Police Initial Course (JPIC) training introduced by the DSPG in 2020. This course covers a broad curriculum including legislation (including controlling or coercive behaviour), scene management, how to build rapport with victims, risk assessment processes, RASSO initial response proformas, safety planning and initial safeguarding. Students must also pass the domestic abuse and sexual offences environmental package. Students must show that they are competent at dealing with the whole first response process in role-play scenarios, where actors take on the roles of victims and witnesses.

Before the DSPG introduced its JPIC, it gave bespoke initial training to the three service police forces. After the *Service Justice System Review* was published, the DSPG and service police forces reviewed this training and significantly changed and expanded the domestic abuse and RASSO elements of the new course. Among the changes was the inclusion of RASSO first responder training.

At the same time, the DSPG also rewrote and expanded on the domestic abuse and RASSO content in the training courses Volume Crime Investigation Course (VCIC) (which leading hands receive after 12 to 18 months in rank) and in the Serious Crime Investigation Course (SCIC) course (taken by all those selected for promotion to petty officer and those wanting to join the SIB).

Omissions in training

Most shore-based leading hands haven't received structured training on how to respond to domestic abuse or RASSO incidents. As stated above, RNP personnel haven't received domestic abuse and RASSO first responder training as part of their initial training course.

Domestic abuse and RASSO first response issues are covered in VCIC training, but leading hands don't receive VCIC until they have been working in an initial response role for 12 to 18 months. Consequently, in some shore establishments, none of the RNP first responders on some shifts will be VCIC trained.

This is a significant omission and one that can't simply be filled by refresher and awareness training. We are aware that the force is acquiring first responder training through an approved provider to CIVPOL forces. The force and DSPG should make sure that personnel with first responder duties who haven't received structured domestic abuse and RASSO first responder training receive this, in order for them to be better equipped to perform their role.

Recommendation 10

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army), the Provost Marshal (RAF) and the Defence School of Policing and Guarding, should make sure that all first responders are trained to the new Joint Police Initial Course standard.

Background to refresher and awareness training in the RNP

In CIVPOL forces, police officers usually get some degree of structured CPD training. But this doesn't always happen in the service police.

Across the service police forces, refresher training, aside from the VCIC and SCIC courses, is the responsibility of parent units and isn't centrally directed from force headquarters or training units.

We found that HQPM(N) mandates some training. For example, masters-at-arms were told to attend a refresher training day in 2020. However, most domestic abuse and RASSO refresher training isn't mandatory. Many interviewees told us that while strategic plan owners encourage personnel to take up specific training opportunities, they don't have the authority to mandate this for personnel in other regions. While some senior managers challenged this and told us that plan owners can mandate training, this was not widely understood.

In some regions, Regional Police Commanders (RPCs) also don't mandate training. As one RPC told us:

"I don't have the overall say for the training in individual units. They [the individual units] manage that ... I offer them the opportunity to join our training, but don't direct them to say 'you must do that training'. they are responsible enough to do their own."

There is also a lack of central oversight of who receives refresher and awareness training. While HQPM(N) could monitor training compliance as part of the strategic tasking and co-ordination meetings, it doesn't do so. The PSD reviews training logs as part of its PPI inspections, but this doesn't involve examining which units have received specific training (for example domestic abuse or RASSO training) or what the training included.

Refresher and awareness training – domestic abuse and RASSO first responder training for shore-based RNP personnel

These problems with consistency and oversight of refresher and awareness training apply to the domestic abuse and RASSO first response and investigation training GPD personnel receive. We found that training between the regions was inconsistent, with personnel in some regions receiving considerably more domestic abuse and RASSO awareness training than in others.

Notwithstanding this, we recognise that non-commissioned officers (NCOs) in all regions receive regular, albeit not standardised, training on domestic abuse and RASSO. This can include training opportunities circulated by HQPM(N) and plan owners, table-top exercises and local training devised and provided by SIB and GPD personnel.

We were impressed by the work the domestic abuse and RASSO strategic plan owners and their deputies have done to develop training, to identify training provided by external parties and to promote these opportunities to RNP personnel. For example, they have produced and circulated a RASSO first responder training presentation, as a temporary measure until formal first responder training is developed. They have also secured places on CIVPOL domestic abuse training courses for some GPD personnel. And they have arranged for independent sexual violence advisors (ISVAs) to give training presentations to GPD personnel about risk assessments, stalking and controlling or coercive behaviour.

While these are all good initiatives, there is insufficient resilience to make sure that this is maintained. We heard that when the domestic abuse and RASSO strategies were first developed, the officers who were strategic plan owners at that time arranged for training for personnel. However, the focus on such training waxes and wanes depending on who performs the strategic plan owner role, how well-motivated they are and whether they recognise the importance of training.

Refresher and awareness training – domestic abuse and RASSO first responder training for RNP personnel on board ship

The problems with refresher and awareness training highlighted above equally apply to RNP personnel on board ship. However, VCIC training is mandatory for all RNP personnel posted on board ship and at least one RNP NCO per ship will have also received SCIC training. This ensures that all ship-borne RNP personnel receive some structured training on domestic abuse and RASSO first response (and investigation).

RNP personnel, as well as the ships' officers, also do table-top exercises to test their response to critical incidents including domestic abuse and RASSO incidents.

Training for RNP first responders – conclusion

Domestic abuse and RASSO training are too important to be dependent on the whim of local commanders. There needs to be more consistency, resilience, and oversight of domestic abuse and RASSO training. Developing centralised, annual training for policing competencies including domestic abuse and RASSO first

response, provided by qualified trainers, and with central assurance, would address some of these problems.

Area for improvement 2

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should develop centralised, annual training for policing competencies including domestic abuse and RASSO first response, provided by qualified trainers, and with central assurance.

In the longer term, the service police forces should work with the [College of Policing](#) to find a way to use the College's CPD training in a way that meets the forces' operational context, role, and career pathways.

First response and initial investigation by coxswains

None of the cases we reviewed involved incidents that occurred on MCMs or submarines and we have not been given the opportunity to interview coxswains or other members of the Submarine Service as part of the inspection. We can't, therefore, independently evaluate how well coxswains are responding to any domestic abuse and RASSO incidents on board these vessels.

Coxswains receive a very basic two-week policing training course at DSPG. RNP RCMs also provide a table-top exercise – including information about domestic abuse and RASSO – to the coxswains and the ship's command team prior to departure. Some RCMs also circulate 'how to guides' to coxswains that cover a range of first response actions including exhibit handling and preserving crime scenes. Coxswains aren't police officers and cannot conduct investigations. But it is important that coxswains undertake some first responder actions, as police response to these incidents isn't possible until the vessel arrives at port where there are RNP personnel.

For the RNP to respond quickly once a vessel has arrived at port, it should further develop its forward base operating model. This would enable it to be more flexible in deploying personnel to meet submarines and MCMs when they arrive at ports in the UK and abroad. Interviewees from throughout the RNP raised concerns about the potential for domestic abuse and RASSO incidents on submarines. We were told by RNP senior officers that having RNP personnel on board all submarines would be both "advantageous" and "aspirational". We are aware that this will be difficult, given:

- the RNP's small personnel establishment; and
- the potential that RNP personnel wouldn't have the secondary skills needed to perform a role within a submarine's company.

Submarines may benefit from a greater measure of policing than the current arrangements provide. The Submarine Service was described to us as a 'closed community', in which crimes are sometimes committed and go unreported. We couldn't establish the veracity of such claims.

Area for improvement 3

The Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with Navy Command and the Submarine Service should examine whether policing arrangements for submarines and MCMs might be improved. As a minimum, coxswains should receive enhanced first responder training and RNP should develop its forward base policing operating model to provide greater support to these class of vessels.

Inexperience of first responders

A lack of experience among many GPD NCOs compounds the problems caused by inconsistent training.

After completing basic training, RNP leading hands are posted to a GPD unit at a shore establishment. Typically, they will stay there for a year, undergo the VCIC and then be transferred to a ship or a shore establishment overseas. Many interviewees expressed their concern about the inexperience of GPD personnel at shore establishments, with one officer's comments typifying what we heard:

“The biggest problem here is lack of experience. We are top heavy with leading hands who have very little experience.”

We were also told:

“As there are few GPD personnel at each unit and there is a fast turnover of personnel to other roles, people with very short service can quickly become the most senior leading hand on shift.”

We spoke to some leading hands who were in this situation less than six months after leaving basic training.

Also, as the RNP responds to only a few domestic abuse and RASSO incidents each year, most of the leading hands who respond to such incidents would be doing so for the first time.

Support and supervision from command chain

One GPD region has introduced a local policy to mitigate the risk posed by inexperienced, under-trained leading hands responding to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents. If such an incident occurs there, policy dictates that a police watch manager (of petty officer rank) or a VCIC-qualified senior leading hand has to deploy to the scene to accompany the junior leading hand. We consider this to be good practice. In other regions, leading hand first responders retain radio contact with police watch managers, who provide them with guidance remotely. We don't think this is sufficient, given the inexperience of many first responders.

Area for improvement 4

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that a police watch manager or a VCIC-qualified senior leading hand accompany junior leading hands when attending domestic abuse or RASSO incidents.

This system can help provide the guidance that first responders need. Clear direction and strong supervision aren't a substitute for training and experience. But they can reduce the effect of having an inexperienced first responder. Although, this depends on people in the command chain having the right experience themselves.

In the other service police forces, personnel can be posted to many roles that aren't specifically policing duties. For example, they could be posted to counter-intelligence roles, be transferred to close protection or policy functions, or deploy on operational military roles. The forces then face a challenge of how to mitigate 'skill fade' for individuals who have been out of policing roles for many years before being posted as a supervisor or manager of a GPD policing unit.

The RNP doesn't face quite the same problems, as there is only one 'non-policing role' in the force. However, skill fade for managers of first responders is still an issue. We found that some petty officers lack confidence in performing their role. While they have experience, this isn't necessarily up to date. Robust CPD would help close this skills gap.

Support for first responders from the SIB

As mentioned above GPD personnel also receive support from the SIB, especially when deploying to RASSO incidents. We heard that, usually, this works well, and SIB personnel provide good advice to first responders over the phone.

Given the problems with GPD first response, mandating SIB first attendance at all RASSO scenes would be beneficial, given their greater skills and experience. But this wouldn't be possible unless the SIB's geographic footprint and personnel establishment were to be expanded and it operated as a 24/7 unit. The cost of doing so may be too substantial to make it a viable prospect.

Another option would be to cede first response and initial investigation and safeguarding to local police. But this wouldn't always be the best solution in the UK. And in most overseas locations it wouldn't be possible and would mean that personnel deployed to overseas bases would have even less experience of conducting these roles.

Instead, the SIB should attend when it can, with the onus being on the force to make sure that its GPD personnel are equipped and supported to conduct first response to a consistently high standard.

Guidance for first responders to domestic abuse incidents

The RNP has developed guidance for first responders attending domestic abuse incidents. It outlines procedures to follow in the *Royal Navy Police Manual BRd 9969*. To aid first responders, it has also produced a *Domestic Abuse Response Guidance* aide-memoire. Such aide-memoires can prove useful for first responders.

The RNP also issues first responders with the College of Policing's *Domestic Abuse Initial Response Guide* which they must complete when attending domestic abuse incidents.¹¹ The RNP is the only service police force to use the College of Policing's response guidance. It is comprehensive and includes evidence and actions checklists, a body map where injuries can be marked, details of early prevention and disruption options and the College of Policing's [domestic abuse, stalking and harassment \(DASH\) risk assessment form](#).¹² However, there are elements of the guidance – including those relating to early prevention and disruption options – and parts of the DASH risk assessment form that don't apply to the RNP, due to its operational context and commanding officers' responsibilities to safeguard victims (see below, [The quality of ongoing safeguarding of domestic abuse and RASSO incidents](#)).

Rather than using the College of Policing's response guide, the force should use one that reflects its policy. We believe this is an area where the three service police forces can collaborate. The Royal Military Police and the RAFP have developed domestic abuse aide-memoires for first responders. The Royal Military Police also issues first responders with a bespoke *Domestic Incident Proforma (DIP)* rather than the College of Policing's response guide.

Consequently, it may be beneficial for the three forces to work together to develop new aide-memoires and a tri-service domestic abuse initial response guide that better meet their needs. While the content of the College of Policing's guide could form the basis of this, it could also combine the best parts of the force's current aide-memoires and proformas, while also including bespoke elements to reflect each force's different processes and operational contexts.

Recommendation 11

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshall (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should publish tri-service domestic abuse aide-memoires (which, to meet each service's needs, may include additional information to reflect local differences).

¹¹ *Technical Instruction 24*, RNP, para 13. Unpublished.

¹² The DASH risk assessment is a tool that many police forces use to assess the level of risk to victims of domestic abuse, stalking and harassment. We evaluate the RNP's use of DASH risk assessment form in this report, in the section [Risk identification and assessment in domestic abuse](#).

Guidance for first responders to RASSO incidents

The RNP has developed a range of guidance for first responders attending RASSO incidents. It has condensed the force's *Manual of Guidance's* first response to sexual offences chapter¹³ into a one-page *RASSO First Responder Initial Action Aid Memoire*.

In addition to the aide-memoire, and guidance on Provost Portal (the force's intranet), the force has developed a *RASSO First Responders Booklet*. Both the *Manual of Guidance* and the aide memoire instruct first responders to complete the booklet.

We consider the introduction of the booklet to be good practice. We found it to be quite wide-ranging. It includes forms where first responders can log information about the victim, incident, suspect, witnesses, clothing, and actions taken, and a sheet to be completed when the case is handed over to a SOLO. The questions included in the booklet guide the first responder through most of the actions they need to take and things they need to consider.

The RMP and the RAFP have also produced RASSO logs or booklets to be completed by their first responders. But the three documents are currently quite different. For example, the RMP's *Sexual Offences First Responders Log* includes a checklist of the most important golden hour actions and a section on early evidence kits that don't feature in the Royal Navy Police's booklet.

There is scope for the forces to work together to develop new aide-memoires and a tri-service RASSO initial response booklet or log. These should combine the best parts of the forces' aide-memoires and proformas and include bespoke elements to reflect each force's different processes and operational contexts.

Recommendation 12

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should standardise RASSO first responders' logs and booklets (which, to meet each service's needs, may include additional information to reflect local differences).

Compliance

In our crime file review, we were pleased to find that first responders had completed a *RASSO First Responders Booklet* in full for all RASSO incidents where they were needed.

¹³ BRd 9969 Chapter 10: First response to sexual offences, RNP. Unpublished – Official Sensitive.

First responders' use of body-worn video cameras

Body-worn video cameras (BWV) can be beneficial when used to capture images following reports of domestic abuse. As the College of Policing's [Body-Worn Video Guidance](#) states:

“The recording provides an immediate and exact record of the disturbance throughout the scene and the emotional effect on the victim and their family or other immediate witnesses. Where an offender is present, a BWV recording captures evidence of their demeanour and language, any continuing offending behaviour such as further abuse directed towards the victim, and evidence of any difficulty in restraining the offender if they are particularly hostile. Using BWV in such instances can significantly strengthen a prosecution case, drawing attention to the true extent of the offending. The recording can provide evidence that supports grounds for an arrest and, where a victim or witness is reluctant to provide a written complaint, it may also be useful in determining when to proceed with a case without the victim's support. Such images may strengthen a case even further by changing the mind of an initially reluctant or hostile victim, so that they agree to support a prosecution.” (page 20)

We support the use of BWV by first responders to domestic abuse incidents, describing it in one of our previous reports as “essential for evidence-gathering”,¹⁴ while recognising – in another of our reports – that introducing BWV involves “substantial investment in both the equipment itself but also the download and storage facilities.”¹⁵

The RNP is the only service police force to use BWV but cameras are only available to personnel at the RNP's regional police headquarters. Many GPD personnel issued with BWV cameras told us they routinely use them and find them invaluable. We recommend that the use of BWV is extended force-wide.

Recommendation 13

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should issue body-worn video cameras to all uniformed personnel.

The force's Domestic Abuse Response Guidance (an annex to its domestic abuse technical instruction)¹⁶ instructs personnel to switch on BWV en-route to a domestic abuse scene and the force's RASSO technical instructions tell first responders to film

¹⁴ [The police response to domestic abuse: An update report](#), HMICFRS, 26 February 2019, p27.

¹⁵ [Increasingly everyone's business: A progress report on the police response to domestic abuse](#), HMICFRS, 15 December 2015, p53.

¹⁶ *Technical instruction number 24 – Domestic abuse, honour-based violence and violence against women and girls (VAWG), Annex A: Domestic Abuse Response Guidance*, Provost Marshal (Navy). Unpublished – Official.

victims' first accounts using BWV or another video recording device, providing the consent of the victim is provided and recorded in a retrievable format.¹⁷

The force should also include a reference to BWV in the body of its domestic abuse policy within BRd 9969.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding involves protecting an individual's health, wellbeing and human rights, enabling them to live free from harm, abuse and neglect.

There are different types and patterns of abuse and neglect and different circumstances in which they may take place. Abuse can occur in any relationship and any setting and may result in harm or exploitation of that individual and in many cases the abuse may be a criminal act.

The actions taken by police at first response to a domestic abuse or RASSO incident are crucial in providing initial safeguarding to victims. In this section, we assess how effectively the RNP does this and how it and other parties provide ongoing safeguarding.

Responsibility for safeguarding in the military

The service police have an important role in providing safeguarding, but they don't hold overall responsibility for safeguarding in the military.

[JSP 834 Safeguarding](#) sets out the MOD's framework for safeguarding in the military. It defines safeguarding in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and stipulates that: "All commands / commanders / heads of establishment in the UK and abroad are responsible for the safeguarding of all personnel."

As part of their responsibilities to the people under their command, COs are responsible for appointing a victim support officer (VSO) to all victims of serious offences, persistently targeted victims, and vulnerable and intimidated victims. This includes victims of domestic abuse and RASSO.

Unless the victim has decided that they don't want a VSO, COs should appoint one as soon as practicable after the complaint is made.

The VSO is an officer, WO or senior NCO appointed to look after the day-to-day support of a vulnerable victim. Their duties are to:

- keep in regular contact with the victim;
- give the victim moral support;
- make sure the victim isn't being intimidated or ostracised in the unit;
- help the victim access service and/or MOD guidance (on bullying and harassment, conduct and discipline, etc), and establish internal subject matter experts to help guard against victimisation; and

¹⁷ *Technical instruction number 39 – Rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) first responders actions*, Provost Marshal (Navy). Unpublished – Official.

- make sure the victim has information about the internal and external organisations that can support them.

While COs and VSOs have important roles in safeguarding victims, we were told that they receive scant safeguarding training. We also found that COs don't appoint VSOs in all cases. Sometimes, the victim can be left without the support they need in the days and weeks after the offence. It can also deny the victim protection from intimidation and further abuse. Victims from the three services confirmed that, in the cases where a VSO was appointed, most didn't support them as they should. Some victims felt ostracised by their units while others endured abuse on social media. This is worrying.

Recommendation 14

With immediate effect, the MOD should reinforce CO compliance with JSP 834 as regards their responsibilities around VSOs and monitor such compliance by reviewing data from COs and feedback from victims.

The quality of initial safeguarding of victims of domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

Many of the means available to CIVPOL forces to provide initial safeguarding to victims of domestic abuse and RASSO aren't available to service police forces. These include bail, Domestic Violence Protection Orders and Domestic Violence Protection Notices. These tools can prevent unwanted contact between the suspect and victim and thereby reduce the risk of repeat victimisation. The service police don't have these powers, but they can instigate other actions, usually in conjunction with commanding officers, that can be just as effective.

First responders are responsible for assessing and addressing initial safeguarding needs. An important element to this is assessing the risk to victims.

Victim needs assessment

Requirements

[The Armed Forces Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) entitles victims to have a timely needs assessment. The victim needs assessment (VNA) determines the kind of support that service police (or commanding officers) may need to give victims in order for them to provide the best possible evidence.

The assessment identifies whether the victim is either:

- a victim of the most serious crime;
- a vulnerable or intimidated victim; or
- a persistently targeted victim.

If the victim meets any of the above criteria, they can request that the service police or CO considers the use of any measures that the victim believes will assist them during the investigation or at court ([special measures](#)).

[JSP 839](#) includes a list of actions and guidance that service police should adhere to when making VNAs. It stipulates that the VNA “must be timely” (paragraph 5.7a). This generally means that the VNA should be completed before taking the victim’s statement.

The RNP’s technical instructions

The VNA guidance in the RNP’s policy is consistent with JSP 839.

It instructs first responders to complete a needs assessment for every victim of a crime prior to any other formal evidence being gathered, with the exception of a statement outlining brief initial details. The force’s RASSO first responder initial actions aide-memoire also reminds personnel about their responsibility to conduct the assessment at the earliest opportunity.

Compliance

Most, but not all, RNP first responders knew that they are responsible for conducting VNAs. Some mistakenly told us that the SIB was responsible for this, rather than them.

In our crime file review, we found that RNP personnel conducted VNAs in all domestic abuse and RASSO cases.

Risk identification and assessment in domestic abuse

The RNP has procedures in place to identify and assess risk at first response to domestic abuse incidents. But it needs to improve adherence to these procedures and increase staff skills in this area.

Risk identification is a fundamental element of the first police response to domestic abuse. If done correctly and with immediate safety planning, it should safeguard the victim and facilitate a good handover to specialists. It also provides a wealth of important evidence about the behaviour of the suspect and what effect it has had on the victim. Responding officers have a crucial role in first identifying and assessing risk, whether the incident is later investigated by the service police or is taken on by CIVPOL.

The RNP, along with the other service police forces, uses the DASH risk assessment form to help personnel assess risk in domestic abuse incidents.¹⁸ This is a nationally-accepted process that assesses several factors in identifying risks to a victim.

¹⁸ [Risk-led policing of domestic abuse and the DASH risk model](#), Amanda Robinson, Andy Myhill, Julia Wire, Jo Roberts and Nick Tilley, September 2016.

Technical instructions

The RNP's operating manual BRd 9969 stipulates that a DASH risk assessment form:

- should be completed in every case; and
- should be completed by the attending RNP police officer at the time; it should not be left with the victim to complete on their own and collected at a later date.

This is all in accordance with national good practice.

There is further guidance on the DASH risk assessment form itself.

DASH risk assessment form

The three service police forces use different DASH risk assessment forms. While the RMP and the RAFP have developed their own, the RNP uses the one contained within the College of Policing's *Domestic Abuse Initial Response Guide*. There are clear advantages to using this version of the form, as it is consistent with other aspects of the College of Policing's guidance. Unlike the forms developed by some other forces, it instructs first responders to evaluate risk using their professional judgment rather than solely assigning a risk level related to the number of questions that were answered 'yes' by the victim. Inflexible risk 'scoring systems' mean that real risks can go unrecognised, leading to victims not getting the support and intervention they need, either from the police or other agencies.

The force, would, however, benefit from making slight changes to the form to reflect its policy. For example, detailing where the form should be sent after completion and omitting the section on safety planning.

A tri-service DASH risk assessment form would help make the service police forces' approach to assessing risks to domestic abuse victims in the military more consistent.

Recommendation 15

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should publish a single DASH risk assessment form to be used by all three services that allows for any requisite local differences to be retained.

Compliance

We found evidence that RNP personnel completed DASH risk assessment forms for 14 of the 15 case files we reviewed.

All RNP personnel have received DASH risk assessment update training from IDVAs. This training and the appointment of domestic abuse champions (see below, [Referral](#)) have occurred since some of the cases we audited were first responded to. Consequently, these initiatives may have improved compliance.

The RNP doesn't routinely monitor whether its personnel complete DASH forms for all domestic abuse incidents, or routinely collect or review any other data about DASH

risk assessments. Because of limitations with COPPERS and REDCAP, it is difficult and time consuming to extract this data.

A force's success in tackling whether scoring is consistent.

We didn't review domestic abuse incidents that were initially attended by the RNP but investigated by CIVPOL, so couldn't determine how often the force made DASH risk assessments in such circumstances.

Quality

Completing a DASH risk assessment form isn't enough on its own. The quality of the assessment and personnel's ability to identify risk are both important.

Personnel making risk assessments should know about the possible risk factors for domestic abuse. They should use skill and professional judgment to apply these factors to individual cases. In all cases, personnel should consider the wider context of the relationship and any history of abuse. They should also consider the nature of the incident, which may form part of a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour.

We were pleased that, in the cases we reviewed, RNP personnel took into account the risks to others, including, children when conducting their DASH risk assessments.

Supervision

The force's policy state that the supervisor of the attending RNP personnel must complete a quality check of the DASH risk assessment form. The form includes a section for supervisors' comments. This is good practice.

The GPD watch manager is responsible for supervising the completion of DASH risk assessment forms and VNA forms before sending copies to multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) and public protection unit (where appropriate). Mandating such managerial checks is also good practice.

Referral

SIB and GPD unit crime managers are responsible for referring [high-risk domestic abuse](#) victims to the local CIVPOL and multi-agency safeguarding meetings. In the UK, such victims are referred to [multi-agency risk assessment conferences \(MARACs\)](#). This seems to happen where it should, but we have been made aware that the RNP isn't always informed about MARACs relating to Royal Navy personnel that are arranged by CIVPOL.

When RNP personnel identify a high-risk victim through the DASH risk assessment process, supervisors can take immediate action to protect the victim, their children and anyone else at risk. This can be in the form of a referral to CIVPOL and early engagement with unit and local welfare authorities.

We found that the RNP has appointed ten 'domestic abuse champions' across the regions who work in various units including GPD and SIB. These champions promote domestic abuse awareness (for example, through DASH risk assessment training), engage with local CIVPOL and other organisations, as well as provide some quality assurance and advice to investigations. This is good practice.

The RNP generally has a good working relationship with Royal Navy Family and People Support. RNP personnel also refer domestic abuse and RASSO victims to the Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare Service (RNRMWS) where appropriate and the RNRMWS then works with local MASHs and MARACs.

The RNP's policy dictates that personnel should raise any safeguarding concerns immediately with the chain of command to ensure that robust safeguarding and welfare measures are established and managed by the unit. A list of support agencies in the local area should also be available for victims. We found that RNP personnel provided victims with details of local support agencies in almost all the cases we examined.

Positive action – arrest

Police first responders have a duty to take positive action¹⁹ when they deal with incidents of domestic abuse and RASSO. While CIVPOL deal with most domestic abuse cases they may not always be the first responders. This often means arresting the suspect, if there are grounds for doing so and it is a necessary and proportionate response.²⁰

The RNP's domestic abuse policy is silent on this duty but the policy for RASSO clearly sets it out:

“If suspect(s) are identified by the victim from the outset; the first responder should arrange for other RNP personnel to arrest and detain the suspect as soon as possible and maintain separation at all times.”²¹

While we found that the RNP made early arrests in many cases we viewed, we found grounds to make an arrest in several others, where an arrest was either delayed or didn't happen. This not only puts the victim at greater risk and misses opportunities to secure evidence from the suspect, such as a forensic examination. There should be greater emphasis on a positive arrest strategy in domestic abuse and RASSO cases, not only to secure evidence but also to safeguard the victim.

Recommendation 16

By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should reinforce and monitor a positive arrest strategy in domestic abuse and RASSO cases, not only to secure evidence but also to safeguard victims.

¹⁹ See [Authorised Professional Practice: Major investigation and public protection: Arrest and other positive approaches](#), College of Policing.

²⁰ See [The police response to domestic abuse: An update report](#), HMICFRS, 26 February 2019, p31.

²¹ *BRd 9969 Chapter 10: First response to sexual offences*, RNP. Unpublished – Official Sensitive.

Referral to specialist agencies

ISVA role

[Independent sexual violence advisers \(ISVAs\)](#) have an important role in providing specialist tailored support to victims of sexual violence. The nature of the support varies from case to case depending on the needs of the person and their circumstances. ISVAs give continuity, advocacy and impartial advice and information to a victim. They also give information on other services that victims may need, for instance to help improve their physical and mental health, overcome addiction, or help with questions about social care, housing, or benefits.

In the recent [joint thematic inspection of rape in the Criminal Justice System](#) we conducted with Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, we found that victims of rape are more likely to continue to engage with the police and support an investigation that involves an ISVA. Although we haven't analysed this specifically for cases investigated by service police forces, it would be reasonable to assume that the same would apply in such cases. It is therefore important that the service police refer all RASSO victims to ISVAs.

IDVA role

[Independent domestic violence advisers \(IDVAs\)](#) also have an important role in providing specialist tailored support to victims of domestic abuse. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis, to assess the level of risk, discuss the range of suitable options and develop safety plans.

ISVA and IDVA provision

There is a network of ISVAs and IDVAs throughout the UK that supports service victims of sexual violence. Interviewees felt the level of provision was enough to meet demand.

In some overseas locations, the service police can refer victims to local services who can perform a similar role to UK ISVAs and IDVAs. However, in others there is no local ISVA or IDVA or similar services that service police can refer victims to.

Area for improvement 5

The Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should ensure that all domestic abuse and RASSO victims are provided with contact details for UK-based IDVAs and ISVAs respectively.

Guidance and policy

*The Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Rape and other Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO)*²² and the *Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Domestic Abuse*²³ stipulate that the service police will make sure that victims are referred to local specialist support services, including, where available, ISVAs in RASSO and IDVAs in domestic abuse investigations respectively.

The RNP's policy doesn't reflect this guidance and make no mention of referring to victims to IDVAs or ISVAs.

There is also no mention of ISVAs or IDVAs in the force's *Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) First Responders Booklet* or the associated *Log of Actions*.

Compliance

In only a few of the cases we reviewed did we find evidence that the RNP referred victims to ISVAs and IDVAs and then communicated with the advocates during the course of the investigation.

Area for improvement 6

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should improve the force's guidance on the use of ISVAs and IDVAs, and monitor compliance with the guidance.

Victim support and victim of crime leaflets

In all the cases we reviewed, the RNP provided victims with a victim of crime leaflet in a timely manner. And the RNP routinely asked victims whether they consented for their details to be passed on to victim support at first contact and forwarded victims' details where appropriate.

Separating parties

RNP personnel can instruct suspects to maintain distance from victims. We were told of examples where RNP personnel gave a lawful order to the suspect to not meet the victim. This helped contribute to the safeguarding of the victim. COs can also give suspects lawful orders to avoid contact with victims or move suspects or victims to other units to prevent further offending. In making such decisions, COs will consider the risk to the victim and whether taking such action would reduce the unit's operational capability. The RNP's role in these matters is purely advisory.

²² Annex C to *Protocol between the Royal Navy Police (RNP), Royal Military Police (RMP) the RAF Police (RAFP) and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) relating to the provision of legal advice during investigations*, 2016. Unpublished.

²³ Annex D to *Protocol between the Royal Navy Police (RNP), Royal Military Police (RMP) the RAF Police (RAFP) and the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) relating to the provision of legal advice during investigations*, 2016. Unpublished.

However, there are clear limitations to this procedure. If the suspect is a civilian or if the accommodation is private or rented, then the CO can't use powers to exclude them from such accommodation. We were told of examples where alternative accommodation was found for victims and the temporary posting of the suspect was arranged, in order to avoid further offending. This is good practice, but we found such measures aren't routinely taken.

Evaluation

We found that initial safeguarding by RNP personnel was generally quite good up to and including when they interview the victim.

However, we also heard from victims across the three services about cases where insufficient initial safeguarding was put in place by COs. This led to feelings of insecurity and vulnerability, as well as chance meetings with the suspect in the case. In addition, intimidation from, and being ostracised by, colleagues was also reported to us.

The quality of ongoing safeguarding of domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

We were unable to assess the quality of ongoing safeguarding provided to victims after the initial safeguarding actions were carried out. After the police make initial risk assessments, they should revisit this risk assessment throughout the investigation, including at the points of crime recording, arrest, charge and trial. While we were told that the SIB revises risk assessments frequently, we didn't find evidence of this in most of the cases we reviewed.

Recommendation 17

With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that the SIB regularly review, and where necessary revise, the risk assessments for the cases they are assigned, including at the points of crime recording, arrest, charge and trial.

Assessing the quality of ongoing safeguarding is difficult. Because COs have responsibility for safeguarding and responsibility for specific actions, risk assessments and oversight are largely outside the control of the service police. We are concerned that nobody has oversight of the totality of safeguarding measures different parties conduct in a case.

Many interviewees, including senior officers and managers from the RNP shared this concern.

Since not all safeguarding actions and decisions are recorded or open to review, this could cause problems for the military in any public inquiry or domestic homicide review.

We can't evaluate how well the units and agencies are safeguarding domestic abuse and RASSO victims or recommend solutions. This is because we don't have the remit to inspect the actions of commanding officers, VSOs, welfare services, and other

relevant individuals and organisations. But there is a risk to victims posed by this lack of a co-ordinated approach to safeguarding and this needs to be addressed. This was brought out in the comments from victims and other interviewees.

The MOD needs to review ongoing safeguarding in the military by all parties, including how victims of domestic abuse and RASSO are safeguarded from the point the incident is reported. It also needs to develop processes to make sure that safeguarding is effective and that there are robust review and oversight procedures in place.

Recommendation 18

By 1 January 2023, the MOD should conduct a review to improve safeguarding in the military by all parties, including how victims of domestic abuse and RASSO are safeguarded. Following such a review, the MOD should develop processes quickly to make sure that safeguarding becomes more effective, and that robust review and oversight procedures are in place.

6. Investigations after first response

In this chapter we evaluate the RNP's policies and practices in domestic abuse and RASSO cases when it comes to how well it:

- allocates and investigates cases;
- interviews victims;
- obtains victim personal statements;
- provides investigatory supervision and oversight;
- conducts forensic investigations; and
- provides intelligence support to investigators.

Finally, we assess the quality of decision-making in domestic abuse and RASSO cases and the timeliness of such investigations.

Are cases allocated appropriately and investigated thoroughly?

Domestic abuse investigations

As highlighted earlier in the report, the RNP offers CIVPOL the opportunity to investigate all domestic abuse cases that occur within the UK that involve children or civilians. Consequently, the force investigates very few domestic abuse cases per year:

Year	Number of domestic abuse investigations, including Schedule 2 offences	Number of domestic abuse investigations that didn't include Schedule 2 offences
2018	7	6
2019	4	3
2020	5	5

Note: Given the difficulties in extracting accurate data from COPPERS and REDCAP, these figures may not be accurate

All criminal offences reported to the RNP that involve domestic abuse and aren't investigated by other forces should be investigated by the RNP. We aren't aware of any instances where this hasn't happened. But, because of the difficulties in extracting accurate data from COPPERS and REDCAP, we can't confirm this.

The force's policy sets out which types of cases should be allocated to the RNP's special investigations branch (SIB) and which can be investigated by general police duties (GPD) personnel. It states that Schedule 2 offences (including rape and penetrative RASSO cases) retained by the force must be investigated by the SIB and that non-RASSO domestic abuse should be investigated by GPD personnel.

GPD and SIB managers often discuss who is best placed to take on Schedule 1 domestic abuse cases, depending on whether the GPD unit has suitable, available personnel who can conduct the investigation. Consequently, between 2018 and 2020, the SIB investigated 5 of the 14 Schedule 1 domestic abuse offences investigated by the force.

Investigative quality

In the previous chapter, we highlighted the variable quality of GPD first response and golden hour investigations. The problems that underpin these issues, including inconsistent training, and the inexperience of GPD personnel, equally apply to ongoing investigations. In most regions, the personnel who conduct the first response and initial investigative actions retain the case throughout the investigation. In some units, however, first responders hand over all cases to GPD personnel in unit investigation elements (UIEs), who then conduct the investigation. This arrangement is beneficial as the first responders can get on with their patrol job while the UIE personnel focus on investigations.

Not all GPD personnel who investigate domestic abuse cases have had specialist investigation training. Leading hands don't get Volume Crime Investigation Course (VCIC) training until a year to 18 months after completing their initial training and before being posted to a ship. Consequently, domestic abuse investigations can be made by personnel who haven't received either VCIC or Serious Crime Investigation Course (SCIC) training. To address this, supervisors in some units look to pool experience to aid the investigator with supervisors providing support. As all petty officers are SCIC trained, most, if not all units, will have at least one person with that level of training.

This isn't a problem on board ship, where at least one RNP NCO will have received SCIC training.

Local GPD commanders have a delegated authority to determine what training their personnel get on top of the mandated training courses. Only some GPD personnel get extra training in investigating domestic abuse, depending on their unit.

Structured and mandatory continuous professional development training would improve this situation. The service police forces should contact the College of Policing about this and should explore whether GPD personnel could receive the [Professionalising Investigation Programme \(PIP\)](#) level 1 CPD training. This would be useful to help give GPD personnel more training on conducting investigations of any type.

We found that, in general, those Schedule 1 domestic cases conducted by shore-based RNP GPD personnel weren't up to the standard of those conducted by RNP SIB investigators. This is unsurprising, given that SIB investigators are, in

the main, more experienced and have received more investigative training than their GPD counterparts.²⁴ We therefore recommend that all criminal domestic abuse cases retained by the RNP should be investigated by the SIB investigators rather than GPD personnel.

Recommendation 19

With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should instruct the SIB to investigate all criminal domestic abuse cases retained by the RNP.

Rape and serious sexual offence investigations

The following table shows the number of RASSO investigations the RNP started between 2018 and 2020:

Year	Number of RASSO investigations
2018	5
2019	7
2020	6

Note: This includes domestic abuse RASSO cases and therefore some cases will appear both on this table and the one above, in the section [Domestic abuse investigations](#)

All incidents of RASSO reported to the RNP that aren't investigated by other forces must be investigated by the RNP. We aren't aware of any instances of this not happening. But as with domestic abuse, as a result of the difficulties in extracting accurate data from COPPERS and REDCAP, we are unable to confirm this.

All RASSO cases are allocated to the correct investigative unit. The force's policy states that RASSO offences are to be investigated by the SIB. We are pleased that the RNP complies with this for all RASSO offences. SIB personnel have conducted all the RNP's RASSO investigations started since at least January 2017.

Investigative quality

During our case file review, we were pleased to find evidence that domestic abuse and RASSO investigations conducted by the RNP's SIB were generally a high standard. From the evidence in the case files, we concluded that most investigations were of a comparable or higher quality than in many CIVPOL forces. This is, in part, a result of investigators having a lower caseload than their counterparts in CIVPOL.

²⁴ SIB personnel receive SCIC training, while GPD personnel only receive initial training and, for some, the VCIC.

Choice of who investigates cases

Some RASSO victims told us that they would have preferred their investigations to have been conducted by CIVPOL rather than by the service police.

All service personnel have the right to report serious crimes alleged to have been committed in the UK, including rape and sexual assaults, to CIVPOL as well as the service police. Commanding Officers are required to ensure this right is widely communicated, particularly among service police, medical and welfare staff.²⁵

We believe that when domestic abuse and RASSO victims tell service police that they want the case to be investigated by CIVPOL, the service police should do its utmost to facilitate this.

We believe that all victims of domestic abuse and RASSO, which often involve serious crimes, should be allowed to choose whether they want the investigation to be conducted by people within the small military community, or from an outside CIVPOL force. Victims wouldn't know whether they would get a better investigation from CIVPOL or the RNP, so their decision would be based on other factors.

In our case file review, we found evidence that RNP officers routinely ask victims whether they would like CIVPOL to investigate their case.

There is no national guidance for CIVPOL forces to ask victims at first response whether they would prefer the service police to investigate when there is concurrent jurisdiction. Offering victims the choice of which police force investigates their case would give them the same rights as victims of incidents initially attended by service police.

Area for improvement 7

The College of Policing should develop a policy that requires all Home Office police forces to ask all victims, in cases where concurrent jurisdiction exists, whether they want the service police or CIVPOL to investigate.

SIB training

All SIB investigators receive RASSO investigation training.

Before they joined the RNP SIB, all SIB investigators will have gained experience in GPD units, have had their VCIC course and must have taken the SCIC course. The SCIC course has been designed by the military and draws from elements of College of Policing courses adapted to service policing. All SIB personnel also receive regular online training and training in RASSO on local training days.

²⁵ *Defence Instruction and Notices 2020DIN01-065*, Ministry of Defence. Unpublished – Official Sensitive.

All SIB personnel also receive specialist courses including sexual offences investigation training, either prior to their appointment, or during the first three months in post. All such specialist training is provided by external partner agencies, in most cases, by CIVPOL.

The SIB receives refresher training, but this isn't accredited by the College of Policing. To improve and standardise continuous professional development for specialist investigators, the service police forces should, with the College of Policing, examine whether the SIB could receive the College of Policing's Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) level 2 CPD training.

Recommendation 20

By 1 June 2022, the Royal Navy career management assignment policy be reviewed to end rotational postings of specialist policing roles which negatively impacts upon on the provost marshal's ability to maintain operational effectiveness. The Royal Navy employment and promotion process of assignments should reflect the provost marshal's role as capability manager to maintain subject matter expertise and promote within specialist policing disciplines roles.

Secondments

In order to become an effective specialist investigator, both experience and training are needed. The force arranges for SIB personnel and officers to take secondments in CIVPOL specialist sexual offences units. These placements give secondees valuable experience of busier specialist units.

Tenure

However, the Royal Navy's military assignment process prevents personnel developing the same degree of experience and expertise as some of their counterparts in CIVPOL. In civilian policing, an officer can spend most of their career in investigatory roles, developing their skills and experience in criminal investigation departments and specialist investigatory units (for example sexual offending units).

This can't happen in the RNP, as Royal Navy career managers post personnel into SIB for a three-year assignment. At the end of this assignment, they are posted to another role elsewhere in the RNP and someone else is 'rotated' in.

Consequently, investigators with a few years' experience must leave the SIB, often to be replaced by someone who has less experience. Unlike CIVPOL unit managers, SIB command can't stop or delay a person leaving the branch even if this means they don't have anyone with the requisite skills. And it is financially inefficient to provide specialist training courses to personnel who routinely leave the post after a relatively brief period.

It would improve the RNP's efficiency and effectiveness if SIB personnel could spend longer in post. This would allow them to further develop their skills and experience and in turn enhance their competencies.

While there is also an organisational benefit in deploying people out of the SIB into GPD roles, as they can share their knowledge and skills with their GPD colleagues, the disadvantages may outweigh the advantages.

But since 'rotational postings' are central to the British armed forces' employment and promotion processes, staying in post for longer could affect a person's career prospects and would make it very difficult for them to be promoted. This is clearly complicated, but the current arrangements adversely affect the RNP's and other service police forces' operational effectiveness (as detailed above).

Recommendation 21

By 1 December 2022, the Royal Navy career management assignment policy should be reviewed and that it should not be a mandated requirement to assign personnel to sea to gain promotion.

Military personnel can have several SIB postings in their career. To prevent skill fade, the RNP gives CPD refresher training to personnel returning to the SIB. We consider this good practice.

Interviews

Interviews of victims are a crucial part of investigating domestic abuse and RASSO offences.

Victims of sexual offences and domestic abuse are entitled to special investigation measures. These include:

- being interviewed by specially trained professionals;
- having their interviews carried out in specifically-designed or adapted premises;
- the opportunity to have a person of the same gender conduct the interview if they are a victim of sexual violence, gender-based violence, or domestic violence (any request should be met when possible unless doing so would prejudice the proper handling of the investigation); and
- having the same person, where possible, conduct all the interviews (unless doing so would prejudice the proper handling of the investigation).

Trained interviewers

The RNP's policy state that interviews of sexual offence victims should be visually recorded. It continues that such [Achieving Best Evidence \(ABE\)](#) interviews must only be carried out by sexual offences investigation trained (SOIT) officers. Both SIB offices have SOIT officers, who receive the ABE training as part of the sexual offences investigation training.

In the cases we reviewed, all RASSO victims were interviewed by appropriately trained personnel under ABE conditions.

In Scotland, it can take SIB personnel a long time to arrive at a crime scene. To mitigate the risk this presents, the force has a formal arrangement for Police Scotland to deploy its ABE-trained officers to RNP RASSO incidents if necessary.

The situation at sea is more complex. While all RNP personnel on board ship have received SCIC training, there is no requirement for them to be SOIT or have received ABE training (see below, [ABE interviews](#)). Therefore, in those instances, an ABE interview can be delayed until either a SOIT officer can deploy to the ship, or the victim can be transported back to the UK.

We were told that where this isn't possible, for example, where the victim wants to be interviewed immediately, a SOIT officer in the UK will provide advice to the RNP personnel on board ship on how to conduct the ABE interview. Such instances are rare, and we were unable to review how well this process works.

The Provost Marshal (Navy) has decided to accept this risk, given the cost of providing ABE training to all RNP personnel aboard ship, the frequent turnover of staff and the low likelihood of the circumstances arising. The RNP's senior management also consider that the availability of SIB personnel to provide arms-length support is sufficient. We agree.

ABE interviews

There is no requirement for the service police forces, or CIVPOL, to conduct ABE interviews for all domestic abuse victims. In service police-led cases, ABE interviews are only mandated in cases where:

- the victim is vulnerable;
- the victim is intimidated;
- the offence warrants an ABE interview (for example, a RASSO offence); or
- the service police use the victim needs assessment (VNA) process to determine whether the victim is either vulnerable or intimidated (the definitions for vulnerable and intimidated victims used in the VNA are in line with those outlined in the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999).

In the case file review, we found that ABE interviews were conducted in all appropriate cases.

In domestic abuse cases that don't need an ABE interview, GPD personnel can interview the victim once they have taken their basic interview training course.

Appropriate premises

In all the cases we reviewed, all the victims that required ABE interviews were interviewed in locations that have the equipment needed for interviews in line with ABE.

In the UK, the RNP has its own ABE suites and can also access CIVPOL's suites.

Gender of the interviewer

The RNP doesn't always offer victims of RASSO offences the opportunity to be interviewed by someone of the same gender.

Most of the force's SOIT officers are men. The force, therefore, can't always deploy a female SOIT officer when the victim would like them to.

The force can't always fulfil victims' requests to be interviewed by an RNP investigator of the same gender on board ship. Gender isn't one of the characteristics used by career managers when they decide who will be posted to a ship and the force was unable to tell us how many ships have male and female RNP personnel on board. Also, operational skills are, and must be, a factor in deciding which RNP personnel are assigned to which ships. However, in order to maintain a good gender balance of RNP personnel on board ships, career managers should treat gender as a relevant characteristic when making posting decisions.

Area for improvement 8

Royal Navy career managers should treat gender as a relevant characteristic when making posting decisions for RNP officers, in order to maintain a good gender balance of RNP personnel on board ships.

Conduct of interviews

Some of the RASSO victims we interviewed from across the armed services told us that their ABE interviews were arduous experiences. One victim told us that they felt that the process was rushed, with interviews conducted in a week of long hours and limited breaks. Some of the victims also felt that investigators could be more caring in the way they conduct the interviews.

Interviews are traumatic experiences for victims, who have to relive their experiences. Investigators from all service police forces should look after victim wellbeing during interviews and try to keep the impact on the victim to a minimum.

All victims – victim's entitlement to be accompanied at interview

[JSP 839](#) includes other guidance for victim interviews including:

"You should allow the victim to be accompanied by a person of their choice unless you make a reasoned decision to the contrary. Any person that the victim wishes to accompany them must not have been involved in or a witness to the offence ... [this isn't to] help them in providing the account." (paragraph 5.8(f))

This is reflected in the force's policy, which states that: "[I]f the victim wishes to have a friend, family member or colleague present, they should be permitted to do so where appropriate."²⁶

²⁶ BRd 9969 Chapter 10: First response to sexual offences, RNP. Unpublished – Official Sensitive.

We only found evidence that this occurred in a small proportion of cases we reviewed. Having a friend accompany them in such a traumatic procedure can provide valuable emotional support.

Recommendation 22

By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that victims can be accompanied by a person of their choice during interview.

Victim personal statement

The RNP doesn't give all domestic abuse and RASSO victims the opportunity to make a victim personal statement (VPS). It should always give such victims this opportunity.

[JSP 839](#) instructs the service police that they must "offer all victims the opportunity to make a VPS when they make their initial statement of complaint" (page 23). Making a VPS gives the victim an opportunity to describe the wider effects that the crime has had on them, express their concerns and say whether or not they need any support.

The RNP has produced guidance about the VPS scheme for its personnel. It reflects that set out in JSP 839, and states that the victim will be given the chance to make a VPS when a witness statement is taken. It also establishes that the victim will have the opportunity to make a further statement at any time before the suspect appears at court.²⁷

We found that the RNP offered almost all victims the opportunity to make a VPS. However, there were three cases where we didn't see any evidence that this occurred.

Area for improvement 9

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that investigators give victims the opportunity to make a VPS in all appropriate cases.

Investigatory supervision and oversight

Our crime file review found that RNP GPD personnel and SIB investigators routinely produce investigation strategies for domestic abuse and RASSO investigations. Most had been produced at the outset of investigations, but they had been delayed in three of the ten RASSO cases and in one of the three non-RASSO domestic abuse cases.

In all the cases we examined, investigators had regularly updated the strategies, had outlined all appropriate lines of enquiry, and had detailed the rationale for them.

²⁷ *Technical instruction number 80: Victims of crime code of practice*, Provost Marshal (Navy), paras 22–23.

However, we found that strategies in complex investigations could be improved. CIVPOL use policy books to set out overarching strategies and decision-making policy in complex investigations. The RNP doesn't use policy books and we found that overarching strategies and decision-making policies for important areas aren't in place in such investigations.

Area for improvement 10

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should introduce policy books for senior investigating officers to use during linked series and complex cases. This would help them to record the overarching strategy and supporting rationale and give evidence of decision-making.

Digital strategies

In domestic abuse and RASSO investigations, following reasonable lines of enquiry often involves obtaining and analysing communication data from digital devices belonging to the suspect, the victim, and sometimes third parties.

Investigators should only seize digital devices if it is necessary and proportionate to do so. To facilitate this, they should create a digital investigation strategy in which they carefully consider the facts of a case to decide which devices they need to seize and what information they want to examine. A blanket approach, whereby investigators seize all digital devices from victims and suspects and seek to examine everything on them, isn't always efficient. The Court of Appeal found in *Bater-James and Another [2020] EWCA Crim 790* "the loss of such a device for any period of time may itself be an intrusion into [...] private life, even apart from considerations of privacy with respect to the contents".²⁸

In our crime file review, we found that while some cases included digital investigation strategies, in most instances these were just generic documents. Investigators don't give enough consideration to how digital investigation would help the specific case they are working on. Consequently, in most cases they tend to go out and seize victims', witnesses' and suspects' mobile phones, because that is what they have been told to do. This happens whether or not the devices' seizure and examination is advisable.

In one case we reviewed, RNP personnel seized a phone as they had evidence that digital contact had occurred between victim and suspect, potentially including photographs and videos that could have supported a prosecution. Despite this, they didn't submit the phone to be examined, because they didn't feel it was relevant to their investigation. The evidence suggests otherwise. The case was later discontinued. This is an example of poor management of digital evidence.

²⁸ Quoted in [Rape and Sexual Offences – Chapter 3: Case Building](#), Crown Prosecution Service.

Area for improvement 11

The Provost Marshal (Navy) should introduce formal digital investigation strategy training for investigators to help them better understand when they should seize and examine digital devices.

Media and social media strategies

The development of media and social media strategies are important elements of the investigation process and can be crucial for public appeals, minimising community impact and maintaining public confidence. Not developing these strategies can also seriously hamper investigators' abilities when it comes to developing a full investigative strategy in the future.

In our case file review, we found no evidence of a media or a social media strategy being produced for any investigation.

We were told that investigators can access the media and do so on high profile cases, however, in our case file review we didn't find any examples where this happened. We were also told that the RNP has not been supported by the RN media team in publicising crime prevention campaigns for fear it would suggest the RN has a particular crime problem.

Supervision

The RNP SIB investigations we reviewed were subject to robust supervision and oversight. This was not the case in all domestic abuse investigations investigated by GPD personnel. As we recommend that all RNP's domestic abuse offence investigations should, in future, be conducted by SIB (see [Recommendation 19](#)), this section focusses solely on supervision of SIB investigations.

At both RNP SIB branches, the team leaders (of chief petty officer rank) don't conduct investigations and instead focus on supervision and oversight of the cases. We were pleased to see that all the RNP SIB investigations we reviewed were formally reviewed by SIB team leaders at 7, 14 and 21 days. All the supervisory reviews we examined were of a high standard and gave investigative advice to investigators where appropriate.

The force's policy instructs senior managers to check investigation strategies "on initial formulation and at periods of seven, 14 and 21 days".²⁹ This was also complied with in all the cases we examined.

Training

All RNP commissioned officers receive management of investigation course training as part of the officer training package. They also receive regular training in post,

²⁹ *Technical Instruction Number 29 Investigative Strategy and Processes*, Provost Marshall (Navy), 2018, para 16. Unpublished – Official.

although this varies from unit to unit. All SIB officers also receive specialist training, which includes training on RASSO investigations.

Skill fade can occur if NCOs or commissioned officers have been out of investigatory roles for a while. The force addresses this by providing them with refresher training.

Forensic investigations

Forensic evidence plays an important part in investigations of domestic abuse and RASSO. Examining the victim, the scene of the crime and the suspect can prove or disprove who was involved and help determine what happened.

The MOD guidance to COs and victims³⁰ outlines how forensic evidence can be preserved, how a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) can support a victim and how such arrangements work overseas.

RNP policy reiterates the MOD guidance giving additional detail about scene preservation and crime scene investigators (CSIs), how and when SARCs can be used, as well as the use of early evidence kits (EEKs). The EEK is used to maximise the potential of securing evidence from the victim when a full examination is delayed. EEKs are available to personnel in UK and overseas units and on board ships.

We found that most RNP personnel we spoke to, including all those who were serving on board ship, had been trained on the use of EEKs.

Crime scene investigators (CSIs)

The collection of forensic evidence should be done by specially trained CSIs.

The RNP scientific support manager (SSM) consists of one officer, and nine crime scene investigators (CSIs).

CSIs complete their training course and join a unit expecting to manage a crime scene to practice and develop their knowledge and skills. However, as serious crimes are rare and as there are few experienced CSIs in their unit for coaching and mentoring, skills fade rapidly.

To mitigate this the SSM provides telephone advice to the relevant unit on how best to preserve evidence and we found that units and ships have equipment to collect and store evidence. All RNP personnel have had forensic evidence training to some degree and some RNP personnel have completed CSI training.

Although RNP personnel have forensic advice available to them and can secure scenes for a long time waiting for CSI attendance, long delays risks losing evidential opportunities, as some types of forensic sample degrade over time. Using CIVPOL CSIs, would reduce response times of CSIs, and secondments of RNP CSIs into CIVPOL would improve skills and experience.

³⁰ 2014DIN01-209 *Guidance to commanding officers and victims when dealing with allegations of serious criminal offences including sexual offences*, Ministry of Defence. Available as Annex B to [JSP 839](#).

Area for improvement 12

The Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army), the Provost Marshal (RAF) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for forensics should establish procedures for Home Office police force CSIs to support RNP investigations and to provide opportunities for RNP CSIs to gain further operational forensic experience.

We spoke with scientific support unit (SSU) staff and CSI-trained personnel. We found that their initial training was sufficient. The RNP has also facilitated secondments for its CSIs to other police forces, including Devon and Cornwall Police, to give them valuable experience and to help further develop their skills. This is good practice.

However, not all ships that have RNP personnel on board have a CSI. Although serious offences may be rare at sea, when they occur, evidence collection is as important at sea as it is on land.

Recommendation 23

As soon as is practicable, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the SSUs should ensure that all Royal Navy units are supported with a global CSI reach capability to deployed units.

Fingerprint analysis

The RNP and the RMP have a joint contract with a private company that provides fingerprint analysis. This arrangement appears to be working well with timely turnaround of analysis.

Forensic medical examiners and sexual assault referral centres

Forensic medical examiners (FMEs) are specifically trained to examine victims of RASSO at SARCs. Unlike UK CIVPOL, the RNP doesn't have FMEs. In the UK, the RNP relies on agreements with CIVPOL and Police Scotland to provide these specialist services. Based on our case file review and interviews with CIVPOL, this seems to be a pragmatic arrangement.

We were told that the RNP scientific support manager gives forensic training to all new medical officers during their training at the Naval Institute of Medicine. When at sea, ships' medical staff, if trained and available, will forensically examine the victim. If such staff are unavailable, then RNP personnel would use an EEK to recover evidence or arrangements will be made for the victim to be flown to the nearest, suitable medical facility.

Recommendation 24

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the head of the Naval Institute of Medicine, should determine whether it would be feasible to provide forensic training to all those ships' medical officers not already so trained. And if so, training should be provided as soon as possible, the effect of which would be to ensure that forensically-trained medical officers are available on all Royal Navy ships.

Digital forensics

As we mentioned earlier (digital investigation strategies), in many investigations, digital devices such as mobile phones, tablets and computers can hold important evidence. This is particularly true for domestic abuse and RASSO. Communication in intimate relationships often takes place using digital devices, and they are often used in making threats, intimidation, control, and in making, sending and storing sexual images. RNP policy directs how such evidence shall be collected.

The RNP uses the service police cyber-crime centre (SP3C) which forms part of the RMP's specialist operations regiment to provide digital forensic investigation and recovery support. The centre has 1 digital forensic manager and 12 digital forensic investigators (DFIs).

The SP3C prioritises devices for examination, with serious offences taking priority. DFIs advise GPD and SIB personnel which devices are likely to contain the best evidence and should be seized at a crime scene.

Once the seized devices have been processed by the SP3C, the GPD or SIB lead investigator visits the unit to do an early case assessment. This involves them sifting through the data that has been downloaded from the device by the DFIs to identify evidence of the offence that needs further examination. The SP3C later completes a report that can be added to the investigation case file. This is good practice.

Our case file review also found evidence of delays caused by waiting on digital forensic submissions. However, this had improved during 2020 and by the time of our fieldwork, SP3C was routinely starting work on cases within 41 days of submission.

In most, but not all, rape and domestic abuse cases, investigators need to examine the victim's mobile phone.³¹ When it is needed:

“[The] investigators should consider whether the digital material can be reviewed without taking possession of the device. If a more extensive enquiry is necessary, the contents of the device should be downloaded with the minimum inconvenience to the victim and, if possible, returned without any unnecessary delay.”³²

³¹ Exceptions may include RASSO offences conducted by strangers and some historical offences.

³² [Rape and Sexual Offences – Chapter 3: Case Building](#), Crown Prosecution Service.

Victims from the three armed services told us that this doesn't always happen. Examples included:

- investigators seizing a victim's phone before they had the chance to write down the phone numbers of friends or family they needed to contact; and
- delays in digital forensics resulting in victims often waiting many months, and sometimes over a year, for the return of their devices.

CIVPOL have introduced equipment and facilities in police stations, commonly known as 'cyber kiosks'. These allow officers to access and download material held on mobile digital devices without having to refer to the high-tech crime unit, thus speeding up the process. We recommend that the service police implement similar technology, perhaps with the introduction of a small number of cyber kiosks.

Recommendation 25

By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should introduce the capability (on a shared or individual basis) to quickly access and download material held on mobile digital devices.

Intelligence support for investigations

Force intelligence bureau (FIB) personnel provide access to intelligence for investigators through the Police National Computer and Database (PNC/D) building suspect and victim profiles, including communications data and guidance from the National Crime Agency.

Passing on information from investigations to other forces

Details of service police investigations held on REDCAP are uploaded to the PNC/D every day. This gives CIVPOL useful information in the event they encounter military personnel. However, REDCAP uses a separate operating system from the service police intelligence system. There is no interface between the two systems, which limits effectiveness. The new integrated ICT system (mentioned earlier) is likely to resolve this issue.

Outcomes and quality of decision-making about case progression

There are several possible outcomes for a service police investigation. It can:

- be discontinued by the police;
- be discontinued ('non-directed') by the prosecutor; or
- result in a charge for the offence referred, or an alternative offence.

Only a small proportion of domestic abuse and RASSO reports that CIVPOL or the service police receive results in a charge. And only a proportion of these end in conviction. This is a problem of significant public interest.

Of those domestic abuse-related crimes investigated by service police forces in 2018 and 2019 in England and Wales, at least 40 percent resulted in a suspect being charged.³³ This is considerably higher than the charge rate in the civilian criminal justice system. In the year to March 2020, 12 percent³⁴ of domestic abuse-related crimes recorded to CIVPOL in England and Wales resulted in a charge, or out-of-court action (such as cautions and community resolutions).

Proportionally more RASSO cases investigated by service police result in charge than is the case for CIVPOL investigations. At least 34 percent of RNP investigations into RASSO incidents reported in 2018 and 2019 resulted in a charge. And suspects were charged in 63 percent of the force's completed investigations of rape incidents that occurred during the same period.³⁵ In comparison, approximately 4 percent of rapes reported to CIVPOL resulted in charge.³⁶

The only cases in which the police can take no further action (NFA) are those that don't meet the evidential standard for them to refer a suspect to the prosecutor for charge. The service justice system (SJS) and the civilian criminal justice system apply different tests to determine whether a case meets this standard. In the SJS, the police have to refer to the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA) all cases that meet the criteria established in its 'Evidential Sufficiency Test':

“(a) a service policeman considers that there is sufficient evidence to charge a person with a service offence that is not a CO offence,³⁷ or

(b) a service policeman considers that there is sufficient evidence to charge a person with a service offence that is a CO offence and is aware of circumstances of a description prescribed by regulations under section 128 for the purposes of this paragraph.” ([Armed Forces Act 2006 116 \(2\)](#))

This is a lower standard of proof than the Evidential Sufficiency Test used by civilian police forces.³⁸ If identical cases were investigated by both the service police and civilian police, the civilian police would discontinue some cases in accordance with their test, while the service police would refer them to prosecutors. Consequently, no accurate comparison can be made between the proportion of domestic abuse and RASSO cases discontinued by the civilian police and the service police.

With RASSO cases, there is another difference between the service and civilian systems. Civilian police forces are expected to make the decision to take no further action on a RASSO case that clearly can't and won't be able to meet the appropriate evidential standard. However, the RNP has a legal duty to consult the SPA before

³³ Some of these investigations are still ongoing and have not reached charging decision.

³⁴ [Domestic abuse and the criminal justice system, England and Wales: November 2020 – Appendix tables](#), Office for National Statistics, table 3.

³⁵ Three rape investigations are still ongoing at the time of writing.

³⁶ [A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action](#), HMICFRS and HMCPSI, 16 July 2021, p13.

³⁷ A Schedule 1 offence that can be dealt with by a commanding officer.

³⁸ See [The Code for Crown Prosecutors](#), Crown Prosecution Service, paras 4.1–5.11.

discontinuing any case³⁹ where it had been suspected, at any stage, that a RASSO offence (or any Schedule 2 offence) has been committed.⁴⁰ None of the RASSO cases we reviewed were discontinued by the RNP. We can't therefore determine if this is being complied with. We suggest that the Provost Marshal (Navy) reminds investigators of the legal requirement for consultation with the SPA in all RASSO cases before discontinuation and monitors investigators' compliance with the requirement.

There is no legal requirement for service police investigators to consult the SPA before discontinuing domestic abuse cases that aren't otherwise classified as Schedule 2 offences.

As part of our case file review, we examined the two domestic abuse cases that were discontinued by the RNP between 2018 and 2020. We found that one of these cases, investigated by GPD personnel, had outstanding lines of enquiry that should have been completed and this case shouldn't have been discontinued at that stage.

This raises concerns about the effectiveness of the oversight arrangements for investigations conducted by GPD personnel. The RNP instructs GPD personnel to consult with the SPA via their regional crime manager before discontinuing cases. However, we didn't see any evidence that this occurred in this case. While our recommendation that the SIB investigates all domestic abuse offences would likely resolve this issue in respect of domestic abuse, the force should improve its oversight arrangements for all investigations conducted by GPD personnel.

Recommendation 26

With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should improve oversight of investigations conducted by GPD personnel.

Communicating the decision to take no further action to the victim and victims' right to review

It is important that decisions to take no further action are explained sensitively to victims. The way a decision is communicated can greatly affect whether a victim understands and can come to terms with a decision.

The Victims' Right to Review Scheme enables victims to seek a review of a police or prosecutor's decision not to bring charges. The scheme was introduced in June 2013 for SPA decisions and extended in November 2015 to cover police decisions. The MOD produced *Guidance on the Service Police Victim Right to Review Scheme*. The RNP, and the other service police forces, have incorporated this into their technical instructions.⁴¹

³⁹ The exception to this is historical investigations, where the reported offence occurred prior to the passing of the Armed Forces Act 2006.

⁴⁰ [Armed Forces Act 2006 s116 \(4\)](#).

⁴¹ *Technical Instruction Number 31 – Victim Right to Review*, Provost Marshal (Navy). Unpublished – Official.

Under the guidance, service police must write to victims in qualifying cases to explain that there hasn't been a referral to the SPA in their case and to tell them of their right to request a review of the decision.⁴² In our case file review, we found no evidence to suggest that this isn't being done in the cases in which the right applies.

Cases discontinued by the SPA

We don't have the remit to inspect the SPA and can't review whether they are discontinuing appropriately.

Our recent [joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's \(CPS\) response to rape](#) found that in most cases examined, the CPS decisions not to charge were consistent with the [Code for Crown Prosecutors](#) Test. So it is possible that this may also be the case in the SJS. The SPA isn't subject to statutory inspection, although it can invite Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (HMCPPI) to inspect its processes. There are distinct benefits in investigating and prosecuting agencies being subject to independent inspection.

There are three specific questions we examined relating to cases that weren't directed by the SPA because they affect service police responsibilities. These are:

- whether the SPA consults the police before discontinuing cases;
- whether the police were given the chance to appeal the SPA decisions; and
- how the SPA and the police give victims the right to review the decision to discontinue cases.

Consulting the police before discontinuing cases

In the civilian justice system, CPS prosecutors should consult the police if the prosecutor is planning to terminate all or part of a case.⁴³ This provides an opportunity for the police to give more information that may affect the prosecutor's decision, such as extra witness statements that resolve evidential problems, or background information not included in the file that may have a bearing on the public interest.

Domestic abuse cases

There is a similar duty for SPA prosecutors in domestic abuse cases. *The Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Domestic Abuse* states:

“Where the prosecutor proposes to discontinue the case or substantially reduce the charge the prosecutor will consult with the service police to ensure that there is no further action that can be taken.”⁴⁴

This isn't happening in all cases.

⁴² *Guidance on the Service Police Victim Right to Review Scheme*, Ministry of Defence, para 3.1.

⁴³ The exceptions to this are (1) the acceptance of pleas where charges were preferred in the alternative; (2) minor adjustments which don't go to the substance of the case, and which are unlikely to affect disposal or penalty; and (3) where local agreements specify that consultation is unnecessary.

⁴⁴ *Guidance on The Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Domestic Abuse* (annex D to 2014DIN01-209)

Non-domestic abuse cases

SPA prosecutors don't have to consult with the service police before discontinuing other cases and we were told by SIB personnel throughout all three forces that they aren't consulted in such cases.

Appeals to SPA decisions

In the civilian justice system, the police can appeal any decision made by a CPS prosecutor after a case is referred.⁴⁵ In the SJS, service police haven't been granted the right to do the same. Consequently, the SPA and service police are unlikely to discuss and revise a decision, which ultimately could affect whether a victim receives justice or not.

Victims' Right to Review

The SPA's obligations under the scheme are set out in its [Victim's Right to Review Policy](#). The policy states that:

"Victims will be notified of any qualifying decision and, briefly, the reasons for that decision. The notification will indicate that the victim is eligible to seek a review under the VRR scheme and to whom they should direct their request." (paragraph 8)

But it is unclear whether the SPA or someone else should notify the victim. Joint SPA and service police guidance on investigating and prosecuting domestic abuse cases says that the SPA should "personally deliver an explanatory letter to the victim which also informs the victim of their right to a review of the decision".⁴⁶ But there isn't corresponding guidance for other types of cases.

We have been told that, in some RASSO cases, the SPA instructs service police SOIT officers to send the letter to the victim, as they are assumed to have a rapport with the victim and are better placed to give the news. In other RASSO cases, the SPA issues the letter. We have also heard that in some non-RASSO cases, the commanding officer, or a victim liaison officer (VLO) is given the task.

Without clear responsibilities for this role, there is the potential that decisions aren't communicated to some victims and their rights are consequently not explained to them or are overlooked. We believe that the SPA is best placed to inform victims if they are discontinuing their case and to inform them of their right to seek a review of the decision.

⁴⁵ *Charging (The Director's Guidance) – sixth edition*, Crown Prosecution Service, para 4.31.

⁴⁶ SP/SPA Protocol: Annex – *Guidance on the Investigation and Prosecution of Allegations of Domestic Abuse*, para 34.

Recommendation 27

With immediate effect, the Director of Service Prosecutions should ensure that the SPA:

- informs victims if it decides to discontinue their case; and
- informs victims of their right to seek a review of its decision to discontinue.

Timeliness of investigations

Criminal investigations should be thorough, but they should also be conducted as quickly as reasonably possible, without unnecessary delays. When a case takes an unnecessarily long time to reach a conclusion, it is unfair to the victim and suspect and may add to their distress. This can also undermine trust in the system. Delays in service investigations and prosecutions can also “reduce the quality of evidence, undermine the morale of individuals and units, distract service personnel from their duties and impact on operational effectiveness”.⁴⁷

Investigations can be delayed for many reasons. Many more serious cases often need forensic testing and analysis of physical evidence, for medical evidence and third-party data to be examined and for digital data to be recorded and reviewed. As stated in the [Service Justice System Review \(Part 2\)](#): “These actions, dependant as they are on other authorities, necessarily delay the process of referral and aren’t under the control of the SP” (paragraph 214).

We were told that there are occasionally delays in getting witness statements. This has happened in situations where commanding officers haven’t encouraged their personnel to report to service police and provide statements, and where personnel have been posted to other countries.

Better case management

To reduce delays in bringing cases to a conclusion, the Office of the Judge Advocate General introduced *Better Case Management in the Court Martial (BCM(CM))*, as set out in [Memorandum 13 Better Case Management in the Court Martial – BCM\(CM\) 2016](#). This was later amended by [Memorandum 3 Better Case Management in the Court Martial – BCM\(CM\) 2020](#).

To achieve better case management, the service police have to “ensure that investigations are concluded more expeditiously, that time isn’t wasted on unnecessary work, and that case files are built according to the needs of the case”.⁴⁸

To this end, rather than sending a comprehensive case file to prosecutors for every case, BCM(CM) instructs the service police to send a report to the SPA containing

⁴⁷ [Practice in the Service Courts Collected Memoranda: Memorandum 13. Better Case Management in the Court Martial – BCM\(CM\)](#), Office of the Judge Advocate General, 2016, para 13.1.

⁴⁸ As before, para 13.5.

the initial details of the prosecution case⁴⁹ once the evidential standard test has been met, with a target in straightforward cases of 21 days after the offence being detected or reported.⁵⁰ The [2020 memorandum](#) is clear that BCM(CM) applies to all straightforward cases and that “a serious case such as a rape where consent is the sole issue will often be straightforward” (paragraph 1.2). Complex cases and those needing forensic or expert evidence in the initial investigation aren’t bound by BCM(CM) and are likely to need a bespoke approach.

The [2020 memorandum](#) also stipulates that submitting the initial detail of the prosecution case to the CO or the SPA shouldn’t be delayed for:

- full transcripts of ABE interviews to be prepared; handwritten summaries written by the monitoring officer during the interview will suffice at this stage;
- full transcripts of interviews under caution to be prepared; a summary reflecting the suspect’s account will suffice at this stage; legible handwritten witness statements are acceptable;
- continuity statements or statements producing interviews, exhibits or dealing with arrest, photographs etc; and
- medical evidence (unless crucial to deciding the level of charge); an indication of likely medical evidence will be contained in the referral; it also outlines what the SPA has to do to expedite cases (paragraph 2.4).

All three service police forces have adopted BCM(CM) and it forms part of the RNP’s policy. This instruction was last amended in January 2020 and the force should update it to reflect the changes made by the 2020 memorandum.

Recommendation 28

By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should update the RNP’s policy to reflect the changes made to BCM.

Complying with BCM

Our case file review showed that BCM isn’t being followed in many domestic abuse and RASSO investigations. Many service police investigators, including some from the RNP, told us that they don’t follow BCM because the SPA prosecutors request full files in all cases so they can assess all the evidence before deciding on a charge. While a

⁴⁹ The IDPC must include:

- the Service Police Case Referral (SPCR) which will include a summary of the circumstances of the offence and any account given by the defendant in interview, whether contained in that summary or in another document;
- any available supporting statements;
- previous convictions and disciplinary record;
- CCTV if available; and
- any other documents which are then available upon which the prosecution intend to rely.

⁵⁰ [Memorandum 3 Better Case Management in the Court Martial – BCM\(CM\)](#), Office of the Judge Advocate General, 2020, para 1.5.

few investigators told us that prosecutors accepted BCM-compliant files in some straightforward cases, this seems to only happen in a few cases.

As we don't have the remit to inspect the SPA, we suggest that any future inspection of the SPA's prosecution of domestic abuse and RASSO cases examine this issue.

Timeliness post-referral

During the inspection, many interviewees from all three service police forces told us that frequent delays occur once cases have been referred to the SPA. We can't mandate the SPA to give us data on the timeliness of cases, so we can't substantiate or refute these claims. To provide swift justice, all elements of the SJS must operate in a timely manner. Therefore, this should form part of the multi-agency review of how the SJS investigates and prosecutes sexual offending and domestic abuse.

7. Victim contact

Victim contact during the course of the investigation

Statutory instruction and guidance

[The Armed Forces Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) (the Code) entitles “all victims to be informed of events as the investigation and any subsequent judicial proceedings into their case progresses”.⁵¹ The accompanying guidance to the Code – [JSP 839 Victim Services](#) – instructs the service police to update victims on the investigation at intervals agreed with them, and to tell victims about specific events during the course of the investigation. Such events include:

- the arrest of a suspect;
- the release of the suspect from pre-charge custody;
- any decision to cease the investigation;
- any decision to refer or not to refer the case to the commanding officer or Director of Service Prosecutions; and
- the referral of the suspect for charge.

RNP policy and instructions

These entitlements are broadly reflected in the RNP’s policy.⁵² This refers readers to the Code’s requirement for service police to agree the frequency of contact with the victim. This is further illustrated in a flow chart to help the police decide when to agree a contact strategy with the victim.

Complying with guidance

In our crime file review, we found that the RNP made an initial agreement with victims about contact frequency in most, but not all appropriate cases (85 percent). The force should make sure that personnel make such agreements in all cases and record them on REDCAP.

⁵¹ [JSP 839 Victims’ Services](#), para 25.

⁵² *Technical Instruction 80 – victim and witness care*, Provost Marshal (Navy). Unpublished – Official.

Recommendation 29

With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that personnel make an agreement with victims about contact regularity in all cases.

Victim contact after referral of case to prosecutor

Civilian police forces must maintain contact with victims beyond the point at which cases are referred to the CPS. Investigators retain responsibility for victim contact until the CPS makes a charging decision and at this point responsibility is transferred to forces' witness care units.⁵³

There is no such obligation on the service police. Instead, [JSP 839](#) states that the commanding officer of the suspect for the crime that has been committed is responsible for allocating a victim liaison officer (VLO) to the victim. It is then the VLO who is responsible for updating victims once cases have been referred to the Service Prosecuting Authority (SPA). This includes updating victims at specific points in proceedings, as well as providing "regular updates on the investigation or criminal proceedings at intervals agreed with the victim by the commanding officer" (paragraph 4.3).

Informing the victim of these post-referral events must be agreed with the victim and commanding officer so that there is no confusion. The victim should always know who their point of contact is.

JSP 839 sets out the rationale for this arrangement, telling the service police that:

"It is recommended that an agreement is reached with the commanding officer of the suspect to pass the responsibility to the VLO for the passage of information to the victim regarding case events post-referral. This is because the commanding officer will always be informed of the progress of the case through the Service Justice System when it is being considered by the SPA or being scheduled for pre-trial hearings or trial by the Military Courts Service, whereas you won't. Passing the responsibility to the VLO on behalf of the commanding officer at this stage will therefore ensure that the victim remains fully informed and compliance with the Code is maintained."

This arrangement is problematic. First, despite outlining the importance of the victim knowing who their point of contact is at all times, JSP 839 also instructs the SPA to inform the victim directly about some matters, as well as routing other information via the VLO. This alone can lead to two channels of reporting information to the victim.

Second, the VLO isn't always best placed to perform this role. We couldn't interview VLOs to get their perspective, but we have heard from people throughout the service police that not all VLOs get training for their role. VLOs are occasionally posted to other units and aren't replaced, and they can be located far from the victim, even in

⁵³ [Authorised Professional Practice: Prosecution and Case Management – Victim and Witness Care](#), College of Policing.

another country. We don't have the remit to examine VLO files to assess whether they comply with their responsibilities to contact victims.

Finally, in small units, the VLO would inevitably know the suspect and, understandably, victims don't always feel this is appropriate.

While the SPA has a role in this process, we don't have the remit to examine SPA files to determine compliance.

RNP instruction and compliance

The RNP's policy in this area is unclear.

As mentioned above, RNP's policy instruct personnel to inform victims about five specific events and decisions that might occur during the course of the investigative and prosecution processes. Some of these events occur after the case has been referred to the SPA and, according to JSP 839, should fall to the VLO, including any decision not to prosecute a suspect.⁵⁴ However, while this implies that the RNP has decided to retain the responsibility for contacting victims post-referral, this isn't stated explicitly in the force's technical instructions.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the lack of clear policy direction, we heard inconsistent accounts from RNP personnel about how victim contact would be maintained after the case had been referred to the SPA. Some personnel told us that they ask victims whether they would prefer to have the suspect's commanding officer or the RNP sexual offences liaison officer (SOLO) act as VLO, and would act accordingly. Others state that they only take on the role if the suspect's CO doesn't appoint a VLO, or if the VLO wasn't fulfilling their obligations. This is reflected in our case file review, which found that the investigation team continued to update victims in most, but not all cases after they were referred to the SPA.

Service personnel RASSO victims we spoke to told us that once service police refer their case to the SPA, they stopped getting frequent updates from anyone. These victims hadn't received updates about their case for many months. For some, the first update they got after the case was referred to the SPA was to inform them that the case had been discontinued. Therefore, in these cases neither the RNP, VLOs nor the SPA routinely updated victims. This is a serious shortcoming: these victims, and potentially many others, don't get regular contact, aren't informed about the progress of their case and feel ignored.

For domestic abuse cases, RNP personnel told us that their victim contact responsibility ends when the case is referred for charge. Although we haven't spoken to non-RASSO domestic abuse victims, given the lack of contact some RASSO victims have had from VLOs or the SPA, it is likely to be a problem for victims of other crime types.

This is clearly not a problem that rests primarily with the service police.

⁵⁴ *Technical Instruction Number 80 – Victims of Crime Code of Practice*, Provost Marshal (Navy). Unpublished.

Recommendation 30

By 1 June 2022, as part of its review of policy document JSP 839 the MOD should decide whether VLOs and the SPA are best placed to conduct victim contact post-referral or whether this responsibility should pass to service police.

Victim feedback

The service police forces should look to standardise the way they monitor victims' satisfaction with the services they provide.

All three service police forces have produced feedback surveys that they issue to victims of crime, including domestic abuse and RASSO victims. All three use a different set of questions, and none includes questions that cover the whole victim experience from first contact. For example, the RNP's survey is the only one with questions about victim needs assessments, while independent sexual violence advisors (ISVAs) and independent domestic violence advisors (IDVAs) are only mentioned in the RMP survey. None of the surveys asks whether first responders were empathetic and professional.

The service police, the SPA, MOD and other important partner agencies should also consider whether questions are viable about the victims' services received from all military service providers after their incidents. This could provide valuable feedback on how well the military safeguard and communicate with victims.

Area for improvement 13

The Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should increase the scope of their victim feedback surveys, to include the whole victim experience from first contact to case conclusion.

Annex A – Recommendations

Strategic leadership and governance

1. By 1 January 2023, the MOD should define the role of the service police in its *No Defence for Abuse* strategy and set clear actions for all three forces to achieve.
2. By 1 January 2023, the MOD should develop an overarching strategy for sexual offending and within it, define the role of the service police and set clear actions for all three forces to achieve.
3. By 1 June 2022, the Royal Navy should develop a RASSO steering group and working groups to promote improvement through the Royal Navy. Without interfering in the operational independence of the Provost Marshal (Navy), these groups should set, in agreement with the RNP, performance expectations for the force and hold it to account against these expectations.
4. With immediate effect, the MOD, in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Navy), Provost Marshal (Army) and Provost Marshal (RAF), should satisfy itself that its replacement ICT system will be able to highlight incidents of domestic abuse and repeat victims, and produce accurate data quickly and easily.
5. With immediate effect, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) should remind all Home Office police forces of the requirement in Home Office Circular 28/2008 to inform the RNP when the suspect or victim of an incident they deal with is a member of the Royal Navy.
6. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (Navy) should address the capacity and capability problems in the force intelligence bureau (FIB).
7. With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should empower the force's strategic plan owners for domestic abuse and RASSO to mandate activity relating these roles across the whole of the RNP.

Prevention and encouraging reporting

8. By 1 January 2023, the MOD should develop appropriate mandatory domestic abuse and RASSO prevention and awareness training for new recruits in the Royal Navy and develop regular refresher training in the form of a mandated naval competency training requirement.

Handling calls and first reports of crime

9. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should carry out a feasibility study for the establishment of a joint contact centre that reflects, as far as is reasonably possible, the capabilities of Home Office police forces. If the outcome of the study isn't for the establishment of a joint contact centre, the Provost Marshal (Navy) and the provost marshals of the other service police forces should implement another solution that resolves the call-handling problems explained in this report.

First response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

10. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army), the Provost Marshal (RAF) and the Defence School of Policing and Guarding, should make sure that all first responders are trained to the new Joint Police Initial Course standard.
11. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should publish tri-service domestic abuse aide-memoires (which, to meet each service's needs, may include additional information to reflect local differences).
12. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should standardise RASSO first responders' logs and booklets (which, to meet each service's needs, may include additional information to reflect local differences).
13. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should issue body-worn video cameras to all uniformed personnel.
14. With immediate effect, the MOD should reinforce CO compliance with JSP 834 as regards their responsibilities around VSOs, and monitor such compliance by reviewing data from COs and feedback from victims.
15. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should publish a single DASH risk assessment form to be used by all three services that allows for any requisite local differences to be retained.
16. By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should reinforce and monitor a positive arrest strategy in domestic abuse and RASSO cases, not only to secure evidence but also to safeguard victims.
17. With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that the SIB regularly review, and where necessary revise, the risk assessments for the cases they are assigned, including at the points of crime recording, arrest, charge and trial.
18. By 1 January 2023, the MOD should conduct a review to improve safeguarding in the military by all parties, including how victims of domestic abuse and RASSO are safeguarded. Following such a review, the MOD should develop processes quickly to make sure that safeguarding becomes more effective and that robust review and oversight procedures are in place.

Investigations after first response

19. With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should instruct the SIB to investigate all criminal domestic abuse cases retained by the RNP.
20. By 1 June 2022, the Royal Navy career management assignment policy be reviewed to end rotational postings of specialist policing roles which negatively impacts upon on the provost marshal's ability to maintain operational effectiveness. The Royal Navy employment and promotion process of assignments should reflect the provost marshal's role as capability manager to maintain subject matter expertise and promote within specialist policing disciplines roles.
21. By 1 December 2022, the Royal Navy career management assignment policy should be reviewed and that it should not be a mandated requirement to assign personnel to sea to gain promotion.
22. By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that victims can be accompanied by a person of their choice during interview.
23. As soon as is practicable, the Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the scientific support units (SSUs) should ensure that all Royal Navy units are supported with a global CSI reach capability to deployed units.
24. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the head of the Naval Institute of Medicine, should determine whether it would be feasible to provide forensic training to all those ships' medical officers not already so trained. And if so, training should be provided as soon as possible, the effect of which would be to ensure that forensically-trained medical officers are available on all Royal Navy ships.
25. By 1 January 2023, the Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should introduce the capability (on a shared or individual basis) to quickly access and download material held on mobile digital devices.
26. With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should improve oversight of investigations conducted by GPD personnel.
27. With immediate effect, the Director of Service Prosecutions should ensure that the SPA:
 - informs victims if it decides to discontinue their case; and
 - informs victims of their right to seek a review of its decision to discontinue.
28. By 1 June 2022, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should update the RNP's policy to reflect the changes made to Better Case Management (BCM).

Victim contact

29. With immediate effect, the Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that personnel make an agreement with victims about contact regularity in all cases.
30. By 1 June 2022, as part of its review of policy document JSP 839, the MOD should decide whether VLOs and the SPA are best placed to conduct victim contact post-referral or whether this responsibility should pass to service police.

Annex B – Areas for improvement

Strategic leadership and governance

1. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should define expectations of performance against priorities that better illustrate qualitative activity and outcomes for victims.

First response to domestic abuse and RASSO incidents

2. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should develop centralised, annual training for policing competencies including domestic abuse and RASSO first response, provided by qualified trainers, and with central assurance.
3. The Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with Navy Command and the Submarine Service should examine whether policing arrangements for submarines and MCMs might be improved. As a minimum, coxswains should receive enhanced first responder training and RNP should develop its forward base policing operating model to provide greater support to these class of vessels.
4. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that a police watch manager or a VCIC-qualified senior leading hand accompany junior leading hands when attending domestic abuse or RASSO incidents.
5. The Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF), should ensure that all domestic abuse and RASSO victims are provided with contact details for UK-based IDVAs and ISVAs respectively.
6. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should improve the force's guidance on the use of ISVAs and IDVAs, and monitor compliance with the guidance.

Investigations after first response

7. The College of Policing should develop a policy that requires all Home Office police forces to ask all victims, in cases where concurrent jurisdiction exists, whether they want the service police or CIVPOL to investigate.
8. Royal Navy career managers should treat gender as a relevant characteristic when making posting decisions for RNP officers, in order to maintain a good gender balance of RNP personnel on board ships.
9. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should ensure that investigators give victims the opportunity to make a victim personal statement in all appropriate cases.
10. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should introduce policy books for senior investigating officers to use during linked series and complex cases. This would help them to record the overarching strategy and supporting rationale and give evidence of decision-making.

11. The Provost Marshal (Navy) should introduce formal digital investigation strategy training for investigators to help them better understand when they should seize and examine digital devices.
12. The Provost Marshal (Navy), in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army), the Provost Marshal (RAF) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for forensics should establish procedures for Home Office police force crime scene investigators (CSIs) to support RNP investigations and to provide opportunities for RNP CSIs to gain further operational forensic experience.

Victim contact

13. The Provost Marshal (Navy) in conjunction with the Provost Marshal (Army) and the Provost Marshal (RAF) should increase the scope of their victim feedback surveys, to include the whole victim experience from first contact to case conclusion.

Annex C – Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation	Term
ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
AFA	Armed Forces Act 2006
APP	authorised professional practice
BCM	better case management
BCM(CM)	better case management (court martial)
BWV	body-worn video
CIVPOL	civilian or Home Office police forces
CJS	criminal justice system
CO	commanding officer
COPPERS	service police's incident reporting ICT system
CPD	continuous professional development
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CSI	crime scene investigators
DASH	domestic abuse, stalking and harassment
DFI	digital forensic investigator
DIP	domestic incident proforma
DSPG	Defence School of Policing and Guarding
EEK	early evidence kits

Abbreviation	Term
EWCA	England and Wales Court of Appeal
FIB	force intelligence bureau
FME	forensic medical examiner
GPD	general police duties
HMCPST	Her Majesty's Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HMICFRS	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service
HMS	Her Majesty's Ship
HOCC	Home Office counting rules
HQPM(N)	headquarters of the Provost Marshal (Navy)
ICT	information communications technology
IDVA	independent domestic violence adviser
ISVA	independent sexual violence adviser
JPIC	Joint Police Initial Course
JSP	joint services policy
MARAC	multi-agency risk assessment conference
MASH	multi-agency safeguarding hub
MCM	mine countermeasure ship
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NCO (JNCO & SNCO)	non-commissioned officers (junior and senior)
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NFA	no further action
NPCC	National Police Chiefs' Council
NSIR	National Standard for Incident Recording

Abbreviation	Term
PIP	Professionalising Investigation Programme
PNC/PND	Police National Computer/Database
PPI	professional performance inspection
PSD	professional standards department
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAFP	Royal Air Force Police
RASSO	rape and serious sexual offences
RCM	regional crime manager
REDCAP	crime investigation ICT system
RMP	Royal Military Police
RMPT	Royal Marines Police Troop
RNP	Royal Navy Police
RNRMWS	Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare Service
RPC	Regional Police Commander
SARC	sexual assault referral centre
SCIC	Serious Crime Investigation Course
SIB	special investigation branch
SJS	service justice system
SOIT	sexual offence investigation trained
SOLO	sexual offences liaison officer
SP3C	service police cyber-crime centre
SPA	Service Prosecuting Authority
SPCB	service police crime bureau

Abbreviation	Term
SSAFA	armed forces charity
SSM	scientific support manager
SSU	scientific support unit
UIE	unit investigation element
VCIC	Volume Crime Investigation Course
VLO	victim liaison officer
VNA	victim needs assessment
VPS	victim personal statement
VSO	victim support officer
WO	warrant officer

June 2022 | © HMICFRS 2022

www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs