



HM Government

Rape Review progress update

December 2022



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Foreword by Deputy Prime Minister and Lord Chancellor and the Minister for Victims and Sentencing

Rape is a horrific crime that wrecks lives and affects whole communities, leaving scars that can be hard to heal.

In 2021, the end-to-end Rape Review exposed the grim reality for victims. Many are too afraid to come forward, disbelieved, offered scant support, and ultimately denied the justice they deserve.

As a Government we vowed to do better. We set out eight levers that we believe will make the most difference for victims – so every victim has the confidence to come forward and get support they need, and we can bring more rapists to justice.

A year and a half on, there is cause for cautious optimism. We are making steady, incremental progress.

The latest criminal justice system data shows that adult rape convictions went up by 65 percent over the past year, with 532 convictions in the year ending June 2022, up from 323 the year before. This is 41 percent higher than pre-pandemic levels (377 in the year ending June 2019).

And the latest CPS quarterly data release shows that the conviction rate for all rape offences has also increased, up from 68.3 percent in January – March 2022 to 69.1 percent in April – June 2022.

Adult rape cases charged by the CPS have increased, with 402 suspects charged in the second quarter of this year, up by 65 percent from the quarterly average in 2019. The number of adult rape cases reaching the Crown Court has also risen in the second quarter of 2022, with 440 Crown Court receipts, up 91 percent from the quarterly average in 2019.

This means that our pledge to more than double the number of cases reaching court by the end of this parliament is within reach.

Timeliness for adult rape cases at the CPS stage has also improved over the last quarter. The average time from first police referral to the CPS charging the suspect has fallen by 29 days from 146 days in January – March 2022 to 117 days in April – June 2022, now closer to the 2019 quarterly average of 114 days.

But we must keep delivering against our milestones so that women, girls and every victim of rape see justice done. In the last six months we have delivered on more of our pledges to victims.

We are continuing to deliver our Specialist Sexual Violence project in three Crown Court Centres (Leeds, Newcastle and Snaresbrook) to improve support for victims and complement ongoing efforts to tackle the courts backlog.

Working with Rape Crisis UK, we've launched a 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line, so that victims can get immediate help and signposting whenever and wherever they need it.

We have expanded 'suspect-focused investigations' – known as Operation Soteria – to 14 more police forces and three new CPS areas. This approach brings together frontline policing, prosecutors and academic expertise to transform the response to rape – rightly ensuring that investigations focus on the suspect's behaviour, rather than the victim's.

We are stopping unnecessary and intrusive requests for victims' phones through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, so that all victims will have their privacy respected.

And we have gone further than our commitments in the Rape Review by rolling out pre-recorded cross-examination nationally. This means that victims are spared the ordeal of appearing before a live courtroom, so they can give their best possible evidence.

But there is more still to do. The wait for justice is too long for some rape victims, and too many drop out of the justice process because of their poor experience, leaving perpetrators free to offend again.

We are determined to put that right. That's why we are more than quadrupling the funding for victim support from £41m in 2009/10 to £192m by 2024/25, so we can increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence and Independent Domestic Violence Advocates (IDVAs and ISVAs) by 300 to over 1,000 – a 43% increase over the next three years.

We have also developed user-friendly guides to help victims of rape and sexual assault to better understand what they can expect from the criminal justice system.

And we've invested a further £4 million – on top of £5m for 2021-22 – into technology that will speed up police examination of mobile phones, so that victims aren't left without their phone for long periods of time when they are at their most vulnerable.

This Government is determined to do better for women and girls, and all victims of crime. We are tackling violence against women and girls at every level – with our landmark Domestic Abuse Act and tougher sentences for serious sexual offences.

Our draft Victims Bill and wider reforms will put victims at the heart of the justice system, strengthen their voices, and improve oversight of criminal justice agencies. And the Victims Funding Strategy will ensure sustainable support is available for victims, now and in the future.

We are restless to go further and faster for rape victims. Huge challenges remain, but this progress shows that our eight chosen levers are making a difference.

We are determined to press ahead: so that more woman, girls and other victims of rape get the justice they deserve – and more rapists are taken off our streets.

Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP

Deputy Prime Minister, Lord Chancellor and Justice Secretary

Rt Hon Ed Argar MP

Minister of State for Victims and Sentencing

Introduction: Progress update on the End-to-End Rape Review Action Plan

When we published the Rape Review, we committed to creating meaningful cross-system change, centred around improving victim experience, and to more than double the number of adult rape cases reaching court by the end of this parliament.

Eighteen months on from publication of the Review, we are making good progress on delivering this commitment. The latest data, published in the November Criminal Justice System Delivery Data Dashboards, shows that our actions are having an important impact and we need to see this continue and to build on it.

- We are seeing increases in police referrals, charges, and Crown Court receipts. Adult rape cases referred by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) (for either early advice or a charging decision) continue to increase, with 901 total police referrals in the second quarter of 2022, up by 95% from the quarterly average in 2019, when the Rape Review was commissioned.
- Adult rape cases charged by the CPS have also been increasing, with 402 suspects charged in the second quarter of 2022, up by 65% from the quarterly average in 2019.
- The number of adult rape Crown Court receipts have subsequently also increased in the second quarter of 2022 with 440 Crown Court receipts, up by 91% from the quarterly average in 2019.
- Adult rape convictions have also increased, with 532 convictions in the year to June 2022, up by 65% compared to the year before (323 in the year to June 2021) and up by 54% compared to 2019 (345 convictions).

These increases mean we are on track to meet the ambition we set out in the Rape Review Action Plan. Progress made so far is a testament to the concerted efforts made by each part of the system to address, head-on, the issues highlighted in the Rape Review. However, there is still more we need to do to build on this and bring about the genuinely transformative and sustained change that we all want to see. Big challenges remain.

There is still much further to go to ensure that victims have confidence across each stage of the system and feel they can remain engaged. The Rape Review was never intended to be static, and we are therefore continuing to work to develop new interventions, consider where we can go further and faster in delivering better outcomes, whilst ensuring that we take in to account the latest data, research and evidence.

This progress report sets out how we are doing this cross-system, at police and CPS stages and at the Courts stage, and with further detail on milestones included in the Annex for each Rape Review Lever.

Key areas of progress from the last six months include:

- Introducing the 24/7 helpline, which will provide all victims and survivors access to dedicated support whenever and wherever they need it.
- Expanding Operation Soteria, a joint police and CPS programme of work to develop new national operating models for the investigation and prosecution of rape, to a further 14 police forces and three new CPS areas onboarded by October this year. This has meant Operation Soteria has been fully adopted by 9 of the 14 CPS Areas, with many of the principles of early engagement which underpin Soteria now reflected in the work of RASSO Units in all 14 Areas. Learning from the first year of the policing aspect of the programme, alongside an iterative draft of the national operating model for the investigation of rape, has been published.
- Through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act, bringing new powers into force to stop unnecessary and intrusive requests for victims' phones. These powers mean that all victims will have their privacy prioritised, and that they will get the information they need to make decisions that are right for them, including knowing that they have the right to refuse these requests.
- Pre-recorded cross examination (Section 28) (a special measure within the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 that enables those eligible to have their cross examination pre-recorded and then played at the trial) was extended to adult complainants of sexual offences. The special measure aims to enhance the quality and reliability of evidence by improving witness experiences of cross-examination and enhancing event recall by reducing the time between complaint and cross-examination.
- Completing a public consultation on police requests for personal records, known as third party material. The consultation response and next steps will be published shortly.

As well as delivering this work, we are continuing to scope where further interventions are needed to bring about the transformative change that victims deserve.

Cross-system actions: what have we delivered?

Supporting victims, in emotional, practical and legal terms, at each stage of the criminal justice process is central to our ambition to transform the system response to rape. Whilst it is positive that we are seeing the number of charges for adult rape increase, victim attrition rates remain high (with the proportion of adult rape investigations ended due to victim attrition at 62% in the first half of the year) and signals that there remains more to do, if the system is to fully meet the needs of all those who use it.

We are taking determined action in this space through expanding victim support, improving our understanding of victims' needs, and improving the transparency of the criminal justice system.

Expanding victim support

Launch of 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line

We are pleased to have launched the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line. Earlier this year Rape Crisis England and Wales (RCEW) was selected as the successful bidder in an open grant competition to deliver the service. The service offers a free, confidential emotional support and listening service for anyone living in England and Wales, aged 16 or over, who has experienced any form of sexual violence or abuse, at any point in their life. It is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, and is accessible through phone and webchat, with additional online resources.

The service is staffed by specially trained advisers, who understand how complex and varied different people's experiences of sexual violence and abuse can be. Their role is to non-judgmentally listen to and believe the experiences of victims, answer questions and share information and resources to support victims to work out what (if any) next steps are right for them, including helping victims find longer-term support.

Ahead of the formal launch, since June, the support line has been operating a 24/7 phone service as part of a testing phase to allow us to gather data on how people were using the service. As with any new service, it is important to closely monitor how the service is being used to continue to improve the support provided. We have established a Steering Group which brings together RCEW, MOJ as commissioners, and key representatives from the wider sector to quality assure the service and to make sure as many calls and webchats as possible are answered, and that victims get the highest quality service to support their recovery.

Publication of user-friendly information guides on the Criminal Justice System

We have developed a series of user-friendly guides to enable victims of rape and sexual assault to better understand what they can expect from the criminal justice system. [Five guides](#) have been published on gov.uk. These set out: (1) available support following a rape or sexual assault; (2) the process involved in reporting a rape or sexual assault; (3) how the police and CPS investigate a reported offence, including information on evidence that may be collected during an investigation; (4) what victims can expect during a trial; and (5) what might happen after a trial has concluded.

The Victims Bill

We will introduce the landmark Victims Bill as soon as parliamentary time allows. We received the Justice Select Committee's pre-legislative scrutiny report on 30 September. We are carefully considering the recommendations and will respond as soon as possible.

Improving our understanding of victim needs through data

We recognise the critical importance of high-quality data in understanding the experiences of different victims in their interactions with the Criminal Justice System. Action we are taking includes:

- Developing prototype data linking tools which would allow us to observe the end-to-end journey of cases through the CJS and identify where there are critical points, for example when in the process victims are most commonly withdrawing.
- The National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) and the CPS are working together to improve data quality of protected characteristics. This has included developing new police guidance on protected characteristics data with input from the CPS. Through the Victim Transformation Programme, the CPS is exploring how to best to meet the needs of victims with protected characteristics.
- Operation Soteria has shown that missing and incorrectly recorded information in police records limits police forces' understanding of differences in outcomes which might impact different groups of victims. We hope the national operating model for the investigation of rape will support police forces to deliver crime recording improvements, in respect of rape and other sexual offences, including recording of protected characteristics, which may in turn support the effective monitoring of justice outcomes.
- The draft Victims Bill introduces a duty for PCCs and agencies to take into account victims' experiences of the services they are entitled to under the Victims' Code. This data will build a better picture of whether all victims are getting equal access to services, allowing us to drive the necessary improvements.

Improving transparency of the Criminal Justice System

Over the past six months, we have expanded the [adult rape CJS Delivery Data Dashboard](#) to include several new metrics that improve the transparency and quality of data across the Criminal Justice System (CJS). The August Dashboard included an additional metric for the number of referrals by the police to the CPS for a charging decision and metrics that measure the quality of police files submitted to the CPS. In the November Dashboard, we included a new metric on CPS decision-making. The inclusion of new metrics helps to provide a more accurate reflection of the CJS, enabling us to be transparent about where

there are challenges in the system and drive collaboration at a local level to directly address these.

Case study: The important roles being played by Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) in providing tailored support, informed by victim needs

We know that Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) and Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) are crucial to the victim support landscape, helping victims make informed choices, staying engaged in the criminal justice system and supporting coordination between victims and criminal justice agencies, and have faced growing demand in recent years. We are seeking to meet this demand by more than quadrupling the funding for victim support from £41m in 2009/10 to £192m by 2024/25, which will enable us to increase the number of ISVAs and IDVAs by 300 to over 1,000 – a 43% increase over the next three years.

We are grateful for the below case study from Safe Link – Independent Sexual Violence Advisor service in Avon and Somerset which showcases this important impact.

When Faiza* was referred to her local ISVA service, she wanted to be supported by the specialist ISVA who works with survivors who are black and from a minority ethnic community. As a young woman, she had recently left her family home to live in supported accommodation. Faiza had reported a sexual assault to police and an investigation was underway and as part of this, she had already given a video-recorded interview.

Faiza had been diagnosed with depression and anxiety as a young teen, and this assault was having an even greater impact on her mental health. Faiza was provided with a safe space by her ISVA to explore her mental health needs and how she would like to be supported. In this safe space, Faiza felt able to disclose that she was neurodivergent and had also started to use self-harm to cope with the trauma of the assault. Faiza also shared the impact this assault had on her relationships, and how she was frightened that her family would find out, and of the impact this might have on them.

Faiza also disclosed that she was struggling with intrusive suicidal thoughts. Faiza's ISVA worked with her to develop a suicide safety plan, which focussed on practical steps Faiza could take to keep herself safe when feeling this way, including getting help and support from those she trusted. Together, Faiza and her ISVA explored how she could identify her emotions and what triggered them, and the different coping mechanisms she could use to express how she was feeling.

Throughout this time, Faiza was also being supported by other professionals. Faiza's ISVA took responsibility for communicating with them regularly, so that Faiza didn't become overwhelmed. This ensured that a co-ordinated response was taken to support Faiza's recovery, centred upon her needs and wishes.

Faiza recognised that she struggled most when she was by herself. During these moments she could not stop from thinking about the assault, which was made worse during Covid-19 lockdowns. Through conversations with her ISVA, Faiza realised that being at work helped her to be distracted and that she would like someone at work to know what had

happened, so she had support if she needed it. Her ISVA subsequently agreed to write a letter to her employer to explain what Faiza was going through, and to find out how her employer could support her moving forward. This letter helped to open a conversation between Faiza and her manager, while minimising the number of times she had to tell her story, leading to Faiza feeling more supported at work, for example through changing her working hours to suit her needs.

To support Faiza to combat the loneliness she sometimes felt when away from work, her ISVA contacted her on a regular basis, sending her mental health resources and supporting her to access local community groups, counselling and peer support to help her to connect with others in her local community who have shared similar experiences.

During their time working together, there were times when Faiza felt physically unsafe, and her ISVA helped advocate for her housing needs as well as providing her with practical home security solutions so that she was, and felt, safer. She also helped liaise with the police around the safety concerns.

Alongside this, Faiza's ISVA also supported her through the criminal justice process. The ISVA regularly obtained updates from the lead police officer and gave Faiza an opportunity to talk these through and ask any questions she might have about the investigation. When the police made the decision to take No Further Action in the case, Faiza's ISVA highlighted her ability to challenge this decision and supported her to submit a Victim's Right to Review (VRR). Faiza's ISVA ensured she was aware of her rights at every stage and that her voice was heard throughout.

Police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS): What have we delivered?

The Rape Review identified a range of issues impacting the investigation and prosecution of rape, including victims feeling like they were under investigation and disbelieved, which was compounded when victims were asked to give up their phones to the police so evidence could be extracted. We want the criminal justice system to be better at considering the needs of victims and we are taking urgent steps to achieve this. We are committed, in collaboration with a range of partners, including the National Police Chiefs' Council and the CPS, to driving forward sustained improvement in how rape is investigated and prosecuted.

The CPS and NPCC also published a [refreshed Joint National Action Plan on rape](#) in October. The refresh highlights the progress made against actions to improve joint working between police and CPS and sets out a renewed commitment to significantly increase the number of cases being brought to court, year on year.

It is promising to note that the number of early advice consultations from the police to the CPS rose from a quarterly average of 129 in 2019 to 373 in the quarter ending June 2022, an increase of 190%. Quality partnerships between the CPS and policing, formed through the seeking and provision of early advice, help to ensure that strong cases are built from the outset and high-quality cases are being referred by police to CPS for a charging decision.

Expansion of Operation Soteria and development of the new national operating models for the investigation and prosecution of rape

By October, a further 14 police forces and three new CPS Areas joined Operation Soteria, a joint police and CPS programme of work to develop new national operating models for the investigation and prosecution of rape. From June 2023, the new national operating models will provide all police and prosecutors with tools to improve their decision-making processes, supporting them to progress cases more effectively, be reactive to the needs of victims, and ensure investigative focus shifts to the actions of the suspect. Of the nine CPS areas piloting innovative new activities under a test, learn and evaluate approach, the five original pathfinder areas are also being supported by independent academic research.

The Home Office published the independent Year One Report on the policing aspects of the programme (sometimes referred to as Operation Soteria Bluestone). This provides an overview of the learnings from research in the five pathfinder police forces who participated in the first phase of the programme and outlines how this learning is being

used to develop the national operating model, an iterative draft of which is provided in the report.

The 14 police forces who joined the programme in October are receiving support from academic and subject matter experts to understand and improve their capability in developing improvement plans.

Significantly, the deep dives into the five pathfinder police forces identified overlap between domestic abuse and rape and sexual offence cases. It is therefore crucial that officers have the right skills to understand wider forms of violence against women such as domestic abuse, including controlling or coercive behaviour, and how such offences interrelate. The national operating models for the investigation and prosecution of rape and other sexual offences will recognise this overlap.

The CPS has established a governance structure, in preparation for the rollout of the national operating model and is working closely with colleagues across local CPS Areas, external stakeholders and policing partners to ensure there is operational alignment. A series of academic-led training sessions will also be delivered across CPS Areas to ensure operational understanding and helping to embed best practice.

A national learning network has been also established as part of Operation Soteria to ensure police forces not directly participating in the programme have regular opportunities to engage with the learning, particularly in preparation for June 2023 when the new national operating model will be available to all police forces in England and Wales. The learning network is ever-growing with 600 members, including CPS colleagues. Bi-weekly learning events, led by the experts working with the 19 police forces to develop the national operating model, have been attended by practitioners in their hundreds.

More broadly, we are working with the National Police Chief's Council, the College of Policing, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services to ensure forces receive support from all aspects of the policing landscape, in preparation for when the model is available to adopt.

CPS and Police Resourcing

The Rape Review identified that the right level of resourcing, with the appropriate level of training, is vital to improving outcomes for the police and the CPS. The CPS are intensifying legal recruitment to support ongoing operational recovery and to enable existing, experienced prosecutors to move into specialist posts. Every rape case that comes to the CPS is dealt with by a specialist prosecutor in a dedicated rape and sexual offences unit. Recruitment into these units is of highly trained staff, with requisite skills and experience, to ensure we deliver justice in every possible case and provide a high-quality service to victims. The CPS has grown its workforce in this specialist area by 17% in the first half of 22/23 and is working towards ambitious growth targets in CPS RASSO Units.

In addition, as of 30 September 2022, **15,343** additional police officers have been recruited in England and Wales, and there are now more women and ethnic minority police officers than ever before. As part of the Policing Education Qualification Framework, all student police officers will receive training in vulnerability and risk, working with the CPS. The

College of Policing's Public Protection and Safeguarding Leadership Programme provides training to policing leaders to ensure they have a strong understanding of the complexity and sensitivity of these crime types.

The College of Policing and the Operation Soteria academic team are working together to create new learning and training products which better meet the needs of investigators. This collaboration will ensure learning from Operation Soteria is embedded across the policing landscape. It includes designing and piloting a new learning programme to upskill current investigators, offering an opportunity for continued professional development, or as an introductory programme for those officers who may have recently joined teams investigating rape.

Disclosure and Third-Party Materials

We are on track to meet the commitment made in the Rape Review, that no adult rape victim should be without a phone for more than 24 hours by the end of this Parliament, with the vast majority of forces in a position to do so by the end of March 2023. Following feedback from victims' groups on the difficulties for victims of handing over their phones for any period as part of a police investigation, the Home Office is investing a further £4m to provide police forces with the technological capability and training to gather evidence and return victim's mobile phones within a shorter timeframe.

This comes on top of an initial £5m funding in 2021-22. The funding is focused on providing technology to forces that need a further capability injection to ensure not just that they are consistently turning around victim's devices within 24 hours, but also that they have the option to conduct examinations at a time and location of convenience to the victim.

In November, through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Act, we brought new powers into force to stop unnecessary and intrusive requests for victims' phones, which is a vital change in law that puts an end to the practice of 'digital strip searches' and ensures that investigations are focused on the suspect and not the victim. These new powers mean that all victims will get the same high level of care, and that their privacy will be prioritised. All victims will be given the information they need to make decisions that are right for them, including knowing that they have the right to refuse these requests without automatically ending their case.

We recognise the importance of reducing intrusive requests for personal information ('third party material'), for example, medical or social services records. We have completed a public consultation exploring the issues regarding police requests for third party material. The response to this consultation and next steps will be published shortly.

In June 2022 the CPS and NPCC also jointly launched two training podcasts for investigators and prosecutors. These aim to improve understanding of examining digital devices belonging to victims and witnesses, and explain the law regarding reasonable lines of inquiry, and how these principles relate to obtaining and disclosing third party material.

In addition, we have sought views on legal support to help victims with personal information requests via the 'Legal Advice Consultation'. This included running a series of

practitioner roundtables and a survey to understand stakeholder views. We are reviewing the outcomes and will publish the results in due course.

Case Study: Better joint working between officers and prosecutors in Durham Constabulary and CPS North East

The CPS North East area and Durham Constabulary participated in the first year of the Operation Soteria programme. Durham was the third pathfinder police force to engage in an academic led research deep dive into their force response to rape between January and March 2022.

CPS North East and Durham Constabulary have since developed new joint working practices with an increased emphasis on early engagement between officers and prosecutors. This includes rape-focussed Joint Operational Improvement Meetings, the development of a local forum for ISVAs, CPS and police, and an enhanced Early Advice pilot that sees prosecutors supporting investigators with advice from the earliest stages of an investigation.

An enhanced pre-charge process introduced in June 2022 has also been piloted between CPS North East and Durham Constabulary. The process aims to ensure that a meeting is held in all police Early Advice / Full Code Test pre-charge decisions between the allocated prosecutor and police investigation team.

Jim Hope, Senior District Crown Prosecutor (SDCP) for CPS North East said “The aim of pre-charge meetings between prosecutor and investigator is to reduce delay in providing charging decisions by agreeing a case strategy at an early stage, including any reasonable lines of enquiry that the police are advised to follow to help jointly build the case.”

In one case, the police submitted a request to the CPS for a charging decision. Together they agreed a strategy for reviewing the victim’s mobile phone and were able to minimise further lines of enquiry in relation to third party material in the case and avoid considerable delays in the investigation.

The clear and narrow parameters agreed during the pre-charge meeting allowed the victim to attend the police station and have the examination of her phone completed whilst she waited. This meant that she did not have to be without her phone at a time when she was particularly vulnerable. Police were able to reassure her that they weren’t going through all of her personal communications and were only interested in the date range around the alleged offence.

The police were given an action plan for a further investigation to take place, and a realistic timeframe for completion. Following this, a decision was made to prosecute, and the suspect was subsequently charged. This meant that the victim had a timely decision made on her case within 6 months of the report to the police, which would have been longer had the police and prosecutor not engaged early in the process.

An officer in the case who had been involved in a pre-charge meeting said: “It was great speaking with a lawyer from CPS and getting their views on the case and the evidence rather than communicating via email. It was a lot more effective speaking with someone directly who could hear what my thoughts were, and I could hear theirs. It gave me a lot

more clarity on why they made the decisions they did. I feel like the lawyer was very helpful and listened to what I had to say.”

Detective Chief Superintendent David Ashton said: “Through these various initiatives, frontline investigators have really valued the opportunity to discuss their case with a CPS lawyer at an early stage. This has been greatly facilitated by technology, particularly through virtual meetings where both the police and CPS are able to quickly identify and resolve issues, generating greater understanding and saving time, which ultimately results in an improved service for the victim.”

Case study: How the technology uplift is improving the experience of rape victims at the police reporting stage

The rollout of improved data extraction technology, including mobile digital forensics vans (unmarked fully mobile digital forensics units which are equipped with state-of-the-art tools), portable digital forensic laptops and mobiles, and fixed-site kiosks has had positive impacts on victim experience at the police investigative stage.

This is illustrated in the recent case of an adult male who disclosed having been the victim of rape as a child, by a male in a position of trust. During investigation, further victims were identified. When the police approached these victims, some expressed nervousness to support this investigation, due to the potential impact it could have on them and their families.

One of the victims resided in another force area and was reluctant to provide their mobile phone for extraction due to the inconvenience this would cause. Investigators were able to offer the option of deploying a new digital van to the victims’ home address, along with an accredited Digital Media Investigator (DMI) to complete the required extraction, at a time convenient to the victim. This overcame the victim’s concerns, and a digital van was deployed to the victims’ home address and the phone extraction was completed by a specialist DMI within an hour and a half.

Improved technological capability allowed police to take a victim-centred approach in this case and encouraged engagement in the process. This complex investigation is currently ongoing and through using the digital van, the Digital Forensics Unit has gone on to encourage further victim engagement, where victims’ needs are put at the forefront of the investigation.

We are committed to continuing to make use of innovative technology to improve investigation outcomes and victim experience. The Accelerated Capability Environment (ACE) impact lab¹ is at the centre of this and is an example of cutting-edge joint private and public sector working, where experts are informing the development of new solutions to challenges in rape investigation. The first proof of concept design that is being kickstarted through ACE is a proposal for a centralised advice portal for victims providing details of support services in their area.

¹ [Accelerated Capability Environment \(ACE\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

Courts: What have we delivered?

When cases reach the court stage, it is imperative that victims continue to have access to support and information that is right for them, as this helps maintain their engagement with the criminal justice system and is crucial to its effective running. For many, giving evidence at court is among one of the most stressful and difficult things they will ever have to do. For victims of rape this is even more acute, with the risk of traumatisation increasing at the court stage.

We also recognise that for many, waiting for a trial can in itself be a cause of significant distress. Since our last progress report, timeliness has worsened at the courts stage exacerbated by the Criminal Bar Association strike. We are continuing to support Crown Court recovery, launching enhanced Specialist Sexual Violence Support in selected Crown Courts, and have completed the expansion of pre-recorded cross examination to complainants of sexual offences to all Crown Court locations in England and Wales.

Ongoing work to support Crown Court recovery

To help drive recovery from the impact of the pandemic, we have taken action in the criminal courts and are continuing our efforts to secure timely justice for victims through tackling the backlog by increasing physical and judicial capacity, reducing demand into the Crown Court, and improving efficiency.

As a result of our actions, the outstanding caseload in the Crown Court reduced from 60,600 cases in June 2021 to 57,900 cases at the end of March 2022. However, since April 2022, the caseload has been increasing again, and it stood at 62,500 at the end of September equating to 74,587 defendants. This rise was largely due to disruptive action by the Criminal Bar Association from April to October 2022. This has also led to a greater number of cases in the backlog that require a jury trial (including rape cases). As jury trials take longer to complete than other types of cases, this will hamper our ability to work through the backlog quickly.

With the Bar strike now resolved, we are working together with our partners across the Criminal Justice System to drive down the backlog so that victims see justice done sooner. We have removed the limit on sitting days in the Crown Court for the second year in a row. This means that the courts will continue working at full capacity, delivering swifter justice for victims, and reducing the backlog of cases.

We have opened two new 'super courtrooms' in Manchester and Loughborough, allowing up to an extra 250 cases a year to be heard across England and Wales. Around 500 Crown courtrooms are now available for hearings and trials, which is higher than pre-pandemic levels. We are also expanding our plans for judicial recruitment to secure enough capacity for judges to sit at the required levels in this financial year and beyond.

We will also continue to support HMCTS in the implementation of their Court Reform programme, which aims to make our court processes more efficient, so that we can hear more cases more quickly. We are working closely with the Crown Court Improvement Group, a judicially-led consultative body reporting to the Lord Chief Justice, which has been established with the purpose of improving overall performance of the Crown Court, to develop options to improve productivity in the Crown Court.

Specialist Sexual Violence Support Project

The Specialist Sexual Violence Support Project in the Crown Court (SSVS) is an initiative we announced in June 2022 that aims to improve support for victims while complementing ongoing efforts to tackle the courts backlog. It is being introduced in three Crown Court centres – Leeds, Newcastle and Snaresbrook in London.

The project aims to improve victim experience at the court stage and improve efficiency. Through this project, we are taking steps to improve facilities in these court centres and ensure that these facilities (including audio visual quality) are of a high standard, and are in the process of developing trauma informed training which will be made available to court staff at SSVS locations. As part of the SSVS project we are also reviewing the communications between victims and criminal justice system agencies, including how the availability of special measures are communicated to victims, and we will consider how this can be improved. Learnings from this project will be shared across the CJS to complement national efforts to improve the criminal justice system response to rape.

The work also aims to increase Crown Court efficiency by improving preparedness through the introduction of the Case Coordinator role. The Case Coordinator will work with the parties involved in a case to ensure that timetables are kept, responsibilities and judicial orders are abided by, and parties are prepared for hearings and trial.

Since June, we have engaged with the victims' sector to seek input on what is required to achieve this 'gold standard' in victim support. We have also engaged extensively with the local judiciary, operations managers and partners such as the Witness Service to identify examples of best practice that can be spread and incorporated into the 'gold standard' ambition. The project will take a phased approach in our first three Court centres between now and March 2023, after which we will continue to share learnings from SSVS and best practice between Court centres, working closely with the judiciary.

Rollout of Section 28 pre-recorded cross examination

We are pleased to have now completed the rollout of Section 28 to all Crown Courts in England and Wales, going beyond the original commitments in the Rape Review. At present, vulnerable witnesses and intimidated witnesses are now able to give video recorded evidence following an application to the court where it will be, subject to judicial approval. The November CJS Delivery Data Dashboard shows that in April – June 2022 49 witnesses gave evidence via Section 28 in a case with at least one adult rape offence. We will continue to report usage in future dashboard publications.

We are looking at data and working with partners to ensure the rollout of Section 28 is being used successfully. We will continue to monitor the effect of the rollout of Section 28

on case outcomes and the operation of the justice system. In early 2023, we aim to publish the results of a process evaluation conducted with victims and criminal justice practitioners who have used Section 28.

Law Commission review of the law, guidance and practise relating to the use of evidence in prosecutions of rape and sexual offences

The Law Commission continues to conduct a landmark review of the law, guidance and practice relating to the use of evidence in prosecutions of rape and sexual offences, which was launched in December 2021. This review is looking at the existence of rape myths and how they shape jurors' views. The review will then develop recommendations to ensure that victims do not face inappropriate attacks on their reputation in court, and that only relevant evidence is presented, while the defendant's right to a fair trial is protected. The Law Commission will consult on their provisional proposals and recommendations in the new year. The feedback gained through this consultation will then inform the final recommendations.

Annex – Detailed summary of actions

Key lever 1: CJS Delivery Data Dashboard and accountability

Key priorities for the last 6 months:

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Published national and local recorded adult rape offences CJS Delivery Data Dashboard for the first quarter (Jan-Mar 2022) data.	Complete
Completed and quality assured separation of data on police referrals (to differentiate referrals for early advice from referrals for a charging decision) to enable a more accurate understanding of this stage.	Complete
Published national & local recorded adult rape offences CJS Delivery Data Dashboard for the second quarter (Apr-Jun 2022) data.	Complete

Key actions for the next 6 months:

Rape Review actions due to be delivered by June 2023	
February 2023	Publish the CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q3 2022 data (July-September 2022).
May 2023	Publish the CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q4 2022 data (October-December 2022).

Key lever 2: Expansion of victims' support

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Reviewed the results of the 'Legal Advice Consultation' which focused on understanding the issues surrounding police requests for third party materials.	On-track. Correction: In the June 2022 Rape Review Progress Report the action was incorrectly reported as <i>Respond to the 'Legal Advice Consultation'</i> . This was an error and should have read <i>Review the results of the 'Legal Advice Consultation' by July</i> . The consultation closed in June and we have been considering its results. We will publish our response in due course.
Launched the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line.	Complete
Published the majority of user-friendly guides for victims of rape and sexual assault, which explain how the criminal justice system works and the support available. A further two guides will be published by the end of the year.	Complete
Completed scoping of the feasibility of introducing new metrics to measure victim engagement and satisfaction.	Complete
Undertook targeted research with rape victims to better understand their experiences and what they want from support services to inform future provision. Published Government Social Research report from targeted research with rape and sexual violence victims, subject to external review. We will use the findings to feed into the recommissioning of the Rape Support Fund.	Off-track as analysis of survey findings has been extended due to higher than anticipated response rate. Research outputs now to be published in early 2023.
Recommissioned the Rape Support Fund for two years over 2023 to 2025.	On-track
Commenced the recruitment process for an additional 300 ISVAs and IDVAs to increase the number to over 1000 by 24/25.	On-track

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review actions due to be delivered by June 2023	
January 2023	Open grant competition for Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund.
April/ May 2023	Announce Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund Grant Awards.

Key lever 3: Operation Soteria

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Held a fifth national learning event to share lessons from South Wales Police academic-led deep dives.	Complete
Completed academic-led deep dives in pathfinder police forces and publish findings from first year of the policing programme.	Complete
Began second year of research to develop and refine the national operating model for the investigation of rape, this includes providing continual academic support to the 5 pathfinder police forces.	Complete
Onboarded 14 expansion police forces in preparation for applying the self-assessment tool.	Complete
CPS and NPCC launched the Joint National Action Plan refresh in October 2022.	Complete
Onboarded 3 expansion CPS Areas to Operation Soteria.	Complete
Expansion police forces provided with the self-assessment tool.	Complete
Teams of academics and subject matter experts began a schedule of visits to the 14 expansion police forces, supporting them to develop responses to the self-assessment tool and reflect on their capabilities in responding to rape.	Complete
CPS appointed academic produces interim position paper on Operation Soteria for learning within CPS.	Complete

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
January 2023	Visit to all 14 expansion police forces by team of academics and subject matter experts.
January 2023	Operation Soteria conference – an opportunity to bring leaders and practitioners from pathfinder and expansion police forces together alongside academics and policy leads, to share learning and best practice.
March 2023	Complete CPS Soteria academic report detailing complete findings of phase 1 (interviews, case file sampling, Area observations).

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
March 2023	Development and implementation of improvement plans by 14 expansion police forces using knowledge gained through supported application of the self-assessment tool.
May 2023	CPS Soteria academic consolidates learning and makes recommendations on the future operating model for rape prosecution.
June 2023	New national operating models for investigation and prosecution of rape available for all police forces and CPS Areas to adopt.

Key lever 4: Increased police and Crown Prosecution Service resourcing

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Piloted the new blended learning programme for rape and sexual offence investigators in three Operation Soteria police forces.	Complete
Hold learning events for RASSO staff, following completion of phase 1 of the Operation Soteria CPS academic work programme.	Complete
CPS to deliver further 6 RASSO induction courses for Senior Crown Prosecutors.	Complete
Provide ongoing RASSO training to support new, existing and returning RASSO CPS staff with a range of induction training modules and refresher training, including on the impact of trauma on memory.	Ongoing

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
February 2023	All 11 modules of the new learning programme for rape and sexual offence investigators developed and available.
March 2023	Increase the CPS RASSO workforce in the next financial year by 194 full time equivalent (representing a 44% increase in 22/23).
March 2023	Complete recruitment of 20,000 additional police officers.
Ongoing	Extend pilot of new blended learning programme for rape and sexual offence investigators to further Operation Soteria police forces.
Ongoing	Provide ongoing RASSO training to support new, existing and returning RASSO CPS staff with induction training modules and refresher training, including on the impact of trauma on memory.

Key lever 5: Improved digital forensics technology and digital disclosure

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service concluded inspections of 10 digital forensics units and presented their conclusions to government in July 2022.	Complete
Received the first voluntary data return on mobile phones in adult rape investigations from the police, and an initial evaluation report on the impact of the £5m technology uplift fund.	Complete
Concluded public consultation on the PCSC Act code of practice for the extraction of information powers and begin the final draft, taking into account feedback received.	Complete
Legislated in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act to ensure victims devices are only examined where necessary, proportionate and as part of a reasonable line of enquiry.	Complete
Completed engagement with police forces and victims' groups to understand the scale of the problem and to start testing policy interventions.	Complete
Circulated Annual Data Requirement to ask forces to provide data to baseline how long forces hold on to rape victims' mobile phones.	Complete
Completed the roll-out of digital forensics equipment to 24 force areas following an initial £5m uplift, with all kit in use by the end of 2021-22 (regular reporting on usage undertaken).	Complete
Private sector tech solutions to end-to-end tech challenges in rape and sexual offence cases presented to Home Office.	Complete
Held a showcase event for the successful supplier to showcase their technology and for Police Digital Service (PDS) and Accelerated Capability Environment (ACE) to demonstrate the work to date to wider partners.	Complete

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
Ongoing	Implement recommendations from Her Majesties Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) thematic review of digital forensics in police forces in England and Wales, to ensure that forces are able to effectively deliver digital forensic services that support investigations and bring perpetrators to justice.
March 2023	Complete a second £4m tech uplift by the end of FY 2022-23. This will support the remaining forces that require further technological capability to ensure that they are consistently examining and returning victim's devices within 24 hours.
March 2023	Completion of proof-of-concept tests within forces of technology developed in conjunction with the private sector, as well as new selective extraction technology that enable policing to be more precise in the data extracted from victim's phones.

Key lever 6: Improving victim experience in the Court

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Began interviews with victims and witnesses as part of phase two of the process evaluation for complainants of sexual and modern slavery offences.	Complete
Completed the national rollout of Section 28 for complainants of sexual and modern slavery offences in the Crown Court nationally, subject to judicial, police and CPS readiness.	Complete
Commenced the test of Section 28 in Leeds Youth Court.	Complete
Combined findings from both phases of the process evaluation (interviews with criminal justice practitioners and interviews with victims and witnesses) into a cohesive Government Social Research report to publish in the late autumn of 2022, subject to internal quality assurance and external academic peer review.	Off-track. Fieldwork with victims is complete, with findings being written up for quality assurance and peer review in December. The research is off track due to delays in data sharing, with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for victim interviews not being signed off until September. This meant recruitment and data collection of victim interviewees could not start until then. Publication now due early 2023.
Continued trial of Best Practice Framework to further Crown Court regions and commence hosting of information and learning through practitioner attended and led innovation and learning events.	New date: October 2022 - March 2023. This work is now being furthered through the Specialist Sexual Violence Support (SSVS) in the Crown Court project. A key element of that work will be sharing learnings with criminal justice system agencies and we will be gathering learnings from SSVS from October 2022 to March 2023.

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Conducted the Law Commission public consultation.	Off-track. Due to the complex nature of the issues and the proposals, and to take into account the wide range of stakeholder views the drafting of the consultation paper has taken longer than originally anticipated. New date for publication in February 2023.

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
March 2023	SSVS: Launch victims communications journey map and information resource to each SSVS location.
March 2023	Complete roll out Digital Audio Visualisation Evolution (DAVE) technology (a major tech uplift to courts) to each SSVS location.
March 2023	Engage with stakeholders and suppliers to develop a training package to roll out in each SSVS location.
March 2023	Case Coordinators begin work in each SSVS location.
March 2023	Begin setting up and supporting best practise sharing events to share lessons learnt across all Courts (Previously Best Practice Framework).
March 2023	Assess the availability of on-site provision for victims and consider if any changes are required.
May 2023	Law Commission consultation period concludes.

Key lever 7: Crown Court capacity

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
The Judicial Appointments Commission will run recruitment campaigns through which we expect to recruit 1,000 judicial office holders in 22/23 across all jurisdictions.	On-track
Used the additional funding secured for criminal justice system recovery in the Spending Review to improve waiting times for victims and reduce Crown Court backlogs.	On-track

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
Ongoing	The Judicial Appointments Commission to run recruitment campaign through which we expect to recruit 1,000 judges in 22/23.
Ongoing	Continue work to improving productivity with the Crown Court Improvement Group (CCIG). The CCIG is a judicially-led consultative body, chaired by the Senior Presiding Judge, that was established by the Lord Chief Justice to improve the Crown Court's overall performance.
Ongoing	Continue to support HMCTS in the implementation of their flagship Court Reform programme, which aims to make our court processes more efficient.
Ongoing	Continue to use remote hearings where appropriate, so that they can be heard quickly, and space can be freed up for cases that must be heard in person. This will always be balanced with the interests of justice.

Key lever 8: Third party material

Key priorities for the last 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by December 2022	Status
Considered recommendations from the Information Commissioner's Office report on data in rape and sexual offences cases, and further actions required. Initial assessment suggests that many recommendations are already in process of being implemented.	Complete
Gathered empirical evidence on the necessity, proportionality and timeliness of third-party material requests through case file review of police files.	On-track

Key actions for the next 6 months

Rape Review action due to be delivered by June 2023	
June 2023	Complete data collection on third party material requests. Use the results to inform development of further options to reduce unnecessary and disproportionate requests for third party material.
January 2023	Publish consultation response and next steps regarding police requests for third party material.



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