



HM Government

# Rape Review progress update

February 2024



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## 2 Rape Review progress update

# Foreword by the Lord Chancellor and the Minister for Victims and Sentencing

Rape inflicts deep trauma on survivors. While physical scars may heal, the emotional impact of rape can last a lifetime.

When these devastating crimes happen, we want every victim to feel able to come forward, to have the confidence that they will be listened to, supported to give their best evidence in court, and that justice will be swiftly served.

It is this Government's mission to improve the response to victims of rape throughout the criminal justice system, from the moment they make a report to the police, to their experience in a courtroom.

In 2019, we commissioned our End-to-End Rape Review. Published in 2021, our watershed report interrogated every stage of the justice process, setting out eight areas that needed to be fixed; levers which needed to be pulled. Our subsequent Action Plan targeted each area in turn, including increases to the support available for victims; ensuring the police and CPS have the capacity to build the best possible cases; transforming the way officers and prosecutors collaborate in the investigation and prosecution of rape; and drastically improving victims' experience in court, potentially the most difficult time of their lives.

It also set out our initial ambitions to return the volumes of adult rape cases being referred by the police (to the CPS), charged by the CPS, and going to court, back to 2016 levels. 2015 and 2016 marked the years where we saw the most adult rape cases being prosecuted and convicted since 2010; surpassing the volumes seen in these years would provide evidence of substantial system recovery, and prove that our eight levers were the right ones to focus on.

And that's what we have done. By delivering almost every action we set out in our Action Plan, from rolling out Operation Soteria's transformative National Operating Models across England and Wales, to delivering our Specialist Sexual Violence Support project in three Crown Courts, **we have exceeded all three of these ambitions ahead of schedule.**

The number of adult rape cases arriving at the Crown Court are higher than at any point since 2014, far exceeding our 2016 ambitions (665 Crown Court receipts in the quarter to September 2023, 20% above our ambition of 553). In addition, adult rape prosecutions are higher than any other period in the last 6 years and, if maintained, will reach the highest levels seen in a decade.

But we are determined to go even further.

Having extended our Action Plan to December 2024, we have set ourselves yet more milestones to hit. We have committed to training 2,000 specialist rape investigators by April 2024; we will quadruple victims funding by 2024/25 compared to 2009/10 levels; we will increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Abuse Advisors (ISVAs and IDVAs) to over 1,000; and we will pass our Victims and Prisoners Bill, which will ensure victims know their entitlements, from emotional support to the right to ask for special measures in court.

In addition, our Sentencing Bill will ensure that rapists spend every day of their custodial term behind bars – another step towards making sure rapists convictions match the abhorrence of the crime they have committed. This comes on top of this Government's excellent track record to date, having already made sure that rapists are spending more time in prison than at any time in the last 15 years, up from 6.6 to 9.4 years.

But we know there is further to go. Too many victims withdraw from the justice process – particularly at police investigation stage. We want to understand the reasons why, which is why we have appointed Professor Katrin Hohl as the new Independent Advisor to the Rape Review. As the architect of the largest ever victim survey of its kind in 2023, Katrin's expertise will be invaluable as we continue this work.

Important progress is being made, but there can be no easing in our efforts. As a Government, we will continue to do more and to do better for victims with relentless resolve – so the criminal justice system prevents and punishes this appalling crime, and every rape victim gets the support and justice they deserve.

Rt Hon Alex Chalk KC MP  
**Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice**

Laura Farris MP  
**Minister for Victims and Safeguarding**

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

The 2021 end-to-end Rape Review took a hard and candid look at how the entire criminal justice system deals with rape and committed to delivering sustained improvements – transforming support for victims, ensuring cases are investigated fully and pursued rigorously through the courts, and more than doubling the number of adult rape cases reaching court by the end of Parliament (compared to 2019, when the review was commissioned). In doing so, we set three ambitions: to return the volumes of adult rape cases referred by the police to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS); charged by the CPS; and received in Crown Court to 2016 levels.

As identified in the Ministerial Foreword, setting these ambitions against 2016 levels made them hugely stretching; 2015 and 2016 marked the years where we saw the most adult rape cases being prosecuted and convicted since 2010, when these data were first published.<sup>1</sup>

At the point of our last Progress Report, the quarterly data showed we had already met our initial ambitions for police referrals and cases reaching court, around 18 months ahead of schedule. Since then, continued increases in the number of CPS charges means **we have now successfully exceeded all three initial Rape Review ambitions**, with volumes continuing to rise on a quarter-by-quarter basis.

The most recent data shows that adult rape prosecutions are higher than any other period in the last 6 years, and if maintained, will reach the highest levels seen in a decade.<sup>2</sup> The number of adult rape cases arriving at the Crown Court is higher than at any point since 2014.<sup>3</sup> This is a significant achievement, going beyond our initial targets to continually increase the numbers of victims having their cases heard in court year by year.

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<sup>1</sup> MoJ publishes information on prosecutions, convictions, sentencing for all offences on a consistent basis from 2010 onwards in the Criminal Justice System Statistics Quarterly. Inconsistencies in the data from pre-2010 mean it is not currently publishable on the same basis and could only be compared to more recent data with significant caveat and caution. We continue to explore the options on producing the pre-2010 timeseries.

<sup>2</sup> Volume of adult rape prosecutions in the 12 months to June 2023 and in the latest quarter to June 2023. Source: MoJ, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: June 2023.

<sup>3</sup> MoJ, Criminal court statistics quarterly: July to September 2023.

The latest published data shows that:

- The number of people prosecuted for an adult rape offence went up by 54% in the latest year of data (12 months to June), rising from 1,410 to 2,165.<sup>4</sup> This is more than double what was recorded in the 12 months to June 2019, increasing 149%. Compared to 2010 the number of people prosecuted for an adult rape offence increased by 32% (2,165 prosecutions in year ending June 2023 compared to 1,644 in 2010).
- The number of suspects with an adult rape flagged offence whose case was referred by the police to the CPS (early advice or a charging decision) increased to **1,470 between July and September 2023, exceeding our ambition of 766.**<sup>5</sup> This represents a rise of 219% on the quarterly average in 2019, when the Rape Review was first commissioned.
- The number of suspects with an adult rape flagged offence that were charged by the CPS increased to **668 between July and September 2023, exceeding our ambition of 538.**<sup>6</sup> This represents a rise of 174% from the quarterly average in 2019.
- The number receipts at Crown Court for adult rape increased to **665 Crown Court receipts between July and September 2023, exceeding our ambition of 553.** This represents a rise of 188% from the quarterly average in 2019.

## What we've done

Making this progress has required every part of the system to work together better. It needs officers and prosecutors to build trust with victims, encouraging them to come forward and supporting them to stay the course of their case. It needs the CPS and the police to have the capacity and skills to build the strongest possible cases, working hand-in-hand. It needs well-resourced victim support services to ensure victims get the guidance and help they need during what will often be a traumatic time. And it needs a collective drive to keep improving and working out where we can make the system better.

Our Rape Review Action Plan identified eight levers of the criminal justice system's response to adult rape which needed immediate action. Over the past two and a half years, we have delivered on almost all of the actions that we set out in each of our Rape Review Progress Reports and updates, with those remaining on-track to be delivered within the Parliament. Meeting our initial ambitions well ahead of schedule has demonstrated that the levers we identified were the right places to focus our efforts, this is why we extended our Action Plan across these levers to December 2024.

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<sup>4</sup> Sources: CPS, CPS data summary Quarter 2 2023–2024. MoJ, Criminal court statistics quarterly: July to September 2023.

<sup>5</sup> In line with advice from the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have updated some of the wording in this report to make sure the use of flags in CPS data is more prominent. We often refer to these as 'police referrals' or 'CPS charges' for simplicity. An adult rape case is identified through the application of a rape flag and the absence of a child abuse flag on CPS operational management information systems. The absence of the child abuse flag indicates the victim is 18 years old or older. The flags are usually applied from the onset of the case and will remain in place even if the charges are later amended. If a case commences under a different offence but during the prosecution an applicable charge is preferred, the case is flagged at that stage. This is a consistent method that has been used by the CPS since 2006, to monitor cases involving rape and facilitate support to victims.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



It is now crucial that we effectively implement and embed each of these actions so that they fulfil their potential. This includes:

- Ensuring every police force and CPS area in England and Wales is effectively implementing the National Operating Models developed through Operation Soteria. This will continue to drive improvements and transform how these cases are handled from the outset, supporting officers and prosecutors to work together and harness academic knowledge about sexual offending in their case building.
- Going further to make sure officers have the expertise and capacity to respond effectively to these offences, including training 2,000 specialist investigators by April 2024.
- Using legislation to strengthen support for victims and build victim trust in the system, including introducing statutory guidance to embed vital roles like Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Advisors (ISVAs and IDVAs) through our Victims and Prisoners Bill.
- Quadrupling victims funding by 2024/25 compared to 2009/10 and increasing the number of ISVAs and IDVAs to over 1,000 so that victims get the support and advice they need at the time they most need it.
- Further improving the victim experience at the Crown Court through our Specialist Sexual Violence Support project, introducing additional measures to make sure that victims feel informed, comfortable and are treated sensitively.

Beyond our Action Plan, we are also legislating to ensure that convicted rapists spend the entirety of their custodial sentence in jail, with no possibility of early release. A fifteen-year custodial term will mean fifteen years behind bars. Alongside increases in the average custodial sentence length (ACSL) for adult rape since 2010 (which has increased from 6.6 to 9.4 years in 2022<sup>7</sup>), this is a further step towards ensuring that convicted rapists are receiving sentences that match the abhorrent crime they have committed. We hope that doing so will increase victim and public confidence in our criminal justice system and its powers to deliver justice.

## Remaining challenges

We have made significant progress, but there is still more to do.

Rape is a uniquely distressing offence. It goes without saying that these are arguably the most invasive, intrusive, and intimate offences that can be committed, exacerbated further by how they can so often be perpetrated behind closed doors, not only by strangers, but by partners, ex-partners, or people victims know. Data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales, for the years 2016/17 and 2019/20 combined, indicates 44% of rape victims (aged 16–59) were assaulted by a current or ex-partner, with a further 37% assaulted by someone else already known to them including friends, colleagues or a date.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> MoJ, Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2022, Outcomes by Offence.

<sup>8</sup> Office for National Statistics (2021): Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales [Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/nature-of-sexual-assault-by-rape-or-penetration-england-and-wales)

The challenges these factors present do not just make rape a difficult crime to investigate and prosecute; they immeasurably burden each victim for every day after the offence. For those victims that have courageously reported their rape to the police, this strain is present every minute of their journey through the justice system. Understandably, levels of victim attrition throughout the criminal justice process, particularly at the police stage (i.e. the percentage of victims who withdraw from the police investigation into their rape), have always been high, never falling below 41%, the series low in July–September 2015. That being said, increases in recent years have remained stubbornly high, now sitting at 61% in the latest quarter of data (July to September).

If we are to truly transform the investigation and prosecution of rape, we need to ensure that victims feel they can stay engaged in the process and are confident that they will be supported, listened to and believed at every stage of the investigation. Key to succeeding in this is improving our understanding of why victims report to the police and their experiences when they do. As part of Operation Soteria, the Home Office funded Professor Katrin Hohl to survey rape and sexual offences victims on their experiences of engaging with the police. As of June 2023 the survey, although not nationally representative of all rape and sexual offences victims and survivors, had received over 2,000 responses.

In September, Professor Hohl published an independent report, which highlighted the range of reasons<sup>9</sup> victims and survivors may withdraw from after making a report to the police, including: the negative impact it was having on their mental health, that they did not feel supported enough, and their fear of the perpetrator. The report also highlighted the impact lengthy timescales for criminal justice proceedings can have, placing significant additional stress on victims' mental wellbeing. This emphasises the need for continued close working across the whole system to understand and address the factors affecting timeliness.

Furthermore, the report highlighted the highly complex range of motivations that result in a victim of rape making a report to the police. Respondents' reasons included wanting to stop the perpetrator from offending again, wanting the perpetrator to understand what they did was wrong, and because they wanted to feel safe. We also know that some victims withdraw because they never intended to make a formal report to the police. That is why it is important to ensure availability of victim support services, independent of the criminal justice system, to help people understand their options, to heal and to recover. The MoJ has committed to funding a minimum of £460 million over three years (22/23–24/25) to enable victim support services, and those commissioning them, to build resilience into services ensuring consistency in the support that all victims receive, including rape and sexual offences, and will ensure that high quality support is available to victims when needed.

This independent survey remains open,<sup>10</sup> and we encourage victims who have reported rape or sexual offences to the police in England and Wales to share their experiences.

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<sup>9</sup> Respondents could choose more than one option.

<sup>10</sup> [https://cityunilondon.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_4GikU2bi38jO0MS](https://cityunilondon.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4GikU2bi38jO0MS)

This kind of in-depth research is vital to pushing the Rape Review forward to further improve outcomes for victims. This is why we are delighted to announce that we have appointed the lead academic of this survey, and the former joint academic lead who has been instrumental in the development of Operation Soteria, **Professor Katrin Hohl, as our new Independent Advisor to the Rape Review**. Professor Hohl will take over from her predecessor, Emily Hunt, who played a pivotal role in the development and delivery of the Rape Review to date.

Professor Hohl is an internationally recognised academic specialising in criminology and criminal justice, with particular focus on how the criminal justice system responds to serious sexual offences and domestic abuse. Her leadership of the policing aspects of Operation Soteria was central to the new National Operating Model's roll out to all police forces in England and Wales, and her work directly with victims, the wider charitable sector, and frontline services, will be invaluable to unlocking the most challenging systemic issues that remain.

We look forward to Katrin's challenge and support in driving the Rape Review forward over the course of the next year.

This report details progress since our last update. Remaining transparent on the work we are delivering, the challenges that remain and the progress we have made is essential to this work.

# Police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS): What have we delivered and what are we doing next?

The Rape Review found that when engaging with the criminal justice system, many victims felt like they were the ones under investigation and that they were let down by the justice process. Investigation of rape must be no different any other crime, conducted along reasonable lines of enquiry and with a focus on the actions and behaviour of the suspect. For rape and sexual offences, this requires officers and prosecutors to work together and to challenge themselves to think differently about how they build a case from the outset and ensure they deploy all the tools and techniques available to them to disrupt perpetrators.

## Operation Soteria

The National Operating Models (NOM) for the investigation and prosecution of rape developed through Operation Soteria launched in July 2023 and represent a significant milestone in our journey to transform the criminal justice response. These models build on the police and CPS' 2021 Joint National Action Plan (JNAP) and reinforce the importance of strong partnership working between police and prosecutors at every stage of the process.

We are now focused on ensuring that these models are implemented and embedded as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and College of Policing have established a new **Operation Soteria Joint Unit** which is working with every police force in England and Wales to support them to successfully implement this new approach.

The Joint Soteria Unit has designed an implementation tool for forces which guides a multidisciplinary team of officers and police staff through a series of exercises based on the six pillars of Operation Soteria. All police forces are now using the findings from this tool to develop improvement plans, with support from the Joint Soteria Unit, including through a national event which took place in January.

The Joint Soteria Unit is also providing ongoing support to all forces, including regular learning events, peer-to-peer networking and support from regional practice advisers. Complementary to this, academics continue to utilise the evidence and data collected throughout Operation Soteria to support the Joint Soteria Unit in ensuring the academic foundations of the NOM are maintained.

As the Joint Unit drives forward the policing model, working closely with the CPS to ensure both models continue to be aligned, the CPS is moving in lockstep to embed their own NOM. The last six months has seen CPS release a collection of new products to support better practices amongst their RASSO teams, including new guidance on instructing RASSO Counsel, and joint guidance on Early Advice procedures, including how to work effectively and efficiently with policing colleagues. Additional products will continue to be added, implementing further consistency in good practice across the CPS.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, interim academic findings from the University of Warwick academic team led by Professor Vanessa Munro were published alongside the CPS model in July. The team continued to carry out further research into late 2023, including planned interviews with the Judiciary. The full report was delivered to the CPS at the end of 2023, and all findings and recommendations to the CPS model will be considered.

In the NOM, the CPS committed to improving its support to victims. This includes the provision of an Enhanced Service to adult victims of rape and serious sexual offences, as part of the delivery of a long-term Victim Transformation Programme. Due to be rolled out from spring, one part of this Enhanced Service for adult RASSO victims will be the offer of a meeting with a member of the prosecution team once a victim has been notified that their case is proceeding to trial. This offer will be a new right for victims as part of the new Victims' Code of Practice. The CPS will also introduce a dedicated Victim Liaison Officer in all RASSO Units to act as a single point of contact and help improve the overall quality of CPS engagement with victims.

### **Case study – Rape Victim Impact Assessments**

Operation Soteria academics identified that some police forces lacked the strategic support and planning required to embed good victim engagement practice into their local policies and procedures. Good practice was observed but was often dependent on individual officers rather than built into systems and policies.

Academics (Dr Ruth Friskney, Professor Clare McGlynn and Dr Kelly Johnson) developed a tool to support officers and police staff to review and consider how the introduction or revision of their force's policies and procedures may impact victims. The Rape Victim Impact Assessment Tool is based on the principles of procedural justice for victims of sexual violence (one the key principles of Operation Soteria). It draws on relevant legislation<sup>12</sup> to make sure victims' rights are appropriately protected by the police.

<sup>11</sup> Standardised processes for cases marked as Pending Response Further Investigation (PRFI), as well as reforms to CPS Area's direct communication channels with Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs), via dedicated mailboxes, are due to be distributed in the immediate next suite of documentation.

<sup>12</sup> Including the Victims' Code within the Equality Act 2010, the Human Rights Act 1998.

The tool provides:

- Officers an opportunity to identify and gather existing evidence, analyse the potential impact this change may have on victims, as well as a process for considering ways to mitigate any adverse consequences.
- Assistance for the police to provide a better service for victims, putting their rights and interests at the heart of the criminal justice system.
- Greater confidence for individual police officers that all policies have been designed with the rights and interests of victims of sexual offences in mind, including those from minoritised and marginalised groups.
- Opportunity for victims, stakeholders and the public to understand police decision-making, as the tool advises forces to publish and share their assessments with the local community to support transparency and accountability.

The tool is now available to all forces as part of the Operation Soteria National Operating Model, and its use is encouraged whenever forces create or review any policies, procedures or practices that could have an impact on the rights and interests of victims of sexual violence.

For example, if a force is considering a change to their call handling and response policies relating to a non-recent rape or sexual offence, the RVIA would help them decide whether it would be more appropriate for the policy to be that victims should be offered a scheduled appointment with a specialist officer first, rather than being assigned to a uniformed officer to attend during their shift.

Dr Ruth Friskney, Professor Clare McGlynn and Dr Kelly Johnson said: ‘The RVIA will help the police to embed the principles of procedural justice – dignity and respect, fairness, voice, safety and trustworthiness – which were developed as part of Operation Soteria. It also reflects findings in year one that there was a lack of strategic oversight and planning for policy development to ensure it carefully considered victims’ interests.’

Academics continue to work with police forces to explore how the tool is used in practice, how it integrates with existing arrangements for engaging with stakeholders and any necessary refinements to the tool to improve its value to forces and victims.

Detective Chief Superintendent Melissa Laremore, Operational Implementation Lead for the Soteria Joint Unit, said: “Supporting victims and their journey through the investigative process is at the heart of everything we do in the Soteria programme and this tool ensures we reach marginalised and minority groups. It is important that police decision making is understood by our stakeholders and for forces to be held to account.”

## CPS and Police Resourcing

The 2021 Rape Review was clear in how vital it is that police officers and prosecutors have the right capacity, capability and mindset to investigate rape cases effectively. This has been underlined through Operation Soteria's research, which highlighted the need to improve the learning and development for officers, ensuring they can continually build specialist knowledge about rape and sexual offending.

The police have recruited over 20,000 additional police officers through the Police Uplift Programme, taking us to the highest officer-numbers on record. The CPS has now also exceeded its resourcing commitment under the Rape Review; recruiting in excess of 194 full-time equivalent (FTE) specialist, trained staff into the RASSO workforce in the context of a difficult recruitment environment.

In addition, the College of Policing is working with Soteria academics to develop a suite of new learning and development products for officers at every rank and are on track to ensure 2,000 investigators complete specialist training by April 2024.

One such product is the Rape Investigative Skills Development Programme (RISDP), which was developed by the College and Soteria academics to provide new and experienced investigators with a refreshed learning programme based on the latest, academic informed evidence on sexual offending. RISDP is being used to support delivery of the 2,000 commitment while the existing Specialist Sexual Assault Investigator Development Programme (SSADIP) is being revised. SSADIP supports experienced investigators to become specialist sexual offence investigators and the revised course will be available to police forces in the Spring.

Speaking to this newly improved offer for police training, Professor Betsy Stanko OBE said:

“Operation Soteria introduced a new innovative way of working combining academic and police practitioner expertise to develop the National Operating Model. My ambition is that this expertise will combine with robust leadership across the criminal justice system to facilitate a sustained transformation in how police forces operate, in turn increasing trust and confidence in how they respond to these crimes.”

### Going Further:

The College of Policing has also developed a new learning programme tailored for those officers likely to make initial contact with victims of rape and sexual offences. This was made available to all first responders in September 2023 and will be compulsory for all new recruits from April 2024.

The programme's curriculum and products focus on helping ensure that officers consider the 'whole story' surrounding a rape or sexual offence, rather than looking at an incident in isolation. Officers are taught to look holistically at the relationship between the suspect and the victim, however brief, and to identify whether the victim may have been groomed or manipulated. Officers also learn about the different ways victims may respond to traumatic events, myths and misconceptions about rape, effective communication skills and how to best support victims. This enables officers who provide an initial response to victims of rape and sexual offences to have a greater understanding of offending behaviour and places victims at the centre of the investigation.

Speaking on the new learning programme, David Tucker, Head of Crime at the College of Policing, said:

"Sexual offences can have an incredibly traumatic impact on victims which is why it is essential that policing is able to provide the best possible support and understanding at every stage from the initial report to the conclusion of an investigation and beyond.

"By better understanding the psychology of offenders who commit these offences, the police can make sure the victim is at the centre of the investigation and the entirety of the context and the circumstances are considered so that offenders can be brought to justice for these very serious offences."

## Digital forensics technology and digital disclosure

In November 2022, we brought in legislation through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act to ensure that the police only request victims' phones when necessary and proportionate. This ends the practice of 'digital strip search' that may have deterred many victims from continuing their case, or from reporting in the first place.

Complementary to this, in 2021 we committed to no adult rape victim being left without a phone for more than 24 hours, with an ambition that victims have their own phones returned within this period, or replacement phones offered in the minority of cases where this is not possible. We remain on track to meet this commitment, with all 43 forces in England and Wales committing to compliance in advance of the ambition that all forces will comply by the end of Parliament. The majority of forces (over 80%) are already meeting the commitment and reporting this to the Home Office. This equates to 83% of recorded adult rape offences in the quarter between July and September 2023 (up from 67% the previous quarter).

To help forces in England and Wales meet this commitment, we equipped them with an additional 244 pieces of technical capability (complementing the 159 pieces previously provided in 2021–22) through a total investment of over £10m. The technical capability increases forces capacity to extract digital evidence at a time and place convenient to adult victims of rape. We are also training forces to ensure they can utilise these technical capabilities effectively.



The combination of these efforts means that the vast majority of mobile phones are now being returned to victims within 24 hours.

We want to ensure that we understand that the commitment is being met across England and Wales and can identify any patterns that are preventing forces from doing so at the earliest opportunity. To make sure we have the information we need we are exploring the possibility of making it mandatory for police forces to return data to the Home Office on how many phones belonging to adult victims of rape are held for over 24 hours.

## Third party material

The Rape Review found that police requests for victim information could often be unnecessary and disproportionate. Excessive requests cause unreasonable intrusion into victims' personal lives which can be distressing, and result in victims feeling like they are the one being investigated. This can also cause them to withdraw from investigations and exacerbate trauma.

As highlighted in the last Rape Review Progress Report, the Home Office completed a case file review of 139 rape investigations from eight police forces which included requests for material from third parties. The key findings reinforce previous research that requests are often not necessary or proportionate. The review found inconsistency across participating forces in the information that is shared with third parties and victims and demonstrated the need to change how police request third party material about victims.<sup>13</sup> The Government is bringing forward legislative measures introduced through the Victims and Prisoners Bill to help ensure police requests for third party material are necessary and proportionate. Once in force, these measures will:

- place a statutory duty on the police to only request victim information that is necessary and proportionate in pursuit of a reasonable line of enquiry;
- place a statutory duty on the police to provide full information to the victim whose information has been requested, including the material being sought, the reason why, and how the material will be used;
- place a statutory duty on the police to be clear in their requests to third parties about the information being sought, why, and how it will be used; and
- create a code of practice to accompany the new duties, adding clarity to the expectations on the police, and promoting consistency. The police will be required to pay due regard to this code when making requests.

When implemented, these measures will help protect victims from unnecessary invasions into their personal lives, giving them greater confidence to come forward to report sexual offences. The Government has published a draft code of practice alongside the Victims and Prisoners Bill, and will consult on this following the Bill's royal assent.<sup>14</sup> We will take into account feedback before publishing the final code.

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<sup>13</sup> We published the headline results in the July 2023 Rape Review Progress Update and are exploring options for sharing a more comprehensive report of the file review. A summary of the findings has also been presented to interested stakeholders.

<sup>14</sup> [Updates in the draft new Victims' Code - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/victims-and-prisoners-bill-draft-code-of-practice)

In advance of these legislative measures coming into force, we have worked closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council to design and implement a new interim form for the police when making requests for victim information. This voluntary form was introduced in October 2023 and is helping ensure requests made by police are specific to each case and aligned with the guidance and recommendations from the Attorney General's Office and the Information Commissioner's Office. The form is accompanied by a victim's information document which seeks to address questions victims may have about the request, informs them of their rights, and signposts them to additional support.

# Cross-system actions: What have we delivered and what are we doing next?

In the last Progress Report, we detailed the significant progress we had made to increase and improve the emotional and practical support available to victims at each stage of the criminal justice process. We introduced the Victims and Prisoners Bill to Parliament with key measures to improve the criminal justice process for victims, and we committed to recommission the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RASASF).

Over the last six months we have made further progress in supporting victims throughout the criminal justice process. This includes our continued delivery of the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line, launched in December 2022, providing crucial support to victims of rape and sexual abuse. Victims who contact the service can speak to a specially trained operator at any time of day or night. In its first year of delivery, the service has connected approximately 56,000 calls and 20,000 webchats.<sup>15</sup>

## **Case study: Frontline worker on the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line**

Maria works as an operator on the 24/7 Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Line. Speaking of her experience she said:

“When you join the 24/7 Support Line team, you complete an intensive 10 day training course, covering a range of topics like listening skills, rape myths, safeguarding, holding boundaries and managing anger. I learnt how to demonstrate empathy with my voice over the phone or webchat, to ensure survivors contacting the service feel listened to, believed, and not judged. The training left me with a solid understanding of power dynamics and the impacts of sexual violence and trauma. I also learnt a lot from the experiences and ideas shared by other people to see how it all worked in practice.

I’ve now been working on the service for about a year, and no one shift is the same! When I start a shift, I make sure my environment is comfortable and confidential, I also find that connecting with other team members makes me feel less isolated.

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<sup>15</sup> These figures do not equal the number of unique individuals.

The service is for anyone aged 16 and over who has experienced any form of sexual violence at any point in their lives; we support a vast range of people who've had different experiences, come from different backgrounds and often faced a wide range of additional challenges. Survivors contact us to talk about a variety of experiences: a recent rape, to understand if what they experienced was a form of sexual violence, to explore the self-blame they are struggling with or the impacts of trauma. Many survivors have experienced multiple incidents of sexual violence, and it is not unusual for us to be the first person they have spoken to about their experiences, sometimes many years later.

We acknowledge, validate and explore feelings, support the survivor to understand their reaction and responses both during and after their experiences of sexual violence, gently challenge rape myths and provide them with information about additional specialist support they can access.

Family and friends of survivors also get in touch and we support them in the same way. They are often looking for support for their loved ones, information on how they can 'say and do the right things' and to talk through their own feelings of powerlessness and devastation.

After a chat or call I write up my notes, get a drink, move my body or take a few minutes away from the screen. I may contact the manager team for a debrief, sometimes to discuss a safeguarding situation, sometimes just to talk about the call/chat and ask for feedback, and sometimes for some emotional support around a difficult call.

Self-care is vital to ensure I can support survivors effectively and empathetically. I get support from managers, clinical supervisors and through connecting with other operators, as well as using self-care techniques for myself such as grounding exercises."

## Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund

The Government is committed to ensuring that victims of rape and sexual abuse have access to quality support that is appropriate to their needs. Through this Government's manifesto in 2019, we committed to increased support for victims of rape and sexual abuse, including ensuring access to a broad range of support services to help them cope with and, as far as possible, recover from the effects of crime.

Since the last Progress Report we have recommissioned the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RASASF), which is providing £26 million over 20 months (August 2023 – March 2025) to more than 60 specialist victim support services. Funded activities provide holistic, trauma-informed, survivor-led support to victims who have experienced rape or sexual abuse at any point in their lives.

Duncan Craig from We are Survivors, an organisation that has received £746,843 of funding from the RASASF, said:

“The MOJ’s continued commitment to investing in supporting victims of sexual abuse, rape and sexual exploitation is extremely welcomed. The financial investment We Are Survivors has been able to access through the RASASF has enabled us to increase the hours available to those seeking counselling, increase the physical spaces where male survivors can access support and begin removing barriers, and increase our ISVA provision by 25% all to ensure no male survivor is left behind. We have also been able to begin to extend our support to the mothers, wives, fathers, and loved ones of male survivors and hope to grow this over the next few years.”

## Independent Sexual and Domestic Violence Advisors (ISVAs and IDVAs)

To further support victims, we made a commitment to increase the number of Independent Sexual Violence and Domestic Violence Advisors (ISVA/IDVAs) to over 1000 by 2024/25. We have now provided funding to PCCs to recruit 950 ISVA/IDVA posts, with the final 50 posts due to be funded in 2024/25. ISVAs provide vital, tailored support including emotional and practical support to victims, support before, during and after attending court, and act as a single point of contact for victims. It is therefore vital that we have enough ISVAs in post to provide this essential support to victims throughout the criminal justice process.

Additionally, with the support of several victim support organisations, the Ministry of Justice is drafting statutory guidance for ISVAs and IDVAs, which, subject to parliamentary approval and timings of the Victims and Prisoners Bill, will be publicly consulted against this year. The guidance will improve awareness of these roles, increase consistency of support and promote collaboration between those who support victims. Guidance will make clear the minimum standards that victims can expect from ISVAs and IDVAs, while retaining the vital flexibility needed within these roles to best meet the diverse and changing needs of victims. The guidance will focus on the role and functions of ISVAs and IDVAs, as well as how they support particular victim needs and work with other professionals.

### **Case study: Bolstering of ISVA Services in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough**

Survivors in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough have described the support they have received from the county’s ISVA service as ‘life saving’.

Peterborough Rape Crisis Care and Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre work tirelessly to make sure ISVAs are available to support victims throughout their journey through the criminal justice system, building strong, trusting relationships that ensure each victim is able to pursue the outcome they want for their personal circumstance. By working closely together, these services have transformed the support available to victims and survivors of rape and sexual violence, ensuring it is equitable wherever a victim may live.

Due to the phenomenal working relationships with Cambridgeshire Constabulary's Rape Investigation Team, officers will offer all victims reporting to the police a referral to the ISVA service and will personally ensure that referral goes in. A duty ISVA will contact the victim within 48 hours to make an initial assessment and allocate a member of the team. Every effort will be made to ensure the same ISVA supports the victim throughout their journey through the criminal justice system, building strong and trusting relationships.

The service has grown significantly since its inception, including both specialist child and adult posts and an outreach service to engage with seldom heard from communities. This growth allowed the ISVA team to support over 900 people in 2022/23 alone (671 adult survivors and 261 young people). Whilst not directly attributable to ISVAs alone, recent data on the CJS dashboard revealed that Cambridgeshire had the lowest percentage of investigations closed due to victim disengagement in the east of England between June 2022 and July 2023.

The professionalism and compassion of the expanded ISVA team has been praised time and time again by survivors in their feedback who describe it as 'life changing' to 'life saving'. One girl, who was 12 when her court case came around and a guilty verdict recorded for her abuser, said: I will never forget everything you have done for me. I can barely put into words how thankful I am that you cared for me through everything."

The service was commissioned by the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, two local authorities and NHS through a pooled budget arrangement in 2020, on a five-year contract.

# Courts: What have we delivered and what are we doing next?

Our commitment in the end-to-end Rape Review was to ensure that the inevitably difficult experience of attending court is managed with care and consideration of victims' needs.

Since then, we have made substantial progress in addressing these issues. Pre-recorded cross examination (section 28) was used by 139 victims in adult rape cases between April–June 2023, an increase of 31 on the previous quarter, sparing victims from retelling their story in the glare of a live trial. Our Specialist Sexual Violence Support project continues to develop in its three selected Crown Courts (Leeds; Newcastle; Snaresbrook), embedding the technological and facilities upgrades whilst going further to provide trauma informed training to court staff, and hiring case co-ordinators to improve case progression.

We remain determined to ensure that victims are at the heart of the legal process, and their needs and concerns are addressed. These measures implemented over the last six months, and upcoming measures continue to demonstrate this commitment.

However, this is set against a constantly challenging backdrop of the growing Crown Court caseload. In the last Progress Report, we reported that the outstanding caseload had shown signs of reducing and stood at 64,800 at the end of April 2023. However, more recently, there has been an increase in the number of people brought before the Crown Court which has exceeded the number of cases that have been completed. This has led to the outstanding caseload increasing for the past two quarters, standing at 66,600 at the end of September 2023.

## Ongoing work to support Crown Court recovery

Despite the increased number of cases coming before the Crown Court, judges disposed of more cases in July to September 2023 than at any point since the start of 2019, with disposals up 28% in July to September 2023 compared to the same time period last year. We remain committed to the reduction of the caseload in its totality and have introduced a raft of measures to achieve this aim. Measures include launching a recruitment campaign to recruit up to 1,000 judges across all jurisdictions, alongside funding over 100,000 sitting days last financial year and we are planning to deliver the same again this year to allow courts to work at full capacity for the third year in a row.

Similarly, we have extended the use of 24 Nightingale courtrooms beyond the end of March 2023 to provide additional capacity for all jurisdictions. The opening of 'super courtrooms' in Manchester and Loughborough have also freed up court capacity elsewhere, allowing up to an extra 250 criminal cases a year to be heard across England and Wales.

Furthermore, we continue to work closely with the Crown Court Improvement Group, a judicially led consultative body chaired by the Senior Presiding Judge and reporting to the Lady Chief Justice, which has been established with the purpose of improving overall performance of the Crown Court.

## Rollout of Section 28 pre-recorded cross examination

Putting dignity and care at the heart of how the criminal justice system treats victims is crucial, and that is why we decided to spare victims the trauma of giving evidence at a live trial. Section 28 pre-recorded cross examination is available to support victims and witnesses to give their best evidence by improving their experience and reducing the time between complaint and cross-examination.

Following the successful rollout of pre-recorded cross examination (section 28) to all Crown Courts, we are pleased to have seen an increase in the number of witnesses giving evidence via section 28. 184% more witnesses used section 28 to give evidence in adult rape cases between April to June 2023 than in the same quarter in 2022.

We continue to work closely with the judiciary, police and the CPS to identify and address issues with the operation of section 28 as well as its impact on the wider functioning of the courts. An impact analysis exploring if section 28 influences outcomes or impacts on the functioning of the courts will be completed by Summer 2024, for publication by December 2024. In the interim, to maximise the efficacy of this work, we are testing new technology for pre-recording witnesses' cross-examination in early adopter Crown Court sites, with some positive initial progress reported. A decision on wider rollout will be taken in due course.

We are aware that section 28 requires extra work from the legal counsel who work tirelessly on these cases. As a result, in October 2023 we announced an increase in fees to £1,000 for barristers involved in pre-recorded cross examinations, which came into effect on 16 November 2023. This will be paid on top of fees for attending court and ground rules hearings where a judge can consider any special measures for vulnerable victims and witnesses.

## Specialist Sexual Violence Support Project (SSVS)

Our SSVS project has delivered some significant measures aimed at improving the victim experience at our three participating courts; Leeds, Newcastle and Snaresbrook. These improvements have included facilities and technology upgrades, to ensure that special measures can be accommodated, and victims feel comfortable. We announced in the last Progress Report that we will offer the option to remotely observe a sentencing hearing by video link, for any adult rape victim who needs it, subject to the agreement of the judge. We are committed to going further to support victims at the Crown Court, and our next round of measures is aimed at further supporting rape victims, giving them the support they need to stay engaged in the process and get the justice they deserve:



## **Trauma-informed training for court staff**

We realise that providing trauma-informed training to court staff is essential to ensure that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to engage sensitively with victims. Court staff and intermediaries are not currently offered trauma-informed training as standard. The Ministry of Justice is rolling out a bespoke trauma-informed training course to staff at the three SSVS courts who interact with victims at the court stage. The training is intended to improve the victim experience at court by precipitating staff behaviour change and creating an environment where victims and witnesses feel safe and supported by all staff with whom they come into contact. The training should also help to create change that leads to court services and policies incorporating a trauma-informed approach. Following a full public procurement, the contract was awarded to social enterprise ICENA Ltd, and training will be rolled out at the three SSVS courts in March–May 2024, with refresher training four months later.

## **Case Coordinators**

We are introducing the Case Coordinator role as a 19-month proof-of-concept in the three SSVS courts, to improve adherence to the principles of Better Case Management and to progress cases from receipt in the Crown Court through to disposal, with particular focus on preparation for preliminary hearings and for trial. Case Coordinators will work with the CPS, defence, and other relevant parties to help ensure that timetables are kept, responsibilities and judicial orders are abided by, and parties are prepared for hearings and trial. During the proof-of-concept evidence will be gathered to assess whether having dedicated case progression resource increases the efficiency of the courts.

In August 2023, the then Lord Chief Justice and Senior Presiding Judge approved the use of authorised powers for Case Coordinators to exercise certain delegated judicial functions such as extending time limits (where this does not affect the trial), subject to the discretion of the local Resident Judge. This should reduce the out-of-court administrative work judges need to do, thereby freeing up judicial time to be used where it is most needed.

The Case Coordinators started in post in January 2024.

## **Additional facilities upgrade**

We acknowledge the need for the Crown Court to offer a comfortable, safe and supportive environment which recognises the unique needs of victims in cases of rape and serious sexual offences. Last year we completed an initial facilities uplift in all three SSVS courts, this included upgraded witness suites, furniture, and both routes around court and blinds in key areas that shield the victim from the defendant. We have now begun a second round of upgrades which include around £422,000 of measures to improve accessibility, victim comfort and privacy at court.

## **Best Practice in Communication for Crown Courts**

Alongside the facilities upgrades, we recognise how important it is for victims to receive clear, regular and consistent communications throughout their court journey. We have shared an initial best practice document with the three SSVS courts, and are considering how best to continue sharing learning and enhance the quality of communication and support offered to victims of sexual offences across these and all Crown Courts.

## **Childcare expenses**

It is crucial that victims are not prevented from attending court due to childcare issues. We have been working to improve awareness of the expenses to which RASSO victims are entitled when attending court, including childcare expenses. After extensive engagement, the CPS is updating guidance concerning expenses to make it more accessible and easier to understand, ensuring that victims are aware of their rights and able to claim entitlements. This should support their ability to engage with the CJS and ensure that victims are not penalised or face high costs to attend court. Once ready, Ministry of Justice and CPS will work with victims' organisations to raise awareness of the new guidance.

## **Remote observation of sentencing hearings**

We announced in the last Progress Report in July 2023 that we will be offering more adult rape victims at SSVS courts the option to remotely observe their attacker's sentencing hearing. We are working to finalise the process for each court and intend to roll out this offer across all the SSVS courts in early 2024.

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

In the Rape Review Action Plan, we set out our commitment to ensure that only evidence about the victim that is pertinent to the case is deployed at court and that a victim's credibility is not undermined by pre-conceptions or rape myths. That is why we asked the Law Commission examine the law, guidance, and practice in prosecutions of serious sexual offences. The Law Commission's review into the use of evidence in sexual offence prosecutions is now underway.

The consultation phase of the review closed in September 2023 and we expect the final report, including any recommendations for reform, to be published in Autumn 2024. We look forward to working closely with the Law Commission on their 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 January 2024	Status
August 2023: Publish the CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q1 2023 data (January–March 2023).	Complete – published 3 August.
November 2023: Publish CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q2 2023 data (April–June 2023).	Complete – published 2 November.
January 2024: Publish the fifth Rape Review Progress Report.	Complete.

### Key actions to December 2024:

Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024	
February 2024	Publish CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q3 2023 data (July–September 2023).
May 2024	Publish CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q4 2023 data (October–December 2023).
July 2024	Publish the sixth Rape Review Progress Report.
August 2024	Publish CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q1 2024 data (January–March 2024).
November 2024	Publish CJS Delivery Data Dashboard with Q2 2024 data (April–June 2024).
December 2024	Publish the seventh Rape Review Progress Report and the end of this Parliament (December 2024).

## Key lever 2: Expansion of victims' support

### Key priorities for the last 6 months:

Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024	Status
July 2023: Mobilisation discussions with successful grantees to the Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RASASF) competition.	Complete – The Ministry of Justice successfully ran an open grant competition to recommission the RASASF for the period 01 August 2023 – 31 March 2025. Successful grantees received award letters in May 2023, all grant recipients were invited to attend a kick off seminar in July 2023 with a focus on data with the intended aim to increase grantees understanding of why MoJ ask for data and how we use it.
August 2023: Commence new Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Fund.	Complete – The RASASF grants commenced on 1 August 2023 and will run until 31 March 2025, providing £26 million to over 60 specialist support services.
Ongoing: Continue the recruitment process for an additional 300 ISVAs and IDVAs to increase the number to over 1000 by 24/25.	On track – MoJ has provided funding to PCCs to recruit 950 ISVA/IDVA posts, with the final 50 posts due to be funded in 24/25.

### Key actions to December 2024:

Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024	
2024*	Consult on draft guidance on ISVAs and IDVAs.
2024*	Pass Victims and Prisoners Bill.
2024*	Assuming, and following Royal Assent of the Victims and Prisoners Bill, formally consult on Victims' Code of Practice and statutory guidance for local commissioners on the duty to collaborate.

\* Victims and Prisoners Bill milestones are subject to parliamentary approval and timings

## Key lever 3: Operation Soteria

### Key priorities for the last 6 months:

Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024	Status
July 2023: Continuation of CPS evaluation into the National Operating Model.	Complete – Evaluation framework of the impact of the CPS NOM has been agreed. This will be delivered through an insights process, work with HMCPSI and CPS internal Rape Programme governance.
July 2023: CPS Areas supported as they begin to implement their new National Operating Model for adult rape prosecutions.	Complete – CPS Areas being supported by the central CPS Change Team who have developed a robust national implementation plan to embed the Model. The plan provides a clear strategy for rollout, including milestones for implementation of individual Model elements. The CPS Change Team are working closely with individual CPS Areas to regularly assess implementation against the agreed milestones, providing additional support as required to help achieve successful implementation.
July 2023: Pathfinder and expansion <sup>16</sup> police forces continue receiving support as they implement their transformation plans and implement the NOM.	Ongoing – The Home Office, National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and College of Policing have established a Joint Unit (Joint Soteria Unit) to support all police forces in England and Wales to implement the NOM.
September 2023: Additional NOM products made available, building on the original suite of documents published in July 2023. Pathfinder and expansion forces to review and evolve existing transformation plans to enable delivery of the NOM.	Complete – The additional NOM products were made available to policing in September 2023. This included: investigative strategy guidance, disruption toolkits, pre-charge consultation guidance and guidance on handling digital materials.

<sup>16</sup> The five pathfinder police forces are: Avon and Somerset, the Metropolitan Police Service, Durham Constabulary, West Midlands Police and South Wales Police. These police forces participated in academic-led deep dives into their response to rape between January 2021 and July 2022. The 14 expansion forces are: North Wales, Gwent, Dyfed-Powys, Northumbria, Gloucestershire, Devon and Cornwall, Warwickshire, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Kent, Sussex, Hampshire, Wiltshire and Dorset. These police forces have been engaging with Operation Soteria since October 2022.

<b>Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024</b>	<b>Status</b>
September 2023: HMICFRS begin thematic inspection on forces' implementation of the NOM.	Complete – The inspection launched in September 2023. The first phase is mapping policing's response to, and preparedness to implement the NOM in the pathfinder and expansion forces that have already adopted Soteria. This will provide important insights into emerging benefits and challenges and help us ensure all police forces are receiving the right level of support.
October 2023: The Joint Soteria Unit issue the implementation tool to all police forces in England and Wales.	Complete – The Joint Soteria Unit provided all forces with an implementation tool and guidance in October. The tool has been designed to enable forces to effectively implement the NOM.
October 2023: Teams to drive forward progress established in the 24 forces who did not participate in the development of the NOM (sometimes known as adopter forces):	Complete – Forces are being supported by Regional Practice Advisers.
December 2023: The Joint Soteria Unit to begin scoping potential options for digital advancements that could be applied to the NOM to increase functionality and make it more user-friendly.	Complete – The Joint Soteria Unit have identified a delivery partner who is scoping options to improve the usability of the NOM for frontline officers.
December 2023: CPS receive full technical report from their independent academic team.	Complete – Following publication of the interim report in July, we received the full report at the end of 2023, following a final phase of data collection and interviews with the judiciary.
January 2024: Police forces to complete the Soteria implementation tool and to use their findings to develop improvement plans.	Complete – All 43 police forces across England and Wales submitted returns to the Operation Soteria Joint Unit at the beginning of January.
January 2024: The Joint Soteria Unit to host a training event for police forces, providing targeted support.	Complete – All 43 police forces across England and Wales attended the two-day event.

## Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
March 2024	The Soteria Joint Unit to complete scoping options for digital advancements to improve usability of the NOM for officers and confirm next steps.
April 2024	Publication of phase one of the HMICFRS thematic inspection of forces' implementation of the NOM.
September 2024	Three years of academic work on the policing aspects of Operation Soteria conclude. Forces transformation plans continually reviewed.



## 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 January 2024	Status
July 2023: Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Investigators Skills Development Programme (RISDP) made available to all police forces in England and Wales.	Complete – RISDP now available to all 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.	Complete – Following mandatory induction training for new RASSO prosecutors, in November 2023 the CPS launched a RASSO Refresher course which is mandatory for all prosecutors and managers undertaking RASSO work to attend, initially a year after induction, then every two years thereafter. Both training courses include updated material on misconceptions and assumptions in rape cases and the impact of trauma on memory. A separate specific course on the impact of trauma on memory is also mandated for all prosecutors joining a RASSO Unit.
July 2023: Increase the CPS RASSO workforce in the next financial year by 194 full time equivalent (representing a 44% increase in 22/23)	Complete – In August 2023, the CPS exceeded its commitment to uplift our RASSO workforce by 194 FTE.
September 2023: Introduction of a tailored sexual offences training programme for all first responders.	Complete – A sexual offences training course is now available to first responders in England and Wales.

## Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
April 2024	It becomes mandatory for all new police recruits to complete learning and development on responding to rape and sexual offences.
April 2024	2,000 investigators specially trained in sexual offences.
August 2024	Specialist Sexual Assault Investigator Development Programme (SSAIDP) to be made available to all police forces.

## 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 January 2024	Status
July 2023: First data return under the new Annual Data Requirement 722 on mobile phones.	Complete – 32 forces provided a quarter 1 response, 31 had useable data.
October 2023: Decision made on whether to make the ADR mandatory and start publishing data.	Off track. Decision to be made in Spring 2024 on whether to make it mandatory for police forces to provide data to the Home Office from Quarter 1 2024–25.
August 2023: Complete validation exercise of hardware for the second tech uplift to expedite the ability for forces to utilise it once deployed to them.	Complete – technical handbook for deployment updated.
September 2023: Complete deployment of hardware for the second tech uplift to support the forces that tell us they lack the technological capability to consistently turn around victim's devices within 24 hours at a time and location convenient to the victim.	Complete – 244 pieces of kit (161 laptops, 38 kiosks and 45 tablets) were with forces for deployment by 31 August 2023.
October 2023: Second data return under the ADR 722 on mobile phones, which will be subject to HO monitoring and subsequent actions as required.	Complete – 36 forces provided a useable data return.
December 2023: Conclude proof of concept testing for new technology interventions developed and enabled by the Police Digital Service.	Off track. The Digital Evidence Project will conclude proof of concept testing by the end of March 2024.
January 2024: Third data return under the ADR 722 on mobile phones, which will be subject to HO monitoring and subsequent actions as required.	Complete.

## Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
April 2024 (Quarterly)	Fourth data return under the ADR 722 on mobile phones, which will be subject to HO monitoring and subsequent actions as required.
July 2024 (Quarterly)	Fifth data return under the ADR 722 on mobile phones, which will be subject to HO monitoring and subsequent actions as required.
October 2024 (Quarterly)	Sixth data return under the ADR 722 on mobile phones, which will be subject to HO monitoring and subsequent actions as required.
December 2024	Add metric measuring progress on 24hr phone target to published dashboard, pending the decision on making the ADR mandatory for police forces to provide data to the Home Office from Quarter 1 2024–25 and following the first mandatory quarterly return in Summer 2024.

## Key lever 6: Improving victim experience in the Court

### Key priorities for the last 6 months:

<b>Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024</b>	<b>Status</b>
December 2023: Complete Section 28 Impact Analysis.	Off track: The scope of the analysis has been set and expert advice obtained on methodology. Phase 1 of the analysis has now begun, looking at the overall timeliness of cases and outcomes, including conviction and acquittal rates. The delay was due to the need to await the collection of data on sufficient completed cases. Both phases of the analysis are now due to be completed by Summer 2024, for publication by December 2024.
July 2023: Snaresbrook Digital Audio Visualisation Evolution (DAVE) installation complete.	Complete – Snaresbrook have completed audio-visual refits in their four SSVS dedicated court rooms. This means all nine rooms across the three SSVS courts have now received an audio-visual uplift.
July 2023: Launch of public procurement exercise to find a specialist trauma informed training supplier.	Complete – Public procurement for specialist trauma informed training has now been completed. The successful bidder has been informed and has signed the contract.
Autumn 2023: New Case Coordinators start in post.	Off track – now due early January 2024. While the commencement date was originally projected for mid-December 2023, the Project Board decided to defer the start date to January 2024 to accommodate notice periods and leave over Christmas and New Year.
Autumn 2023: Law Commission to begin analysis of responses to their public consultation on the use of evidence in sexual offence prosecutions.	On track – consultation closed in September 2023 and final report due Autumn 2024.

## Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
March – May 2024	Roll out trauma-informed training for court staff and those who interact with the victim at court at the three SSVS courts.
Summer 2024	Conduct qualitative research on perceptions around the implementation of enhanced SSVS measures.
March 2024	Update CPS legal guidance on tackling rape assumptions and misconceptions to be made available to counsel, in collaboration with Equally Ours.
Autumn 2024	Law Commission to publish their final report and recommendations following their public consultation and subsequent analysis of consultation responses.
Early 2024	Rollout remote observation in all three SSVS courts.
January 2024	Explore how best to establish a consistent process regarding the attendance of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors in court.
Winter 2024	Complete the second round of facilities upgrades.

## Key lever 7: Crown Court capacity

### Key priorities for the last 6 months:<sup>17</sup>

Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024	Status
Autumn 2023: Complete launch of recruitment exercises scheduled in Q1–Q2 of 2023/24 recruitment programme.	Complete – recruitment exercises launched.
Autumn 2023: Agree Judicial Recruitment Programme for 2024/25.	Complete – The Lord Chancellor and the Lady Chief Justice were asked to agree the Judicial Appointments Commission Recruitment Programme for 2024/25 in December 2023.
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 Lady Chief Justice to improve the Crown Court’s overall performance.	Ongoing – Since publishing an update on the group’s work in January alongside a progress report summarising the work of each attending organisation, a Better Case Management handbook, and listing advice for the judiciary, the Senior Presiding Judge has been embedding use of the handbook to further drive performance. CCIG continues to meet monthly to discuss and resolve key issues.
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.	Ongoing – Remote hearings continue to be deployed where appropriate and of benefit, to ensure the delivery of swift and fair justice. The use of remote hearings is subject to judiciary discretion and is dependent on individual case characteristics.
Ongoing: Continue to support HMCTS in the implementation of their flagship Court Reform programme, which aims to make our court processes more efficient.	Ongoing – We will 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.

<sup>17</sup> The July 2023 Rape Review progress update included court efficiency measures in the Judicial Review and Courts Act. As these measures focus on the Magistrates court they will no longer be included in the Rape Review Action Plan.

## Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
Early 2024	Consult on potential options for transition from system of 'local justice areas' to the implementation of a new, more flexible leadership and allocation system for the way cases are listed and magistrates are deployed in the magistrates' courts.
Summer – December 2024	Appointments from 2022/23 recruitment campaign to begin taking effect in Court.



## Key lever 8: Third party material

### Key priorities for the last 6 months:

<b>Rape Review action due to be delivered by January 2024</b>	<b>Status</b>
July 2023: Complete analysis of the case file review of third-party material and mobile phone requests conducted in eight police forces and create a summary of the findings.	Complete – full analysis undertaken.
October 2023: Work with the NPCC on new process and guidance for requesting TPM	Complete – launched in October 2023 and we will continue to work with the NPCC to amend the form to reflect future legislative changes.

### Key actions to December 2024:

<b>Rape Review actions due to be delivered by December 2024</b>	
2024*	Deliver legislation to ensure police requests for third party material are necessary and proportionate as part of the Victims and Prisoners Bill, including a new code of practice.
Spring 2024	Launch consultation on the draft code of practice for victim information requests.

\*Victims and Prisoners Bill milestones are subject to parliamentary approval and timings



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