



Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

12th November 2021

END TO END RAPE REVIEW AND SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

1. Introduction

1.1. As requested by the Police and Crime Panel, this paper provides an update on the End to End Rape Review published by the government in June 2021. It also sets out the actions taken by the Commissioner to support victims of sexual violence through commissioning services and the securing of additional national funding. The paper also provides an overview of the wider national landscape relating to sexual violence and violence against women and girls and the latest comparative data published by the National Rape Monitoring Group on rape offences (for England and Wales and for Devon and Cornwall)

2. The Government's End to End Rape Review (June 2021)

2.1. In June 2021 the government published its End to End Rape Review (the Review). The Review which commenced in March 2019 looked at evidence from across the criminal justice system: from reporting of offences to the police to the outcomes achieved in court. It highlighted that there had been a sharp decrease nationally in the number of prosecutions since 2016-17, that victims felt let down and unsupported by the process and that there was a need for significant changes to improve the investigation and prosecution process and the support provided to victims¹.

2.2. The Review committed the government to 'urgent, sustained change' with an initial ambition to return to 2016 levels. This includes rolling out a new approach to investigations, reducing the number of victims withdrawing from the process, increasing the volume of trials being heard, and putting more rapists behind bars. It sets out a range of actions, some of which are for government while others are for the police, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and wider partners. The full details of the action plan are set out in the Review (see footnote 1).

2.3. The government has committed to publishing an update every six months on progress in delivering the actions set out in the Review and the first update is expected in

¹ [End-to-End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978117/end-to-end-rape-review-report-on-findings-and-actions.pdf)



December 2021. They will also establish performance scorecards to monitor progress against key metrics, including timeliness, quality and victim engagement in each part of the system as well as implementation of the action plan set out in the Review. A monthly Criminal Justice Board Taskforce chaired by the Minister for Crime and Policing will oversee the actions in the Review and drive forward progress.

2.4. The Review has not occurred in a vacuum. There have been two national inspection reports published in the last four months which also set out a series of recommendations for the police and partners to improve their response to rape and serious sexual offences.

- Criminal Justice Joint Inspection of the Police and CPS response to rape (Phase One) was published in July 2021². That report set out a series of findings and recommendations to police forces and the CPS, many of which cover the areas for action identified in the End to End Rape Review. The Commissioner has published her response to that inspection which includes commentary from the Chief Constable regarding the actions he is taking to address the recommendations made by the joint inspectorate³.
- Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a report on their thematic inspection of the police response to Violence Against Women and Girls in September 2021⁴. The review was commissioned by the Home Secretary in March 2021 and sets out a series of findings and recommendations on a range of matters including the support given to victims during the process, investigative practices and multi agency working. The Commissioner will publish her response in November.

2.5. In addition to these inspections there has been a significant volume of activity in the national policy landscape over the past six months. This has included the publication of the government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy, the continued passage of the Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill through parliament and the forthcoming publication of a draft Victims Law for consultation. Also in January 2021 the National Police Chief's Council and the CPS published a 3 year National Action Plan to improve their response to rape and serious sexual offences. Improvements made under the Review may also be expected to support achievement of many of these wider recommendations/actions and vice versa.

National Rape Monitoring Group Performance Data

2.6. Since 2015/16 there has been a significant rise nationally in the number of rape offences that are reported to the police. This increase is not considered to represent

² [a joint thematic inspection of the police and crown prosecution service's response to rape – phase one: from report to police or cps decision to take no further action \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/cps/cps-reports/criminal-justice-joint-inspection-of-the-police-and-cps-response-to-rape-phase-one/)

³ [a joint thematic inspection of the police and crown prosecution service's response to rape phase one from report to police or cps decision to take no further action.pdf \(devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.devonandcornwall.s3.amazonaws.com/cps/cps-reports/criminal-justice-joint-inspection-of-the-police-and-cps-response-to-rape-phase-one-from-report-to-police-or-cps-decision-to-take-no-further-action.pdf)

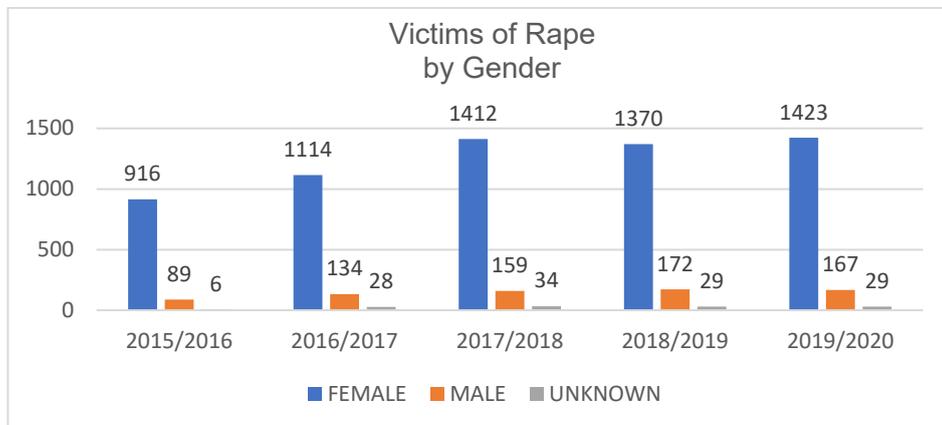
⁴ [police response to violence against women and girls – final inspection report - hmicfrs \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/reports-and-publications/police-response-to-violence-against-women-and-girls-final-inspection-report/)

a change in prevalence of these offences but a reflection of both increased reporting of offences as well as a significant increase in the reporting of historic offences. In Devon and Cornwall there were almost 600 more reported rape offences in 2019/20 compared to 2015/16.

2.7. The latest comparative data from the National Rape Monitoring Group (published by HMICFRS) on cross system performance covers the period to 31st March 2020⁵.

- Total reported rape offences per 100,000 population:
England and Wales – 56,061 (94.83 per 100,000 people in 2019/20)
Devon and Cornwall – 1618 (91.81 per 100,000 people in 2019/20)
- Cases in which there was a charged/summonsed outcome
England and Wales – 1.4% in 2019/20 from 13.69 in 2015/16
Devon and Cornwall – 1.55% in 2019/20 from 11.81 in 2015/16
- Cases referred to CPS for a charge which result in a charge being made
England and Wales – 45% in 2019/20 from 57% in 2015/16
Devon and Cornwall – 39% in 2019/20 from 53% in 2015/16
- Cases where a suspect is identified but the victim does not support prosecution
England and Wales – 28.68% of cases which are not progressed
Devon and Cornwall – 31.83% of cases which are not progressed

2.8 The below graph shows levels of recorded rape in Devon and Cornwall by gender.



The Commissioners response

2.9 I have been absolutely clear in all my statements on this matter that action by the police and CPS to improve the service provided to victims of rape is critical. The criminal justice system is not supporting victims of these horrific crimes properly and this cannot continue. Too few cases are moving forward to charge and prosecution and it is clear that many victims feel unsupported by the system that is there to help them and bring their attacker to justice. This is a local, regional and national problem and one where policing and criminal justice leaders must work together to deliver the changes that

⁵ [Rape Monitoring Group - HMICFRS \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/nrm/)

victims deserve. It is widely recognised that only a small proportion of rapes are reported to the police, with ONS estimating in 2021 that only around 20% are reported. Improvements must be made if we are to support those victims who have bravely come forward and encourage those who currently choose not to report to do so.

2.10 Within Devon and Cornwall Police the actions being undertaken to improve their response to sexual offences are led by the Assistant Chief Constable for Crime and Vulnerability who also has the wider organisational lead for the full range of activities and actions being taken with regards to Violence Against Women and Girls.

2.11 Devon and Cornwall Police had already begun working with partners and local services to improve the response it provides to all victims of rape and serious sexual offences. This has included the establishment of a Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) performance plan with CPS and significant work to build a prosecution team approach and to monitor and scrutinise performance. It has also included and the establishment in late 2020 of a new Strategic Safeguarding Improvement Hub to improve policy, practice and performance across Devon and Cornwall Police. There local joint action plan in place with the CPS includes actions to improve the quality and timeliness of investigations and improvements to the services and support provided to victims during investigation. Since the Review was published the south west forensics collaboration has also secured national funding to enhance its forensic investigation services for rape offences. This successful bid will enable the forensics team to deploy mobile digital examination units which will increase timeliness and reduce the need to take mobile devices away.

2.12 As Commissioner it is my responsibility to hold the Chief Constable to account for the progress that is being made. Locally, through both my work with the Chief Constable at the Policing and Crime Joint Executive and my role as Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board I will be closely monitoring the progress that is being made.

2.13 The Local Criminal Justice Board will play an important role in steering progress to improve the service to victims of rape and reverse the trends shown in the Review. The Board will also be examining rape and serious sexual offences in its scrutiny of how criminal justice agencies are delivering the Victims Code of Practice and the findings of that scrutiny will be published by my Office to aid transparency.

2.14 As part of my responsibilities for victims I already provide significant investment each year to support victims of sexual violence which are set out in more detail in section 3 of this report. My office is also fully engaged in a range of work with partners to improve the service provided to victims of sexual violence. This includes the Peninsula Wide Sexual Violence and Abuse Board where my office is working alongside local authorities, Devon and Cornwall Police and NHS England. One of the local projects that has been underway for some time is a 'digital walk through' of the criminal justice system for victims, which is also an action in the Review. My office has also just recently completed a ground-breaking piece of work with one of our Lived Experience Advisers

to create a guide for the media on ensuring trauma informed and respectful reporting on sexual offences which will be published in mid-November. Going forward I will be continuing to work closely with our partners, including our new Strategic Partner for Victims (Victim Support) and my own Lived Experience Advisor Scheme as well as the wider sector to further develop our support for victims.

2.15 Improving the supports for victims when crimes occur is critical but we must also have a relentless focus on preventing them from occurring in the first place. To do this we need to focus on perpetrators, on changing attitudes and on working with wider society to encourage and empower people to challenge behaviours. I have made tackling and preventing violence, with a particular focus on sexual violence and domestic abuse one of my key priorities in the new Police and Crime Plan 2021-2025 and will be working closely with partners right across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as well as with wider regional and national partners to deliver this.

2.16 I will also be continuing to work with local partners to make our public spaces safer through environmental measures, such as improvements to CCTV and street lighting supported by the Safer Streets Fund and to encourage the public to tell us about locations where they feel unsafe through the new pilot StreetSafe tool launched by the government in September. I am delighted that the bids submitted by Plymouth City Council and Cornwall Council with my office to the Safer Streets Fund (VAWG) in summer 2021 were successful. With £512,000 awarded for Plymouth and £33,000 in Falmouth to support investment in infrastructure and educational and behavioural change programmes this brings the total government funding provided in Devon and Cornwall under the Safer Streets Fund over the past two years to over £1.5M.

3. OPCC Commissioned Services for Victims of Sexual Violence

3.1 The Commissioner continues to fund a wide range of support services for victims which are set out annually in the PCC's Commissioning Intentions Plan.

3.2 While the Commissioner has continued to invest in support services there is significant demand and pressure continues to grow on services. Last year 2723 adults and 2034 children in Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly received support services through the Ministry of Justice's Victim Services Grant. The coronavirus pandemic has placed ever greater pressure on services, both in terms of impacts on their income but more significantly through the increasing trauma needs of the victims whom they are supporting due to court backlogs and wider delays. The Commissioner and the OPCC have continued to work with local partners to seek to alleviate those strains and to secure emergency funding from government to enable services to continue and adapt.

3.3 In 2021/22 a total of £2,127,935 is being invested in services to support victims of sexual violence within Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, this is an increase of almost £1 million on the previous year. This includes emergency COVID grants and

funding as well as funding from Ministry of Justice victims Services Grant as well as the Commissioners wider policing and crime budget.

Independent Sexual Violence Advocates and SARC Services

3.4 In 2018 the commissioning arrangements in this area changed, with NHS England assuming responsibility for the commissioning of Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) services, while the OPCC assumed the responsibility for the commissioning of ISVA services. Prior to this the funding of both services had been shared between the two organisations. The Commissioner continues to work closely with NHS England to jointly contract manage the ongoing delivery of both services.

3.5 A SARC is a special facility where victims of rape or sexual assault can receive immediate help. It can offer confidential medical, practical and emotional support to people who have been raped or sexually assaulted, including forensic medical examinations. The Devon and Cornwall policing area continues to have three SARCs, these are situated in Truro, Plymouth and Exeter.

3.6 Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) advocate on behalf of victims, providing help and support through the criminal justice system. They provide specialist dedicated support for victims and survivors and are able to liaise directly with the police and provide updates as well as supporting the individual throughout their criminal justice journey. The ISVA service within Devon and Cornwall is delivered by First Light and last year received 1,294 referrals, which was a 12% increase on the previous year. In 2021/22 additional funding from the Ministry of Justice has been secured to increase capacity within the service, with an additional 4 adult ISVAs (including one to support male victims and 1 to support victims with complex needs) as well as 4 children and young person ISVAs within Devon who are focused on non-intimate violence. These additional investments build on additional funding obtained over the previous year to expand the cohort of ISVAs within Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to provide specialist support to men and boys, people from the LGBTQ community and children.

Specialist Victim Support Services

3.7 The Commissioner funds a network of community therapeutic support services for adults and children who are survivors of sexual violence through the Ministry of Justice's Victim Services Grant. In 2021/22 over £550,000 has been invested in this network, including £142,834 in bespoke services for victims of child sexual abuse. In addition, emergency COVID funding of £106,172 has been secured from the Ministry of Justice this year to provide additional support to providers. The network of organisations supported by this funding includes Devon Rape Crisis, CLEAR, The Women's Centre Cornwall, the Children's Society and Operation Emotion which provides support for male victims of sexual violence.

3.8 The funding provided annually by the Commissioner to Community Safety Partnerships

(CSPs) also directly supports victims of sexual violence and this year over £650,000 of that funding has been directed to sexual violence support services.

3.9 As the Panel is aware in April 2021 the Commissioner entered into a new 10 year strategic partnership with Victim Support who will deliver victims services across Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. Under this innovative partnership Victim Support will commission and manage support services for both sexual violence and domestic violence from April 2022 and the team are working closely with the OPCC and the sector to put in a place a broad package of support for the coming years.

3.10 Victims can sometimes have to wait long periods of time to access therapeutic services due to high levels of demand. Last year there was an average of 409 people waiting for therapy as a result of rape or sexual abuse and a median wait time of 114 days. Recognising the impact that these waits can have on victims the Commissioner has allocated an additional £200,000 this year to support a new project developed with partners across the peninsula. 'Operation No Waiting' was launched in October 2021 and its objective is the eradication of waiting lists for therapeutic services for victims of childhood and adult sexual violence and improving the ongoing availability of therapeutic services for individuals who need it. The project includes a range of operational activities including the sharing of best practice on how to reduce waiting times for therapy and the prototyping of new support approaches that help reduce the problem of waiting lists (self help tools, group support, peer support etc).

Other support services and initiatives

3.11 *Pathfinder Project:* The OPCC have also been working with partners locally to support their application to the NHS England and NHS Improvement 'Pathfinder' Programme which will provide enhanced trauma-informed mental health support for sexual abuse victims and survivors with the most complex needs. Devon and Cornwall have been successful in that application and have been awarded £1M over the next three years to improve the pathway of adult survivors of sexual violence into mental health support services.

4. Wider National Policy Landscape

- HM Government's Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. In July 2021 the government published its Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy. This followed a re-opening of the government's Call for Evidence in the aftermath of the tragic murder of Sarah Everard in March 2021. The Strategy set out a range of actions already being taken and further actions which were needed. The Strategy is focused on: prioritising prevention; supporting victims; pursuing perpetrators; and strengthening the system. A new National VAWG Taskforce will oversee progress, supported by a National Policing Lead for VAWG and chaired by the Home Secretary.

- Beating Crime Plan. In July 2021 the government published its Beating Crime Plan which sets out its national priorities for policing which includes a focus on tackling serious violence and on sexual violence and wider hidden harms.
- New Victims Law. The government has stated its intention to consult this year on the content of a new Victims Law. It will consult on proposals for placing the new Victims Code of Practice 2021 on a statutory footing – further enshrining the twelve victim rights set out in the code. It will also seek views on the provision of community based services for victims of sexual offences and domestic violence as well as proposals to establish a statutory requirement and framework for ISVA services.
- Policing, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. The Bill is currently being debated in the House of Lords and is expected to receive Royal Assent in early 2022. It contains a number of provisions related to sexual violence, including higher sentences for certain offences, new rules on digital investigation and a duty to prevent serious violence.
- Home Affairs Select Committee. The Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the investigation and prosecution of rape which launched in April 2021⁶.
- NPCC/CPS Joint Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Action Plan⁷. Published in January 2021 the 3 year national plan sets out how the police and the CPS will work together to improve their joint response. It sets out five areas of action: supporting victims, improving casework quality/progression; enhancing digital capability and disclosure; staff training/development; and stakeholder engagement and transparency.

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Report prepared on 29th October 2021

⁶ [Investigation and prosecution of rape - Committees - UK Parliament](#)

⁷ [Police-CPS Joint National RASSO \(Rape and Serious Sexual Offences\) Action Plan 2021 | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)