

## Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations (August 2024)

Report: [Operation Soteria](#)

**Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

We welcome the HMICFRS inspection report and its detailed examination of the progress made towards implementing a national operating model for investigating rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO). The report underscores both the significant challenges faced by police forces across the country and the steps already taken to improve how these investigations are conducted.

Tackling rape and serious sexual offences requires a consistent and effective national approach to ensure that victims are supported, investigations are thorough, and justice is served. We are encouraged by the recognition in the report that many forces are committed to improving their processes, with several positive initiatives already underway. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight we have been an early adopter of the Soteria national operating model (NOM) implementing practice change since November 2023 with the CPS, Police and ISVA protocol which provides victims and partners with clarity around roles and responsibilities while prioritising support through ISVAs. Over the summer we developed a new RASSO force policy and procedure which reflects the Soteria investigators journey, the importance of the NOM and links into the Angiolini recommendations.

### Key Observations:

- Progress Made:** The report acknowledges that some forces have begun implementing specialist teams and improving training for officers dealing with these sensitive cases. The development of specialized units, alongside enhanced multi-agency cooperation, has contributed to more focused investigations.
- Challenges:** However, the report also highlights a need for greater consistency across police forces. Variability in the quality of investigations and victim support undermines public confidence. We agree that more must be done to standardize practices and implement a cohesive national operating model that all forces can follow.
- Support for Victims:** A victim-centred approach is at the heart of these investigations. The report makes clear that more needs to be done to reduce delays and improve communication with victims, ensuring they feel supported throughout the investigative process. The emotional and psychological impact of these crimes means that victim care must be prioritized.
- Data and Accountability:** The report emphasizes the need for better use of data and performance metrics to monitor progress. We fully support the call for greater transparency and accountability, which will help drive improvements and ensure that forces remain committed to this vital work.

### Looking Ahead:

We are committed to working with HMICFRS, partner agencies, and all police forces to ensure that the recommendations are implemented fully and effectively. The introduction of a standardized NOM will help drive better outcomes for victims and ensure that those who commit these heinous crimes are brought to justice. We look forward to continuing our efforts to improve and build public confidence in how these sensitive and complex cases are investigated.

It is essential that we work together as a collective—police forces, government agencies, and support organisations—to ensure that rape and other serious sexual offences are treated with the seriousness and urgency they deserve. The well-being of victims and the delivery of justice must always remain our top priorities. As identified in the report *“Soteria is a major opportunity for the criminal justice system to finally give victims the service they deserve.”* As Police and Crime Commissioner I am committed to supporting victims of these heinous crimes and as such I have commissioned the combined Frankie Worker Service and all-age Sexual Crime Therapeutic Service across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight which began on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and will continue to March 2029 with funding of up to £4,794,482 over this period.

**Donna Jones**  
**Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

### **Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary**

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary (HIOWC) have been proactively delivering on the six pillars of Operation Soteria and we echo the findings of the HMICFRS progress report that this is an unprecedented national programme making significant changes to the police response to rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO).

HIOWC have RASSO as a clear strategic priority which is underpinned by a well-established governance structure with clear reporting lines into the Force Change Board and the Violence Against Women and Girls steering group overseen by the relevant Assistant Chief Constable.

We recognise that we are on a journey of continuous improvement and our ongoing work within each of the Operation Soteria pillars will ensure that the five out of the fourteen recommendations allocated to us from this progress report will be included and delivered within the HIOWC Soteria transformation plan, with support of a Project Manager under the direction of the RASSO Strategic Lead.

As a part of our ongoing work we have been committed to ongoing liaison and consultation with the Home Office and locally with key partners to deliver against each of the six pillars within Operation Soteria. Partner agencies include commissioned independent sexual violence abuse charities and other criminal justice agencies including the Crown Prosecution Service.

HIOWC has furthermore completed ongoing internal scrutiny and self-assessment, supported by national guidance and tracked through the Operation Soteria structures. This approach has enabled us to ensure continuous improvement in our delivery of the national operating model and against each of the pillars in terms of delivery, practice and performance. Thus far we have seen some significant areas of improvement including, for example, improving relationships with the Crown Prosecution Service to enable effective use of early investigative advice, in this area of work HIOWC and CPS Wessex was recommended to other forces for best practice.

We are also making strong progress in ensuring that our people have the right skills and specialist training to thoroughly investigate RASSO and that their approach remains victim centred and uses the voice of the victim to ensure we are learning from their lived experience.

Other areas of improvement include re-development of Force Policy and Procedure to enhance our approach to identifying and disrupting serial and repeat offenders and ensuring that we utilise the techniques available to us to effectively safeguard victims including use of protective orders.

HIOWC remain committed to working with local and national partners to support the effective delivery of the new national operating model (NOM) and its strategic aims including; increasing criminal justice outcomes for all victims, ensuring procedural justice for both victims and suspects and the reduction and prevention of rape and serious sexual offences whilst ensuring these aims are also embedded within our own force priorities; putting victims first, relentless pursuit of criminals and exceptional local policing.

**Sam De Reya**  
**Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

**Recommendations:**

Recommendation 3: By 31 January 2025, all forces should make sure personnel working on rape and other serious sexual offences receive College of Policing approved training on the investigation of word-on-word cases.

OPCC response: I will seek assurances from my Chief Constable that all personnel working on rape and other serious sexual offences have received the College of Policing approved training on the investigation of word-on-word cases.

Recommendation 5: By 31 July 2025, chief constables should make sure their forces use the new definition of repeat rape and other serious sexual offences suspects to identify and manage them.

OPCC response: I will seek assurances from my Chief Constable that Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary uses the new definition of repeat rape and other serious sexual offences suspects to identify and manage them by 31 July 2025.

Recommendation 7: By 31 January 2025, all chief constables should make sure their forces prioritise identifying and disrupting rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO) suspects. This includes making sure that:

- All forces track, manage and respond effectively to breaches of bail and protection orders in RASSO cases; and
- All relevant personnel complete National Operating Model training on using criminal and civil orders to tackle RASSO.

OPCC response: In my scrutiny role as PCC, I will ensure my Chief Constable prioritises identifying and disrupting rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO) suspects.

Recommendation 9: By 31 January 2025, chief constables should make sure their forces have good processes in place for applying to retain DNA and fingerprints to improve their use of section 63G of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

OPCC response: I will seek assurances from my Chief Constable that the force has good processes in place for applying to retain DNA and fingerprints to improve their use of section 63G of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

Recommendation 11: By 31 March 2025, all chief constables should make sure that, as part of adopting the National Operating Model, their forces:

- develop a rape and other serious sexual offences problem profile;
- include the National Operating Model flight deck within their strategic performance monitoring; and
- adopt any key performance indicators that are agreed and published by the Soteria Joint Unit.

OPCC response: Through my oversight and scrutiny responsibilities I will work with my Chief Constable to ensure the force have adopted all relevant aspects of the NOM by 31 march 2025.