



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
For Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland

Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Police and Crime Panel for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland

13 December 2023

Ensuring that Leicestershire Police are delivering for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland in implementation of Operation Soteria to develop new national operating models for the investigation and prosecution of adult rape.

Report Date	13 th December 2023
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Security Classification	OFFICIAL

Purpose of Report

1. In his role the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) the Commissioner is required to secure efficient and effective policing for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and contribute to national and international policing capabilities set out by the Home Secretary.
2. The PCC brings this report to outline for the Police and Crime Panel how he is fulfilling his duty by holding the Chief Constable to account in relation to how the new national operating model for the investigation and prosecution of adult rape are being implemented across the Force area.

Request of the Panel

3. In their role to scrutinise the PCC, the Commissioner requests that the panel examines the contents of this report. He would specifically like to ask the panel their opinion on the following questions;
 - a. Is the Panel content in the way that the PCC has held the Chief Constable to account on this important subject?
 - b. Would the panel like to make any recommendations to the PCC in relation to this matter?

Summary

4. It is the opinion of the PCC that the Chief Constable is leading the Force well in relation to the implementation of Op Soteria and that the Force is significantly ahead of schedule for implementation.
5. The PCC has formed this opinion after requesting a formal report through the Corporate Governance Board and being presented with an update on timelines for implementation from the Force. It is anticipated that the revised operating model will be implemented ahead of the national milestones.
6. In the recent public consultation commissioned by the PCC, the results highlighted that female residents are four times more likely to be 'fearful' or 'worried' about being raped than male residents. As such the PCC is pleased that the Force are progressing the implementation of the operating model with haste and will be providing an enhanced service to victims of rape as early as the end of this year.

Background, Relevant Data and Trends

7. Op Soteria-Bluestone is a Home Office funded research and change programme launched in June 2021 to improve the way the Police and other criminal justice partners investigate and prosecute rape offences with a target of doubling the number of adult rape prosecutions before the end of this parliament.
8. This has been rolled out nationally with a RASSO (rape and serious sexual offences) national operating model in July 2023. The operating model is underpinned by key aims and principles which the Force has adopted. Each Force is expected to have implemented the operating model by June 2024.
9. In July 2023, the Leicester Police executive board approved a programme of change in response to a review of Leicestershire police's RASSO (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) response in October 2022 in which strengths, weaknesses and key improvements were identified. The new programme of change was implemented with the expected outcomes;
 - a. to improve the experience of victims
 - b. raise confidence in reporting
 - c. change the investigation policy of Leicestershire Police so that all adult rape offences are dealt within an Adult Serious Crime team,
 - d. ensure that appropriate training and welfare is in place for all staff dealing with serious sexual offences,
 - e. implement new processes within Signal to support victims and identify offenders, and
 - f. review and implement and suitable supervision structure within Signal to meet current and future demand in line with the Op Soteria model
10. The programme will see an uplift of PCs into the Forces Signal team to manage the initial response to reported incidents of rape. This will build consistency and expertise into the response to victims and provide continuity of contact with an identified officer to reassure the victim.
11. Approximately 34% of victims do not support investigations at the outset, 27% initially engage then withdraw their support and 39% maintain engagement throughout the journey of the investigation and prosecution. It is intended that through better and consistent victim care, the number of victims staying engaged or engaging at the outset will increase significantly. To this effect, there will also be an uplift of Inspector and Sergeant ranks. This will promote officer wellbeing and prevent fatigue and also increase engagement with reluctant victims by utilising specialist support agencies (for example the SARC) to build the Victims confidence in the investigation process.

12. Alongside the work of the Force in relation to the implementation of the national model, the PCC commissioned the Ethics and Transparency panel to scrutinise the cases of rape in which the Victim doesn't support the investigations (outcome 16) – this has appeared to increase over recent years. This included dip sampling a significant proportion of rape offences and picking out key themes in the cases, a summary of findings from the panel is shown below:
- a. In 24% of cases reviewed, victims often stated the reasoning behind their disengagement was fear of repercussions or reprisal from supporting an investigation of rape.
 - b. In 55% of domestic incidents, the victim refuses to support police action.
 - c. In all third-party reports (16% of sampled cases) – victims always refused to engage with the Police directly & never supported an investigation from the start.
 - d. In underage rape offence cases, 90% of victims never supported an investigation.
13. The panel also scrutinised the policy document for Outcome 16s – the full minutes of the meeting can be found on the OPCC website.
14. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner also provides funding to a range of victim's services across LLR. These include but are not limited to – Victim First, New Dawn New Day, Living Without Abuse, Freeva, SARC (Sexual assault referral centres), Leicester Rape Crisis, Women's Aid Leicestershire and The Zinthiya Trust.
15. The PCC hopes that the Police and Crime Panel can see that the action of both the Force and the OPCC have been challenged and supported to deliver for the residents of LLR in this area.
16. The PCC would welcome bringing a short update report to the March Panel on this important matter.

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