

# About the national operating model

The national operating model for investigating rape and serious sexual offences is designed to support investigations that are victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led.

First published 10 July 2023

## Introduction

Building on the [theoretical framework](#) and learning from [Project Bluestone](#) and [Operation Soteria Bluestone](#), the model serves as a crucial initiative to transform the police approach to investigating rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO).

Over three years, the collaboration brought leading academics together with senior police officers of all ranks, in consultation with the victim-support sector, to address the shortcomings and improve the justice outcomes in RASSO cases.

- [Read the year one report](#)

### Video Transcript

Rape is a crime that shatters lives, leaving a profound impact on its victims and those who love them, and those who support them. It is one of the most difficult crimes for the police to address and through this work we recognise that we haven't always got our approach right.

Over the last two years, Operation Soteria Bluestone has brought police forces together with academics to develop a new National Operating Model for the investigation of Rape and Serious Sexual Offences.

Our aim is nothing short of transforming the police response to victims and to perpetrators. We feel this approach will improve investigations across the board, resulting in increasing the number of cases referred for charging by the CPS.

Through this landmark collaboration between police and leading academics, we have uncovered significant flaws in our current approach. It hasn't been easy to confront these issues but it is an essential step towards achieving our goal of comprehensive and transformative change.

The new National Operating Model for Investigating Rape and Serious Sexual Assault is now ready for Investigating Officers to see, to learn and – critically – to use when dealing with a Rape or a Serious Sexual Assault Case.

But our work doesn't stop there.

Beyond individual officers using this model, we will be working with forces across the country to support the embedding and the evolution of the new approach in the coming year.

Everyone in policing recognises that we must do better on this, and this programme has been met with a genuine willingness and openness to change.

The new National Operating Model will turn the research that we've gathered throughout the programme so far into tangible action to turn the tables on perpetrators, improve victims' experience and secure more convictions.

This is a critical opportunity to transform the way the police respond, and investigate, rape and serious sexual offence cases and to give the victims their best chance of securing justice.

## Why a new approach to investigating RASSO is needed

Over recent years, there has been an open recognition of failures and poor justice outcomes for victims of sexual offences.

The Government's [End-to-End Rape Review Report on Findings and Actions](#) highlighted these issues and led to a commitment from the Home Office to support the development of a new national operating model for the investigation of rape.

This new approach to investigating RASSO is an essential first step to significantly and sustainably improve how the police investigate rape and engage with rape victims.

## Aims and objectives of the national operating model

There are three aims and seven principles. Each principle details specific objectives and key performance indicators for forces to measure their performance against.

- [Read the aims and objectives](#)

## Rollout across England and Wales

The ambition is that all police forces in England and Wales will adopt the national operating model, with appropriate training, guidance and ongoing collaboration between forces and academic experts.

Throughout its development, pathfinder forces have played a pivotal role in testing and refining the model during the initial stages. The insights and experiences gained from these forces, as well as Avon and Somerset Police – where the original Project Bluestone originated – have all contributed to the creation of the national operating model.

- [Find out more about how forces can and should implement the model in their area](#)

The Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) are establishing a Joint Soteria Unit, supported by the College of Policing. The NPCC component will be hosted in their violence against women and girls taskforce. This will ensure Operation Soteria and the implementation of the national operating model is firmly set within the broader national effort to tackle crimes which disproportionately impact women and girls.

## Our approach to terminology

We have taken advice throughout the research and development of the national operating model to ensure we define and use wording around victims and protected characteristics using existing English and Welsh law.

The European Convention on Human Rights, the Human Rights Act, the Equality Act and the Victims' Code of Practice have served as our framework.

## Read more about our approach

- [Note on terminology \(pdf\) 161.5 KB](#)

## Additional resources for police officers and policing staff

- [Find further national operating model materials on Knowledge Hub \(you will need need to log in\)](#)

## Tags

Rape and sexual offences