

# Rape and serious sexual assault investigation strategy

A three-part strategy for rape and serious sexual assault investigation, known as Project Eleos.

First published

20 October 2023

## Key details

<b>Does it work?</b>	Promising
<b>Focus</b>	Prevention Reoffending
<b>Topic</b>	Crime prevention Intelligence and investigation Violence against women and girls Vulnerability and safeguarding
<b>Organisation</b>	<a href="#">Cambridgeshire Constabulary</a>
<b>Contact</b>	John Massey
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:john.massey@cambs.pnn.police.uk">john.massey@cambs.pnn.police.uk</a>
<b>Region</b>	Eastern
<b>Partners</b>	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
<b>Stage of practice</b>	The practice is implemented.
<b>Start date</b>	December 2021

## Key details

<b>Scale of initiative</b>	Local
<b>Target group</b>	Adults Children and young people Communities General public Offenders Victims

## Aim

The aim of this initiative is to:

- reduce harm by identifying and prosecuting offenders
- reduce reoffending
- increase public and victim confidence in the investigative process

## Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are:

- increased charging rates
- reduced attrition in the investigative process
- increased victim satisfaction – which will be mapped from victim feedback

## Description

Project Eleos is part of a commitment made by Cambridgeshire Constabulary to improve outcomes for survivors of rape and serious sexual assault.

It involves a threefold tactical response led by the force Rape Investigation Team (RIT).

The three interventions are:

1. the recruitment of Eleos investigation and research support officers
2. the deployment of uniform teams to address outstanding offenders
3. engagement with the Tackling Organised Exploitation Programme (ToEX)

## **Recruitment of investigation and research support officers**

These research officers provide investigative support for the RIT. The research officers help ensure the police are equipped for:

- researching suspects
- finding clear patterns of high-harm behaviour
- identifying evidential opportunities
- supporting preventative orders

Four research support officer posts have been created. (Three are sixteen-month fixed-term contracts and one is a full-time post.) The funding for these posts came from COVID-19 budget underspend.

## **Deployment of uniform teams to address outstanding offenders**

Outstanding offenders are offenders named as a suspect for a crime and where the threshold for arrest has been met, but who have not yet been detained.

Uniform teams are deployed as an additional resource to support the RIT. This process involves high-vis patrols in Cambridge city centre over a series of nights to address fear and intimidation within the night-time economy (NTE). The patrols are coordinated by a RIT detective inspector.

The arrest teams have completed 362 tasks on 127 separate investigations. This includes arrests, evidence gathering and statement taking not required by a specialist detective.

The uniform officers are directly supervised by a detective sergeant who is responsible for reviewing the tasks set and briefing the officers accordingly. The detective sergeant ensures the task is fully understood and suitable for a non-specialist officer. The officers who undertake the overtime are volunteers and normally undertake the work on their scheduled rest days.

## Engagement with the ToEX

This collaboration has enabled the RIT to obtain data and analytical products around high-harm offenders and produce independent force analysis. Two new products have been created:

- a key offender violence against women and girls (VAWG) dashboard
- a high-risk victim dashboard

Each month, each department:

- reviews the data
- identifies nominals who are considered high-harm in terms of VAWG (among others)
- develops a tactical plan

A local policing level tactical meeting is held. Here, agreement is reached on whether the risk can be managed by local policing input, or whether a formal request for additional resources from across the organisation is required at the formal force level tactical tasking and coordination group (TTCG).

## Evaluation

A two-fold evaluation is currently being conducted by the force.

1. The vulnerability performance group tracks key metrics of the RIT outputs and outcomes. This is overseen through the protecting vulnerable people senior leadership team performance mechanism. Key metrics include:

- charging rates
- volumes of arrests
- outstanding suspects
- geographic and demographic trends

2. A bespoke [victim feedback panel](#) seeks the views and experiences of rape victims at an early stage. The panel seeks to actively improve investigative performance.

## Overall impact

A positive impact has been observed through the following.

- A significant reduction in outstanding offenders – there was a 59% decrease in outstanding RIT suspects between August 2022 and March 2023.
- A clear dashboard of high-harm and high-risk offenders has been created
- A notable increase in prosecution possible outcomes – rising from an average of 3% to 6% in six months.
- Through use of the dedicated arrest teams, the number of outstanding suspects on rape crimes has fallen from 20% to 5%. This has been sustained, positively managing risk and community safety.

## Learning

Key learning has been around the value of a threefold tactical approach. The force has found this approach has:

- mobilised different groups of officers
- brought different groups together to generate a greater momentum behind the purpose of the activity
- broadly reinforced the message of VAWG across a wider scope of officers within a specific operational set of circumstances
- encouraged collaborative working – for example, police staff researchers are working alongside analysts, detective constables and uniform officers
- helped ensure that Project Eleos is imprinted in the force's operational memory – the results of Project Eleos can then be used to drive further elements of the VAWG strategy more effectively

The force has also found that the same officers typically apply for overtime when it is offered. This has led to these officers becoming more skilled in the role, and then also being able to transfer these skills when undertaking their normal day-to-day work. Project Eleos therefore impacts on a broader organisational level than just the dedicated RIT.

## Copyright

The copyright in this shared practice example is not owned or managed by the College of Policing and is therefore not available for re-use under the terms of the Non-Commercial College Licence.

You will need to seek permission from the copyright owner to reproduce their works.

## Legal Disclaimer

Disclaimer: The views, information or opinions expressed in this shared practice example are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or views of the College of Policing or the organisations involved.