

**‘A JOINT THEMATIC INSPECTION OF THE POLICE AND CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE’S  
RESPONSE TO RAPE – PHASE TWO: POST-CHARGE’ A CRIMINAL JUSTICE JOINT INSPECTION  
PUBLISHED ON 25TH FEBRUARY 2022  
AVON & SOMERSET PCC RESPONSE DATED 22ND APRIL 2022**

Rape is second only to homicide when considering the severity of the crime. The trauma of the offence can last a lifetime and have a devastating psychological impact. This is an offence that disproportionately affects women and girls and a significant proportion of rape victims are victims of domestic abuse.

Given the severity of the offence it is wholly unacceptable that, nationally, only 1.3% of rapes reported to the police result in a suspect being charged/summonsed to court. The length of time rape cases take are also too long. This report highlights the average time between a victim reporting to police and the start of a trial is almost two years. The research has also found that the whole process can re-traumatise victims.

The current system is failing victims and leaving dangerous offenders in the community; justice is not being done. I welcome the recommendations, of which there are three for local police forces.

**Recommendation 1**

Immediately, police and prosecutors should review and significantly improve communications with victims from the point of charge onwards.

**Recommendation 8**

Immediately, the police and the CPS should work collaboratively to ensure that bad character is considered in all rape cases, and progressed wherever it is applicable.

**Recommendation 9**

Immediately, forces should make sure that victims of rape are given the opportunity to make a victim personal statement (VPS) at the earliest possible time, with the option of updating this statement closer to the court trial date.

There are a couple of very important aspects of this work that should be explained first:

- [Project Bluestone](#) – the Avon and Somerset Police response to Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO). This was developed in partnership with leading academics and in consultation with partners across the criminal justice system, as well as victim services. This is a transformative pathfinder approach being rolled out nationally through Operation Soteria.
- [Independent Sexual Violence Advisors \(ISVAs\)](#) – provide specialist, tailored support to people who have been victims rape and sexual assault. They provide ongoing continuity, advocacy and impartial advice and information to victims. They are fundamental to properly supporting these victims.

In response to these recommendations I can confirm the below.

#### Recommendation 1

The Constabulary have commenced a review which is being jointly undertaken by the senior leads for victims and RASSO. This review will work with the CPS and ISVAs to ensure there is a cohesive approach, across different organisations, which is best for the victims.

#### Recommendation 8

The issue of bad character has recently been raised at the local RASSO Joint Operational Improvement Meeting – between the Constabulary and the CPS. It was recognised similar challenges may be presented where there are two or more cases being separately investigated at the same time and how the facts from one case can be presented in the other.

The Constabulary will work with the CPS through Project Bluestone – as part of the suspect focussed investigations pillar – to explore these issues.

#### Recommendation 9

Victim Personal Statements were also discussed between the Constabulary and CPS at the RASSO Joint Operational Improvement Meeting. It was felt that, in Avon and Somerset, victims are being given appropriate opportunities to give a VPS. In order to check this, further work will be undertaken through the victims' pillar of Project Bluestone.

As can be seen above all these recommendations require additional work to be undertaken. My office receives monthly briefings on Project Bluestone and has regular updates on the progress of HMICRS recommendations. HMICFRS recommendations will also feature as a standing agenda item on my new Performance and Accountability Board which will be available for the public to watch.

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