



NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF NORTHUMBRIA POLICE

Inspection title	Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations
Type of inspection	<input type="checkbox"/> Northumbria-specific <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National Thematic
Date inspection published	22 nd August 2024
Deadline for PCC response (56 days)	17 th October 2024
Recommendations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National <input type="checkbox"/> Local

NORTHUMBRIA PCC RESPONSE TO HMICFRS

I welcome the report on Operation Soteria, which focuses on the progress made to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations. Operation Soteria is an opportunity to bring lasting change to police forces, ultimately to make sure we improve the experiences of victims and address low conviction rates.

Northumbria was one of the 14 expansion forces that were asked to join Operation Soteria Bluestone in 2022, although were not one of the forces inspected for this report.

The Chief Constable has provided me with a position statement in respect of Northumbria Police's roll-out of the operation and also against the five recommendations that are specifically for Chief Constables.

Northumbria's response to implementing Operation Soteria Bluestone has been coordinated and managed by a trained rape investigator Detective Sgt from within the Safeguarding Department. Pillar leads from across Northumbria Police are identified for each of the 6 Pillars. From the original 211 actions required, 22 remain outstanding. The Force aims to embed the National Operating Model's (NOM) products aimed at assisting decision making throughout the investigation of a rape or serious sexual assault by March 2025.

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

- The Force Lead for rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) and the Force's People Department are engaged with the national programme and the College of Policing around the relevant training requirements.
- The recruitment into safeguarding includes a Training Needs Analysis and the training requirements for 'word on word' are included in the training plan for 2025.
- Northumbria Police are in discussion with the CPS to implement joint annual training to develop a RASSO prosecution team approach.

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.

- No agreed definition has been disseminated by the College of Policing. Northumbria Police are reviewing the scope of RFGV with MATAC to include repeat RASSO non-convicted suspects.



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 (i) forces track, manage and respond effectively to breaches of bail and protection orders in RASSO cases: and (ii) all relevant personnel complete NOM training on using criminal and civil orders to tackle RASSO.

- Preventative Orders is a Force-wide strategic aim led by the Prevention Department.
- The Safeguarding Department is a key stakeholder on the Force Orders Working Group. The Safeguarding Daily Management Meeting identifies any areas for the application of preventative orders, arrests for breach of bail and orders.
- The Force Orders Working Group is developing a tracking system and central repository for all orders. The NOM training on criminal and civil orders is planned for completion by April 2025 which coincides with the final phase of the ongoing recruitment of PIP2's into safeguarding.

Recommendation 9: by 31 January 2025, Chief Constable 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.

- Under section 63G of PACE 1984, the police can apply to keep the fingerprints and DNA of RASSO suspects who haven't yet been charged or convicted. This power came into force in 2013. Biometric material can be held for up to three years. Northumbria Police have revised the RASSO/OSSO policy and procedure guidance, and this is written into the revised policy.

Recommendation 11: by 31 March 2025, all Chief Constables should make sure that, as part of adopting the National Operating Model, their Forces: (i) develop a rape and other sexual assault problem profile, (ii) include the National Operational Model flight deck within their strategic performance monitoring: and (iii) adopt key performance indicators that are agreed and published by the Soteria Joint Unit.

- A RASSO Problem Profile has been commissioned and will be complete by November 2024.
- RASSO performance is managed via Force Governance Boards; the Force is to undertake a review of all NOM products within the flight deck and document an implementation plan to be completed at the conclusion of the current recruitment into Ssafeguarding.

I will monitor progress where further action is required to ensure that NP are compliant through my regular HMICFRS Scrutiny process.

Yours sincerely,

Susan Dungworth

Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria