

CAMBRIDGESHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL	Agenda Item No. 7
27th November 2023	Public Report

Report of Police and Crime Commissioner for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

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CAMBRIDGESHIRE CONSTABULARY’S APPROACH TO OPERATION SOTERIA

1. PURPOSE

1.1 To provide the Cambridgeshire Police and Crime Panel (the “Panel”) with an overview of Cambridgeshire Constabulary’s approach to Operation Soteria, the police and Crown Prosecution Service (“the CPS”) programme to transform the investigation and prosecution of rape and improve outcomes.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Panel is recommended to note the contents of this report.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE

3.1 Item 8 - To support the effective exercise of the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 (the “Act”) the Panel has a role in scrutinising the Police and Crime Commissioner (the “Commissioner”) in the exercise of his statutory functions.

4.2 Cambridgeshire Constabulary has been enhancing and improving its approach investigating and prosecuting rape for the past two years following the Government’s ‘End to End Rape Review’. The Panel has been briefed on many of the separate elements of this work during that time. This paper brings together each of those workstreams, and highlights the contributions by the Commissioner’s Office, so Panel members have a landscape view of the totality of work already carried out by the Constabulary and partners – not limited to the CPS.

4.3 The number of live rape investigations now sits at under 300 (from a high of 438) the lowest for several years. The rape detection rate in September was 8% and the rolling average as of November 6th is 6.2%. This is an improving position but still a cause of concern amongst CJ partners and the public.

Crown Prosecution Service ("CPS") data from quarter 2 of 2022/23 to quarter 1 of 2023/24 shows that, compared to all other Force areas in England and Wales, Cambridgeshire recorded the highest percentage of adult rape convictions (based on adult rape flagged prosecution outcomes), at 77.8%.

5. OPERATION SOTERIA

5.1 In response to the national 'End to End Rape Review' Cambridgeshire Constabulary launched Project Eleos which became one of four elements of the force's Violence Against Women and Girls ("VAWG") strategy. This gave Cambridgeshire a two-year head start on the transformational change required under the recently launched Operation Soteria. Locally work comes under six workstreams which encompass all elements of the Operation Soteria framework. Examples of such work include:

- Putting **victims at the heart of the investigation** – in line with the Police and Crime Plan.
- Seeking and acting upon **feedback from victims** on their experience of reporting rape through joint Constabulary and OPCC **Rape Engagement Project**.
- A focus on the **behaviour of the suspect** and their actions rather than those of the victim and challenging victim-blaming language. Ensuring this ethos guides all communications and engagement with the public.
- **Early intervention and prevention** through **Safer Streets** 4 bids and a proposal for Safer Streets 5 which trains additional staff in the night-time economy to spot the signs of predatory behaviour.
- Better **joined up working with the Constabulary and CPS** to improve the victim's journey through the criminal justice system ("the CJS"). It is appreciated that there are still significant challenges within the CJS which is transparently looked at the Cambridgeshire Criminal Justice Board, chaired by the Commissioner. Progress against the End-to-End Rape Review is discussed with partners across the CJS on a six-monthly basis.

- Appointment of **Police staff researchers** in the Rape Investigation Team who can help with building investigation case files and speed up their submission to CPS.
- Taking a **trauma-informed approach** to communication with victims - all 'Protecting Vulnerable People' staff have been trained and this will now be rolled out across the force. All formal communication is written/delivered in a trauma-informed way in partnership with support services. As a result the number of **challenges to NFA decisions, (called Victim's Right to Review) has dropped by 25%**. The OPCC has also rolled this training out to all commissioned victim support services.
- Proactive and effective **multi-agency management of suspects** and offenders where the offence happened in an intimate partner relationship through the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel. The OPCC recently secured funding for a DA Perpetrator Panel Co-ordinator as part of a bid to the Home Office.
- Improved **use of civil orders** to manage risks posed by the perpetrator guided by more robust data.
- Improvements in **digital forensics through new technology** – victim's phones can now be returned in most cases within 24 hours. Cambridgeshire sits fourth in the country for meeting this important aim.
- Training for up to 500 non-specialist officers and improved support and **wellbeing offers** for staff investigating rape and serious sexual offences – absence rates in the Rape Investigation Team is now one of the lowest in the force.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan 2021 – 2024

[Police and Crime Plan 2021-24 \(cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire-pcc.gov.uk)

Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/13/contents>

End to End Rape Review

[Rape Review Progress Report: Two years on - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

CPS Area Level Data Tables (Table 3.4: England & Wales - Adult rape flagged prosecution outcomes)

<https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/CPS-Area-Level-Data-Tables-Q1-23-24.xlsx>