

WILTSHIRE POLICE



XXXXXXXX

By email

**Force Disclosure Unit
Police Headquarters**

London Road

DEVIZES

Wiltshire

SN10 2DN

Date 4th December 2025

Our Ref FOI 2025-1139

Dear XXXXX,

I write in connection with your request for information dated 2nd December 2025, concerning department/s responsible for investigating intimate partner sexual violence.

I am required by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to handle all requests in a manner that is blind as to the identity and motives of the requestor. Any information released as a response to a request is regarded as being published and therefore in the public domain without caveat.

Following receipt of your request, research was conducted by the Violence Against Women & Girls department and Force Policy Officer at Wiltshire Police.

Your request for information has now been considered and I am able to respond as follows.

You wrote and our response:

1. Which unit or units in your force are responsible for investigating cases of intimate partner sexual violence (i.e. cases where the sexual offences occurred within a context of domestic abuse from an intimate partner and/or where a victim has reported both domestic abuse and sexual offences by the same perpetrator)?

CID

2. If the answer to question 1 is more than one unit, how are cases allocated between units?

N/A

3. Please provide a copy of any internal force policy relating to the issues in questions 1 and 2.

The below relevant policies have been included at the end of this response letter.

➤ **Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure**

Note - A file path for a location on our Intranet site has been redacted within this policy.

➤ **R.A.S.S.O (Rape and Serious Sexual Offences) Policy**

Please note: The Domestic Abuse Policy was amended three times between December 2021 and December 2022. The only difference between the December 2022 Police and the one

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provided at the end of this letter is the reference to 'Rape and High Risk DA' on page 13, which was added in April 2024. There was no equivalent to the RASSO Policy in 2022.

4. Does your force currently have:

a) a dedicated RASSO unit

No

b) a dedicated domestic abuse unit

No

Please could you provide answers to questions 1 to 4 above on the arrangements within your force in January 2022.

I am satisfied that all the relevant information has been passed to me and been considered in the light of your request within the time constraints applicable under the legislation.

Wiltshire Police would like to thank you for the interest that you have shown in the Force.

Yours sincerely,

FDU Decision Maker

Wiltshire Police offers a re-examination of your case under its review procedure.



Force Disclosure Unit

Wiltshire Police HQ, London Road, Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 2DN



Keeping Wiltshire Safe

Freedom of Information Request Appeals Procedure

1. Who Can Ask for a Review

Any person who has requested information from Wiltshire Police, which has been dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act, is entitled to complain and request an internal review, if they are dissatisfied with the response they received.

2. How to Request a Review

Requests for review of a Freedom of Information request must be made in writing to the:

Force Disclosure Unit
Wiltshire Police Headquarters,
London Road, Devizes,
Wiltshire,
SN10 2DN

Email at disclosure@wiltshire.police.uk.

The reference number, date of the request and details of why the review is being requested must be included. Requests for review should be brought to the attention of the Force Disclosure Unit within 20 working days of the Force's response to the original Fol request.

3. Review Procedure

Receipt of a request for review will be acknowledged in writing to include confirmation of the reasons for the review. The review will be conducted by another Decision Maker, who is independent from the original Decision Maker. The Force Disclosure Unit will set a target date for a response. The response will be made as soon as is practicable with the intention to complete the review within twenty working days. In more complex cases the review may take up to 40 working days.

The Independent Decision Maker will conduct a review of the handling of the request for information and of decisions taken, including decisions taken about where the public interest lies in respect of exempt information where applicable. The review enables a re-evaluation of the case, taking into account the matters raised by the complaint.

4. Conclusion of the Appeal

On completion of the review the Independent Decision Maker will reply to the complainant with the result of the review. If the complainant is still dissatisfied following the review they should contact the Information Commissioner to make an appeal. The Information Commissioner can be contacted via the following details:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 01625 545 700
Fax: 01625 524 510
Email: mail@ico.gsi.gov.uk

Please note that the ICO's offices will be closed for the foreseeable future and are therefore unable to receive correspondence via post.

If you should wish to contact them, please visit <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/>

Keeping Wiltshire Safe

WILTSHIRE POLICE FORCE POLICY AND PROCEDURE



DOMESTIC ABUSE

Date of Publication: November 2022
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POLICY STATEMENT

Wiltshire Police is committed to delivering a high quality service to all victims of domestic abuse. Investigations will be conducted thoroughly, professionally and to a high ethical standard, having due regard to issues of diversity.

We are committed to building a safer community by providing a quality of service to victims and by focusing on the prosecution of offenders.

We will achieve this within a multi-agency environment, acting as a gateway to the services provided by ourselves, external agencies and voluntary organisations.

We will maintain a corporate approach to the investigation of Domestic Abuse, whilst ensuring that the individual needs and requirements of the survivors of domestic abuse are met. All action will be in the interests of the victim and any associated child.

The Force policy for the response to Domestic Abuse remains one of 'Positive Action'. Positive action includes arrest when an offence has been committed and that officers should consider the incident as a whole and carry out a thorough investigation, which does not just rely on the evidence of the victim.

POLICY AIM

- To protect the lives of both adults and children who are at risk as a result of domestic abuse;
- To thoroughly investigate all reports of domestic abuse, taking into account previous reports and the presenting situation;
- To facilitate effective action against offenders so that they can be held accountable through the criminal justice system;
- To adopt a proactive multi-agency approach in preventing and reducing domestic abuse.
- To raise awareness of domestic abuse through better education and partnership work, in particular within minority communities.

APPLICABILITY

This policy applies to all Wiltshire Police officers and staff who have their own concerns or to whom concerns are raised in relation to Domestic Abuse. This policy will impact upon all of Wiltshire's communities and our community safety partners.

LEGAL BASIS and DRIVING FORCE

Domestic Violence Crime & Victims (Amendment) Act 2012
Sexual Offences Act 2003
Criminal Justice Act 2003
Youth Justice & Criminal Evidence Act 1999
Family Law Act 1996
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Stalking Protection Act 2019
Common Law (Trespass, Assault and Breach of Peace)
Offences Against the Person Act 1861
Public Order Act 1986
Criminal Damage Act 1971
Criminal Law Act 1997
Criminal Justice Act 2003
Human Rights Act 1998
Equality Act 2010
CPS Guidance on Prosecuting Cases of Domestic Violence 2005
Domestic Abuse Act 2021

RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES and OTHER DOCUMENTS

[Child Abuse Procedure](#)

[Hate Crime Policy and Procedure](#)

[R.A.S.S.O \(Rape and Serious Sexual Offences\) Policy](#)

[Policy and Procedure for Safeguarding Adults at Risk in Swindon and Wiltshire](#)

[Major Crime Investigation Manual](#)

[UK Government Guidance on Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVDS and DVPN's\)](#)

[Firearms and Explosives Licensing Policy](#)

[Firearms and Shotgun Certificate Holders Procedure](#)

AUTHORISED PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

- [Domestic Abuse](#) [Major Investigation and Public Protection > Domestic Abuse]
- [Prosecution & Case Management](#) (see Enforcing Sentences, Victim & Witness Care and Possible Justice Outcomes)
- [Investigation](#)
- [Major Investigation and Public Protection > Homicide](#)

DATA PROTECTION

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this policy will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations and the Force [Data Protection Policy](#).

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000

This document has been assessed as suitable for public release.

MONITORING and REVIEW

Detective Superintendent Geographic Crime is responsible for the accuracy and integrity of this document. This policy will be continuously monitored, and updated when appropriate, to ensure full compliance with legislation. The Geographic Crime Department will review this process to ensure that all aspects are being adhered to in accordance with the framework of this policy.

WHO TO CONTACT ABOUT THIS POLICY

Detective Superintendent Geographic Crime is responsible for this policy and procedure. All queries relating to this policy or procedure should be directed to the Geographic Crime Department.

PROCEDURE

This procedure should read in conjunction with the APP content on Domestic Abuse. Please see [APP Domestic Abuse](#) for more in-depth considerations.

1. DEFINITION OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

The definition of Domestic Abuse has been defined by statute in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 which was enacted on 29th April 2021 and states:

- (1) This section defines “domestic abuse” for the purposes of this Act.
- (2) Behaviour of a person (“A”) towards another person (“B”) is “domestic abuse” if—
 - (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and
 - (b) the behaviour is abusive.
- (3) Behaviour is “abusive” if it consists of any of the following—
 - (a) physical or sexual abuse;
 - (b) violent or threatening behaviour;
 - (c) controlling or coercive behaviour;
 - (d) economic abuse (see subsection (4));
 - (e) psychological, emotional or other abuse;

and it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

- (4) “Economic abuse” means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B’s ability to—
 - (a) acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or
 - (b) obtain goods or services.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition includes so called ‘honour’ based abuse, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group.

The cross-government definition of Domestic Abuse can be found on the College of Policing APP [Context and dynamics of domestic abuse | College of Policing](#). This includes reference to the range of relationships within the family context – intimate and non-intimate.

2. RESPONSIBILITY OF CALL TAKERS

The Force has adopted and utilises THRIVE+. However, the nature of domestic abuse investigations requires the gathering of specific information and therefore the following **will** apply as an exception to the use of THRIVE+.

2.1 Minimum Standard of information when taking an initial report of domestic abuse

On receipt of a report of Domestic Abuse the call taker will complete THRIVE+ to determine the level of response which will be recorded upon a STORM log. Call takers will seek the following information when taking an initial report of domestic abuse:

2.2 Location and identity of

- Person making the report
- Suspect
- Location of other parties -children and witnesses

2.3 Ascertain the following

- Are there any injuries?
- The severity of any injuries;
- Is medical assistance required;
- Have any weapons been used?
- Does any person present appear drunk or taken drugs;
- Are any children present? If so are they safe?
- Is there a history of domestic abuse? Information given in the form of disclosures made by victims relating to domestic abuse history must be acted on, with attending officers advised at the earliest opportunity.
- Description of the suspect;
- Are there any court orders?
- Are there any special needs, e.g. disability, language difficulties? Is an interpreter required?
- Is the victim or another member of the household an adult at risk or vulnerable adult? If so who is their main carer?

2.4 Record

- Identity of the parties involved including victim and children ensure names are spelt correctly
- Sex,
- Dates of birth,
- Home address,
- Telephone numbers;
- Details of the demeanour of the victim/suspect/witnesses;
- A first account of what the caller says has happened recording it verbatim.

2.5 Research

Call takers and attending officers will ensure appropriate checks are made on Niche and other police systems for;

- Previous reported domestic abuse history,
- PNC checks,
- Bail conditions,
- Civil injunctions,
- Court orders relating to child contact,

-
- Child protection, vulnerable adult intelligence systems,
 - ViSOR (if appropriate);
 - PND (if appropriate)

2.6 Minimum Standards - Deployment

Call takers will:

- Despatch an officer having prioritised the safety of officers and others;
- Ensure that medical assistance is en-route, where appropriate;
- Make sure that support/back up is available for the officer(s) attending the incident,

NB: If a STORM log is to be closed to NICHE without deployment authorisation MUST be obtained from the CCC supervisor or FIM.

Reporting persons (RP) wishing to remain anonymous – where an RP requests to remain anonymous this information should be recorded on the STORM log and conveyed to the attending officer immediately.

3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF ATTENDING OFFICER

3.1 Powers of entry

- Under section 17(1) (b) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, a constable may enter and search any premises for the purpose of arresting a person for an indictable offence.
- Under section 17(1) (e) of PACE, a constable may also enter and search premises for the purpose of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property (**in the exercise of police protection powers if entry to premises is refused, this section may give adequate powers**);
- Under Common Law a constable has the power to enter premises to prevent or deal with a Breach of the Peace;
- Under section 48 of the Children Act 1989, a warrant may be obtained to search for children who may be in need of emergency protection;

A record of all searches must be made in accordance with PACE and PACE Codes of Practice.

3.2 Actions on arrival at the scene

To ensure both the safety of officers, victims and children and to secure and preserve evidence, on arrival at the scene officers should:

- Re-assess victim and officer safety, including immediate risk (potential access to weapons)
- Make an immediate assessment of the need for first aid or other medical assistance
- Separate parties, including any children;
- Confirm the identity of the suspect
- Establish who is or was at the scene, **including any children, young persons and vulnerable adults** (if there is a vulnerable adult or adult at risk check who their main carer is and whether they are known to social services or subject to a safeguarding alert/process/plan?)
- Establish who normally resides at the address **including any children, young persons and vulnerable adults**
- Request appropriate checks on the suspect and household, including warrants, bail conditions, civil orders, and children subject to protection plans, if not already done;

-
- Make accurate records of everything said by the suspect, victim and any witnesses, including children (ensuring compliance with PACE). Significant statements or admissions to offences of domestic abuse by perpetrators must always be recorded by attending officers. Golden Hour principles and standards of initial investigation will not be affected by significant statements by the perpetrator and such enquiries must continue, irrespective of such disclosures.
 - Take evidential photographs where required. Body Worn Video (BWV) should be used in line with the [Body Worn Video Procedure](#).
 - Secure the safety of victims in their home, e.g., if appropriate or the home of a relative or refuge.
 - Obtain an overview of what has occurred, taking into account the established risk factors associated with domestic abuse.
 - Ensure that information relating to the suspect is included in any risk assessment processes.
 - Provide the victim with time and space away from the perpetrator, thus maximising the opportunity to reassure the victim and create opportunity for disclosure to the attending officers.
 - Where an RP has requested to remain anonymous their information should not be shared with the victim, suspect or any other involved party. In exceptional circumstances where information has needed to be shared clear rationale around this must be recorded on the OEL of an occurrence, a supervisor made aware and clear consideration given to safeguarding the RP including making them aware of this and the reason for it. Safeguarding completed for the RP must also be recorded on the OEL.

3.3 Protecting the scene

Officers should take the following action appropriate to the circumstances;

- Note that both the victim and suspect are considered the primary scenes, and victims safety, state of mind and ability to cope with forensic requests should be a priority.
- Secure, preserve and control the scene to limit any access until sufficient information is available to make an informed assessment of the situation.
- Consider any potential areas of contamination that could impact upon the integrity of evidential material;
- Consider erecting cordons and putting in place a log list to record persons entering and leaving (dependent upon the severity of the incident);
- Request a CSI to attend or record the reasons on the PPN, why a CSI was not called or did not attend;
- Ensure the scene is photographed or videoed as soon as possible
- Scope and secure any potential CCTV footage which may have captured the incident

3.4 Police Powers of Arrest

Officers must note that charging standards are for custody officers and the CPS to use to determine what offence to charge a suspect with. The standards **do not** affect police powers of arrest.

Section 110 Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2003 replaced section 24 of PACE with new powers.

You can arrest for **any offence but only if** there are *reasonable grounds to believe* **one** of the following necessity conditions applies:

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Child or vulnerable person: to protect
Obstruction of the highway: prevent
Physical Injury: to prevent (cause/ suffering, self /other)

Public decency: to prevent offences against
Loss or damage to property: to prevent
Address not known or doubted
Name not known or doubted
Effective/prompt investigation of offence: to allow for
Disappearance of person: preventing prosecution

3.5 Positive action

Positive action includes arresting the suspected perpetrator for any offence as detailed above. It is the decision of the attending officer whether or not to arrest a suspect and therefore victims should not be asked whether they require an arrest to be made.

The requirement for 'positive action' means that in all Domestic Abuse cases, officers should consider the incident as a whole, not just the oral or written evidence of the victim.

Officers must focus efforts from the outset on gathering alternative evidence in order to charge and build a prosecution case that does not rely entirely on the victim's statement. This is particularly important where at any stage the victim appears not to support a prosecution.

The victim's views are always to be considered but the decision to arrest remains with the officer even if the victim does not wish to pursue a complaint. All actions will be taken in the interests of the victim in order to take the pressure and responsibility away from the victim.

It is acknowledged that on occasion, the victim may not agree with the actions taken, however the overriding concern is to keep the victim safe. Only by protecting the victim can we be truly focused on the survivors of domestic abuse.

Previous withdrawals of support for a prosecution should not adversely influence the decision making in whether to arrest for an offence.

The Domestic abuse definition does not require 'violence' to have been used and 'abuse' is much wider than any criminal allegations.

In any Domestic abuse case where no formal interview of a suspect takes place the investigation and decision surrounding this must be reviewed and ratified by the Inspector of the OIC and supervisor.

3.5.1 Victim Disclosures

When speaking to victims, all staff should be aware that **any disclosures or allegations made should be fully investigated and recorded even if the allegation is historic or does not relate to the incident you have been called to.**

It is important to check the STORM log prior to completing a PPN to ensure that you are aware of any disclosure made by the victim to the CCC.

Don't assume that just because a disclosure is made while completing a PPN or statement that it has already been investigated and recorded.

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Below are the key points to remember when a disclosure is made by a victim:

1. Ask the victim if the disclosure has previously been made to the Police **and** then check Niche to ensure a full investigation has taken place and a crime recorded if appropriate
2. If an allegation or disclosure is found to not be recorded, please ensure a Niche is created and a prompt investigation is started regardless of how long ago the offence took place
3. If a decision is made not to investigate an allegation or disclosure, please ensure that a full rationale is recorded in Niche
4. Victims who disclose offences while speaking to operators in the CCC may not provide the same information to attending officers. It is the responsibility of the attending officers to view the log and fully investigate any disclosures made
5. A victim may make reference to events and incidents which have happened in the past. **Never assume that these have been investigated and recorded. Check Niche**
6. If you are taking a statement or completing a PPN on behalf of another officer, it is your responsibility to ensure disclosures or allegations are fully investigated.

3.6 If the Suspect IS NOT arrested;

- Officer **MUST** record their rationale in PNB and on the PPN
- Justify why an arrest has not been made
- Record what action has been taken to safeguard victim and family
- Gather evidence to support future criminal prosecutions/civil proceedings e.g. those relating to child contact.
- Officers **will not** under any circumstances interview a suspect of domestic abuse by way of contemporaneous notes (For guidance, please see Force [Contemporaneous note Interview Policy](#)).
- BWV devices should not be used to record suspect interviews (see the [Body Worn Video Procedure](#) for more detail).
- If the suspect's arrest cannot be justified, arrangements will be made for the suspect to be interviewed at a Police station under invite as soon as practicable: see [Voluntary Attenders for Interview Procedure](#).
- Supervisors reviewing PPN will be expected to make reference within the PPN to the decision taken not to arrest as part of their oversight into such matters, cognisant of the decision making process from the attending officer and the risks known at that time.

3.7 Charge, summons, cautions, out of court disposals and no further action cases

- The CPS Directors Guidance will **always** be referred to and fully complied with. If the outcome deems that the appropriate form of process is by way of a summons, the first line supervisor (Sergeant) or a supervisor on duty (Sergeant or Inspector) will authorise the summons and ensure the file with the CPS for consideration during that tour of duty or as soon as practicable afterward. Summons files for domestic abuse must remain victim focussed and be treated as a priority.
- If the CPS Streamlined Process is to be used for Domestic Abuse Cases, officers must note that a full evidential witness statements will be always be required from victims and witnesses. (For guidance, please see force Streamlined Process under Policy and Procedure)
- If charges or summons are authorised the case file will be delivered electronically, and in person, to the Integrated Prosecution Team (CJU File Build) within 24 hours of reporting for prosecution or, during a weekend, by the following Monday. The reporting officer is

charged with the personal responsibility to email the Case Managers inbox at Melksham to advise them of the file's impending arrival.

- On receipt of the file (which has already been quality assured by the initial supervisor) the Case Manager will, within 24 hours, process that file for the Courts team to commence the laying of the summons process with HMCTS. The Courts team supervisor will then liaise with HMCTS regarding the timely return of the summons to Wiltshire Police.
- Cautions are rarely appropriate in domestic abuse cases. However a local agreement has been reached with Wessex CPS that in circumstances where a caution is being considered, as a charge is not appropriate, then it is not necessary to consult CPS for a cautioning decision, however; if in doubt on whether to charge the CPS should be consulted.

A caution for domestic abuse will only be administered under the following conditions: **NB: as of 11.01.2023 an interim process for Adult Cautions in domestic abuse cases has been implemented. Please read the [Caution Options – Interim Process](#) for details.**

- a) The Full Code test has been met;
- b) There is absolutely no previous domestic abuse history for the perpetrator (whether reported and recorded previously or not. Previous domestic abuse history includes previous partners and/or family members as well as the current partner);
- c) The victim has made no additional disclosures recorded on the PPN or STORM log i.e. previous incidents of DA that have not been reported or investigated. (See [s3.5.1 Victim Disclosures](#) above);
- d) The perpetrator does not have any previous convictions for violence (this includes cautions and community resolutions);
- d) The seriousness of the offence and the range of appropriate penalties;
- e) The perpetrator admits the offence.

Any decision to issue a caution must be accompanied by a fully documented rationale.

Although there is no need for a victim to consent to a caution the victim should, wherever possible, be consulted and their views taken into account.

- Community Resolutions can only be used for incidents of domestic abuse where there is **no intimate partner relationship or history of such**; the below criteria has been met and the resolution has been authorised by a Detective Inspector or, where impractical, by an operational Inspector prior to delivery:
 - A restorative justice process should only take place where the victim is fully supportive of its use and the offender has admitted the offence and is showing remorse.
 - Restorative justice should only be considered after cases have been assessed (using the PPN) as Standard Risk. Officers should consult with specialists from PPD if they have any concerns about the level of risk.
 - It should only be used as an **exception**, where the call is in isolation and there is no previous history or concern. The incident should be extremely low level such as a minor criminal damage or a theft.
 - In the case of first time perpetrators (under 18 years of age) involved in minor sibling disputes, restorative justice may also be considered for incidents involving common assault where the injuries are very minor and youth justice and domestic abuse specialists agree it is an effective intervention. Such cases must be subject of a thorough risk assessment.
 - Any case with a history of intimate partner violence or adolescent to parent violence should not be considered appropriate.

-
- Where no further action is to be taken in a case where a crime has been recorded, and the OIC proposes that no formal interview of the suspect will take place, the authority of an officer of the rank of an Inspector will be required prior to the investigation to be closed.
 - Offences which at the time of report are already outside the limitation of time (i.e. common assaults reported more than 2 years after it occurred) are not required to have Inspector review (change to law as per [s49 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#)).

3.8 Completion of PPN and DASH risk assessment

Domestic incidents reported to the police falling within the domestic abuse definition will result in the completion of a PPN which incorporates the DASH risk assessment (Annex B). This must be submitted electronically to the MASH before **the end of their tour of duty** (see [Guidance to creating a PPN](#)).

It is important to check the **STORM** log prior to completing a PPN to ensure that you are aware of any disclosure made by the victim to the CCC.

The risk assessment is an ongoing process and needs to be constantly reviewed by the OIC and supervisor, especially at key points, i.e. arrest, bail, charge etc.

The DASH risk assessment must **always** be completed in cases of stalking, harassment and honour based violence. Where stalking is suspected or reported a [Stalking Screening Tool](#) should also be completed.

Should the DASH risk assessment not be completed the officer must record the reason.

In recognition of the impact of controlling and coercive behaviour on a victim and the fear that can be exerted by verbal control in these relationships a DASH risk assessment will be completed at all incidents of domestic abuse that police are called to. This includes those which appear on the surface to be a verbal argument only. Completing a DASH at such incidents will increase the likelihood of officers being able to identify any patterns of behaviour which may warrant a referral to a support service (any risk) or even to MARAC (high risk).

Where a victim is able to be identified the DASH should be completed with that person. In circumstances where it is not clear who may be victim and who may be aggressor a DASH should be completed with the caller.

The DASH risk assessment provides for three levels of risk:

STANDARD: Current evidence **does not** indicate likelihood of causing serious harm.

MEDIUM: There are identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm. The offender has the potential to cause serious harm but is **unlikely to do so** unless there is a change in circumstances, for example, failure to take medication, loss of accommodation, relationship breakdown, drug / alcohol misuse.

HIGH: There are **identifiable indicators of risk of serious harm**. The potential event could happen at any time and the impact would be serious.

RISK OF SERIOUS HARM is defined by the Home Office as: **‘A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible’.**

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3.9 Standard assessment of risk

It is the responsibility of the attending officer to ensure safety measures are in place for the victim and her/his children and to signpost the victim to support agencies. Initial safeguarding measures taken will be documented by the attending officer within the PPN. A Victim Safeguarding Pack should be used where appropriate.

The responsibility for the investigation, safeguarding of the victim and on-going management of the perpetrator remains with the OIC.

3.10 Medium assessment of risk

It is the responsibility of the attending officer to ensure safety measures are in place for the victim their children and to signpost the victim to support agencies. Initial safeguarding measures taken will be documented by the attending officer within the PPN. A Victim Safeguarding Pack should be used where appropriate.

It is the responsibility of the investigating officer and their supervisor to review safety measures put in place for the victim and their children and to signpost the victim to other support agencies. Safeguarding measures undertaken will be documented by the attending officer within Niche.

3.11 High assessment of risk

Following attendance at domestic abuse incidents if the attending officer deems the incident high risk the duty Inspector must be informed at the earliest opportunity. This will ensure immediate supervisory oversight of high risk cases and provide support to the attending officer when managing the risk.

Attending officers will be responsible for the initial safeguarding of the victim and **'golden hour' investigation, including the arrest of the perpetrator. Liaison with a CID Detective Sergeant should occur at the earliest opportunity to agree an investigation strategy and safeguarding plan.**

It is the responsibility of the attending officer to ensure immediate safety measures are in place for the victim and her/his children and to signpost the victim to support agencies. Safeguarding measures undertaken will be documented within the Niche record.

Safeguarding should be reviewed by the OIC and their supervisor at key points in the investigation or where a victim reports a significant change e.g. end of a relationship.

Although all DA risk assessments are quality assessed by a supervisor and domestic abuse cases at all risk levels are reviewed by MARAC Police Coordinators to identify repeat cases (5/12's) MARAC referrals, there will be additional scrutiny of Standard and Medium risk assessed cases and where no children are involved, by the Safeguarding Support Team. This will serve to ensure victims in such cases receive the same level of service as those involving children and identify any changes or patterns in Police practice and procedure that may have a detrimental impact on the quality of service provided.

Rape and High-risk DA - As per the [RASSO \(Rape and Serious Sexual Offences\) Policy](#), all DA rape offences must be closed by a decision maker of at least the rank of inspector or above.

Closure requirements for Outcome 15 and 16 - High Risk DA where the case has been submitted outcome 15 and 16, the decision maker must be at least the rank of inspector or above

3.12 Allocation and investigation

As of the introduction of Volume Crime Teams there is an expectation that most PIP1 DA investigations will be allocated to VCT.

However, there will be occasions when there is no benefit or value in VCT being involved.

For example, if an officer attends a DA incident third party report of verbal only argument with no subsequent criminal complaint, breach of DVPO, or request to complete PPN and/or victim statement for an out of force enquiry - these wouldn't automatically fall to VCT as there is no further investigation required. Any handover would be through negotiation between supervisors but would not be considered the norm.

Storm Logs will not be closed and sent to the VCT Niche inboxes, without prior discussion and agreement with the VCT supervisor.

Please refer to [Crime Screening and Allocation Policy](#) for more detailed information regarding where PIP1 offences will be allocated.

The immediate safeguarding of the victim and any children will be completed by the attending officer(s).

Ongoing safeguarding will subsequently be completed by the investigating officer.

PIP2 offences:

Following initial actions at the scene all PIP2 identified offences will be investigated as per the Crime Allocation Policy and should be brought to the attention of the duty CID Ds at the earliest opportunity.

All ongoing safeguarding will be completed by the investigating officer. **Immediate safeguarding must be completed by the attending officer - all efforts must be made to ensure the immediate safety of the victim and any children.**

PPD administrators will link the relevant High Risk Domestic Abuse victim flag to the victim on Niche. High Risk flags will be reviewed on expiry, whereas Standard & Medium flags will automatically drop off.

OFA Safeguarding requests

In domestic abuse cases where the victim resides in Wiltshire but the offence took place in another force area, safeguarding enquiries will be carried out by designated staff/officers from the Safeguarding Support Team Monday to Friday 0800 - 1800 hours.

Urgent safeguarding outside of these hours this will need to be carried out by CPT via FCC tasking.

The officer dealing must notify the Safeguarding Support Team via email (SafeguardingTeam@wiltshire.police.uk) of relevant case details including the safeguarding enquiries completed.

3.13 Impact on children, young persons and vulnerable adults

Officers attending domestic incidents must assess the risk and respond positively to ensure the safety of all vulnerable parties, particularly children, young persons under 18 and vulnerable adults, whether they were present at the incident or not.

s.3 Domestic Abuse Act 2021 legislates that children are victims of domestic abuse and that any child who sees or hears or experiences the effects of the abuse and is related to A or B (adults in the abusive relationship) are victims in their own rights. All children within the household must be recorded within the PPN in order that they are recorded as victims and afforded the rights within the Code of Practice for Victims.

It is good practice to see the child, young person or vulnerable person in order to assess the impact of the domestic incident upon them, whether they witnessed the incident or not. Due consideration is to be given to establish if the incident involves any Honour Based Abuse.

Officers attending domestic abuse incidents **must** record the following details of Children, Young Persons and vulnerable adults on the PPN:

- Name, including other family names and any previously used names (correctly spelt);
- Date of birth;
- Sex;
- Normal address;
- General practitioner;
- Primary carer or care arrangements;
- School;
- Full details of the child's/vulnerable adults circumstances, witnessed by the officer, to include
 - personal welfare including evidence of self harming
 - cleanliness,
 - communication ability,
 - injuries
 - demeanour; including anger, aggressive behaviour, withdrawal, lack of interest, hyper vigilance and disassociation
- Details of anything said by the child/vulnerable adult;
- Full details of other children ordinarily present at the address. Ensure a check is made to establish if child is subject to a protection plan

If the child/vulnerable adult was present during the incident the following must be recorded:

- How do they feel?
- Do they feel safe?
- What have they witnessed, heard or been aware of?
- Have they been a victim of direct abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or neglect)?

Notify parent or carer that the information will be shared with partner agencies. If a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm refer to [Child Abuse Procedure](#) and if in immediate risk of harm consider removing child under Section 46 Police Protection powers.

In cases involving a vulnerable adult refer to the [Three Strands of Vulnerability](#) and take appropriate action.

In both cases officers should liaise immediately with a PPD supervisor or outside PPD core hours a Duty Inspector.

3.14 Possession of firearms

Any report of domestic abuse where there is an indication of access to firearms must be taken as increasing the risk. Firearm/shotgun holders who are involved in domestic abuse (whether as a survivor or as a perpetrator) **must** be flagged to the FIM for consideration of immediate revocation of the firearms and also referred to the Firearms Licensing Unit for a review of their certificate. Evidence of domestic abuse should indicate that an individual should not be permitted to possess a firearm or shotgun.

If the Firearms Licensing Unit become aware that a certificate holder may be the perpetrator of domestic abuse, then they will complete a PPN – containing the information they have available and submit to MASH and the CPT covering the area the certificate holder lives. Depending on the circumstances of the disclosure, the Firearms Licensing Unit may also consult with the Force Incident Manager with view to the firearms being removed from the certificate holder as a matter of urgency.

3.15 Lines of investigation

Attending officers should use body worn cameras to capture condition of victim, children and alleged perpetrator, damage to property and condition of scene and any account given to support the initial report or full allegation by the victim. Digital equipment can also be used to capture injuries to victim/s.

Officers using photographic evidence techniques should:

- Photograph all injuries
- To the victim and suspect,
 - bite injuries should be photographed as soon as possible with an appropriate scale included;
- Photograph or video record all damage/disruption at the scene including damaged clothing and weapons
- Any other evidence that might assist in corroborating victim or witness accounts or proving the offence
- Use CSI photographs whenever possible in domestic abuse cases **irrespective** of whether digital photographs have been taken;
- Make arrangements for the victim to be re-photographed when injuries may be more apparent;
- Use photographs pro-actively to assist in the investigative interview, see *Using photographic evidence during [interviews](#)*
- Provide custody officers with photographs to assist them with decision making, particularly in respect of police bail
- Attach photographs to the NICHE file to inform the CPS, magistrates and judiciary.

The previous history of domestic abuse should be explored with the victim and family members, including any previous presentations for medical treatment or third party disclosures. Consider securing evidence from family members, close friends, colleagues and neighbours.

- Attending officers should secure physical and forensic evidence.
- 999 tapes should be secured as a useful source to support a prosecution.
- House to house enquiries should be considered.
- Consider telephony and computer analysis where relevant.

3.16 Counter Allegations

See [APP Domestic Abuse > First Response > Carry out an initial investigation > Determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations](#) and [APP Domestic Abuse > Arrest and other positive approaches > Arresting the right person](#)

3.17 Information to be included in Officers statement and prosecution file

Officer's statement will cover the following observations:

- Victim's injuries;
- Suspect's injuries;

-
- Presence of children and/or vulnerable adults (adults at risk) and any injuries they may have sustained;
 - Any damage to property;
 - Observations of the scene, e.g., overturned furniture, broken ornaments, marks on clothing;
 - Demeanour of the suspect, victim and witnesses, including children;
 - Identification of risk factors (see [section 3.8](#));
 - Allegations made by the victim;
 - Unsolicited comments made by the suspect;
 - Significant statements made by the suspect.

3.18 Taking comprehensive retraction statements

When a victim indicates that they wish to withdraw their support for the prosecution process, a statement should be taken stating and describing any reasons for the withdrawal.

It is essential that the statement captures the reasons why the victim no longer wishes to support a prosecution and should include reference to them understanding that Special Measures and support may be available to them.

Withdrawal statements taken with care may still be used as evidence in current or future criminal proceedings or as evidence within the family court system.

Any withdrawal of support for a prosecution should prompt a revised risk assessment process and safety planning. The officer in the case should notify the CPS without delay if the victim indicates a wish to withdraw support for the prosecution.

For further information see APP Domestic Abuse > Victim safety and support > 2. Communication with the victim > 2.5 [Withdrawal](#).

Consideration should always be given to whether a case may proceed as “Evidence Led” i.e. without the evidence of the victim. This will be a matter for police to consider pre-charge and CPS should be asked to consider post-charge.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIRST LINE SUPERVISOR.

It is the responsibility of the first line supervisor to review all standard and medium risk PPNs to ensure:

- Appropriate immediate safety measures have been put in place for the victim and any children
- Positive action has been taken in respect of the perpetrator
- Endorse rationale where no arrest has been made
- If children were present that they were checked and impact upon them has been considered and recorded
- Appropriate initial investigative action has been taken and is fully recorded within the NICHE
- The PPN is accurate and clear and includes all relevant details of the incident
- Names and addresses, wherever possible, are accurate and consistent throughout the report
- All relevant DASH questions have been completed*
- The NICHE has a corresponding PPN
- The NICHE outlines a clear investigation plan and all effective lines of investigation are being carried out in a timely way

-
- The victim desired outcome has been recorded and considered
 - The grading of risk corresponds to the assessment of the risk detailed

*The risk assessment should be considered as an ongoing process and needs to be constantly reviewed by the OIC and supervisor, especially at key points, i.e. arrest, bail, charge etc.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DUTY INSPECTOR.

It is the responsibility of the duty inspector to review all high risk PPNs unless it is impracticable to do this because of other commitments. If the duty inspector is unavailable then the CIM within the Force Contact Centre or any other inspector should be used as an alternative to review high risk domestic abuse cases.

With the reviewing of all high risk cases particular emphasis should be given to locating outstanding offenders ensuring that safeguarding is in place for the victims and any children.

The duty Inspector will ensure that all outstanding high risk domestic abuse perpetrators are flagged on the force risk management portal as part of the daily management process in order that oversight can be maintained and risk can be managed appropriately.

6. POLICE OFFICERS AND STAFF VICTIMS / PERPETRATORS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

APP [Domestic Abuse > Leadership, Strategic Oversight and Management](#) > 3. Management > 3.1.1 Management of personnel > Specific management considerations when dealing with police perpetrators of domestic abuse should be referred to in circumstances where police officers, police staff and partners or family members of officers and staff are victims of domestic abuse.

- All incidents of police perpetrated domestic abuse will be dealt with in line with [Domestic Abuse Committed by Police Perpetrators memorandum of Understanding](#).
- All incidents of police perpetrated domestic abuse are to be investigated by a PIP2 detective/investigator from CID, who is based at a different location to where the suspect works, and, where possible, lives.
- Where a Wiltshire police officer or member of staff is arrested the officer should be taken to a custody unit outside of Wiltshire (if practical and safe to do so).
- The Head of PSD must be made aware of any arrest when practicable to do so.
- In all such investigations, the OIC should sign an undertaking to declare that they have no conflict of personal or professional interest in relation to the suspect or the victim. (see [Appendix A - Police Perpetrated Domestic Abuse Undertaking](#)).
- The safeguarding of the victim(s) and any key witnesses will be the responsibility of the investigating officer.

Wiltshire Police also has an HR policy in regard to Domestic abuse involving staff, seek guidance from an HR manager.

7. POST CUSTODY PROCEDURES

7.1 Police Bail and Release Under Investigation (RUI)

Due to the nature of domestic abuse, Police bail must always be considered to protect the victim, RUI must only be used in exceptional circumstances, and such cases **must** be authorised by the duty Inspector. (See [Released Under Investigation Procedure](#) and [NPCC Operational Guidance on Pre-Charge Bail and Released Under Investigation](#)).

Before a suspect is released from a police station officers must:

- Inform the victim of the suspect's impending release and record this notification on NICHE regardless of whether the suspect has been bailed or not
- Ensure NICHE is updated regarding bail conditions, in case of future calls.

Any subsequent decision to move the suspect from bail to RUI **MUST** be authorised by an inspector and the rationale for that decision and authorisation documented on Niche. Once the decision to move a suspect from Bail to RUI has been authorised the investigating officer **MUST** follow the process laid out in the [Released Under Investigation Procedure](#).

7.2 Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPN, DVPO)

Wiltshire police will make full use of the [Domestic Violence Protection Notice \(DVPN\) and Domestic Violence Protection Order \(DVPO\) schemes](#) in order to offer greater protection to victims of domestic abuse.

Following a full investigation, including PACE interview of the suspect, a decision will be made as to whether there is sufficient evidence to prosecute. If the decision is no further action is to be taken (NFA) or a caution is administered, consideration **must** be given to the application of a Domestic Violence Protection Notice as per Home Office Guidance; the ERO decision must contain a rationale for why a DVPN has or has not been applied for.

A DVPN **can** be issued to a suspect who has not been arrested.

A DVPN **can** be issued in addition to police bail although a clear rationale for this will be requested by the court.

A DVPN **can** be issued where the involved parties do not reside in the same property.

For more information see:

- APP Domestic Abuse > Arrest and other positive approaches > [Using domestic violence protection notices and domestic violence protection orders to make victims safer](#) or
- Home office guidance [Domestic Violence Protection Notices \(DVPNs\) and Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVPOs\) Guidance](#).

7.3 Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)

Wiltshire police will make full use of the [Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme](#), using existing legislation and information sharing protocols, to consider whether an individual at risk of domestic abuse should be informed of the previous history of their partner either through a process referred to as 'Right to know' or 'Right to ask'.

Such decisions will be made in accordance with the Home Office guidance.

8. RADICALISATION

The Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a general duty on specified authorities to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The purpose of Prevent is at its heart to safeguard and support vulnerable people to stop them from becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism.

Factors that may have a bearing on someone becoming vulnerable to radicalisation may include: peer pressure, influence from other people or via the internet, bullying, crime against them or their

involvement in crime, anti-social behaviour, family tensions, race/hate crime, lack of self-esteem or identity and personal or political grievances.

If officers/staff believe or suspect that a victim of, or suspect involved in, domestic abuse is at risk of radicalisation they should report this directly to the Duty Inspector without delay. Duty Inspector will consider level of risk and appropriate response (on a case by case basis). An appropriate intelligence submission should be made and the duty officer from CTPSW can be informed.

9. SHARING of INFORMATION with IMMIGRATION SERVICES

Please note that this guidance relates to victims of domestic abuse only.

[NPCC policy](#), published in 2020, is set out below:

When an individual reports to the police that they have been a victim/witness of crime the focus of the police will always be:

- *To investigate the allegation the victim/witness has reported; and*
- *To put in place such reasonable measures as are necessary to protect the victim/witness from harm.*

Officers will not routinely search police databases for the purpose of establishing the immigration status of a victim/witness or routinely seek proof of their entitlement to reside in the UK.

When a victim/witness is suspected by an officer of being an immigration offender, their status as a victim/witness does not change. The focus of the police will remain to investigate the allegation the victim/witness has reported and to put in place such reasonable measures as are necessary to protect them.

10. FURTHER SUPPORT

Further and useful documents relating to domestic abuse can be found on the Public Protection website using the link below;

[REDACTED]

DOCUMENT ADMINISTRATION

Ownership

Department Responsible: Geographic Crime Department
Policy Owner/Author: D/Supt Sarah Robbins / DI Helen Clarke
Technical Author: Andrew IRVING
Senior Officer/Manager Sponsor: ACC Geographic Crime and Force Development

Revision History

Revision Date	Version	Summary of Changes
16.01.2023	7.0	s3.16 Counter allegations link to APP Domestic Abuse > First Response > Carry out an initial investigation > Determining the primary perpetrator and dealing with counter-allegations amended. New link added to APP Domestic Abuse > Arrest and other positive approaches > Arresting the right person.
12.06.2023	7.0	s3.11 MARAC co-ordinator review of PPN s3.12 OFA safeguarding requests s3.13 Section 3 DA Act 2021 Children as victims Change of ownership from PPD to Geographic Crime Department.
30.06.2023	7.0	S3.7 Limitation period for proceedings to be commenced extended to 2 years from the date of the offence.
30.04.2024	7.0	S3.11 Lines re the rank of the decision maker in relation to High Risk rape and DA cases and outcome 15 & 16 added.

Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

Name & Title	Date of Approval	Version
Force Policy Officer	12.06.2023	7.0
Supt Geographical Crime Department	12.06.2023	7.0
JNCC (Not required for all policies)	N/A	

Distribution

This document has been distributed via:

Name & Title	Date of Issue	Version
E-Brief and force wide email	12.06.2023	7.0
Email to relevant affected Staff/Officers		

Equality Impact Assessment

Has an EIA been completed? If no, please indicate the date by which it will be completed. If yes, please send a copy of the EIA with the policy.	☒ Yes ☐ No Date:
--	--

Consultation

List below who you have consulted with on this policy (incl. committees, groups, etc):

Name & Title	Date Consulted	Version
Supt Cox, Head of Professional Standards	16.04.2021	4.1
Gemma Mullen, HR	29.04.2021	4.1
DI Phillippa Sharpley and DI Matt Smith, VCT	21.10.2022	6.1

Implications of the Policy

Training Requirements

None

IT Infrastructure

No new infrastructure required.



R.A.S.S.O. (Rape And Serious Sexual Offences) Policy

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POLICY STATEMENT.

Rape and serious sexual offences, known as 'RASSO', are among the most serious and high-impact crimes against the person. Wiltshire Police is committed to playing its role in partnership with the Home Office, the Crown Prosecution Service and local and national support services in identifying, targeting and bringing to justice perpetrators, and, supporting and increasing confidence of victims, survivors and effected communities.

To achieve this aim, this RASSO Policy will support colleagues and partner agencies in understanding the strategic intent of Wiltshire Police.

This policy acknowledges and supports the operating model developed by the national research and change program: Operation Soteria Bluestone, the National Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategic Threat Assessment and the Authorised Professional Practice for Rape and Sexual Offences.

Wiltshire Police acknowledges that RASSO offending crosses a broad spectrum of other criminality (for example: domestic abuse, honour-based abuse (HBA), criminal exploitation, offences against children) and that offending can remain hidden and unreported due to victims' feelings of fear, misplaced shame or embarrassment, isolation from support or mistrust of police or the criminal justice system.

Public trust and confidence in policing have been eroded over recent years. A series of high-profile cases have impacted women and minoritised groups confidence in policing, particularly in relation to how policing responds to crimes disproportionately affecting women and girls.

An independent report, authored by the co-academic lead from the Soteria Bluestone programme, reinforced the findings from the government's End-to-End Rape Review, and highlighted that policing needs a capable and confident workforce which understands the nature of rape and sexual offences and utilises this knowledge to thoroughly investigate suspects and better support victims.

STRATEGIC INTENT.

Wiltshire Police will:

- Work to Build trust and confidence in the police service so that victims feel safe to seek our help directly.
- Encourage reporting of all forms of sexual offending and provide effective means of reporting intelligence.
- Ensure that RASSO offences are thoroughly investigated by appropriately skilled police personnel.
- Provide effective support to victims of RASSO crimes, recognising & responding effectively to risk, keeping victims safe and holding offenders to account.
- Signpost every victim of RASSO offences to appropriate support agencies.
- Ensure that victims or survivors personal details are stored, managed and handled with integrity and confidentially
- Proactively engage with victims and survivors of RASSO crimes to obtain feedback on the effectiveness of the service.

- Engage with the Crown Prosecution Service and the Tri-Force Wessex RASSO governance structures to understand force and regional performance.
- Provide effective support to Wiltshire Police personnel tasked with responding to, and investigating, RASSO ensuring they are:
 - Properly trained according to national guidelines
 - Provided with effective support in relation to their emotional wellbeing and mental health

APPLICABILITY.

This policy applies to all police officers and staff, including volunteers, whether they are first responders, investigators, welfare or safety support, case managers or supervisors of personnel in these roles.

Any member of Wiltshire Police who may have contact with victims, witnesses and suspects of RASSO, their families or associated members of the community should be aware of this policy.

The policy applies equally to all RASSO offences, whether there is a standing relationship (regardless of the time scale of the relationship) between victim(s) and suspect(s) or not.

POLICY AIMS.

This document does not provide a RASSO investigative toolkit but will instead define RASSO and direct responders and investigators to local procedures and signpost to national learning, guidance and Authorised Professional Practice for the initial response and investigation (including victim care) of RASSO cases.

Terminology.

The term RASSO is used in relation to the following sections of The Sexual Offences Act 2014:

- Section 1: Rape
- Section 2: Sexual Assault by Penetration

ACPO Guidance for Investigating and Prosecuting Rape 2010 defines other serious sexual offences as:

- Where the assault is particularly serious
- Where features of the offence are aggravated (for example, where the victim is vulnerable or the offence is linked to Hate Crime).
- Sexual assaults that are linked as a series to the same offender(s).
- Any other offence of a sexual nature deemed especially serious by the investigating officer
- An attempt to commit any of the above offences

Where the victim of a serious sexual offence is under the age of 18, then this policy should be applied in conjunction with the [Child Abuse Procedure](#).

Police officers and staff should consider whether identified victims might be at risk of linked criminality or harmful practices, **particularly Domestic Abuse and Honour Based Abuse (HBA)**. In cases where such risk is reported, suspected or feared, officers and staff should take appropriate steps to identify particular risks, protective factors and sources of support.

Risk assessment and safeguarding is not simply the responsibility of a single point of contact or unit. Every member of Wiltshire Police who has contact with a RASSO victim should consider:

- the context of the investigation
- whether any new incident, event or information may affect the risk to the victim, and
- take appropriate action to ensure the risk is reduced or removed.

Victim or Survivor's Gender.

Clear evidence shows that females are statistically much more likely to be targeted by RASSO offenders, and RASSO offenders themselves are overwhelmingly male. However, Wiltshire Police acknowledges that RASSO can have a devastating affect regardless of the victim's gender. As such, the label 'victim' or 'survivor' in this policy applies equally to any person of any gender.

POLICY APPROACH TO RASSO INVESTIGATIONS.

In response to rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) reports, all Wiltshire Police personnel will adhere to The Operation Soteria Bluestone national operating model approach, which is underpinned by three fundamental principles.

Wiltshire Police RASSO investigations must be:

Victim-centred:

Procedural justice principles underpin all officer and staff interactions with victims. Victim rights and needs inform officer decision-making in RASSO investigations.

Suspect-focused:

Specialist knowledge about sexual offending behaviour and its impact on victims informs RASSO investigations and offence prevention. Officers are bound to act consistently with the human rights of suspects and victims, as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and incorporated into domestic law by the Human Rights Act 1998.

Context-led:

Officers take the context of the offence into consideration from the moment the offence is disclosed to police. This includes the:

- victim-suspect relationship context
- victim context, including whether they want an investigation
- suspect context, uncovered through a suspect-focused investigation

The meaning of 'Context' is to take into consideration the conditions that surround an event or situation, so giving it a fuller or more identifiable meaning than if simply dealt with in isolation.

The Investigator's Journey guidance is central to this model and shows how policing can use this approach throughout the investigation. This guidance can be found on the force's [Operation Soteria Bluestone Sharepoint](#) page.

THE FIRST RESPONSE TO RASSO.

The swift, effective response to, and thorough investigation of RASSO is critical. The current [Crime Screening and Allocation Procedure](#) states that generally, PIP 2 (Professionalising Investigations Programme, level 2) trained investigators from CID or CAIT will deal with penetrative sexual offences (including attempts and non-recent cases).

If there are aggravating factors in any other RASSO case which suggest it may be more suitable for PIP 2 investigation, this should be discussed with the relevant CID or CAIT supervisor.

It is important to acknowledge that during hours outside of normal CID or CAIT duties, initial response to a victim of a RASSO offence may fall to PIP1 trained 'uniformed response' personnel. In such circumstances the FIM should contact the Duty Detective Sergeant for advice.

Please see [SOIT On Call - Terms of Reference](#) and [TOR SOLO deployment from 090112](#).

Responders, investigators and safeguarders must be alert to the status of a victim of serious sexual offences as 'Intimidated' (under section 17 of the Youth Justice & Criminal Evidence Act 1999) and, as such, they will have 'Enhanced Rights' as set out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#).

It will be beneficial for first responders to have read and understood the College of Policing [Briefing note for police first responders to a report of rape or sexual assault](#) which clearly states that the quality of your initial response may influence the victim's decision to support the investigation and in ALL cases you should:

- ensure the victim's safety, understanding any risk posed by the perpetrator to the victim or other people
- identify any immediate medical needs
- initiate the investigation and consider evidence preservation from the outset
- reassure the victim that they have done the right thing in coming forward and reporting
- be non-judgemental
- show empathy and sensitivity
- maintain impartiality
- identify if an interpreter or registered intermediary is required
- speak to the victim in an environment in which they are comfortable
- understand that rape and sexual offences in intimate or ex-intimate partner relationships may occur as part of a pattern of coercive or controlling behaviour or stalking and seek evidence connected with either of these offences
- remember that many victims may be under the age of 18 and are therefore still children and need to be dealt with in accordance with current Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance and Authorised Professional Practice on child abuse investigation.

If a body worn video device is deployed by a first responder, this must only be used to obtain an initial account and only where the victim consents and has the capacity to consent (see [Body Worn Video Procedure](#) section 2.5).

Victim Safety & Wellbeing.

On initial contact, the condition of the victim should be ascertained and if it is apparent that the victim is injured, or is in need of some other medical treatment, suitable arrangements should be made. The safety and wellbeing (both physical and mental) of the victim is the over-riding priority. Those with neuro-diverse or physical disabilities or conditions may need additional support to preserve their health.

Early Evidence & Disclosure.

In relation to deployment of resources, all Wiltshire Police personnel should note the guidance within [Authorised Professional Practice for the investigative process](#) ('First Investigative Steps'), which states:

'The first chance to obtain material may also be the last. The speed of investigative action and the deployment of resources to a scene will increase the chance of protecting, preserving or gathering material that may otherwise be contaminated or lost. It may also improve the chances of identifying and apprehending the suspect earlier.'

When attending as a first responder to a victim of RASSO it is vital that an officer has due regard for the Golden Hour 'Five Building Block Principles' (as defined in Section 1.4.2 of the [Major Crime Investigation Manual](#)):

1. Preservation of Life
2. Preserve Scenes
3. Secure Material
4. Identify Victims
5. Identify and Arrest Suspects

The officer must have with them as a minimum: an **Early Evidence Kit** and a **First Response Booklet: RASSO**. Both of these items should be kept in marked response vehicles.

An electronic version of the First Response booklet is available at the SharePoint Document Centre (Forms & Templates) page ([Form number 1073](#)).

An [Early Evidence Kit video guide](#) is available on the [RASSO Sharepoint](#) site's First Responder Toolkit page.

FORENSIC EVIDENCE.

RASSO cases may provide an opportunity to prove forensically that sexual and/or other physical contact has taken place. It is essential that in our initial response we identify forensic opportunities which may help support lines of enquiry. FFLM Sampling guidelines provide windows of forensic opportunity for physical samples (NOTE: these guidelines are reviewed and refreshed twice per year, so it is important that the latest version is obtained from the website. DO NOT keep and refer to old versions as the guidance in these may now be incorrect). In addition, investigators should be aware of physical injury and task CSI to record those injuries at the time and or in a succession of visits to record emerging injuries.

It is important for first responders to note that, even if a victim is booked to complete a forensic medical, it is best practice to complete an **Early Evidence Kit** prior to transport to Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC). Vital forensic evidence could be lost in the time it takes to get to the SARC, for example, the victim may need to urinate or take on fluids prior to the forensic medical commencing and there a risk (albeit small) of cross contamination when travelling in police vehicles.

It is also important to consider any other evidence that may be at scene, for example discarded tissues, condoms, clothing, drinks bottles, cigarette ends, body fluids, etc. Any potential evidence must be secured as soon as is practicable. Contact the duty DS and or a CSI Manager for further advice.

Victim Body Swabs.

Ideally, skin swabs should be taken from RASSO victims as part of a forensic medical. **Victims should only be asked to self swab in exceptional circumstances** (so, where the alternative is that the forensic evidence will be lost) bearing in mind the fact that they will not be doing this in a forensically clean environment.

Investigators must not swab intimate areas of a victim. Be aware that an 'intimate' sample referred to in relation to victims differs from a suspect intimate sample as defined by Section 65 of PACE 1984. Investigators must avoid taking any skin swabs from an area of a victim's body which would be ordinarily covered by underwear. In addition, investigators must exhibit caution when considering swabs near intimate areas (e.g., the inner thighs).

Investigators should always consider obtaining advice from SARC (in or out of normal hours) – this is particularly important considering the fact that the victim may need a high level of support that a crisis worker is best placed to provide. Though taking a first account and securing evidence is a vital part of the initial investigation of RASSO, police personnel must be mindful that a victim cognitive function could be impaired by the extreme trauma of their ordeal, have misplaced feelings of shame and embarrassment or be fearful of police and authority, which could leave them unable to initially disclose the full details of what happened. An appropriately trained member of SARC may be able to elicit a more accurate and detailed account from the victim and properly assess the victim's immediate medical and welfare needs.

Toxicology.

Where toxicology is to be requested, a detailed history of medication for a victim or suspects may be required. If in doubt, investigators should consult with a CSI.

Forensic Integrity.

It is vital that when any seized evidence that may have forensic value is immediately placed into a forensically clean container or bag and **sealed at the time of seizure**, prior to moving from the current location. A detailed description of the item must be recorded on the exhibit label along with details of continuity to aid identification and maintain the integrity of the exhibit.

Forensic items must **NOT** be later removed from packaging as doing so can cause damage to the integrity of the evidence and further examination by the laboratory could be refused. Further, evidence could later be undermined by the defence in relation to cross-contamination arguments. Therefore, forensic evidence must not be removed from its container unless done so in a forensically clean environment under the guidance of a CSI.

Urgent Forensic Submissions.

Where investigators consider urgent submissions to forensic providers, contact must be made with the On Duty Regional Forensic Coordinator (RFC), details of which are held by local CSI. The RFC will determine and authorise evidence for urgent submission. The RFC must be provided with details of the victim's first account, physical evidence and samples already obtained, together with **Early Evidence Kit** and FFLM documents.

'Non Recent' Offences.

Regardless of the passage of time, there may be forensic opportunities. On a case-by-case basis, investigators should consider conducting a forensic review with local CSI managers, of victim and suspect accounts together with a review of physical evidence.

Consent.

Where consent has the potential to be raised as a defence (e.g., victim and suspect are in a domestic relationship), the tasking of CSI should still be considered. CSI may attend scenes to both search for

and record evidence or the location's environment to support reasonable lines of enquiry in accordance with our CPIA obligations.

VICTIM SUPPORT & SAFEGUARDING.

Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).

Every adult victim of RASSO crimes **must** be signposted to the SARC. The investigator must explain their right to seek support, aware that SARC provides for much more than just the forensic medical.

Always consider the need for urgent medical and welfare advice and be aware that, if emergency medical care is not required at a hospital, SARC will be able to triage the case and if appropriate offer this service. Timescales may be crucial and victims should be advised, for example, that a maximum of 72 hours applies to start HIV treatment and emergency contraception needs to be taken within five days.

The need for medical treatment should be carefully considered regardless of the age of the victim. Although a child may not be considered for pregnancy screening, etc., longer term health and wellbeing must be considered. For example, if Chlamydia is left untreated it can damage a victim's reproductive system, causing permanent infertility.

Victim Self-Referral to SARC.

Where a victim is unable to support a police investigation and or is unable to consent to forensic medical examination, they must as soon as is practicable be informed of their right to self-refer to SARC and be offered contact details.

Every member of Wiltshire Police who has contact with a victim must bear this in mind and pass on the information if the victim is hesitant in voicing their support for police action.

It may be that the victim will require time to process their ordeal before they can engage with support. SARC staff may be able to proactively contact a victim who currently does not wish to engage with the service. Where a victim refuses referral they must be asked at an early opportunity whether they would consent for police to pass their details to SARC for contact to be made from that service at a later time. This decision and whether the victim consents or not, should be recorded.

Where a victim had previously self-referred then later reports to police, the investigator allocated to the case **must at the earliest opportunity** obtain written consent from the victim for police to take any forensic samples previously taken by SARC into police evidence. This signed consent must be provided to the SARC before they will release the forensic samples.

VICTIM SAFEGUARDING.

The safety and welfare of a victim of RASSO must be central to the police response. This is particularly important in cases where the offence occurs within a domestic setting, where the victim is particularly vulnerable due to one or more protected characteristics being a factor, where the suspect is in a position of trust, where honour-based abuse is present, or where the suspect has engaged in stalking behaviours.

In circumstances where a PPN should be submitted, this must still be done and safeguarding appropriate to the identified risk level completed by the initial responder (regardless of whether that responder is uniform or non-uniform police personnel).

Police personnel must be aware that **levels of risk can fluctuate, so safeguarding opportunities must be considered whenever there are changes in circumstances**. For example, risk can escalate if a victim or suspect becomes homeless or if a victim withdraws support for the investigation. A 'flash point' can occur when a significant point of progress in the case is reached - for example, when a suspect becomes aware of a report to police, at the point of arrest or any release from custody or at the point of charge or discontinuance (by police or CPS).

Further to the safety of the victim, all police personnel must consider the risk of further sexual violence a suspect could pose to other members of the public, outside of the current case. Conducting a suspect led investigation and completing extensive intelligence background checks can assist in this regard, as well as considering information and intelligence from the victim(s), witnesses and other third parties and professionals.

All investigators of RASSO offences are encouraged to use the [Suspect Check List](#) aide memoire, available on the Operation Soteria Bluestone SharePoint site.

Further information around safeguarding, risk assessment, information sharing and partnership working can be found in the following force guidance:

[Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure](#)

[Honour Based Abuse \(HBV\) Policy](#)

[Honour Based Abuse FGM and FM Procedure](#)

[Stalking and Harassment Policy and Procedure](#)

[Child Abuse Procedure](#)

INVESTIGATIONS & CASE MANAGEMENT.

When building cases, investigators are encouraged to view the Force RASSO and Operation Soteria Bluestone SharePoint sites along with [CPS case building](#) guidance.

THE 24 HOUR COMMITMENT - Digital Evidence Retrieval From Victim Devices.

Officers and staff who investigate adult rape cases where digital media evidence may need to be obtained from devices belong to the victim must be aware of the requirements of The Home Office 24 Hour Commitment 2022.

In order to raise public confidence around the investigation of rape, the Home Office published 'The 24 hour commitment'. The commitment, which sits alongside Operation Soteria Bluestone, states that no adult rape victim should be without a phone for more than 24 hours during a rape investigation.

Where it is possible and timely to do so, an investigator must consider alternatives to removing an adult rape victim's device as this potentially will leave that person unable to access help and support (or at least make accessing help and support more difficult and so causing further potential distress to the victim).

Alternatives to taking possession of the device are:

- Digivan deployment
- Op Odyssey deployment

If there is no other alternative but to request consent from the victim to take possession of their device, appropriate safeguarding of the victim (including consideration of providing a temporary replacement device at the force's expense) must be considered and recorded. All efforts must be made to ensure the victim's own device is returned within 24 hours.

If a device is not returned to an **adult** rape (or attempted rape) victim within 24 hours, the appropriate form: [THE 24 HOUR COMMITMENT \(office.com\)](#), must be completed and submitted to DIIU as soon as possible.

Interviews of Victims.

All interviews of victims of RASSO should be planned and conducted in accordance with the standards set out in [Achieving Best Evidence In Criminal Proceedings](#) (ABE) guidance.

If a victim chooses to forego parts of the ABE process, for example, 'opting out' of Video Recorded Interview (VRI), or does not wish to be considered for Special Measures, it is critical that these decisions are recorded.

Interviewers must also be aware that the victim has 'Enhanced Rights' set out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) and therefore has a 'right' under the code to request that the police officer conducting the interview is of a gender of their choice. The police must meet such a request unless doing so would prejudice the fairness of the proceedings. If the request is not met, the investigator must explain the reasons why to the victim and record the rationale appropriately.

NCA SERIOUS CRIME ANALYSIS SECTION REFERRAL.

The NCA Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) works to identify the potential emergence of serial killers and serial rapists at the earliest stage of their offending. The SCAS database is a national dataset of over 33,000 serious sexual offences, including over 960 murders.

It is vital that, if the criteria is met, the case details are sent to SCAS within twenty days, whether the offence is detected or undetected.

The [Serious Crime Analysis Sharepoint](#) page provides details of the criteria for a submission, a process map and contact details for the Force SPoC.

EARLY INVESTIGATIVE ADVICE (EIA).

Early consultation is a requirement for rape cases under the Director's Guidance on Charging. It is therefore vital that in all rape cases that are capable of a criminal justice outcome, the OIC considers whether early advice should be sought from CPS Wessex RASSO. The 2020 CPS Wessex 'Partnership Working & Early Advice' newsletter gives the guidance to police and is available on [EIA Sharepoint page](#), along with other advice and guidance for RASSO investigators.

Consideration of early advice is particularly important in cases involving a witness under 10 years of age (see section 5 of the [Police/CPS/HMCTS Young Witness Protocol](#) guidance).

Although EIA should always be considered, it is **not mandatory for every rape case**. However, where a case does meet the criteria for referral but the OIC decides not to bring the case to CPS for early advice (e.g. the early advice will not add value to the investigation), the OIC or their supervisor should record a clear rationale explaining this decision.

SUPERVISORY OVERSIGHT.

It is critical that supervisors have robust oversight of RASSO cases to ensure they are suspect focused, victim centred, context-led and are progressed at an acceptable rate.

All supervisors must comply with force [Investigation and Crime Review Procedure](#), and be aware of the procedure in relation to rape cases specifically (referred to in Section 6 of the procedure).

Rape (including attempts) NFA Decisions (Police).

Where an investigator provides a rationale that a case should be submitted for No Further Action (NFA) without submitting the file to CPS RASSO for a charging decision, the investigator's detective sergeant must notify a detective inspector (usually the DI responsible for the unit or team) to request authority to discontinue the case.

The DI must provide a written rationale as to why the case is appropriate for NFA and only then can the case file be submitted to crime auditors for closure.

Delivering NFA Decisions.

The Investigator's priority at the point of NFA must always be for the victim to be informed of the decision as soon as is practicable whilst remaining sensitive to the impact this could have on them.

Investigators must think carefully about how this message is to be delivered and consider whether a third party, such as ISVA, other support service or friend or family member nominated by the victim could assist in communicating the message and offer support.

NFA decisions must be delivered face to face unless there are circumstances preventing this occurring or the victim requests a different form of contact. Letter templates and other guidance is available in the [Operation Soteria Bluestone Sharepoint site](#).

RELATED DOCUMENTS and Authorised Professional Practice.

- [Authorised Professional Practice for Rape and Sexual Offences](#)
- [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Crime Screening and Allocation Procedure](#)
- [Honour Based Abuse \(HBV\) Policy](#)
- [Honour Based Abuse FGM and FM Procedure](#)
- [Stalking and Harassment Policy and Procedure](#)
- [Child Abuse Procedure](#)
- [Investigation and Crime Review Procedure](#)
- [SOIT On Call - Terms of Reference](#)
- [TOR SOLO deployment from 090112](#)

DATA PROTECTION AND FREEDOM OF INFORMATION.

Any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual recorded as a consequence of this policy will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, General Data Protection Regulations and the Force [Data Protection Policy](#).

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUALITY IMPACT.

This policy has been drafted to comply with the principles of the Human Rights Act 1988 and Equality Act 2010. Members of Wiltshire Police administering this policy are responsible for ensuring that in its application, those to whom the policy applies, shall not receive less favourable treatment because of their age, colour, disability, ethnic or national origin, gender re-assignment, marital status, nationality, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

This policy has been subject to an equality impact assessment and has been graded High Impact. A full Equality Impact Assessment can be found on the [Equality Impact Assessment SharePoint page](#).

Revision History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes
1.0	15.12.2023	First publication.
1.0	11.03.2024	Slight amendments made re. FFLMS guidance and consent from victims for their details to be provided to SARC by police.
1.0	22.09.2025	Reference to Hierarchical Crime Review Procedure changed to Investigation and Crime Review Procedure.