

Rape and sexual offences

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

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Overview

This authorised professional practice (APP) provides guidance on the policing response to rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO). It supports officers, staff, and supervisors in delivering an effective, victim-centred, suspect-focused, context-led approach to the investigation and management of these offences.

RASSO investigations are complex and sensitive, requiring a coordinated and trauma-informed response that prioritises victim safety, gathers best evidence and builds public trust and confidence while bringing offenders to justice and holding them to account. The APP aligns with national frameworks, including the national operating model (NOM) for RASSO, Operation Soteria and Joint National Action Plan.

The purpose of this guidance is to:

- provide guidance and good practice principles for the investigation and management of RASSO
- ensure a consistent national approach across forces that reflects the latest evidence, research, and insight from Operation Soteria
- promote decision-making that supports victims, maintains public confidence, and is procedurally just for all victims.
- support effective activity to hold offenders to account and secure justice for victims
- signpost officers and practitioners to relevant national resources, frameworks, and tools that support effective RASSO investigations.

National operating model

The national operating model (NOM) has been co-developed by [Operation Soteria](#) to support forces improve their response to RASSO. Operation Soteria is a national programme delivered by

the National Centre for VAWG and Public Protection, working in partnership with the National Police Chiefs' Council, College of Policing, and Home Office to drive change in the policing and prosecution of rape.

Operation Soteria emphasises a victim-centred, suspect-focused and context-led approach, supporting forces to transform their investigation of RASSO through a systemic programme of change and learning over time.

The **national operating model** reflects the principles and learning emerging from Operation Soteria and is designed to support forces in embedding these within local practice. It provides a continuously evolving evidence-based framework for how police should investigate adult rape and serious sexual offences.

All forces should use the NOM as their primary reference, supported by associated materials within this APP. Access to the NOM is restricted to police personnel because of the operational sensitivity of its content.

The national operating model for RASSO is the principal source of guidance in this area. This includes specific guidance for first responders, investigators, supervisors, leaders as well as strategic information.

Officers and staff using the NOM for the first time should familiarise themselves with the introductory toolkits, including:

- **Introduction to the NOM**
- **NOM scope and terminology**
- **Whole story**

Supporting resources

Officers and staff should consider the following tools and resources in addition to the NOM, to assist in delivering effective RASSO responses:

- **RASSO actions for offences committed abroad**
- **CPS RASSO operational information**
- **CPS RASSO case building**
- **CPS Easy read victims' guides**

Tags

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