

Rape and serious sexual offences – training for first responders

Published on 29 September 2023

New training helps police to investigate rape and serious sexual offences, and support victims

News 2 mins read

We've created training to help police understand the psychology of sex offenders and how they manipulate victims. The training is for anyone in force who provides an initial response to rape and serious sexual offences (RASSO) and may need to offer support to victims.

The training focuses on the whole story surrounding a rape or sexual assault, rather than looking at an incident in isolation. This means looking at the whole relationship between the suspect and the victim, however brief, including any grooming or manipulation. It's based on learning developed by Operation Soteria, a project led by academics to improve police responses to reports of rape and serious sexual assaults.

Learning outcomes

During the training, officers and staff will learn about sex offenders, victims' responses to these traumatic events, myths and misconceptions about rape, communication skills, victim support, and effective response.

By the end of the training, officers and staff will be able to:

- understand that offending begins with offenders and look at the psychology behind how an offender's mind works, the way they see the world and tactics they may use
- understand the relationships surrounding sexual offending and how an offender can groom or manipulate a victim in order to offend, or create vulnerability such as using alcohol or drugs
- identify, assess and manage the risk posed by the suspect to the victim or others

- identify crime scenes and early forensic opportunities within a rape or serious sexual offence to ensure evidence is preserved for investigation
- identify and challenge the myths and misconceptions surrounding victim behaviour and understanding how grooming, manipulation and fear can impact this. A first responder is often responsible for the initial steps in an investigation, so it's important they understand how a victim's behaviour can be influenced in different ways under different circumstances
- understand how to support victims with referrals to partner organisations for further help, as well as listen to their needs and consider the best ways of communicating with victims with different needs – for example, the best communication method and the best use of language
- apply what they have learned in the training package to their past or live cases with the support of a trainer

The first four modules of the training package are completed online via College Learn. The last module is completed in a classroom environment by a trainer in force. We're running train the trainer sessions, so trainers can teach across all 43 forces across England and Wales and to ensure the learning is of a consistent standard.

Rape and serious sexual offences can have an incredibly traumatic impact on victims which is why it is essential that we are able to provide the best possible support and understanding at every stage from the initial report to the conclusion of an investigation and beyond.

By better understanding the psychology of offenders who commit rape and sexual assault, we can make sure the victim is at the centre of the investigation and the entirety of the context and the circumstances are considered so that offenders can be brought to justice for these very serious offences.

David Tucker, Head of Crime, College of Policing

- [Access the training on College Learn \(you will need to log in\)](#)
- [National operating model for the investigation of RASSO \(Operation Soteria\)](#)

Tags

Rape and sexual offences Violence against women and girls