

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SEXUAL VIOLENCE STRATEGY 2023-2026

GLOUCESTERSHIRE
SEXUAL VIOLENCE PARTNERSHIP



CONTENTS

01. Foreword	3
02. Gloucestershire's Vision for Tackling Sexual Violence	4
03. Priorities & Outcomes	5
04. Context	12
05. National Policy Landscape	13
06. Gloucestershire Sexual Violence Needs Assessment	16
07. Recommendations From Needs Assessment	19
08. Survivor Voices In Gloucestershire	20
09. Gloucestershire Commissioning Context	21
10. National And Local Policy Context	23
11. Glossary	29



This document contains live links to online documents. When you see this symbol it means there's an active link you can click on.

01

FOREWORD

It is both shocking and shameful that in the UK one in four women, one in 20 men and one in six children have been affected by rape or sexual abuse in the year ending March 2022, when there were 70,330 reported rapes - the highest number ever recorded.

In Gloucestershire, the Constabulary recorded **2169** sexual offences in the year ending September 2022, that is an average of **6 sexual offences every day of the year**. From these figures alone, it is indisputable that more needs to be done in order to stop Sexual Violence within our communities.

Nationally, there has been continued development in the area of Sexual Violence in terms of the creation of strategies such as the Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2021), Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Strategy 2025, the Police and CPS Joint National Action plan (2021) as well as a general increased public awareness. Within Gloucestershire there has been direct action to increase the feelings of safety

for survivors and victims, and one example of this has been embedding Operation Soteria within Gloucestershire Constabulary. This has included the creation of the FLARE app, which allows people to report experiences or places where they feel threatened anonymously. Within education, local organisations have created lesson plans and videos around consent for school children, incorporating a specially commissioned animation from the Bristol based BAFTA and Oscar award-winning studio Aardman. My office has been successful in bidding for pots of money, including the Home Office Safer Streets fund, which has allowed for further educational videos, bystander training, CCTV, lighting and more equipment for the Constabulary's forensic team. All of this is done alongside the Sexual Violence Partnership Board, which involves a collaboration of local services, organisations, providers, police and the OPCC.

As Police and Crime Commissioner, tackling male violence and intimidation against women and girls is one of the priorities of my Police and Crime Prevention Plan. We are

2169 **SEXUAL OFFENCES**
IN THE YEAR ENDING
SEP 2022

listening to victims and survivors, helping to improve policies and practices as well as supporting and resourcing support services. Support we have funded includes counselling through Tic+ and Gloucestershire Counselling Services, Independent Sexual Violence Advisors and Specialist Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors.

Despite the progress that has been made, there is still more to be done and this Sexual Violence Strategy **aims to improve our responses to Sexual Violence**. I am looking forward to having a positive impact in Gloucestershire, bringing partners together and helping to support the continued collaboration and hard work of local organisations.

CHRIS NELSON,
GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

GLOUCESTERSHIRE VISION FOR TACKLING SEXUAL VIOLENCE 2023-2026



For Gloucestershire to be a county that effectively tackles the stereotypes that contribute to sexual violence in our society, focusing on education, re-education and empowerment to create genuine change.

For the reduction in sexual violence to be a priority for all, where a collaborative partnership approach ensures a robust response to perpetrators and prioritises improving the health and wellbeing of survivors, their families and wider community, where those with lived experience are at the heart of our response.

02

PRIORITIES & OUTCOMES

01

PRIORITY 01
**CREATING LONG
TERM CULTURAL
CHANGE AND
PREVENTING
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

02

PRIORITY 02
**SURVIVOR LED
HIGH QUALITY
SERVICE
PROVISION**

03

PRIORITY 03
**BUILDING CAPACITY
AND CONFIDENCE
IN THE CRIMINAL
JUSTICE SYSTEM
AND HOLDING
PERPETRATORS TO
ACCOUNT**

04

PRIORITY 04
**COLLABORATIVE
APPROACHES
TO IMPROVE ACCESS
AND AWARENESS
OF SUPPORT**

05

PRIORITY 05
**SUSTAINING A
STRONG AND
RESILIENT
WORKFORCE**

03

PRIORITY 1:
**CREATING LONG
TERM CULTURAL
CHANGE AND
PREVENTING
SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

- + **Local processes** in place to develop a public health approach to Sexual Violence (SV) and Sexual Harassment (SH), and plans are developed to adopt interventions that focus on primary prevention activity across the county.
- + **Development of a joint plan** for specialist education around SV and SH to ensure ongoing delivery and investment in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DA LPB).
- + **Raise awareness of consent/healthy relationship behaviours** through the development and delivery of a countywide communications/media plan. Ensuring a focus on the role of the community in challenging the attitudes that contribute to SV and SH, creating a culture change that challenges offenders and reduces the stigma for victims.
- + **Support early identification and response to all victims of SV** that reflects the role of community groups in supporting cultural change through the development of a service user and community engagement plan.
- + **Engage with the night time economy** and other relevant businesses to support awareness raising activity, bystander interventions and recognising the importance of public safety through the development of a multi-agency plan.
- + **Tackling sexual offending** through exploring options to support education settings.
- + **Development of a survey to understand gaps** in knowledge amongst young people and the ongoing assessment of the impact of awareness campaigns locally.

03

PRIORITY 2: SURVIVOR LED HIGH QUALITY SERVICE PROVISION

- + **Ongoing efforts to secure funding** to invest in sustainable high quality services that are based on local needs assessments and survivor voice.
- + **Ongoing development of a SV Needs Assessment** every three years to define and monitor SV at a local level.
- + **Support the local implementation of national best practice** including approaches to working with victims/survivors of SV.
- + **Ensure SV services are accessible and representative** of people with protected characteristics through positive engagement with specialist organisations and groups. Ensuring service offers are developed to increase referrals aligned to local demographics.
- + **Address local gaps in service provision** for victims from minority groups and in particular migrant victims of SV through exploration of best practice and local research.
- + **Development of local approaches** to consider the commissioning of research and the use of emerging evidence and best practice in future commissioning.
- + **Ensure the use of research**, emerging evidence and best practice in future commissioning to continue to develop the local approach to SV.
- + **Development of a SV commitment plan** for commissioners of specialist services.
- + **Development of a partnership plan** that considers our local approach to online sexual violence and for this to be included in a multi-agency communications strategy.

03

PRIORITY 3: BUILDING CAPACITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM AND HOLDING PERPETRATORS TO ACCOUNT



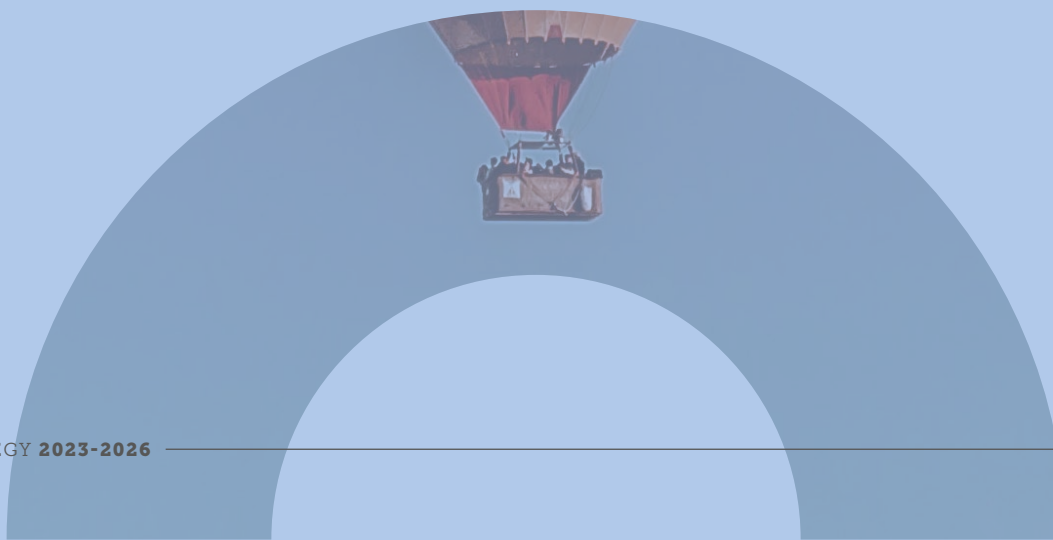
- + **Implementation of Operation Soteria Bluestone** in Gloucestershire to improve and enhance the service offer provided by Gloucestershire Constabulary, building on best practice approaches. Operation Soteria Bluestone will underpin the constabulary's delivery for this strategy. Please also see pg.27.
- + **Raise awareness of pathways** to support and promote positive action taken, including successful prosecutions locally to increase public confidence. Developing a multi-agency communications plan.
- + **To ensure lessons can be learnt locally** to improve the CJS response to survivors of SV through the development of a consultation plan for those with lived experience. Ensuring all elements of the CJS are aware of the victim's experience.
- + **Identify and respond to high risk/harm offenders of SV**, domestic abuse (DA) and stalking, through the development and implementation of the Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination (MATAC) process in Gloucestershire.
- + **Exploration of approaches to behavioural change** work with offenders of SV and consideration of local service need.
- + **Challenge offending behaviour** through local campaigns and awareness raising, holding perpetrators to account through multi-agency communications plans.
- + **Ensure an increase in the volume of cases** referred by police to Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) through the exploration and implementation of opportunities to strengthen partnerships with the CPS. Development and implementation of scrutiny panels to ensure learning is shared and standards of investigation and decision making are improved.

03




PRIORITY 4:
**COLLABORATIVE
APPROACHES TO
IMPROVE ACCESS
AND AWARENESS
OF SUPPORT**

- + **Support those with mental health needs**, substance misuse issues and wider complex needs through the development of joint working and collaborative approaches between SV services (considering information sharing practices).
- + **Raise awareness of SV and support services** through the development and delivery of a countywide communications/media plan.
- + **Ensure frontline professionals in the county can effectively respond to disclosure**, signpost to support and challenge offending behaviour through the development of a sexual violence training pathway.
- + **Consideration of joint working with the DA LPB** and the development of a 'Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Workplace Charter'.
- + **Explore options to clarify the local approach** and pathways to support for victims of harmful traditional practices that link into the SV agenda.



03



PRIORITY 5:
**SUSTAINING
A STRONG AND
RESILIENT
WORKFORCE**

- + **Commit to long-term commissioning of services through the development of a multi-agency commissioning approach.** Acknowledging the true cost of provision and the importance of a strong and resilient workforce.
- + **Continued identification of opportunities** for national funding to be brought into the local commissioning landscape.
- + **Aim to increase local funding** where possible through considering initiatives and internal business cases.
- + **Development of a local approach to clinical supervision for specialist staff** through consultation between services and commissioners to ensure a resilient specialist workforce.

04

CONTEXT

The Gloucestershire Sexual Violence (SV) Strategy 2023-2026 aims to ensure that the reduction in experienced SV and Sexual Harassment (SH) and increased support for those who experience it, continues to be a priority within Gloucestershire. This Strategy builds on the work of the Sexual Violence Partnership (SVP) and works in conjunction with the County Domestic Abuse Local Partnership Board (DA LPB) and Strategy (2021-2024).

Gloucestershire recognises the devastating impact that sexual violence and sexual harassment have on individuals, families and the wider community. In particular, it acknowledges the impact it can have on how women, girls, transgender people and some men access public spaces, their perception of safety and fear of crime.

There is a continued commitment to collaboration between statutory partners and the specialist and voluntary sector, to ensure support is in place for all victims of SV and SH, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and

disability. Partnership approaches will focus on prevention, victim service provision and holding perpetrators to account.

The scope of this strategy will consider both SV and SH, including public space safety. Given the links to domestic abuse, the Gloucestershire SVP is also committed to ensuring a joined up approach with the County DA LPB through shared membership and joint project work where necessary.

This strategy has been produced by the Gloucestershire SVP. All agencies represented on the Board had input into the co-production of the strategy. It is informed by people with lived experience, community engagement activity and a number of documents including: The Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) Health Needs Assessment (NHSE, 2020); The Sexual Abuse and Assault Therapeutic Pathway Needs Assessment (NHSE, 2021) and The Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment (2021).

The Gloucestershire SVP was established formally in 2019, marking a move away from combining both the domestic abuse (DA) and SV agendas, ensuring each area had its own

"

GLoucestershire recognises the devastating impact that sexual violence and sexual harassment has on individuals

specific strategic focus whilst still ensuring links between the Partnership Boards were maintained. The SVP consists of two tiers; a Strategic Group that focuses on commissioning of specialist services, securing funding, resolving issues raised by specialist services and overseeing the wider sexual violence pathway; and the Full SVP which leads on the implementation of the strategy and local developments to enhance the local response to SV and SH. Provider organisations are represented at the Full SVP. In addition, the SVP and DA LPB share a Consultation Network and Consultation Officer to ensure the work of both Partnership Boards is fully informed by those with lived experience as well as the work of wider community groups and organisations.

For governance processes, the SVP Board reports into Safer Gloucestershire and provides updates to the Gloucestershire Criminal Justice Board, where appropriate.

NATIONAL POLICY LANDSCAPE:

BACKGROUND TO RESPONDING TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE

05

Sexual Violence (SV) is used to describe any sexual activity that happened without consent covering, but not limited to, the offences defined in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 including rape, sexual assault and assault by penetration¹.

In the main, SV falls under the Government umbrella term of 'Violence against women and girls' (VAWG) with an estimated **22.9%** of women and **4.7%** of men having experienced some type of sexual assault since the age of 16². The term VAWG³ reflects a range of crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls⁴ such as SV, DA and 'honour-based violence', both nationally and locally however, it is recognised that these crime types are not experienced solely by women and girls and therefore the experience of men, boys and non-binary individuals is also considered, whilst still acknowledging the disproportionate experience of women and girls.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) estimated that **773,000** adults aged between **16-74** (1.8% of the

population) had been victims of sexual assault, including attempted sexual assault in the year ending March 2020⁵. For the year ending March 2020, the CSEW showed that an estimated **5.9 million** victims aged **16 to 74** years had experienced sexual assault since the **age of 16 years**. This equates to a prevalence rate of approximately **14 in 100** adults⁶. Despite these high numbers, only approximately **1 in 6** victims of rape or assault by penetration report to police⁷.

The number of reported offences have continually increased year on year with the biggest increase in reporting seen in the period of April to June 2021 with **48,003** sexual offences being reported across England and Wales. This followed fluctuations during the periods of national lockdown in 2020 where reporting of sexual offences dropped from **40,884** sexual offences being reported in January to March 2020 to **31,655** in April to June of the same year.



¹ *Sexual Offences Act 2003 (legislation.gov.uk)*

² *www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwales/annualsupplementarytables*

³ *Locally Gloucestershire Constabulary and the OPCC use the term Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG)*

⁴ *Policing violence against women and girls - National framework for delivery: Year 1 (npcc.police.uk)*

⁵ *Sexual offences prevalence and trends, England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)*

⁶ *www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesprevalenceandtrendsenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2020*

⁷ *Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)*

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THE CRIME SURVEY FOR ENGLAND AND WALES ESTIMATED THAT 773,000 ADULTS AGED BETWEEN 16-74 HAD BEEN VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

Whilst reporting has increased overall (apart from the lockdown period mentioned above), there are clear disparities between the numbers of reports to police compared to the number of offences that are actually occurring. This can be seen with the offence of rape where there are an estimated **128,000 victims** of rape a year⁹ of which only **20%** will report to police⁹. Alongside this, there has also been a steady decline in the number of cases being referred to the CPS for a prosecution decision with data from March 2020 indicating that of the **56,000 rapes** reported only **4,481** were referred to the CPS. From this small number of referrals only **3%** then resulted in a successful prosecution with prosecution rates noted as sharply declining since 2016/17 (Rape Review 2021).

Following this sharp decline in prosecution rates, the Rape Review (2021) was commissioned by the UK government to look at evidence across the CJS to better understand this decline and make recommendations for change.

End Violence Against Women (EVAW) and the Centre for Women's Justice provided evidence of case studies to the Rape Review (2021) that demonstrated that women who had reported offences had felt deeply let down by the CJS. These case studies, alongside the research commissioned under this review, resulted in a series of actions being developed to secure improvements across the CJS; this is now a priority both nationally and locally.

Prior to the release of the Rape Review, the CPS released the Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) Strategy 2025¹⁰, a 5 year plan which sets out the role that the CPS will play in making sure the right person is prosecuted for the offence. The aim is to provide a fair, high-quality and sensitive service which is responsive to the individual needs of victims, with an overarching aim of increasing public confidence in the CJS and reducing the gap between reports of RASSO and criminal justice outcomes.

A significant element of the RASSO 2025 Strategy was focused on ensuring a collaborative approach with police to improve investigations and prosecutions of RASSO allegations; highlighted further in the joint inspectorate report¹¹ into the police and CPS response to rape by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) which found that there needed to be fundamental change in the way both organisations worked together.

ESTIMATED 128,000 VICTIMS OF RAPE A YEAR

⁹ *The end-to-end rape review report on findings and actions (publishing.service.gov.uk)*

¹⁰ *Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) 2025 | The Crown Prosecution Service (cps.gov.uk)*

¹¹ *A joint thematic inspection of the police and Crown Prosecution Service's response to rape – Phase one: From report to police or CPS decision to take no further action - HMICFRS (justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)*

05

The Joint National Action Plan, released in 2021, demonstrates a commitment from the CPS and police to work effectively together to focus on:

- + **Supporting victims** - increasing investigators' and prosecutors' understanding of the impact of abuse and improving communications
- + **Addressing issues** related to casework quality
- + **Balancing the needs of an investigation with the right to privacy** through work on digital capability and disclosure
- + **Supporting organisation staff** with learning and development
- + **Working openly and collaboratively** and being accountable through stakeholder engagement

This more victim-focused approach is directly in support of the Victims' Code¹², which aims to increase victims' understanding of their rights, setting out the minimum standard expected from services outlined within the code, including those organisations that make up the CJS. For victims of SV in particular, it sets out their right to be able to access specialist support from Independent Advisors.

Alongside the publication of the Victims' Code, the Government also recently refreshed its National Statement of Expectations for commissioning VAWG services, setting out the expectations for local areas in their response to VAWG to ensure that local areas:

- + **Put the victim at the centre** of service delivery
- + **Have a clear focus** on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe
- + **Take a strategic, system-wide approach** to commissioning, acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG
- + **Have locally led approaches** that safeguard individuals at every point
- + **Raise local awareness** of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG

Overall, the Government's focus has been outlined in the Tackling Violence against Women and Girls Strategy (2021-24), prioritising prevention, support to victims and pursuit of perpetrators and building a stronger system; all areas reflected on locally by the SVP in its development of this strategy.

DATA SHOWS OF 56,000 RAPES REPORTED ONLY 4,481 WERE REFERRED TO THE CPS

ONLY 3% THEN RESULTED IN A SUCCESSFUL PROSECUTION

¹² MoJ Victims Code 2020 (publishing.service.gov.uk)



GLOUCESTERSHIRE SEXUAL VIOLENCE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

06

In 2019, Perpetuity Research was commissioned by the Gloucestershire Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to conduct a SV Needs Assessment to understand the needs of both services and victims across Gloucestershire, to support the development of the approach being taken by the SVP.

With the unexpected arrival of the covid-19 pandemic in 2020 however, it was agreed that a refreshed Needs Assessment was required in order to understand the impact of the pandemic on victims and services. This refresh was commissioned in 2021. There were shared themes across both these assessments, which are encapsulated in this section.

On the next pages is a brief summary of the Needs Assessments, including national and local data. Some data presented has been sought outside of the needs assessment in order to provide an up to date picture across Gloucestershire.

06 NATIONAL DATA

183,587

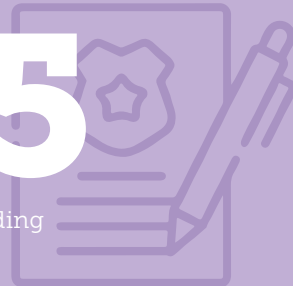
sexual offences were recorded in the 12 month period in the year ending December 2021, increasing by 22% from the year ending December 2020 (which could have been affected by the pandemic)

1.6M

Adults reported to the Crime Survey of England and Wales that they had experience sexual assault by rape or penetration

67,125

were rapes recorded by police in the year ending December 2021



17,699

Online child sex offences recorded by Police in England and Wales between April and September 2020 compared to **15,183** during the same time period in 2019

16%

REPORTED THE ASSAULT TO POLICE

38%

DIDN'T THINK THE POLICE COULD HELP

34%

THOUGHT IT WOULD BE HUMILIATING¹³



¹³ Nature of sexual assault by rape or penetration, England and Wales (ons.gov.uk)

26%

Of sexual offences cases had not yet been assigned an outcome (reflecting the complexity of cases and length of time required to investigate), as shown by the National outcomes data for the year ending March 2020

06

LOCAL DATA (GLOUCESTERSHIRE FORCE AREA)

475

Rapes recorded by police in 2019/20, an increase from **370** in 2018/2019¹⁴ (from Rape Monitoring Group dashboard)

335

of these recorded rapes were of victims over 16

311

FEMALE

24

MALE

The highest prevalence of sexual violence areas are

GLOUCESTER & CHELTENHAM

according to police data

¹⁴Rape Monitoring Group digests - HMICFRS ([justiceinspectorates.gov.uk](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk))

The highest prevalence of recorded offences in 2020 were sexual assaults on females aged 13+ and rape of female aged 16+, closely followed by sexual activity involving children under the age of 16.

349

FEMALE AGED 13+

344

FEMALE AGED 16+

177

CHILDREN UNDER 16

Increasing number of sexual offences recorded

1,356

OFFENCES IN 2020

1,276

OFFENCES IN 2019

1,185

OFFENCES IN 2018

In 2020/21 Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC) received over

10,000

contacts with survivors across their services with

48%

of survivors who contacted them reporting to police

264

Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) referrals in 2021/22.

421

Referrals to Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in 2021

In the 2020/21 financial year, TIC+ Supported

84

young people and their families. Equating to...

688

attended counselling sessions who either had Sexual Assault mentioned either at referral or during counselling.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM NEEDS ASSESSMENT

07



SERVICES

- + Individual person-led services
- + Future development of counselling services



YOUNG PEOPLE

- + Increased prevention work
- + Ensuring timely access to services through a variety of means
- + Access to a range of support – including for non-offending parents



STAFF WELLBEING

- + Ensuring wellbeing of staff on all levels
- + Sharing of best practice with other services



RAISING AWARENESS

- + Promotion of services
- + Education around Sexual Violence



ENGAGE COMMUNITY

- + Improvement of accessibility on all inter sectional levels
- + Research into best practice



SVP WORKING

- + Incorporation of Service Users
- + Maintain and develop positive working practices



UNDERSTAND DEMAND

- + With particular focus on understanding demand from under engaged groups



OFFENDERS

- + Targeting offenders and holding them accountable for their behaviour

SURVIVOR VOICES IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Individuals with lived experience of SV are in the unique position of being able to provide their view on how local approaches and services can be improved. It is therefore a commitment of the SVP to ensure survivor voices are at the forefront of our response and help to shape the partnerships priorities and local delivery.

As part of the commissioned SV Needs Assessments (by Perpetuity), online 'survivors' surveys' were conducted in order to ensure the voice of those with lived experience was captured to help influence local recommendations and actions¹⁵. The following provides a summary of the key findings from these survivor surveys:

¹⁵It is recognised that this is not representative of all experiences in Gloucestershire, but was designed to provide a snapshot of lived experience. The development of the Consultation Network will aim to increase representation of victim/survivor voice.

A NEED TO INCREASE EDUCATION REGARDING SV and increase awareness of what constitutes SV

ENSURE THE PROVISION OF LONG TERM SUPPORT IS MADE AVAILABLE and support to be more quickly and easily accessible

ENSURE THE PROTECTION OF EXISTING SINGLE SEX SPACES and opportunities to increase this provision across Gloucestershire

INCREASE IN OPTIONS FOR SUPPORT that recognise the diverse needs of all victims

A NEED TO REDUCE THE STIGMA around talking about SV

ENSURE THE PROVISION OF ALTERNATIVE routes to police reporting

A NEED TO REDUCE THE JUDGEMENT of victims and improving professional empathy

A NEED TO IMPROVE CJS outcomes

In recognition of the ongoing importance of reflecting on the views of those with lived experience in the work of the SVP, a Consultation Officer role has been established in conjunction with the DA LPB. This role will ensure the development of a Consultation Network to provide an opportunity for victim/survivor voice to be fed into the SVP as well as engaging with a broader range of stakeholders, such as community groups and voluntary sector organisations, to identify local priorities, concerns and issues and seek views on current service offer, gaps and future developments; helping to shape the local response.

In addition, the SVP will include academic representation to ensure emerging evidence and victim focused researched is considered regularly within the partnership and its work.

08

GLOUCESTERSHIRE COMMISSIONING CONTEXT

A partnership approach is taken in Gloucestershire to the commissioning of SV support services.

The following sets out the current (September 2022) local specialist provision and commissioning arrangements:

09

INDEPENDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE ADVISOR (ISVA) SERVICE:

Provided by Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Assault Centre (GRASAC), the ISVA service is a specialist countywide service providing practical help and emotional support to anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted at any time in their lives. The service is available to all, regardless of age, gender and background and provides:

- + **Support and information** to help a survivor decide if they wish to report to the police
- + **Support and information** in understanding the legal process and victims' rights
- + **Advocacy for victims** going through the criminal justice process
- + **Support through** any court processes
- + **Support in identifying** victims/survivor needs and access to other specialist support such as counselling, mental health, sexual health and substance misuse support

SEXUAL ASSAULT REFERRAL CENTRE (SARC):

Provided by Gloucestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, the SARC provides medical and forensic services for anyone who has been raped or sexually assaulted. People can self-refer or be referred by the police or another organisation. There is no pressure to inform the police unless the victim/survivor chooses to do so. The service is located at Hope House at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital and provides:

- + **Immediate crisis support** to victims of rape and sexual assault including the assessment of safeguarding needs
- + **Immediate assessment of health needs following rape and sexual assault**, including assessment and treatment of injuries and access to emergency contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis for HIV
- + **Assessment of mental health** needs and other vulnerabilities

09

- + **Storage of medical records and forensic samples** for those who are not ready to report to police
- + **Onward referral to other specialist services** such as ISVA services and counselling provision

This service is commissioned by NHS England alongside the OPCC, with the current contract in place from 1st October 2022 to 30th September 2029. The service is funded by NHS England and the OPCC/Gloucestershire Police.

Children and young people who have experienced abuse are seen at the Paediatric Centre of Excellence, hosted by the SARC in Bristol. Children and families are referred to Gloucestershire services for follow-up support and onward provision.

COUNSELLING AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT:

Commissioned by Gloucestershire NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB), counselling and emotional support services are provided by:

+ GLOUCESTERSHIRE COUNSELLING SERVICE (GCS):

Commissioned to provide specialist counselling to victims of SV of any gender, aged 0-21 and their parents/carers. They are also commissioned to provide specialist counselling for male victims of any age.

+ TEENS IN CRISIS (TIC+):

Commissioned to provide specialist counselling, both face to face and online, for victims of SV aged 9-21.

+ GLOUCESTERSHIRE RAPE AND SEXUAL ASSAULT CENTRE (GRASAC):

Commissioned to provide specialist emotional support to female victims of SV of any age.

+ SEXUAL ASSAULT REFERRAL CENTRE (SARC):

Commissioned to provide specialist emotional support to female victims of SV of any age.

Recurrent funding is provided by NHS England and Gloucestershire ICB. Services also receive time-limited and grant funding from charitable sources (such as Children in Need and the Big Lottery) and from statutory bodies (such as the Home Office and the MoJ).

SEX WORKER OUTREACH PROJECT (SWOP):

Provided by The Nelson Trust, SWOP provides evening outreach operating in close proximity to where women are street sex working. This outreach is supported by a donated decommissioned police van from Gloucestershire Constabulary. The team provide practical and emotional support, in addition to offering "care bags". The National Ugly Mugs (NUM) system is utilised to report and alert the women regarding risky individuals and the SWOP also engages with

neighbourhood policing teams for general advice and support for the women to report crime including sexual assault and rape.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING INTO THE SV PATHWAY:

Through a multi-year funding opportunity from the MoJ, Gloucestershire OPCC have secured additional funding and extra resource through the Sexual Violence Fund and the ISVA fund. This funding is available up until March 2025 and provides the following additional provision:

- + **2 Children and Young People's ISVAs** awarded to GRASAC
- + **3 Adult ISVAs** awarded to GRASAC
- + **Counselling** support for TIC+
- + **Counselling** support for GCS
- + **Group support** for under-represented groups provided by GRASAC

In addition, the OPCC currently provide funding to GRASAC for a Child Sexual Abuse Specialist Support Worker and Rural Specialist Support Worker from the MoJ's Core Victim Grant which has been funded since 2017/18. Many of the services funded formally through the SV pathway also receive a range of additional funding through charitable funds in order to provide a broader range of services across Gloucestershire.

10

NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT



The titles on this page are live links. Simply click on them to be taken to the linked article.

NATIONAL

TACKLING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (2021-24)

The strategy to tackle VAWG 2021 – 2024, provides a specific focus on the types of violence and abuse which are more likely to be experienced by women and girls including domestic abuse, sexual violence/harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), honour based violence, stalking, sex work, modern slavery and human trafficking, child sexual exploitation (CSE) and supporting female offenders. This strategy places a focus on prioritising prevention, supporting victims, pursuing perpetrators and there being a stronger system.

RASSO 2025

This strategy sets out the CPS plan for the next 5 years outlining the role the CPS will play in improving the way RASSO

cases are approached. The aim of the strategy overall is to ‘narrow the disparity between the number of offences reported to the police and the cases going to court’¹⁶. Looking internally at the CPS as well as externally on their collaboration with partners, RASSO 2025 considers how to better support victims and how to improve trust in the CJS.

¹⁶ *Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) 2025 | The Crown Prosecution Service (cps.gov.uk)*

CPS NATIONAL OPERATING MODEL

In 2023, the CPS have published the National Operating Model to outline their way of working to transform prosecution of adult rape cases.

POLICE-CPS JOINT NATIONAL RASSO ACTION PLAN 2021

The Police-CPS Joint National RASSO Action Plan (2021) comes from the above RASSO 2025 strategy and envisions how the police and the CPS will work together in order to improve their joint response to RASSO over 3 years. It aims to help deliver fair investigations and prosecutions, placing a focus on collaboration between the organisations with actions designed to make sure that there is a clear understanding of the roles they play and their remit. It also aims to build confidence in the system for both victims and the general public, with actions specifically around supporting victims of rape.

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VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS NATIONAL STATEMENT OF EXPECTATIONS (2022)

This statement sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure that their response to VAWG is collaborative, robust and effective. This is to ensure that all victims and survivors can get the help they need. It asks for local areas to put the victim at the centre of their strategies; have a clear focus on perpetrators; a strategic and a system wide approach to commissioning; is locally-led and safeguards individuals at every point; raises local awareness of the issues and involves, engages and empowers communities to seek, design and deliver solutions.

THE NATIONAL VICTIMS' STRATEGY

The National Victims' Strategy places a focus on: overarching improvements to victims' experience; support available whether or not victims report a crime; improving support once a victim reports a crime; better support during the court process and ensuring that victims understand court decisions and the implications for them and the offender.

MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Modern slavery is a complex crime that encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking. Domestic abuse, including sexual offences, is experienced by many victims of modern slavery and some are exploited or trafficked by intimate partners or family members; this is particularly the case for victims of domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, who are predominantly women and girls. The Modern Slavery Strategy aims to disrupt perpetrators, prevent exploitation, protect victims, and prepare systems to respond.

Locally, Gloucestershire County Council chairs the multi-agency Gloucestershire Anti-Slavery Partnership and has a modern slavery strategy under development.

THE VICTIMS' CODE

The Victims' Code was originally created in 2005 and sets out the minimum standards that must be provided to victims of crime by organisations. It sets out that all victims of crime should be treated in a respectful, sensitive and professional manner without discrimination and outlines 12 victims' rights.

FEMALE OFFENDER STRATEGY

The National Criminal Justice Board's female offender strategy recognises that many female offenders experience chaotic lifestyles involving substance misuse, mental health problems, and homelessness which are often the product of a life of abuse and trauma. The strategy aims to take a new approach which is locally-led, partnership focused and evidence-based in order to address vulnerability and treat offenders as individuals with the potential to contribute positively to society.

DOMESTIC ABUSE ACT 2021

The DA Act 2021 sets out to define domestic abuse and makes provision for a DA Commissioner as well as outlining the statutory duty of local areas to provide support within safe accommodation. SV falls under the definition of DA in the Act if that behaviour is committed by a person aged 16 year or over who is personally connected to the victim. Additionally, the Act outlines special measures and protections for victims and witnesses within legal proceedings, particularly outlining that witnesses are eligible for assistance on the grounds of fear or distress about testifying about a sexual offence or modern slavery.

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LOCAL

SAFER GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Addressing DA and SV is one of the six priorities of Safer Gloucestershire, alongside substance misuse, safeguarding children, and violence prevention. The strategy makes a commitment to ensuring a zero-tolerance approach to DA and SV, including honour based violence and forced marriage. This includes identifying and offering help earlier to victims and families; supporting professionals from all organisations to support victims in coming forward; and working together to make best use of resources.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE CRIMINAL JUSTICE BOARD (GCJB)

Gloucestershire's criminal justice board is chaired by the Police and Crime Commissioner and attended by Police, CPS, HMCTS, HMPPS, Youth Support and OPCC colleagues. For GCJB, addressing SV sits under the broader umbrella of violence and intimidation against women and girls (VIAWG), which is one of four priorities that GCJB is focusing on. The board is committed to overseeing work in Gloucestershire with partners to improve prevention and victim care; bringing offenders to justice and improving criminal justice outcomes

for victims; and the development of a local Criminal Justice Board Performance framework, which will support local activity and the measurement and delivery of commissioned services to support RASSO and VIAWG in line with national priorities and the priority included in the Police and Crime Plan. Whilst these are broad objectives and the board appreciates that not all SV is VAWG, GCJB continues to forge links under the four priorities to ensure that any required subject matter that needs to be flagged to GCJB is done so through appointed points of contact who provide detailed highlight reports.

The SVPB provides feedback to the GCJB when issues relating to the CJS are raised by partner agencies to ensure accountability locally.

SERIOUS VIOLENCE DUTY (SVD)

The Sexual Violence Partnership Board has been a key partner in the work that has commenced to implement the Serious Violence Duty (SVD) across Gloucestershire. The SVD became statute law in January 2023. It gives clear, mandated direction to statutory partners that the prevention of serious violence must be part of their delivery plans. The SVD Senior Partnership Group has agreed that one of the priorities over



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the next five years will be “Reducing the Harm caused by VIAWG”, this will include Sexual Violence, Domestic Abuse and Stalking and Harassment. Opportunity will be available to all partnerships and the voluntary and community sector agencies to seek grant funding that is available to create prevention interventions in line with the SVD priorities.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES JOINT OPERATIONAL IMPROVEMENT MEETING (RASSO JOIM)

The RASSO JOIM brings key partners together every eight weeks to support the local delivery of the joint police and CPS RASSO national action plan. The JOIM, through a joint action plan, specifically considers:

- + **The improvements of casework** by identifying and sharing best practice
- + **Driving improvements** in the timeliness of investigations
- + **Ensuring appropriate training** is in place to support people, case progression and casework quality

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GLOUCESTERSHIRE CONSTABULARY APPROACH TO VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VIAWG)

The Gloucestershire Constabulary approach to VIAWG sets out locally the response to the NPCC Policing violence against women and girls National framework for delivery, against 3 pillars:



BUILD TRUST AND CONFIDENCE



RELENTLESS PERPETRATOR PURSUIT



SAFER SPACES

GLOUCESTERSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PREVENTION PLAN

Tackling VAWG (challenging unacceptable attitudes and behaviour) is a priority within the Police and Crime Prevention Plan. The goal should be to ensure that women are safe no matter where they are; in their home or in public, no matter the time or location. Delivery against this plan includes: improving our learning, working together with partners, improving our

services, focusing on the perpetrator, providing resources and meeting the needs of Gloucestershire residents. The OPCC is committed to continue to bid for national funding related to preventing SV as well as supporting victims and survivors.

ACTION ON ACES

Understanding of the impact of trauma and abuse links to the Action on ACEs work in Gloucestershire. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are specific traumatic events that occur before the age of 18, including neglect and abuse as well as indirect experiences in the household, including parental separation, DA, substance misuse, mental illness, and incarceration. Evidence shows that experiencing ACEs has direct links to increased risk of poorer outcomes in education, employment and health in later life. The Gloucestershire Action on ACEs Strategy aims to break the inter-generational cycle of trauma.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE JOINT HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

The Gloucestershire Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy takes a systems approach to addressing eight key priorities including:

+ ACEs

+ Mental wellbeing

+ Early years

+ Housing

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Partnership has representation from; NHS Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB), Gloucestershire Constabulary and Gloucestershire County Council working together to identify safeguarding priorities for children and young people including securing their health and wellbeing and ensuring they have access to a good quality learning. DA and sexual abuse is recognised as a child protection issue.

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS

The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Adults Board strategic plan reflects the commitment of organisations in Gloucestershire to work together to safeguard adults with care and support needs in line with the Care Act, including those experiencing DA, SV, modern slavery, and financial abuse.

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OPERATION SOTERIA BLUESTONE

Gloucestershire Constabulary joined Op Soteria Bluestone in the autumn of 2022, aiming to build on the investigative excellence already offered by its dedicated RASSO team. The constabulary was initially one of 14 pilot forces for the roll out of Operation Soteria Bluestone prior to it being rolled out nationally following the publication of its National Operating Model. Soteria Bluestone is a whole system approach working in collaboration with the CPS and Third Sector survivor provision, to shape a service that best supports victims and focusses on tackling perpetrators. The approach is based upon six pillars, each pillar lead has a thematic area of delivery and will join a national policing network of peer support.



PILLAR 1:

A suspect-focused investigation
.....



PILLAR 2:

The disruption of and challenging of repeat offenders
.....

PILLAR 3:

Embedding a systematic procedural justice approach to victim engagement during the investigative process
.....



PILLAR 4:

An enhanced, specialised officer learning and development programme, sensitive to officer wellbeing joined up seamlessly with the challenges of RASSO complaints in force as well as academic evidence drawn from a variety of disciplines



PILLAR 5:

Using data-led performance monitoring and evaluation of new investigative strategies and justice outcomes, to improve understanding of RASSO reporting and outcomes
.....



PILLAR 6:

Using an evidence informed, proportionate and transparent digital forensic strategy to improve the victim's (digital) experience and better inform the overall RASSO investigation
.....

The constabulary will complete a self-assessment by March 2023 and will take part in the peer review of another force in the project.

The National Operating Model (NOM) has now been published and can be accessed through the College of Policing.



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GLOUCESTERSHIRE DOMESTIC ABUSE STRATEGY (2023-2026)

Gloucestershire DA Strategy fulfils the requirement of the DA Act 2021, as well as considering the wider needs across Gloucestershire to tackle DA, stalking, honour based violence, forced marriage and child to parent abuse. The Gloucestershire DA strategy has identified five priorities:

- 01 PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION
- 02 MULTI-AGENCY WORKING AND PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT
- 03 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
- 04 HIGH QUALITY SERVICE PROVISION
- 05 BREAKING THE CYCLE OF PERPETRATOR BEHAVIOUR

Locally, the work of the DA LPB and SVP are closely aligned with shared staffing resources, membership and joint working.

PLANNED REVIEW OF THE SV STRATEGY

The Gloucestershire SV Strategy will be in place for three years (2023-2026), with annual reviews conducted against the delivery plan of the SVP.

To support the continued delivery of the Gloucestershire SV Strategy, the local needs assessment will be completed in full, every three years, alongside regular service user and community consultation activity to inform the delivery plan.



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Adverse Childhood Experiences – **ACE**

Child Sexual Exploitation – **CSE**

Criminal Justice System – **CJS**

Crown Prosecution Service – **CPS**

Domestic Abuse – **DA**

End Violence against Women – **EVAW**

Female Genital Mutilation – **FGM**

Gloucestershire Counselling Service – **GCS**

Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre – **GRASAC**

Independent Sexual Violence Advisor – **ISVA**

Integrated Care Board – **ICB**

Joint Operational Improvement Meeting – **JOIM**

His Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service – **HMCTS**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services – **HMICFRS**

His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service – **HMPPS**

Local Partnership Board – **LPB**

Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime – **MOPAC**

Ministry of Justice – **MOJ**

Multi-Agency Tasking and Coordination – **MATAC**

Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner – **OPCC**

Rape and Serious Sexual Offences – **RASSO**

Sexual Assault Referral Centre – **SARC**

Sexual Harassment – **SH**

Sexual Violence – **SV**

Sexual Violence Partnership – **SVP**

Teens in Crisis – **TIC+**

Violence against Women and Girls – **VAWG**

Violence and Intimidation against Women and Girls – **VIAWG**



OPCC
Office of the Police &
Crime Commissioner
for Gloucestershire

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information about any aspect of this strategy please contact
PCC@gloucestershire-pcc.gov.uk

The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) led on this strategy development on behalf of the Sexual Violence Partnership Board.