



**POLICE & CRIME
COMMISSIONER**
for Leicester,
Leicestershire & Rutland

Your Communities - Your Commissioner

Date: 4th October 2024

His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary
His Majesty's Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services
6th Floor Globe House
89 Eccleston Square London
SW1V 1PN

Dear Mr Wilsher,

I write to you on behalf of the Police and Crime Commissioner in response to your publication "An inspection report on progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations in early adopter police forces" published on 22nd August 2024.

I am troubled to learn of the widespread issues identified within your publication in relation to the embedding of Op Soteria. Op Soteria has the potential to reform the way Force's tackle rape and other serious sexual offences, and it is extremely worrying to learn that some Forces are not taking the appropriate steps to comply fully with Op Soteria, ultimately failing to protect victims of sexual violence.

Op Soteria and Rape and other Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) are regularly monitored in our corporate governance framework. Rape performance and RASSO were discussed in March 2024 and subsequent summary papers have also been provided to the Leicestershire Police and Crime Panel in June 2024 with an update paper scheduled for October 2024. Full details on Leicestershire Police's position with RASSO/Op Soteria can be found on the panel section of the County Council website.

Following your publication, a member of our office contacted a Detective Chief Inspector in the Serious Crime directorate to receive position statements against the recommendations highlighted on pages 14-17 of your report. The following updates were received:

- Leicestershire Police use problem profiles for RASSO/Sexual Violence which includes data from Partner agencies (SARC and Freeva), and data from similar forces for comparison purposes where there may be learning opportunities to access. The profile is updated annually, and also references the impact/benefits of working with survivor groups. The profile has been recently enhanced, having previously only been related to Rape, and is now also broken down by both gender and age. Ethnicity data was considered, but the data was deemed too unreliable to draw immediate conclusions.
- Leicestershire Police faced challenges with continuing internal scrutiny panels during the COVID period, with attendance on the panels not meeting threshold requirements. However, I am reassured that work is now underway to reinvigorate two panels in both Domestic Abuse scrutiny and RASSO scrutiny with the intention of working more collaboratively with partners including ISVAs (independent sexual violence advisors) and importantly, survivors.



- Leicestershire Police are experiencing demand pressure for detectives across the Force but have been able to maintain a cadre of detective constables as investigators in both the adult and child RASSO specialist establishments. I am informed that work is ongoing to understand whether the establishment is appropriate to the current level of demand and whether there are process and efficiency solutions. The Force is also undertaking a 'lightning review' of the adult RASSO team during September 2024 and the Op Soteria transformation plan has multiple workstreams to improve working practices in support of both efficiency and welfare.
- Leicestershire Police's approach to repeat RASSO offenders is an area of development. In terms of individual investigation in specialist departments, the transition to a suspect focussed model involving intelligence and understanding of suspects is embedded and robust.

The Force is working on improving understanding of repeat RASSO offenders as a group and focussing on earlier intervention/prevention. To support this, the Force is:

- ❖ Developing analytical tools using power BI. A RASSO app has already been developed to support Op Soteria objectives and a repeat section is being built in at the time of this letter.
- ❖ Proactively identifying un-convicted sex offenders and proactively seeking to work with them through the Suspect Sexual Risk Pathway (SSRP) which includes obtaining protective orders if appropriate.
- ❖ Developing intelligence to target concerning behaviours in the night-time economy (Op Vigilant).

The Force informed us that there is a long-term aim to develop a RASSO threat tool similar to the DA threat tool presently used in Force to drive problem management with high-risk offenders. I will follow up on the progress of this when we revisit the recommendations in 12 months' time.

- The Force has had a robust approach to obtaining and managing Serious Harm Prevention Orders (SHPOs) and SROs through offender management prior and throughout the implementation of Op Soteria. Leicestershire Police have had stable figures of SHPOs year on year. The number of Sexual Risk Orders (SROs) is much smaller than SHPOs but have increased slightly in 2024. Leicestershire Police piloted and adopted the Sexual Suspect Referral Pathway (SSRP) and since its inception in July 2024, there are already 38 consultations with the SSRP process, from which 4 SHPOs have moved through to courts – 1 has already been granted.
- The adult Rape team has recently embedded a member of staff dedicated to supporting the completion of SHPO and SRO applications during the investigation process, along with supporting SSRP referrals. As a result, there are a number of SROs now in the application process originating from the investigation team rather than offender managers. Leicestershire Police will further evaluate the impact of this role in the future.



- Leicestershire Police feel they have sufficient support from performance analysts in relation to Op Soteria. I am informed that there is a senior analyst as a lead for Op Soteria transformation and dedicated support from the analytical team to continue development of the RASSO app and performance data to support governance meetings.

On behalf of the Commissioner, I accept the recommendations made within the report wholly, however I am pleased with the current position of Leicestershire Police against most of the recommendations made. There is evidently still work to be done, particularly with the reinstating of DA/RASSO scrutiny panels, and we will work with the Chief Constable to support the implementation of these, and the remaining measures.

I have scheduled a review on the progress of these updates in 12 months' time in our Corporate Governance Board for August 2025.

Yours sincerely,

Rani Mahal
Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland