


Cumbria's Office of the Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner

HMICFRS Responses

Cumbria Police Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) response to inspections of Cumbria Constabulary published by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS)

Section 33 of the Police Act 1996 (as amended by section 37 of the Policing and Crime Act 2017) requires local policing bodies to respond to recommendations in inspectors reports within 56 days.

	
Inspection Title:	Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations.
Date Published:	22/08/2024
Type of Inspection:	National Thematic
Key Findings	
<p>Operation Soteria is an unprecedented programme to transform how the Crown Prosecution Service and police forces across England and Wales respond to rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO).</p> <p>Soteria aims to create effective suspect-focused RASSO investigations, where the police support victims and understand their needs. It also aims to make sure intelligence, analysis and digital forensics are used effectively to support cases.</p> <p>Since 2021, 19 early adopter forces have been putting Soteria in place via the National Operating Model.</p> <p>In May 2023, the then Home Secretary commissioned HMICFRS to carry out this inspection using the powers under section 54(2B) of the Police Act 1996. The Inspectorate inspected 9 of the 19 early adopter forces to evaluate their progress so far.</p> <p>This report sets out HMICFRS' findings.</p>	

Recommendations:

REC 03 - By 31 January 2025, all forces should make sure personnel working on rape and other serious sexual offences receive College of Policing approved training on the investigation of word-on-word cases.

REC 05 - By 31 July 2025, chief constables should make sure their forces use the new definition of repeat rape and other serious sexual offences suspects to identify and manage them.

REC 07 - By 31 January 2025, all chief constables should make sure their forces prioritise identifying and disrupting rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO) suspects. This includes making sure that:

- forces track, manage, and respond effectively to breaches of bail and protection orders in RASSO cases; and
- all relevant personnel complete National Operating Model training on using criminal and civil orders to tackle RASSO.

REC 09 - By 31 January 2025, chief constables should make sure their forces have good processes in place for applying to retain DNA and fingerprints to improve their use of section 63G of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

REC 11 - By 31 March 2025, all chief constables should make sure that, as part of adopting the National Operating Model, their forces:

- develop a rape and other serious sexual offences problem profile;
- include the National Operating Model flight deck within their strategic performance monitoring; and
- adopt any key performance indicators that are agreed and published by the Soteria Joint Unit.

PFCC & Constabulary Response to Report and Recommendation:

As Police, Fire & Crime Commissioner (PFCC) for Cumbria, I welcome the publication from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services of "An inspection report on progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations in early adopter police forces."

Soteria was developed as a result of work which identified the impacts on victims/ survivors of rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO) and the ways in which the investigations of these offences could be improved. It provides an evidenced-based model and takes a victim-centred and suspect-focused approach to RASSO. The implementation of Soteria, and the successes and lessons arising from it, is an important step in addressing the way that victims/ survivors are dealt with by the police and by the wider justice system. It is also important to consider the ways in which the early stages of Soteria have helped improve detection and processes, and the barriers that have prevented some parts of Soteria being successfully implemented in some forces.

The report draws into sharp focus the limitations of forces in implementing Soteria, given the many operational pressures that are faced and the reasonable need to either redeploy people in already stretched services, or the consequences of officer burn out or sickness on case load - and subsequently onto the experiences of victims.

Cumbria Constabulary has accepted the report's recommendations and through my accountability framework I will review the implementation of Soteria in Cumbria with respect to these recommendations to ensure that lessons learned in other Constabularies can benefit our county also.

The Chief Constable stated, I welcome this recent HMICFRS inspection report. I have reviewed our current position against each of these recommendations and have developed a plan which will help the Constabulary to achieve the standards outlined by HMICFRS within the timeframes that they have specified.

In relation to the recommendation three, Cumbria Constabulary will have all detectives performing investigation roles trained in 'RASSO Investigative Skills Development Programme' (RSDPIP) by the end of January 2025. This is a significant undertaking supported by our Learning & Development function and the HQ Public Protection Unit. In addition, the ambition is to also have all investigations detective constables, including professional standard departments (PSD), fully trained in Specialist Sexual Assault Development Programme (SSADIP).

In relation to recommendation five, HMICFRS have set the national Soteria Joint Unit a deadline of the end of January 2025 to create a definition and produce the associated guidance for forces to adopt. Once this has been received, the Constabulary will then implement the appropriate processes.

With regards recommendation seven, Cumbria Constabulary has already prioritised the disruption of RASSO offenders and we have driven Sexual Risk Orders as a significant tool in the armoury to do this, with high levels of success and a significant increase in the amount of these ancillary orders. These are managed and applied for through our RASSO teams and successful applications dealt with through Managing Sexual and Violent Offenders and Violent Other Offenders (MOSOVO) management. This is managed and scrutinised through the force strategic vulnerability board chaired by my Assistant Chief Constable. In addition, we are adding the tracking of RASSO offenders who breach bail, our analysts are currently building this data so it can be implemented within one month.

Recommendation nine states the Chief Constables should make sure their force have good processes in place for applying to retain DNA and fingerprints. I will ensure that we conclude this within the required timescales.

Lastly, in relation to recommendation eleven, Cumbria Constabulary already has a strong and robust performance framework in place around RASSO offences and is scrutinised by the Chief Officer Team at both the Strategic Vulnerability Board and Strategic Performance Board. We do not currently have a RASSO problem profile, but this is in development and is ongoing as part of Operation Soteria Pillar 5 (Data and Analytics) as well as the flight deck work.