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Police and Crime Commissioner for Dyfed-Powys

Scrutiny Panel Dip Sampling
Exercise
Op Soteria- Victims of RASSO
(Rape and Serious Sexual
Offences)

Members' Findings & Feedback

September 2025

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1. Overview, Background, Purpose and Methodology

The Quality Assurance handbook, available on the <u>PCC's website</u>, states the background, purpose and methodology of the Panel.

On the 25th of September 2025, Quality Assurance Panel (QAP) members met at Dyfed Powys Police (DPP) Headquarters to review a selection of incidents involving victims of Rape and Serious Sexual Assault Offences (RASSO).

Operation (Op) Soteria is a national research and change programme funded by the Home Office and led by the National Police Chief Council (NPPC). This national programme aims to produce a unified National Operating Model (NOM) across England and Wales that improves the handling of RASSO in adult cases.

Op Soteria is built on three key principles:

- 1) Victim-centred.
- 2) Suspect-focused.
- 3) Context-led.

The 5 Procedural Justice principles underpins all police interactions with victims, with valued emphasis on respectful, non-judgemental, consistent, fair and accountable interactions throughout. The 5 principles of procedural justice are:

- 1. Fairness unbiased treatment and equal opportunity for all victims.
- 2. Dignity and respect victims are treated in a humane way, and their experience, rights and interests are taken

seriously.

- 3. **Voice and recognition** barriers to victim participation are removed. Victim's choices, queries and concerns are listened and responded to.
- 4. **Safety** identifying and acting on victims' safety concerns. It means ensuring they are not exposed to harm through participating in an investigation or exiting it.
- 5. **Trustworthiness** showing victims that DPP are consistent, that we are sincere in our responses to victims and that our actions are transparent and accountable.

Between August 2023 and December 2024, all of DPP's frontline officers and detectives completed online and in person training in relation to Op Soteria. Whilst detectives received additional training to investigate RASSO, frontline officers received training on Op Soteria's key principles and how the principles of procedural justice are expected to be abided by their interactions with every victim-survivor.

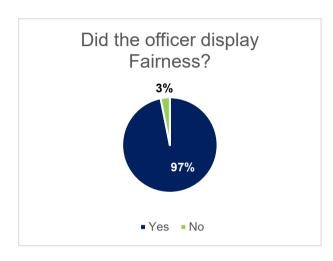
The QAP were asked to assess a series of recordings of Body Worn Video (BWV) and video calls, known as GoodSam. The BWV footage shows the initial police response by frontline officers and their interaction with the victim. The GoodSam footage shows interactions between specialist detectives who engage and capture initial information from non-recent RASSO offences (occurred months or years ago). The Panel were asked to review the footage and consider two areas of focus:

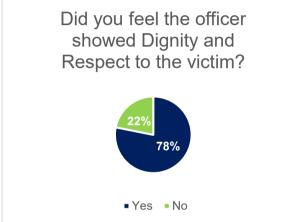
- 1. To assess the Force's compliance regarding the 5 Procedural Justice (Fairness, Dignity and Respect, Voice and Recognition, Safety, Trustworthiness).
- 2. Compare service standards provided by Operational frontline officers and CID officers operating the virtual telephone service-GoodSam.

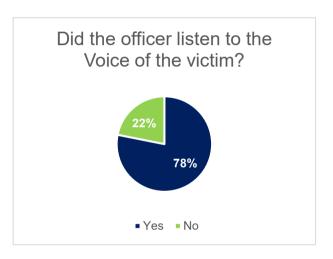
2. Executive Summary

Focus area 1

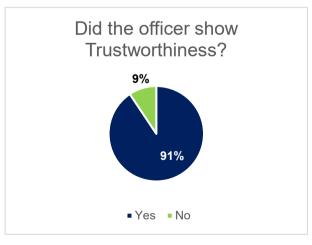
QAP members assessed 4 cases. This is a summary of their evaluation of the DPP's performance in relation to the 5 principles of the Procedural Justice.











Focus area 2

Overall assessment in comparing both services:

Positives

- Level of training to frontline officers appears satisfactory. The QAP acknowledged that the role and function of frontline officers is diverse and dynamic and that they may therefore not have the same in-depth knowledge in comparison with specialist RASSO officers and detectives.
- The QAP praised the professionalism displayed by all officers displayed on both BWV and GoodSam footage.
- There was no evidence of victim blaming nor discrimination in victim interactions on BWV nor GoodSam footage.

Areas for improvement:

- Both GoodSam videos reviewed involved the same police officer engaging a victim; therefore, the QAP were uncertain
 whether their feedback ought to be interpreted by DPP specifically for the officer or as an overall assessment of the service
 provided through GoodSam.
- Wider consideration may need to be given by officers' rapport building and demonstration of empathy with virtual
 engagement via GoodSam especially where sensitive RASSO disclosures are made by a victim. In comparison, the QAP
 considered that the frontline officers displayed good rapport building and empathy to victims.
- As footage recorded from GoodSam is considered appropriate for recording disclosures from victims, the QAP would like to view BWV footage where frontline officers have been afforded the same evidential means in replacement of the completion of the Witness Information Booklet (WIB).

3. Queries Raised by QAP

Observations	Force response
For frontline officers, would it be advantageous to have two officers present; one to record the victim's account on the WIB and the other to engage and question the victim, maintaining eye contact?	This recommendation would certainly allow an officer to converse and engage with the victim with better eye contact; but unfortunately, it would be difficult to resource this for every case due to officer caseloads and current staffing levels.
The QAP queried whether BWV footage could be used for the purposes of recording the account of the WIB, as they felt the transcribing process produced prolonged silences and limited eye-contact when the victim disclosed sensitive and personal information? In addition, the QAP queried the necessity for a WIB to be taken separately alongside the DASH, as the BWV footage had already recorded details of the disclosure. The QAP were mindful of the damage and difficulty victims face when asked to recount questioning surrounding their disclose of a traumatic experience(s)?	BWV is an excellent tool to capture interaction with victims including capturing the victim's demeanour and nonverbals etc. The initial account process is written within the "Achieving Best Evidence" guidance, and I don't believe there has been any national guidance regarding BWV being used as an alternative method to capturing an initial account in RASSO cases. Something perhaps I can speak to the National Centre for Violence Against Women and Girls and Public Protection (NCVPP) during their force visit in December. The purpose of the Witness Interviewing Booklet (WIB) and DASH is to both understand what has happened, where it's happened, who was involved, but to also implement appropriate safeguarding which may include correctly grading the risk to the victim and understanding what support the victim may require following police

attendance. By completing both documents in one visit, it prevents support being delayed. It would be difficult to separate the two documents as they are used for separate purposes. Not all domestics will require a WIB, and not all RASSO offences will require a DASH. Frontline officers have received training which is specific to Has the training provided to frontline officers made any understanding the principles of Op Soteria - suspectreference to selecting suitable environments for victim focused, victim-centred, context-led. The training does disclosures? discuss procedural justice ensuring engagement with a victim is conducted sensitively and confidentially. Having watched the BWV footage, which captures victim-police contact in a hospital, there would have been an opportunity to request privacy until their conversation was over, and officers should be mindful of this. From personal experience in a busy hospital environment, rooms can be difficult to find in order to have those sensitive and private conversations. I have reflected on this feedback and do believe there is a When discussing the three possible outcomes of a criminal place and a time to discuss no further action (NFA) investigation, the QAP felt that the officer (record 2) emoutcomes. Whilst its important to manage a victim's phasised the NFA outcome, which a victim may perceive as overtly negative. Would you agree with this assessment, expectations, if supporting a criminal justice outcome this and do you think the delivery of information on the crimicould be something explained later in an investigation and nal justice process should be revised as per the QAP's sugnot necessarily at the beginning. In cases where the victim gestions?

is not engaging from the outset, explaining an NFA

	decision will be important as that will likely be the next stage of the investigation following safeguarding matters being addressed.
Is there a time constraint for officers to conduct a Good-Sam interview?	No, GoodSam contact is no different to an officer attending an address in person with the victim. Each contact can last for different lengths of time depending on how much the victim wishes to engage with the officer, documents what the officer needs to complete etc. It's important that victims do not feel overwhelmed with information shared and this is something we can look into so that some of the information regarding the criminal justice process may be explained prior to the GoodSam call. The risk to this is that victims may decide not to engage in a GoodSam when they've only been provided limited relevant information to help them make an informed decision. There is a lot of information police officers need to explain to a victim whether this be in person or via GoodSam. To put it into perspective, the CPS have a guidance document explaining the criminal justice process which is over 300 pages long. We have a victim information guidance document we send to victims following in-person or GoodSam contact that is a fraction of this size. The guidance is a good tool to help understand some of the information explained by the officer.

Should all officers have WIBs and forensic bags in their vehicles?

Yes, it is important that officers are equipped with the relevant materials when attending a sexual offence. There is a new sexual offence response booklet currently being created which we hope to have embedded on the officer's mobile data terminals (work devices) so that they don't have to print out paper copies. Early evidence kits and exhibit bags should be stored in vehicles, and this is something I will address with the relevant senior leaders and local single points of contact for forensic consumables

Is the victim asked prior to the virtual engagement via GoodSam whether they would prefer to speak with an officer of the same sex?

It is important to ensure the victim feels comfortable speaking to an officer when discussing sensitive subjects such as sexual offences. Op Bluestone consists of two female detectives and so the option of a male speaking to a victim via GoodSam is not currently available. This may change in the future as the Force is looking into new models where many officers, male and female, may become trained in using GoodSam. Currently, when Op Bluestone contact a victim over the phone, it is explained that the victim has the option of providing an initial account to one of the two female detectives via GoodSam. or an officer can attend in person. If they choose the latter, Dyfed-Powys Police should make every effort to send an officer of the sex the victim would prefer. In my experience, some victims prefer speaking to an officer of a different sex.

Given the victim's reluctance to proceed in case 4, would the victim have to consent to speak to a specialist officer via GoodSam?

Where a victim does not seek a criminal justice outcome, it's important to respect the victim's wishes. Certainly, in cases where victims do not support a criminal justice outcome, it's important to understand the reasons for this to help overcome any barriers associated with feeling believed, negative experiences with the police, mental health, fear of repercussions from the suspect etc. It's also important that victims are provided with sufficient information to make an informed decision, that they feel believed by the police, and understand what support is available regardless of the victim's decision. Initial contact with victims of sexual offences sometimes involves inexperienced officers who may not be able to explain the criminal iustice process as well as specialist officers can. Should a victim choose not to engage following specialist officer contact, we can be sure that they have made an informed decision and understand what the next steps are to avoid confusion. This may encourage a victim to come forward in the future. It's about empowering victims and giving them control back that sexual offences often and sadly take away.

For police officers using GoodSam, is there a script/checklist of the information they must provide to victims at this stage? If yes, is there any flexibility as to how this information is disseminated? On both GoodSam videos reviewed, the information provided during the engagement was deemed overwhelming by the QAP.

Op Bluestone officers do not follow a script or checklist. It's apparent that due to the number of rape cases they deal with, it may appear scripted because of routine explaining the process to victims. This process, however, should not come across robotic or scripted in any way, but flow like a normal conversation. It's about providing clear and

	coherent information but also checking the victim's understanding of what has been explained. The officer will reflect on this and perhaps break up the information into smaller sections.
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4. Review of RASSO Cases

Record 1 - (BWV)

Circumstance

The Victim has been visited in a hospital ward where they have disclosed details surrounding an incident of rape to staff. An officer has attended to take details.

Did the officer display **Fairness**?

- The officer had a quiet and gentle approach which was considered appropriate in responding to the victim's disclosure.
- There was no indication of victim-blaming nor a perception that the victim was being judged.
- The officer provided reassurance when the victim was uncertain whether to progress with criminal proceedings and provided information regarding consent when discussing the suspect's accountability.

Did the officer show **Dignity** and **Respect** to the victim?

- The officer was not heard asking the victim if they would like to speak to an officer of the same sex.
- The officer conducted the enquiries in a public setting, which was considered inappropriate by the QAP. There were a number of interruptions by hospital staff and the QAP did not view the environment as confidential/ safe for any disclosures.
- Despite the environmental issues, the Panel considered that the officer did well under the circumstances and that the victim appeared comfortable to disclose the offence.

Did the Officer listen to the victim's **Voice**?

- After the officer had completed the WIB, the officer moved closer to accommodate the victim, so that the document could be read before a signature was obtained.
- The officer displayed patience and empathy and was respectful of victim's wishes.

Did the Officer consider the victim's **Safety**?

- The victim discussed concerns surrounding pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. The officer acknowledged the victim's concerns and discussed a referral to New Pathways and to a Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC).
- The victim was advised that the suspect would be arrested with conditions not to approach or contact them.
- The QAP were uncertain whether there were appropriate support services in place at the conclusion of the officer taking the details.

Did the Officer show signs of **Trustworthiness**?

- The officer discussed the investigative process, and explained which DPP department would be handling the allegation and when to expect further contact from specialist officers at the Criminal Investigative Department (CID).
- As mentioned above, the officer advised the victim of New Pathways and their services, but no explanation/information on the organisation was shared.
- Details surrounding the forensic window were discussed but the officer did not seem certain of the procedure.

Any **positives** raised from the Panel?

- The officer explained that CID would follow this up but offered to be contacted by the victim during the interim.
- The officer provided reassurance when the victim was not sure what to do.
- The officer's tone was appropriately empathetic throughout.
- The officer was heard asking on how the victim felt after recording the WIB.
- The officer explained that the BWV was recording and asked whether the victim was happy with this.

Any **areas of improvement** considered by the Panel?

- It was not clear why the officer chose to conduct the enquiries in a hospital ward behind a curtain. As mentioned, there were many interruptions, the QAP did not view it as a private place and there were distractions such as crying children. The QAP acknowledged that they were not aware of the full circumstances, and that potentially, injuries sustained by the victim may have prevented them from changing location.
- Whilst the officer's tone was complimented by the QAP, others did note that at times, the officer appeared uncomfortable and the officer was heard on many occasions using the utterances of "um", suggesting either that the officer found the environment distracting or the officer was not confident in the process.
- There was limited eye contact from the officer, due to the responsibility of completing the WIB. There were also prolonged silences which the QAP felt was counterproductive in taking details and encouraging the victim to progress with the Criminal Justice process.
- The officer did not check whether the victim needed a break throughout the entirety of their encounter.
- The officer contradicted themselves in stating that they did not believe the offence has occurred within the forensic window but then stating that the suspect would be arrested for a forensic examination.

Any queries raised?

- For frontline officers, would it be advantageous to have two officers present, one to record the victim's account on the WIB and the other to engage and question the victim whilst maintaining eye contact?
- The QAP queried whether BWV footage could be used for the purposes of recording the account of the WIB, as they felt the transcribing process produced prolonged silences and limited eye-contact when the victim disclosed sensitive and personal information?
- Has the training provided to frontline officers made any reference to selecting suitable environments for victim disclosures?

Record 2 - (GoodSam)

Circumstance

The victim has disclosed an incident of rape via the virtual telephone call known as GoodSam.

Did the officer display **Fairness**?

- There was no evidence of victim blaming.
- However, the QAP felt that once the victim had disclosed details of the rape, they were not afforded enough time to consider the information shared by the officer regarding the criminal process. Some QAP members viewed the officer's delivery as rushed and scripted.

Did the officer show **Dignity** and **Respect** to the victim?

- Whilst the officer displayed measured and empathetic responses, the QAP were concerned that the amount of in-depth information shared may have been overwhelming for the victim.
- The officer ensured the victim was in a safe location and asked to be shown the room to confirm that they were alone and safe.

Did the Officer listen to the victim's **Voice**?

• The officer was clear in terms of instructing the victim of the criminal process. The Panel considered the officer to be well

informed and provided necessary clarity on the criminal justice process overall.

- The QAP were concerned that specialist officers may be in danger of becoming too rigid in their delivery of information and were unable to be flexible, if warranted, to offer victims of RASSO necessary comfort when required due to the sensitive nature of what was being disclosed.
- The QAP felt that the officer gave the impression they were reading from a script, resulting in a lot of information that perhaps could have been delayed to support them in the investigative process.
- The QAP considered too much jargon was used such as ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advocate) and ABE (Achieving Best Evidence) without an explanation of their meaning. The Panel suggested that these terms ought to be used in their full form.

Did the Officer consider the victim's **Safety**?

- The officer asked the victim to show them the room to confirm they were in a safe place to discuss.
- The ISVA was introduced at the beginning, who gave an overview of the New Pathways service. The Panel also noted that the victim was given time to consider the offer of support.
- The QAP highlighted the benefits associated with this virtual disclosure being that it is a discreet method for victims to disclose to police officers without the need for police to attend the victim's home.

Did the Officer show signs of **Trustworthiness**?

- When discussing the three possible outcomes that can occur with progressing with the criminal justice aspect, the QAP felt that the officer may have been emphasising too much on the No Further Action (NFA) outcome, which a victim may perceive to be overtly negative.
- The Panel considered that the officer was professional and offered reassurance to the victim that they were available to be

contacted by the them whilst an investigating officer was assigned to handle the investigation.

Any **positives** raised from the Panel?

- The officer displayed excellent knowledge and competency in their role.
- The conduct of the officer was perceived by the majority of the QAP to be measured and empathetic.

Any areas of improvement considered by the Panel?

• The depth of information regarding the criminal justice process and special measures, felt excessive and the QAP queried whether it was necessary to be delivered at this stage of the disclosure. They suggested that some of this information could be shared during other interactions.

Any queries raised?

- When discussing the three possible outcomes of a criminal investigation, the QAP felt that the officer emphasised the NFA outcome, which the victim may have been perceived as overtly negative. Would you agree with this assessment and do you think the delivery of information on the criminal justice process should be revised as per the QAP's suggestions?
- Is there a time constraint for how long officers should conduct a GoodSam interview?

Record 3 - (BWV)

Circumstance

The victim has disclosed an incident of rape at their home by their partner.

Did the officer display **Fairness**?

- The officer displayed no signs of victim blaming and demonstrated a supportive, non-judgemental and caring nature.
- The officer provided plenty of reassurance to the victim, letting them know they were not accountable for the suspect's actions. The officer praised the victim's courage in coming forward.

Did the officer show **Dignity** and **Respect** to the victim?

- The officer checked with the victim whether they wished to remain inside the van or if they preferred to talk in the house (which the suspect had vacated).
- The officer provided the victim with a blanket to keep them warm.
- The victim was not asked if they would like to speak to an officer of the same sex.
- The officer provided reassurance and demonstrated genuine care to the victim.
- The officer discussed the forensic window and the requirement to obtain items from the bed for evidential purposes.

Did the Officer listen to the victim's **Voice**?

- It was evident that the victim and officer had a rapport which enabled the victim to feel comfortable in disclosing previous abuse alongside the disclosure of rape. The details were disclosed at the victim's pace and the officer displayed empathy, regularly apologising for asking sensitive questions.
- The officer offered reassurance and support throughout.

Did the Officer consider the victim's **Safety**?

- The officer clearly outlined what was intended to happen to the suspect and what measures would be put in place to protect the victim and prevent the suspect from returning.
- The officer discussed special measures which could be put in place if the incident was to be heard in court.
- The interviewing officer explained that they were going to undertake a Domestic Abuse and Stalking and Honour Based Violence risk assessment (DASH) whilst the second officer retrieved the WIB.
- The officer advised the victim of New Pathways and that they would make a referral for support on the victim's behalf.
- The officer confirmed with the victim that they had support in place with friends and family at the conclusion of the disclosure.

Did the Officer show signs of **Trustworthiness**?

- The officer avoided the use of abbreviations and jargon.
- The officer displayed excellent pacing with the sharing of information, explaining the process in a manner that could be easily understood.
- The officer advised the victim of the process to occur at the conclusion of them taking details and how this would be

followed up.

• The officer avoided sharing unnecessary information and explained procedures clearly and professionally.

Any **positives** raised from the Panel?

• The Panel proposed that the officer receives feedback on their excellent communication skills, professionalism and the effective manner in which they obtained pertinent evidence throughout their engagement with the victim.

Any **areas of improvement** considered by the Panel?

 Neither frontline officer had a WIB or forensic bags within the van for them to proceed with the necessary evidence gathering.

Any queries raised?

- Should all officers have WIBs and forensic bags in their police vehicles?
- The QAP queried the necessity for a WIB to be taken separately to the DASH, as the BWV footage had recorded the
 disclosure and were considering the repetitious nature of requesting the victim to disclose traumatic experience(s)?

Record 4 - (GoodSam)

Circumstance

The victim has disclosed an incident of rape but is reluctant to share details or proceed with a criminal investigation.

Did the officer display **Fairness**?

- There was no indication of victim blaming throughout the interaction.
- The officer displayed a non-judgemental manner and provided a clear understanding of the process of consent and suspect responsibility.

Did the officer show **Dignity** and **Respect** to the victim?

- The victim was not given the opportunity to speak to an officer of the same sex; however, the Panel acknowledged that this could have been arranged by officers who may have established this detail prior to the victim consenting to virtual engagement via GoodSam.
- As the victim was reluctant to proceed with the criminal investigation, citing the desire to move on with their life, the
 officer introduced the role of the ISVA from New Pathways and the opportunity for counselling; advising that the trauma
 of the incident may have a delayed impact on them. Whilst counselling was signposted as an option, the officer then
 focussed on the negative aspect of the waiting list.
- The officer discussed consent in detail with the victim, which some QAP members felt that this put the victim at ease.

Did the Officer listen to the victim's **Voice**?

- The victim was adamant they would not proceed with the criminal justice route; but some QAP members felt that whilst the officer acknowledged this, they appeared persistent in their request for the victim to reconsider and to disclose the suspect's details.
- Some QAP members felt that the victim was not afforded time to respond whilst the officer was sharing information of the criminal justice process. Despite this, it was noted that the officer did take time to listen to the victim when they did speak, to understand the barriers they felt prevented them from proceeding with an investigation.
- The officer clearly wanting the victim to understand the process and to be safeguarded.

Did the Officer consider the victim's **Safety**?

- The officer confirmed the victim's safety at the beginning of the video by asking the victim to show them the room.
- As specified above, the victim was signposted to New Pathways with counselling suggested; however, the emphasis on the waiting time may have been overtly negative to mention despite the good intentions of managing victim's expectations.

Did the Officer show signs of **Trustworthiness**?

- The criminal justice process was thoroughly explained to the victim and the officer did outline the demanding nature of the investigative process.
- Due to the communication being facilitated virtually, some QAP members expressed concerns that the interaction too clinical and a barrier to build genuine rapport during the initial stages of disclosure. The process was described by some as scripted and was almost too rigid in its perceived inability to adapt to the victim's needs.

Any **positives** raised from the Panel?

- The officer was supportive of victim's decision and understanding of the complexity with regards to supporting someone who is still in the initial stages of processing the incident and acknowledging they are a victim of a sexual offence.
- The officer encouraged the victim and offered reassurance throughout their engagement.
- The Panel acknowledged that interaction with RASSO victims requires a certain level of script to be followed to ensure the victim has the relevant details. The officer made efforts to personalise the criminal justice information that was shared.

Any **areas of improvement** considered by the Panel?

- Once the victim had disclosed the circumstances of the incident, there were very few opportunities for the victim to respond to anything shared by the officer. However, some QAP members felt that the victim was clearly reluctant to engage with the officer. This made rapport-building difficult.
- The process felt very scripted and gave the impression that the officer was attempting to persuade the victim to change their mind, rather than respect their initial decision. Once the victim announced they would not support criminal proceedings, the officer made attempts to ascertain the suspect's details, advising that this was for safeguarding purposes, which the victim refused to provide.

Any queries raised?

- Is the victim asked, prior to the virtual engagement via GoodSam, whether they would prefer to speak with an officer of the same sex?
- Given the victim's reluctance to proceed, would the victim have to consent to speak to a specialist officer via GoodSam?
- For police officers using GoodSam, is there a script/checklist of information that they must provide to victims at this stage? If yes, is there any flexibility as to how this information is disseminated? On both GoodSam videos reviewed the information provided during the engagement was deemed overwhelming by the QAP.

5. Next Steps

DPP intends to establish a scrutiny panel that will focus specifically on cases that are NFA'd (No Further Actioned) based on the perceived threshold of evidence.

The OPCC, alongside New Pathways and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) have been invited to sit on the panel which will meet on a monthly basis. The scrutiny panel will scrutinise two cases to provide ongoing learning to police officers and to ensure investigations involving RASSO are consistent, effective and holistic in evidence gathering; and most importantly, are engaging and empathetic towards the victim-survivors throughout. Through this scrutiny forum, the OPCC hopes to identify future scrutiny work for the QAP.

The QAP will revisit their scrutiny of RASSO support service delivered by New Pathways in the coming year and will be looking to establish any learning from previous scrutiny activity, which can be viewed here.