



Response Date: 13/08/2025

2025/792 - Policies/procedures

In response to your recent request for information regarding;

The current versions of your internal policies and/or procedures relating to:

Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

We don't have any specific policies on these issues.

Safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children

No internal force policies; force would follow All Wales Safeguarding procedures and College of Policing APP.

Victim communication, trauma-informed approaches, and victim engagement

No internal force policies

Any internal guidance issued to officers regarding:

Victim withdrawal of support and No Further Action outcomes

We apply outcomes in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules (a public document).

The Victim's Right to Review (VRR) process

Please find attached

Supporting survivors with complex trauma, neurodivergence, or language barriers

From the training perspective this is something that we cover on all the courses the ITDC team deliver. In addition, we have introduced several courses delivered internally that cover these areas of vulnerability specifically.

- Adults at Risk course – This course is one developed by the NWP training team, having seen a gap in identifying adult vulnerability. The course has inputs from SMEs and Academics in relation to trauma and neurodivergence. There are also inputs from Trained intermediaries and survivors which enhances the learners understanding in relation to these barriers.
- SCAIDP – Child survivors and investigations. This course covers the vulnerability of children and again has inputs from SMEs and intermediaries in relation to complex trauma, neurodivergence, or language barriers.
- PIP 2A advanced interviewing Course – The covers Achieving Best Evidence Interviewing and again has inputs from intermediaries to support survivors through the criminal justice process and maximise the evidence quality.

Pencadlys yr Heddlu,
Glan-y-Don, Bae Colwyn LL29 8AW
www.heddlugogleddcymru.police.uk

Police Headquarters,
Glan-y-Don, Colwyn Bay LL29 8AW
www.northwales.police.uk

- ABE training delivered to all new recruits – This course recognises how trauma, neurodivergence, or language barriers can impact on the quality of the evidence obtained, how to recognise this and how to support survivors through some of those challenges.
- SSAIDP course - Rape and serious sexual offence investigations, this is a new course which has been developed by the College of Policing following the Op Soteria review. This course covers the impact of trauma on survivors as part of the learning material provided by the college.

**If applicable, your local implementation strategy or action plan relating to:
The NPCC VAWG strategic framework**

This is currently being redesigned and updated.

Operation Soteria Bluestone

There is no specific internal policy for Op Soteria, it would come under the RASSO practice guide (attached)

Public confidence or trust-building plans with survivors of sexual violence

North Wales Police do not have any trust building plans. We do hold a survivor focus group where we invite survivors to attend a Teams meeting and provide feedback about their experience with professional agencies. This is way to identify learning, address victims needs, support victims of sexual violence and improve practices. This is a forum involving police and support agencies such as RASASC, Stepping Stones, SARC.

We work closely with the SARC/ISVA's and developed a new victim information guide, which is accessible through our OPCC website [Rape and Sexual Assault | Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner North Wales \(northwales-pcc.gov.uk\)](https://www.northwales-pcc.gov.uk/rape-and-sexual-assault/)

THIS INFORMATION HAS BEEN PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST
UNDER THE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000, AND IS CORRECT AS AT 13/08/2025



**ASSOCIATION OF
CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS**

National Policing Guidelines on Police Victim Right to Review

The Association of Chief Police Officers has agreed to these guidelines being circulated to, and adopted by, Police Forces in England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

It is NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED under the Government Protective Marking Scheme and any referrals for advice and rationale in relation to Freedom of Information Act disclosure, should be made to the ACPO Central Referral Unit at acpo.request@foi.pnn.police.uk.

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Document information

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These guidelines have been produced and approved by the National Policing Criminal Justice Business Area. Version 1 of the document was approved by Chiefs Constable Council on the 16th January 2015. Version 2 of the document was approved by the National Criminal Justice Coordination Committee on the 10th October 2022 and approved by Chief Constables' Council February 2023. These guidance sets out the principles and parameters for police Victim Right to Review (VRR) schemes. Guidelines produced by NPCC should be used by chief officers to shape police responses to ensure that the general public experience consistent levels of service. The implementation of all guidance will require operational choices to be made at local level in order to achieve Any queries relating to this document should be directed to either the author detailed above or the NPCC Victims & Witness Board.

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1. SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This guidance sets out the principles and parameters for police Victim Right to Review (VRR) schemes.
- 1.2 It is acknowledged that the differing force structures across the country do not allow for a universal approach. However it is important that a level of consistency is maintained nationally to ensure that the process is clear, accessible and fair for all victims. Forces to therefore seriously consider applying the below key messages, in a professional manner when providing updates to the victim regarding the outcome of their crime, in whatever form they update the victims with e.g. letter/email/phone.
- Not include your own opinion, particularly where it contradicts the police decision.
 - Provide information regarding the evidence considered in the decision-making process (the rationale for the decision can be found on the MG6 but the MG6 document itself must not be given to the victim).
 - Explain the decision has been made after a full review of the evidence.
 - The Police Decision Maker must think that a court will convict the accused on the evidence available for a case to proceed.
 - Information about the VRR scheme.
- 1.3 These guidelines sets out the framework for police VRR schemes, whilst allowing forces to individually tailor the details of the scheme to their own local situations.

2. SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND

- 2.1 VRR relates to a right for a victim to ask for a review of a decision not to prosecute a suspect.
- 2.2 The right of a victim to request such a review was considered in the case of *R v Killick* and is set out in Article 11 of the EU Directive on Victims (EU Directive), which comes into effect in November 2015.¹
- 2.3 In *R v Killick*, the Court of Appeal considered an abuse of process claim, amongst other matters, following the conviction of a man for sexual assault offences. A decision had originally been made by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in June 2007 not to prosecute the offender but this was overturned by the Court in December 2009, following a complaint by one of the victims. In the ruling the Judges confirmed an earlier decision that interested persons have a right to seek a judicial review of decisions not to prosecute and noted that it was therefore, 'disproportionate for a public authority not to have a system of review without recourse to court proceedings'. They also drew a clear distinction between a 'complaint about service' and a 'review' and asked the CPS, 'to consider whether the way in which the right of a victim to seek a review cannot be made the subject of a clearer procedure and guidance with time limits'.²
- 2.4 As a response, the CPS launched a national pilot VRR scheme in June 2013 to allow victims to ask for a review of CPS decisions not to prosecute. In July 2014, the CPS confirmed their adoption of VRR, and issued national guidance.³ CPS last updated their policy in May 2021, police VRR reflects CPS VRR.
- 2.5 Article 11 of the EU Directive provides that, 'Member States shall ensure that victims....have the right to a review of a decision not to prosecute', and the Directive makes clear that this includes decisions made by, 'law enforcement authorities such as police officers'.
- 2.6 The EU Directive provides the legal imperative to develop a police VRR system but it is anticipated that facilitating reviews of police decisions not to prosecute will also improve victim satisfaction and public confidence in the service, and it accords with the policing principles of openness, fairness and accountability, as set out in the Code of Ethics.

¹ *R v Christopher Killick* [2011] EWCA Crim 1608 (*R v Killick*). Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.

² *R v Killick*, para. 57.

³ http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/docs/vrr_guidance_2014.pdf

3. SECTION 3 – THE PRINCIPLES OF POLICE VRR

3.1 Police VRR schemes should adhere to the following principles:

- I. All forces should have a VRR scheme, effective from the 1st April 2015.
- II. The scheme should apply to qualifying cases as set out in paragraphs 4.1-4.6;
- III. The scheme should be available to all victims as defined in paragraphs 5.1-5.7;
- IV. All victims should be notified of their right to ask for a review at the point they are informed of the decision not to prosecute. However, reviews will not ordinarily take place until the investigation has concluded (see paragraphs 5.3-5.4);
- V. All forces shall ensure that their VRR scheme is clearly explained and easily accessible for victims and made available in an appropriate language. To provide consistency to victims, a 'Victims Script' has been included in this guidance (**Appendix A**) which all forces should seriously consider utilising on external communication (e.g. websites) to provide information to victims.
- VI. Reviews should be conducted by an officer at least one rank higher than the decision maker or by an equivalent staff member, such as a Senior Evidence Review Officer. Forces may wish to consider having a Supt or DCI/staff equivalent to undertake the VRR who are not involved in the investigation chain to ensure objectivity and impartiality.
- VII. The reviewing officer should consider the case afresh rather than assessing the validity of the original decision-making process.
- VIII. In order to overturn a decision not to prosecute the reviewing officer must be satisfied that:
 - a) In cases requiring the authority of the CPS to charge, the earlier decision not to refer the case to the CPS was wrong (see paragraphs 7.7-7.8) in assessing whether the appropriate Test⁴ had been met; or
 - b) In cases where the police have the authority to charge, that the earlier decision not to prosecute was wrong in applying the appropriate Test; and in both cases;
 - c) For the maintenance of public confidence in the Criminal Justice System (CJS), the decision must be reversed.
- IX. It is anticipated that forces will offer a single review of the evidence (see paragraphs 9.7).
- X. Police VRR requests should be dealt with in a timely manner, in particular where cases are subject to the 6 month statutory limitation on proceedings (see paragraphs 8.1-8.5).
- XI. The scheme should allow victims to request a review within 3 months of them being notified of the case being filed (see paragraph 8.2). Force should have discretion to review cases outside of the 3 months in certain circumstances. Individual cases will be reviewed on their merits.
- XII. Review decisions should ordinarily be confirmed in writing (see paragraph 9.2).

4. SECTION 4 – QUALIFYING CASES

4.1 Police VRR will only apply to :

4.1.1 National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) offences.

4.1.2 Forces should seriously consider reviewing life changing injury road traffic matters which fall outside of National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) offences."

⁴ The appropriate test will normally be the 'Full Code Test' unless unless the suspect presents a substantial bail risk if released and not all the evidence is available at the time when he or she must be released from custody unless charged. For further details see 'The Director's Guidance on Charging 2013 – fifth edition'

http://www.cps.gov.uk/publications/directors_guidance/dpp_guidance_5.html#a08

- Life changing is defined as 'The injured person is not able to lead an independent life. This would include loss of limbs (not fingers), severe head injuries with a loss of cognitive ability and full or partial paralysis.'

4.2 Predominantly Police VRR will only apply to cases in which a suspect has been identified and interviewed under caution, either following an arrest or by voluntary arrangement. An 'interview' in this context relates to situations where a suspect has an allegation put to them in some detail as opposed to limited questioning that might take place in the immediate aftermath of an incident, for instance during a stop and search. However, this can be extended to suspects not interviewed in certain circumstances. The decision to review a case should lie with the force decision maker. However, it should not extend to cases where a suspect has not been interviewed due to lack of evidence.

4.3 The right of a victim to request a review arises where the police:

- Make a decision not to bring proceedings in cases where the police have authority to charge; or
- Make a decision that the case does not meet the appropriate Test for referral to the CPS for a charging decision.

4.4 Police VRR will only apply to decisions taken under paragraph 4.3 that were made on or after 1 April 2015. The scheme does not apply retrospectively to decisions taken before that date.⁵

4.5 The following cases **DO NOT** fall within the scope of police VRR:

- I. Cases where no suspect has been identified and interviewed, for instance investigations that are filed 'at source';
- II. Cases where charges are brought in respect of some (but not all) allegations made or against some (but not all) possible suspects;
- III. Cases where a charge is brought that relates to the matter complained about by the victim but the offence charged differs from the crime that was recorded; for instance the suspect is charged with common assault but an offence of actual bodily harm has been recorded;
- IV. Cases which are concluded by way of out of court disposal⁶; and
- V. Cases where the victim retracts their complaint or refuses to co-operate with the investigation and a decision is therefore taken not to charge/not to refer the case to the CPS for a charging decision. However, if at any point in the future the victim does cooperate, an investigation can be reviewed before considering VRR.

4.6 It should be noted that VRR specifically relates to decisions not to prosecute and does not cover crime recording decisions or decisions not to continue with enquiries.

5. SECTION 5 – WHO CAN APPLY UNDER THE SCHEME?

5.1 Any victim in a qualifying case where a decision is made not to prosecute, as per paragraph 4.3, is entitled to seek a review of that decision.

5.2 A victim is defined as per The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2013 (Victims' Code): 'a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was **directly** caused by criminal conduct'.

5.3 This includes:

- Close relatives of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct;
- Parents or guardians where the main victim is a child or youth under 18;
- Police officers who are victims of crime;

⁵ If the allegation relates to child sexual abuse and is excluded from police VRR as the decision was made prior to 1 April 2015 the case may be suitable for review via a National Child Sexual Abuse Panel and the victim should be advised accordingly. Guidance on the panel process can be found in the ACPO National Child Sexual Abuse Review Panel Guidelines for Police Forces and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), March 2013, amended June 2014.

⁶ Out of Court Disposals should be taken to be the Home Office/Ministry of Justice recognised disposal methods at the time of review request. The range of current out of court disposals is set out in the Ministry of Justice Quick Reference Guide for Out of Court Disposals, July 2014, <https://www.justice.gov.uk/downloads/oocd/quick-reference-guides-oocd.pdf>

- Family spokespersons of victims with a disability or who are so badly injured that they cannot communicate; and
- Businesses, providing they give a named point of contact.
- Legal persons on behalf of the victim with their consent.
- Support services acting on behalf of victim with their consent e.g., registered charities in support of victims.

- 5.4 All victims should be notified of their right to ask for a review at the point they are informed of the decision not to prosecute. However reviews will not ordinarily be conducted until the conclusion of the investigation. This is to cater for situations where no further action is taken against one or more suspects but the case remains open and actively investigated. This further investigation may result in another suspect(s) being prosecuted and thereby put the case outside the scope of qualifying cases. Consideration may need to be given to securing material that the victim indicates will form the basis of a future request for a review, where appropriate; particularly if, like CCTV footage, it is liable to being lost or destroyed. If there is a likely to be a significant period of time between the decision to take no further action and the concluding of the investigation consideration may also need to be given for conducting the review at an earlier stage, as very lengthy delays could strengthen a subsequent abuse of process argument made by the suspect.
- 5.5 Victims should be reminded of their right to review at the point they are notified that the case is being filed, if the case still remains within the scope for a review to be conducted.
- 5.6 It is recommended that forces consider recording that the victim has been made aware of their right to ask for a review on the investigation log. The notification itself does not necessarily need to be made in writing. However, it is important that victims are provided with sufficient information to decide whether to request a review of a decision and it is recommended that forces provide written information on VRR to victims, either as part of the notification or as part of other information provided during the course of the investigation.
- 5.7 VRR is specifically intended to allow a victim to have an avenue to appeal a decision not to prosecute. It is not intended to allow others, such as campaigning groups, to direct reviews of cases that relate to their area of interest and such requests should be declined.
- 5.8 It is acknowledged that a victim might ask an individual to act on their behalf, such as a solicitor or an MP, charity or specific service provider to support a victim e.g., Support after Murder and Manslaughter, Women's Aid, Help for Heroes. Forces may wish to consider the appropriateness of acting on such requests on a case by case basis and may wish to obtain written confirmation, where appropriate, that the person in question has the authority of the victim to act on their behalf.

6. SECTION 6 – VICTIMS ENTITLED TO AN ENHANCED SERVICE

- 6.1 Victims entitled to an enhanced service are those eligible as defined in The Victims' Code which identifies three categories of victim who are entitled to receive an enhanced service: vulnerable or intimidated victims, victims of the most serious crime and victims who are persistently targeted.
- 6.2 Forces should look to ensure that victims entitled to an enhanced service are given an appropriate level of support to enable them to make an informed decision regarding their right to ask for a review. This might involve ensuring that relevant victim support agencies are engaged in helping the victim with their decision regarding VRR.
- 6.3 Reviews requested by a victim who is entitled to an enhanced service should be expedited, where possible, as the effect of the crime and of uncertainty regarding the outcome of the investigation are likely to have an increased impact on them.

7. SECTION 7 – CONDUCTING THE REVIEW

- 7.1 Reviews should be conducted by an officer at least one rank higher than the decision maker or by an equivalent staff member, such as a Senior Evidence Review Officer. Forces may wish to consider having a Supt or DCI/staff equivalent to undertake the VRR.

- 7.2 The reviewing officer should be independent of the investigation - they should not have been involved in the investigation, or in the making of the original decision that is being challenged to ensure objectivity and impartiality.
- 7.3 Forces should seriously consider having a single point of contact in which all VRRs are directed to, this would also assist with collation of performance monitoring information as outlined in Section 11 of this guidance.
- 7.4 In cases requiring a level of specialist knowledge, such as certain Public Protection and financial investigations, the reviewing officer should have relevant experience/qualifications in the field.
- 7.5 The reviewing officer must approach the case afresh and reach their own conclusion regarding whether a prosecution should be brought, whether the matter should be referred to the CPS, whether further enquires are necessary or that no further action should be taken. Their decision will, in almost all cases, be made against the Full Code Test as, even if the original decision was made against the Threshold Test, it is highly unlikely that the conditions justifying use of the Threshold Test will exist by the time of the review.
- 7.6 The reviewing officer's decision takes precedence over the original decision.
- 7.7 The reviewing officer should not assess whether the original decision was justified based on the process that was taken to reach it.
- 7.8 A determination to overturn a decision not to prosecute must be grounded in the principle that the original decision was 'wrong' as per paragraph 3.1, Principle VIII. This is to ensure that such decisions have a legal foundation that will withstand challenge. The CPS rely on section 10 of The Code of Practice for Crown Prosecutors for this authority and police VRR will look to follow the same principles.
- 7.9 Factors that might be regarded as leading to a determination that the original decision was 'wrong' include:
- An unreasonable decision to disregard compelling evidence;
 - A significant misinterpretation of the evidence;
 - A failure to consider, or an unreasonable decision to ignore, relevant policy;
 - An incorrect application of the law.
- 7.10 The outcome of the review and the rationale for the reviewing officer's decision should be recorded in writing. The rationale should clearly set out why the original decision was wrong, considering the factors in paragraph 7.8. This is important if the decision is subsequently challenged through judicial review.
- 7.11 The CPS provide guidance entitled, 'Reconsidering a Prosecution Decision', to their prosecutors which may be of assistance for police reviewing officers. This guidance is available at: http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/p_to_r/reconsidering_a_prosecution_decision/

8. SECTION 8 – TIME LIMITS

- 8.1 When a victim requests a review of a decision it should be acknowledged within 10 working days.
- 8.2 Victims should be allowed to request a review within 3 months of being notified of the case being filed, as this is the period during which they can request a judicial review. Requests made after this period should be dealt with at the force's discretion. Forces should consider retaining case material for at least the 3 month period open for review requests.
- 8.3 Forces should, wherever possible, complete the review and communicate the decision to the victim within an overall timeframe of 30 working days (i.e. 6 weeks from receipt of the request from the victim).

- 8.4 Where the case is particularly complex or sensitive, it may not be possible to provide a VRR decision within the usual time limits. In such cases, forces should notify the victim accordingly and provide regular updates on the progress of the review.
- 8.5 Where a case is due to become statute-barred every effort should be made to expedite the review, particularly where the CPS will ultimately be required to make the charging decision, and early liaison should be made with the CPS in such cases.
- 8.6 Should a VRR appeal be undertaken by the force, wherever possible, the VRR appeal should be completed and the decision communicated to the victim within an overall timeframe of 30 working days (i.e. 6 weeks from receipt of the appeal from the victim). Where the case is particularly complex or sensitive, it may not be possible to provide a VRR appeal decision within the usual time limits. In such cases, forces should notify the victim accordingly and provide regular updates on the progress of the review.

9. SECTION 9 – THE OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

- 9.1 There are six potential outcomes of a review:
- I. The original decision to take no further action is upheld;
 - II. The original decision is overturned and proceedings are commenced against the suspect, i.e. they are charged/summonsed;
 - III. The original decision is overturned and the suspect is dealt with by way of an out of court disposal;
 - IV. The original decision is overturned and the case is referred to the CPS for a charging decision;
 - V. It is determined that further enquires need to be completed before the reviewing officer can make their decision;
 - VI. The original decision is overturned but the case is statute-barred and proceeding cannot be instigated.
- 9.2 The method of communicating the outcome of a review with a victim may be determined on a case by case basis but review decisions should be confirmed in writing, unless the circumstances of the case make it inappropriate to do so or the victim has stated that they do not wish to receive written communication. It is not suggested that any standardized template is used to communicate the decision as the response should be tailored to each individual. However, each response should include:
1. Provide information regarding the evidence considered in the decision-making process.
 2. The outcome of the review.
 3. An explanation of any terminology used in the letter.
- 9.3 If proceedings are to be commenced following review, the suspect should be advised. Suspects should not be made aware of the victim's request for a review during the review process or in cases where the original decision is upheld.
- 9.4 It is important that suspects are given clear information if they are informed of a decision to take no further action against them, making them aware that proceedings may still be initiated in light of fresh evidence or a review of the decision. This is vital to prevent abuse of process arguments precluding the instigation of proceedings following a review.
- 9.5 In cases where it is determined that further enquiries are needed (paragraph 9.1, point V), consideration should be given as to whether the reviewing officer or another supervisor is best placed to manage their completion. If following completion of the further enquiries, no further action is still the proposed outcome the matter should be brought back to the reviewing officer for determination.
- 9.6 In cases which are statute-barred but where the reviewing officer believes that the original determination was wrong, the only option available is to offer an explanation and, where appropriate, an apology to the victim.

- 9.7 The CPS VRR scheme uses a two-tier model of local review followed by an escalation to a central national review team if the victim remains dissatisfied following the initial review. As the police service does not have a similar national structure it is anticipated that forces will offer a single review of the evidence. Forces should strongly consider having an appeals process, with a VRR appeal undertaken by an officer/staff of a higher rank/grade than the original VRR reviewing officer. A two-tier process provides enhanced transparency of the VRR process and will assist to build confidence with victims, although it is not necessary to meet the requirements of the EU Directive.
- 9.8 A victim who remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the police review and wishes to pursue the matter further can apply to the High Court for a judicial review.
- 9.9 It is possible that a victim could appeal a police decision not to prosecute resulting in that decision being overturned and the matter being referred to the CPS for a charging decision. The CPS could then decide to take no further action and the victim would then be entitled to ask for a review of the CPS decision under the CPS VRR scheme and ultimately to refer the matter for a judicial review.

10. SECTION 10 – REVIEWS, COMPLAINTS AND OPERATIONAL LEARNING

- 10.1 Reviews of decisions not to prosecute should not be considered as 'complaints' against the police.
- 10.2 If a review of an investigation reveals issues of misconduct or under-performance then these should be dealt with in the normal manner, but the purpose of a review is not to apportion blame.
- 10.3 Where lessons can be learned from the outcome of a VRR request, forces should establish a process for informing relevant parties and embedding the learning more widely where appropriate. It is strongly advised that learning should be captured as part of VRR performance monitoring as outlined in section 11 of this guidance.
- 10.4 An expression of dissatisfaction by the victim in relation to a review decision should not automatically be treated as a complaint under the Police Reform Act. The appropriate way for a victim to challenge the reviewing officer's decision is by way of judicial review. As such, allegations made solely about the decision itself may be regarded as an abuse of process and, therefore, not recorded or be subject of disapplication.
- 10.5 Complaints made regarding the reviewing officer but not specifically about the decision itself, such as alleged incivility, should be dealt with in the usual manner

11. SECTION 11 – PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 11.1 All forces are strongly advised to collect data on the performance of their scheme to allow for local and national reporting. Such data should include the following:
1. Number of VRR's received annually
 2. Offence type
 3. % of VRRs completed in the timeframe of 30 days
 4. Learning outcomes if any and actions taken
 5. VRR Outcome
 6. Victim gender
 7. Victim ethnicity

The above performance measures support the Victims Code and provide for greater reporting of police force's VRR performance, providing an opportunity for sharing good practice to improve the service provided to victims whilst also improving the transparency of the VRR process and assisting to build confidence.

Appendix A – NPCC VRR Victims Script

The Victims' Right to Review (VRR) Scheme gives victims the right to ask for a review of a police decision not to charge a suspect.

A victim is defined as per The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2013 (Victims' Code): *'a person who has suffered harm, including physical, mental or emotional harm or economic loss which was directly caused by criminal conduct'*.

VRR only applies to those cases where a suspect has been identified and interviewed under caution. This happens either after they have been arrested or because the suspect has been asked by the investigating officer and volunteers to be interviewed.

The VRR scheme applies to any decision made on or after April 2015.

Cases you can ask to be reviewed

You have a right to request a review if the police decide:

- Where the police decide that the case doesn't meet the test for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to decide to charge someone – at this point you have a right to ask for a review (VRR).
- VRR only applies where the decision is made not to charge or not to pass the case to the CPS to make a decision to charge someone.
- It doesn't cover decisions on whether a crime is recorded or whether an investigation into crime can continue.
- If your request to review relates to CPS VRR scheme, you can request a review on a decision made on or after 5th June 2013. As this is a CPS scheme, the right to review lies with CPS. Visit the CPS website for more information.

Cases that can't be reviewed

VRR doesn't apply to cases where:

- Cases where no suspect has been identified and interviewed, for instance investigations that are filed 'at source.'
- Cases where charges are brought in respect of some (but not all) allegations made or against some (but not all) possible suspects.
- Cases where a charge is brought that relates to the matter complained about by the victim but the offence charged differs from the crime that was recorded; for instance the suspect is charged with common assault but an offence of actual bodily harm has been recorded.
- Cases which are concluded by way of out of court disposal, for example a caution, a conditional caution, a community resolution.
- Cases where the victim retracts their complaint or refuses to co-operate with the investigation and a decision is therefore taken not to charge/not to refer the case to the CPS for a charging decision. However, if at any point in the future the victim does cooperate, an investigation can be reviewed before considering VRR.

Who can ask for a review and when

- If the case qualifies under the scheme, any victim of a crime can request a review of the cases.
- You must request a review within 3 months of the police decision not to charge.
- Forces have a discretion to review cases outside of this timeframe, but cases will be individually reviewed on its merit.

Other people who can ask for a review and when:

- Close relatives of a person whose death was directly caused by criminal conduct.
- Parents or guardians where the main victim is a child or youth under 18.
- Police officers who are victims of crime.
- Family spokespersons of victims with a disability or who are so badly injured that they cannot communicate.
- Businesses, providing they give a named point of contact.

- Legal persons on behalf of the victim with their consent.
- Support services acting on behalf of victim with their consent e.g., registered charities in support of victims.
- As a victim you might ask an individual to act your behalf to request a VRR, such as a solicitor or an MP, charity or specific service provider to support a victim e.g., Support after Murder and Manslaughter, Women's Aid, Help for Heroes.

How to apply for a review:

- There is an online form on the website for each police force.
- Each force has a dedicated point of contact to forward your VRR to, details can be found on the website of each police force.

What happens next:

- The police aim to contact people within 10 working days to let them know we have received their request.
- An officer, who wasn't involved in the case, will be assigned to review the case. The officer's role is not to review the previous decision, but to take a fresh look at the evidence and to make their own decision.
- A review should be completed within 30 working days (i.e. 6 weeks from receipt of the request for a VRR). In complex or sensitive cases, it may take longer. You will be given regular updates.

Outcomes of reviews:

There are six potential outcomes of a review:

1. the new officer reviewing the case agrees with the first decision
2. the new officer disagrees with the first decision and the suspect is charged by the police, or the decision to charge is sent to the CPS
3. the original decision is overturned and the suspect dealt with out of court (an out of court disposal). This is a way of resolving an investigation for offenders of low level crime and anti-social behaviour.
4. the new officer disagrees with the decision and the case is sent to the CPS for a decision to charge.
5. the police decide they need to investigate further so the new officer can make a decision.
6. the new officer disagrees with the decision but the statute of limitations has run out so nothing more can be done.

- You will be contacted to let you know the outcome and for an explanation.
- If you are unhappy with the VRR decision, you can apply to the High Court for a judicial review.
- If you're not happy with the VRR decision, you can also request to the same police force a VRR appeal to take place – this will be undertaken by an officer/staff of higher rank/grade than the VRR reviewing officer.
- A police VRR appeal review should be completed within 30 working days (i.e. 6 weeks from receipt of the request for a VRR). In complex or sensitive cases, it may take longer. You will be given regular updates.
- If you are unhappy with the police VRR appeal decision, you can apply to the High Court for a judicial review.

End of Guidance



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Rape and Serious Sexual Offences (RASSO) Practice Guide

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PRACTICE GUIDE

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1. Introduction

Rape and serious sexual offences are amongst those which cause the most harm to an individual and therefore the approach of NWP in dealing with such incidents must reflect that.

The objective of this guidance is to ensure that all RASSO investigations are carried out thoroughly and in accordance with national standards, whilst ensuring that NWP provides an excellent service to victims and focuses on fighting, preventing and reducing crime.

The nature of these crimes is that the victim must be considered as a key witness but also as a crime scene and therefore investigators must carefully balance managing the welfare of the victim against the need for information. When working with the victim staff must be trauma informed and mindful that there is no 'typical' response to a sexual crime. The manner of approach by police can significantly influence the victim as they decide whether to support the investigation and work jointly to bring the offender/s to justice.

Different cultural beliefs within our communities must be considered and the police response tailored accordingly. In some circumstances, cultural shame and other honour based abuse sits alongside other aggravating factors such as domestic abuse, language barriers and fear of reprisal.

This guidance supports College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) - [Rape and sexual offences | College of Policing](#)

2. Operation Sorteria

Operation Soteria is a national programme to transform how the police handle rape and other serious sexual offences (RASSO).

Soteria provides both a new approach and a new model for responding to these devastating crimes. It is grounded in decades of research that has examined

policing practice and why RASSO victims have been systematically failed by the criminal justice system.

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.

As part of Soteria, NWP should target and disrupt repeat suspects, to prevent future RASSO taking place. And they must take action to change RASSO investigators' skillsets and well-being.

[Progress to introduce a national operating model for rape and other serious sexual offences investigations - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectors.gov.uk\)](#)

3. Target Audience

This guidance should be used by **all** Police Officers and Police Staff dealing with any incidents of rape or other serious sexual offences; links to relevant subject areas are included at the end of this document.

4. RASSO Defined

RASSO is a term that covers most serious sexual crimes, including all rape, attempted rape and sexual assault offences. 'Serious' is defined as any case destined for the Crown Court.

5. Initial Response

The initial response to a RASSO offence will be in accordance with APP guidance:

[Briefing note for police first responders to a report of rape or sexual assault \(college.police.uk\)](#)

[Investigator's journey | College of Policing](#)

6. Local Procedures

In addition to activities documented within APP, when dealing with a report of rape or attempt rape, staff must consider the below (not exhaustive)

- Ensure that the incident is brought to the attention of Amethyst and/or DI/DS Cadre
- Complete a Response Officer's log with the victim. BWV to be switched on [Response Officer's Log.pdf \(nwp.net\)](#)
- If the victim refuses a forensic medical examination, advise them of SARC & ISVA's and the self-referral process.
- Remain as single point of contact until SOLO (Sexual Offences Liaison Officer) & an ISVA (Independent Sexual Violence Advisor) is appointed to the case. Adhere to the Crime management plan
- Adhere to the Crime management plan
- Maximise early investigative advice opportunities.

[Early Advice FAQ](#)

For other serious sexual offences, consider any crime patterns or escalation in offending. This should not just be limited to a single force boundary. Research using (not exhaustive) RMS, PNC and PND must be undertaken.

[Rape Aide Memoire](#)

7. Forensic Medical

[FME Call Out flowchart](#)

8. Supporting Documents

[Guidance on investigating and prosecuting rape - NPCC, CPS, NCA PVPU SharePoint Site - Amethyst \(nwp.net\)](#)

Procedural response to offences of sexual exposure and voyeurism

[Crime Management Practice Guide](#)

Wales Safeguarding Procedures 2020

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

Domestic abuse guidance (Including PPDA)

Honour Based Abuse including Forced Marriage

Female Genital Mutilation

Stalking and Harassment

9. PVPU SharePoint

PVPU SharePoint site is a centralised point of information and guidance for all aspects of vulnerability – [click on below images](#):



When accessing the site, clicking the Amethyst tab will provide information and guidance for safeguarding and investigation of rape.