



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	19 March 2025
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Deep Dive Analysis of Rape & Sexual Crime
Presented By	Steve Johnson, ACC Major Crime, Public Protection & Local Crime
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Yes: Appendix 1: EmilyTest

PURPOSE

The objective of this paper is to inform members of the Policing Performance Committee regarding the strategies and collaborative initiatives pertinent to Rape and Sexual Crime. It places particular emphasis on statistical data and projects that adopt a victim-centred approach.

Members are invited to consider the contents of this report and associated presentation for further discussion.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. In Scotland, rape and sexual offences account for a substantial portion of reported crimes, often disproportionately impacting women and girls in our community. During the period of 01 April 2024–31 December 2024, Police Scotland documented 2,056 reports of rape, which constituted a 20% specific proportion of the total reported Group 2 crimes.
- 1.2. Sexual offences encompass a variety of criminal acts, including non-consensual offences such as rape and sexual assault, as well as crimes that exploit individuals for sexual purposes, whether conducted in physical spaces or facilitated through online platforms.
- 1.3. Criminal offences can manifest between various social relationships, including interactions among strangers, friends, acquaintances, current or former partners, and family members. The elapse of time does not impede the ability to investigate or prosecute such offences. Sexual offences are systematically investigated within the framework of the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) strategy.
- 1.4. Through the quarterly and annual performance reporting, Police Scotland continues to publish a large volume of publicly available data relating to rape and sexual crime.

2. POLICE SCOTLAND RAPE & SERIOUS SEXUAL CRIME PORTFOLIO

- 2.1 Police Scotland has a dedicated lead for Major Crime and Public Protection. The current lead is ACC Steve Johnston, Specialist Crime Division. Further assurance is provided through the Police Scotland Force and Regional tasking boards that provides a suitable tactical response that promotes effective local responses and collaborative working. The head of SCD National Public Protection also co-chairs the Sexual Crime Board along with Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) to enhance working nationally between Police Scotland and COPFS.
- 2.2 Responding to and working to prevent rape and sexual crime is delivered operationally across all the local policing divisions and

supported nationally by SCD Public Protection teams for Rape and Sexual Crime, Child Abuse and Domestic Abuse. This is a system wide response and requires the support of partner agencies both local and national. Every case of rape that is reported has a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) appointed, this shows the level of commitment from SCD NPP and Local Policing.

- 2.3 Against a backdrop of a shared understanding and belief that rape, and sexual crime is significantly under reported, reports of rape and sexual crime has increased in the last year. SCD National Public Protection (SCD NPP) has implemented a consistent national approach to addressing rape and sexual crime, aiming to enhance awareness, training, and delivery of services. This approach is essential in tackling societal issues surrounding these crimes and ensuring that victims feel confident to report the crime. As these initiatives continue, they lead to increased reporting and improved detection rates, fostering a safer community for all.

3. KEY INSIGHTS – SEXUAL CRIME

- 3.1 Rape is at the highest level of recording and accounts for almost one fifth of all reported sexual crimes.
- 70% of all rapes were committed against females over the age of 16 years.
 - 'Recent' rapes continue to account for the largest proportion of all rapes.
 - Over half of rape crimes have a domestic element recorded.
- 3.2 In Scotland, a total of 2,056 crimes of rape have been reported between 01 April 2024 – 31 December 2024 which is an increase of 286 crimes compared to the previous year.
- 3.3 Rape of a female over 16 accounts for 70.2% of all rape and is the only classification within rape to have a year-on-year increase. Rape of a female over 16 has increased from 1,018 crimes in 2019/20 to 1,444 crimes in 2024/25, an increase of 41.8%.

- 3.4 There have been 61 crimes of rape reported where the victim is a male over 16 recorded in 2024/25. This is the highest volume of crimes recorded for this crime classification.

CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

- 3.5 There were 302 rapes of children aged 15 and under between 01 April 2024 – 31 December 2024. This accounts for 14.7% of all reported rapes during that period.
- 3.6 Children and young people (under 16) are potentially one of the most vulnerable communities that Police Scotland serve. Any connection to an act of violence of sexual harm is traumatic for any child or young person which is why we are committed to dealing with these incidents in the most effective and trauma informed way possible.
- 3.7 In 2019 the Scottish Child Interview Model (SCIM) for joint investigative interviews was introduced, which is a trauma informed, best practice model which seeks to secure best evidence for court processes, and to inform assessment of risk to the child and other children.
- 3.8 Children and young people are interviewed by officers and social workers that have the specialist training and knowledge for forensic interviewing of children and who can contribute to the ongoing support and aftercare of the child.
- 3.9 The SCIM joint investigative interviews also support the 'Barnahus' or 'Bairns' hoose' quality standards currently being rolled out across Scotland. Bairns' hoose is Scotland's approach to the Icelandic 'Barnahus' (Children's house offering a holistic child centred support to those who have been victims or witnesses to abuse of all kinds).
- 3.10 Operational work began on 11 Bairns' hoose sites across Scotland in January 2025. The model connects services and Police Scotland, along with local partnerships, are building their Bairns' hoose's to support our commitment to tackling rape and sexual crime in the best way for our children.

- 3.11 SCD NPP have recently reviewed and strengthened training to probationers in terms of child exploitation and child sexual exploitation. To ensure a focus and recognition of this specific type of sexual abuse at an early stage.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

- 3.12 Rapes reported where the perpetrator is the partner or ex-partner of the victim account for over 50% of all rapes reported (1,111 cases).
- 3.13 The response to sexual crime within the context of domestic abuse is the same as to non-domestic sexual crime. It involves application of the same tactics and processes, the appointment of a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) and the training for, e.g. Sexual Offences Liaison Officers (SOLO) is the same. There is no distinction made in terms of our response to victims.
- 3.14 Where rape or any other serious sexual crime has occurred in the context of domestic abuse, it is investigated as part of the entire course of conduct. The nature of domestic abuse investigations, often identifying multiple complainers, frequently results in very effective application of the Moorov Doctrine (*a stated case where a series of crimes committed were closely linked by crime, character and circumstances as to constitute a course of conduct by an accused*), with notable increases in conviction.
- 3.15 However, due to Scots Law and the need for corroboration, when there is a single complainer of rape, either in a domestic context or otherwise, this can be challenging to evidence. There are two recent stated cases in Scotland whereby Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) have successfully utilised Domestic Abuse Scotland Act (DASA) legislation to support a complainer's report of serious sexual violence, where the rapes would otherwise be uncorroborated, and achieved a conviction. (*HMA v Findlay & HMA v Kirkwood*). This demonstrates the effectiveness of including the investigation of serious sexual abuse within the parameters of the broader domestic abuse investigation.

4. LORD ADVOCATES REFERENCES 2023

Lord Advocates Reference 1 of 2023

- 4.1 In October 2023, a panel comprising seven judges concluded that the emotional distress shown by a complainant could corroborate their reported experiences. Furthermore, the judges determined that statements made by the complainant while still experiencing this emotional distress, shortly after the incident (*de recenti*), could be considered as corroborative evidence supporting their account.

Lord Advocates Reference 2 & 3 of 2023

- 4.2 In June 2024, a panel of nine judges determined that *de recenti* statements, even in the absence of distress, can corroborate a victims account, further that in deciding whether something is a *de recenti* statement, greater/considerable latitude has to be given in sexual offences cases and cases against children, and even when the statement is not *de recenti*, the statement can still be corroborative if it is made to a first natural confidante. The *de recenti* statement can corroborate both the commission of the crime and the identification of the accused as the perpetrator.
- 4.3 The introduction of Lord Advocates References represents a substantial shift in Scots Law, with the potential to transform policing and prosecution in Scotland. This approach emphasises the importance of victim and witness statements for corroborating offences in the absence of physical evidence.
- 4.4 Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) are in the process of developing a comprehensive training program for Police Scotland in conjunction with this initiative. Further the COPFS is evaluating the implications, particularly considering the references encompassing a broad spectrum of offences, rather than being confined solely to matters pertaining to rape and sexual crime.
- 4.5 SCD NPP and National COPFS team convene quarterly forums for Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs) and Sexual Offences Liaison Officer (SOLO) Coordinators. Throughout the year, SCD NPP have hosted a series of continuous professional development (CPD)

events, addressing key issues. These events spotlight topics such as non-fatal strangulation, the work of "Emily Test" charity (see Appendix 1 for more information) concerning Gender-Based violence (form of violence that predominantly affect women and are most commonly perpetrated by men), and vicarious trauma experienced by officers handling cases of rape and sexual crimes. These forums provide a platform for the exchange of information pertaining to the identification and resolution of barriers encountered in evidence gathering and reporting.

KEY INSIGHTS – NEW TRENDS

5. STEALTHING

- 5.1 Within the Scottish Crime Recording Standards and Counting Rules April 2023, information was circulated that if a person reports the circumstances that amount to "Stealthing", this should be recorded as Rape (Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act, 2009, Section 1).
- 5.2 **Stealthing is defined as** - Non-consensual condom removal and is the practice of a person covertly removing or damaging a condom during sexual intercourse, when their sex partner has only consented to condom-protected sex.
- 5.3 SCD NPP has effectively integrated changes within the National Crime Management framework to ascertain the extent of the issue throughout Scotland and to systematically document relevant data.
- 5.4 In May 2023 a 35-year-old male was found guilty of 19 charges against 9 women including stealthing, violence, sexual assault, threats and abuse and sentenced to 16 years in custody. This landmark case was Scotland's first conviction for Stealthing, which attracted national media attention.
- 5.5 Reports of stealthing may be expected to rise in the future and it is suspected that there is a lack of knowledge that this is rape. In December 2024, celebrity Megan Barton-Hanson (Love Island contestant) publicly disclosed her experience as a victim of stealthing and previously being unaware that it constituted a criminal offence. Additionally, the feature of stealthing in a

prominent BBC drama (I May Destroy You) has significantly contributed to raising public awareness on the issue. Several external organisations, collaborating with SCD NPP, are actively engaged in promoting awareness of stealthing within university and college settings, while also disseminating information about recent revisions to crime recording procedures implemented by Police Scotland. These modifications have correlated with a significant increase in the number of officially documented cases of “Stealthing”.

6. EARLY EVIDENCE

- 6.1 SCD NPP are engaged in the development of effective strategies aimed at fostering a consistent approach when dealing with the initial report of sexual crime. Officers approach to victims of sexual crime should be victim-centred and trauma-informed. Early Evidence Kits (EEK) safeguard forensic evidence and are used to gather samples during initial victim contact.
- 6.2 Collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders has been essential for the development of instructional modular videos aimed at optimising the effective utilisation of various forensic kits. Each forensic kit will be equipped with a QR code, which can be scanned by first responders utilising mobile devices. This scanning functionality will facilitate access to crucial instructional videos that provide comprehensive guidance on the proper use of these kits in order to capture best evidence.
- 6.3 SCD NPP have integrated the instructional videos into the intranet, probationary training and detective training programs to ensure that all police officers perform their duties effectively, continuously and appropriately throughout their career. This initiative aims to promote best practices and confidence, which prioritises a victim-centred approach in policing.
- 6.4 The fundamental principle underlying this recent change is to facilitate multiple advantages, including the provision for officers to engage in remote training, the optimisation of operational guidance, and the reduction of risks associated with the loss of evidence or operational challenges.

The Facility of Forensic Medicine has commended this initiative, aiming to integrate the SCD NPP concept into all forensic kits across England and Wales.

7. INITIAL BRIEFING REPORT

- 7.1 The recording of rape and sexual crimes is evolving, especially with police-issued mobile devices. This technology offers benefits and challenges for Police Scotland's ability to document and preserve evidence accurately. The Initial Briefing Report (IBR) is designed to gather essential information early in investigations, ensuring optimal evidence collection. This information will be evaluated by the relevant department before the case is assigned to a Sexual Offences Liaison Officer (SOLO). The IBR is crucial to the evidentiary chain and must be submitted as part of the investigative process.
- 7.2 SCD NPP have developed a concept for an application that operates on police handheld devices within the framework of the crime recording system. This application is designed to feature a newly developed initial briefing report, which allows officers to input specific details about crimes directly into their devices, thereby eliminating the need for paper forms.
- 7.3 The application presents numerous advantages, including the facilitation of remote work for officers, the acceleration of document processing, and the support of ongoing developmental initiatives. Additionally, it promotes a more environmentally sustainable approach that adheres to accessibility standards. Another key objective of the application is to foster confidence and trust among victims of sexual crimes by ensuring that their initial disclosures to Police Scotland are systematically recorded, securely stored, and protected from misplacement. The IBR is critical for maintaining the integrity of evidence throughout the investigative process. This work is currently in the pipeline and will likely be in place by the summer of 2025.

8 BODY WORN VIDEO

- 8.1 In October 2024, a collaborative partnership was formed with the Body Worn Video project team to develop a policy focused on the consent process for recording initial reporting with both adult and child victims of sexual offences. The primary aim of this initiative was to implement a victim-centred approach that accurately reflects the emotional distress associated with these crimes while maximising essential evidentiary opportunities. (Lord Advocate Reference 1 of 2023).
- 8.2 Following the Lord Advocate's Reference 1 of 2023, this initiative aims to substantially bolster the evidence accumulation for rape and serious sexual offences. In circumstances where recent distress is apparent, officers must carefully document and capture this alongside the victim's statement.

9. PARTNERSHIP WORKING/FEEDBACK

- 9.1 SCD NPP are committed to supporting victims of rape and serious sexual crime regardless of their geographical area or where the crime took place. A key area of this support is working closely with partner agencies to ensure the victim receives appropriate care. Rape Crisis and the Sexual Assault Response Coordination Service (SARCS) are our key partners in providing an appropriate trauma informed approach to support victims of rape and sexual crime.
- 9.2 Additionally, SCD NPP is committed to the continuous improvement and implementation of a trauma-informed, victim-centred approach in responding to cases of rape and serious sexual offences. Our foremost priority is the safety and well-being of victims, as we endeavour to cultivate their trust. To achieve this, SCD NPP utilise anonymous feedback from victims of domestic abuse, rape and sexual crime, which is collected through Police Scotland's website. This feedback is supplemented by insights from Rape Crisis, National Advocacy Service and COPFS as well as lived experience groups of those affected.
- 9.3 Integrating feedback from persons with lived experiences is crucial for ensuring their voices are heard. This engagement is key to

shaping training initiatives, informing policy development, and improving service delivery to victims. By prioritising the perspectives of those directly affected, SCD NPP can implement significant enhancements in order to support victims whilst obtaining best evidence.

- 9.4 **Rape Crisis Scotland (RCS)** – Following an amendment to the Information Sharing Agreement with RCS in March 2024 there has been a reduced level of feedback which is being addressed by them, however positive reporting about Police Scotland have remained consistent. From April 2024 – December 2024 86% of survivors of sexual crime that were supported by RCS were positive about their experience in dealing with Police Scotland, this was an increase on 83% from the same period from April 2023.
- 9.5 **Lived Experience** – SCD NPP are working closely with a group of lived experience victim/survivors who have been through the criminal justice process and who have had a range of experiences that they are willing to share to enhance our understanding of the victim perspective and help shape future policy and practice around witness engagement. Several engagement sessions have taken place to focus on feedback received and how our approach can be improved.
- 9.6 **COPFS** – SCD NPP are regularly in contact with COPFS to obtain feedback from their perspective on good practice and areas for improvement within Police Scotland. This is fed back through national and local divisions to enhance performance.

10. TRAUMA

- 10.1 In March 2019 the Lord President, Lord Carloway, commissioned an independent judicial review to improve the management of sexual offences cases. One of the aims of this review was - *To improve the experience of complainers within the Scottish Court system without compromising the rights of the accused.*

Recommendations recognised the importance of staff across organisations working with victims and witnesses having a shared

understanding of the impact of trauma and having the knowledge and skills to minimise the risk of harm and re-traumatisation, to support recovery and maximise participation to gain best evidence.

- 10.2 In May 2023 NHS Education Scotland (NES) in partnership with Scottish Government, published the Trauma Informed Justice Framework which identifies all Police Officers should be trained to "Trauma Skilled" level with Detective Officers requiring the advanced level of "Trauma Enhanced".
- 10.3 Police Scotland is committed to ensuring we are a Trauma Informed organisation with work ongoing to comply with measures outlined within the framework to ensure our officers and staff have the required skills and capabilities.
- 10.4 A Trauma Skilled programme was developed by NES featuring modules designed to increase understanding of psychological trauma, how to support recovery and develop trauma informed relationships. In November 2024 two further modules were release by NES Trauma Informed Justice modules 1 & 2; Foundation knowledge for working with victims and witnesses and Developing skills for working with victims and witnesses.
- 10.5 These modules are a pre-requisite for officers attending SOLO courses and will be rolled out to all police officers to ensure our workforce reach Trauma Skilled level.
- 10.6 To establish a programme to upskill officers to Trauma Enhanced level a Short Life Working Group (SLWG) was established in November 2023. Their remit was to establish what additional training would be required for SOLO's, SIO's across the country and how this could be delivered.
- 10.7 Trauma Enhanced training must be delivered by a Clinical Psychologist therefore the SLWG has been working with Dr Caroline Bruce who led on developing the framework to develop a pilot. This will initially be rolled out to 25-30 students before being refined based on feedback from subject matter experts and expanded to an in person 100-150 student course which will meet the demand of

providing training for a substantial number of specialist officers whilst also ensuring learning and understanding throughout. Police Scotland have now employed a Trauma Informed Coordinator who will look at the needs of specialist officers and how this can be factored into the national training program.

- 10.8 This ongoing work will provide officers and supervisors with the necessary skills to ensure they are meeting the aims of the framework to improve the experience of victims throughout the justice system process whilst also supporting our workforce and limiting the impact of trauma.

11. OPERATION SOTERIA

- 11.1 Operation Soteria was launched in June 2021 within Avon & Somerset Police to improve outcomes in cases of rape and serious sexual crime and deliver sustained improvement in the criminal justice response. This led to the development of the National Operating Model (NOM) for the investigation of rape and serious sexual offences and to the National College of Policing developing sexual offences courses covering different areas of policing from first responders to specialist officers.
- 11.2 Senior officers from Operation Soteria visited Police Scotland in January 2025 to meet with National Leads and Head of Public Protection, whereby an overview was provided of our work and governance on all rape, sexual crime, domestic abuse, child sexual abuse and management of sex offenders. They were impressed with Police Scotland's approach and further benchmarking in ongoing in respect of training and VAWG plan.

12. DEVELOPING OUR APPROACH TO RAPE & SEXUAL CRIME

- 12.1 We continue to support local policing divisions by capturing best practice and providing advice, guidance and toolkits to assist them in achieving the best possible outcomes on behalf of victims.
- 12.2 Continued work with partner agencies ensuring meaningful and coordinated engagement to agree on the introduction of shared

action plans aligned to rape and sexual crime priorities ensuring they are monitored, reviewed and measured with key milestones built in.

13. CONCLUSION

- 13.1 In recent years, various awareness campaigns have been launched to educate the public about sexual violence by addressing misconceptions and encouraging open conversations, these initiatives have empowered victims. Increased awareness has fostered an environment where victims feel safer to come forward and report incidents.
- 13.2 The delivery of support services has substantially improved, contributing to the rise in reporting. Organisations dedicated to helping victims of sexual crimes have expanded their outreach. These services include confidential hotlines, counselling, and self-referral process which provide victims with the necessary resources to feel secure in their choice to report the crime.
- 13.3 Multi-agency working has proven essential in addressing rape and sexual crime cases. Such partnerships enable information sharing and the development of strategies to tackle sexual violence. This cohesive approach reassures victims that they will be supported throughout the reporting and recovery process.
- 13.4 The rise in reported incidents of rape and sexual offences indicates a constructive change in society's approach to addressing these key issues. Ongoing awareness initiatives, enhanced support services, and successful collaboration among multiple agencies have created a more encouraging atmosphere for victims.
- 13.5 Police Scotland acknowledge the increase in reporting of rape and sexual crime, and we continue to be victim focussed in order to improve our services.

14. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are financial implications in this report. Ensuring we meet our obligations in becoming a trauma informed workforce will have financial implications in that trauma enhanced training must be delivered by a clinical psychologist.

15. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no personnel implications in this report.

16. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are no legal implications in this report.

17. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

17.1 There are reputational implications in this report. We are aware of the importance to maintain the trust and confidence of our communities and the reputational impact to Police Scotland.

18. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

18.1 There are social implications in this report. Rape and sexual crime are cross cutting issues that disproportionately impact women and girls and has a profound and lasting impact on individuals, families and communities.

19. COMMUNITY IMPACT

19.1 There are no community implications in this report.

20. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

20.1 There are equalities implications in this report due to rape and sexual crime disproportionately impacting women and girls within our communities.

21. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

21.1 There are no environmental implications in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are invited to consider the contents of this report and associated presentation for further discussion.



Appendix A - EmilyTest

EmilyTest is a registered charity in Scotland that works to prevent and support victims of Gender Based Violence (GBV) in schools, colleges and universities.

Fiona Drouet founded EmilyTest in memory of her daughter Emily Drouet an undergraduate law student, who tragically died by suicide in 2016 after being subjected to a campaign of GBV by a fellow student whilst living in university halls of residence.

The mission at EmilyTest is to ensure no other student ends up in Emilys shoes.

They aim to achieve this through their GBV Charter, training programmes and resources they share across organisations. The GBV Charter is an award allowing educational institutions to take the Emily Test which involves meeting minimum standards where if they had been in place Emilys life could have been saved.

The charter was created between March 2020 and March 2021 after extensive research and co-creation across Scotland and the United Kingdom with hundreds of students, graduates, further education and higher education staff, Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) professionals and third sector professionals working with marginalised groups such as ethnic minority women, disabled students and LGBTQIA* youth.

The charter instils minimum standards and excellence in Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention, intervention and support in Colleges and Universities.

The Charter is made up of five principles with over forty minimum standards which institutions must reach in order to meet the standard. EmilyTest supports institutions to implement the framework through one-to-one coaching, providing dedicated staff support, resources and opportunities to share good practice with the sector.

Based directly upon the failings in Emily Drouet's case and on testimony-led research undertaken in institutions across Scotland, the charter provides a toolbox alongside guided coaching for universities and colleges to effectively prevent, intervene and respond to GBV in line with best practice, while cementing an outwards celebration of progress.