

**ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE**

**PAPER NO: AP24 – 13**

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –  
1 MARCH 2024**

**SUBJECT: SUPPORTING VULNERABLE VICTIMS**

**SUMMARY:**

1. This report sets out the progress that has been made in respect of the support provided to vulnerable victims. It provides background context in respect of the service provided to victims, an update on the work ongoing to increase the delivery of the Victims Code of Practice (VCOP) and more detailed updates in respect of the work ongoing to support the most vulnerable victims and victims of the most serious crimes.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) is asked to consider the progress made by the Constabulary and raise issues with the Chief Constable as appropriate to the PCC's role in holding the Chief Constable to account.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The services provided to victims remain central to Suffolk Police and Crime Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan and the Chief Constable's Delivery Plan. From the first call for service, to a criminal justice outcome the Constabulary aims to deliver a service that delivers the Victims' Code and provides confidence and reassurance for victims and witnesses. Suffolk Constabulary's work in relation to victims focusses on these key elements of the Police and Crime Plan:

- Keeping people informed, and updated, once they have reported a crime;
- Ensuring compliance with the police elements of the Victim Code with a strong focus on how the force supports victims through the investigation.
- Maintaining a continued focus on tackling the crimes which constitute Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

1.2 The service to victims is overseen through the Supporting Victims Group which is chaired by the Head of Justice Services, and this group is a sub-group of the Investigation Standards Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable, Local Policing.

1.3 The service provided to victims varies according to need and this paper sets out the work that is ongoing in particular in relation to VAWG, domestic abuse, rape and serious sexual offences and hate crime. These and other specialist areas of crime are managed within the Crime, Safeguarding and Investigation Management Command.

1.4 The Victims and Prisoners Bill continues to navigate its way through Parliament. The aims of the Bill include raising awareness of the Victims' Code and requiring improvement to agency compliance which in turn should improve victims' experience of the justice system. It is important that criminal justice partners work together to ensure effective service to victims throughout the criminal justice process. Through the Local Criminal Justice Board Suffolk, Constabulary works closely with its criminal justice partners to provide effective services to victims.

1.5 Whilst the partnership is strong, there are significant challenges within the criminal justice system locally as well as nationally. Court backlogs are not being reduced and delays are now also emerging in the Magistrates Courts as well as the Crown Courts. This issue continues to be actively monitored through the Local Criminal Justice Board and also through representation by the National Police Chief Council Criminal Justice Leads.

1.6 There is clearly a risk that victims and witnesses will disengage from a criminal justice process that takes years to reach a conclusion. The Constabulary's Victim and Witness Care Unit provides updates to those whose cases are awaiting trial and, with so many more cases in the system, their work has increased significantly. Additional resources have been provided and are likely to be needed until well into 2025.

## **2. NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK CONSTABULARIES SUPPORTING VICTIMS SUBGROUP**

2.1 The Supporting Victims Subgroup is made up of representatives from various departments and includes colleagues from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Suffolk.

2.2 The aim of the subgroup is to oversee the delivery of the Victims' Code and to ensure that victims and witnesses are supported through the criminal justice process from first point of contact, ensuring their needs are met and that they receive a consistent, good quality service. The activity to deliver this aim and the strategic objectives is managed through the subgroup. The development of an information management tool that provides data on VCOP compliance

has provided an excellent resource that enables the constabulary to understand and improve that way that victim services are provided and recorded. This tool allows themes in respect of VCOP compliance to be addressed at the Supporting Victims subgroup in order to improve services.

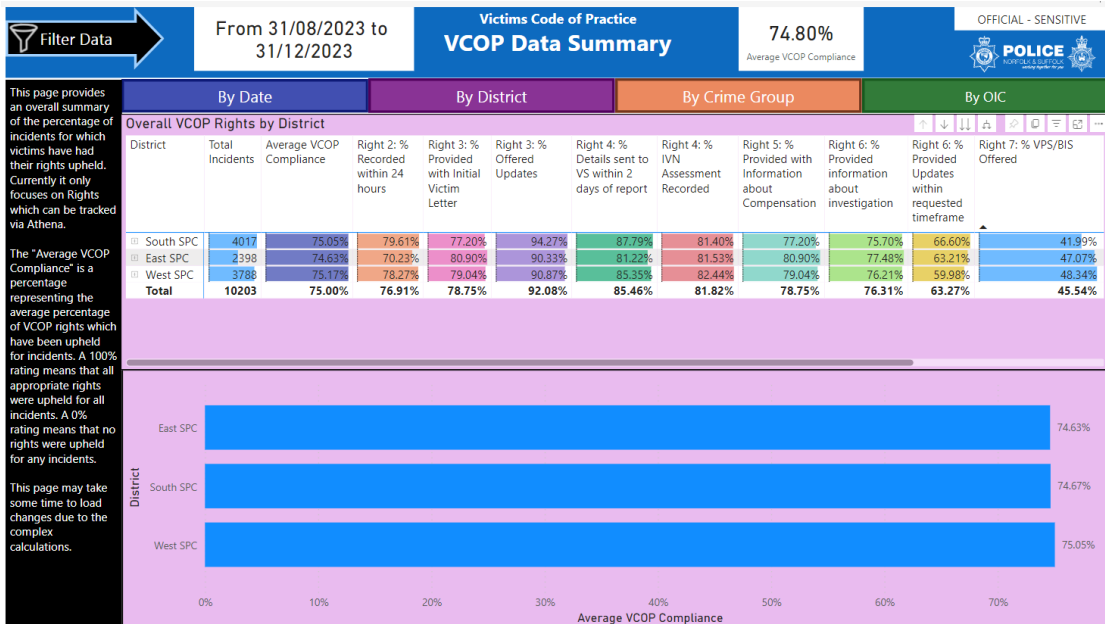
### 3. VICTIMS' CODE OF PRACTICE (VCOP) COMPLIANCE

Table 1 - Overview of 12 Victim's Code Rights.



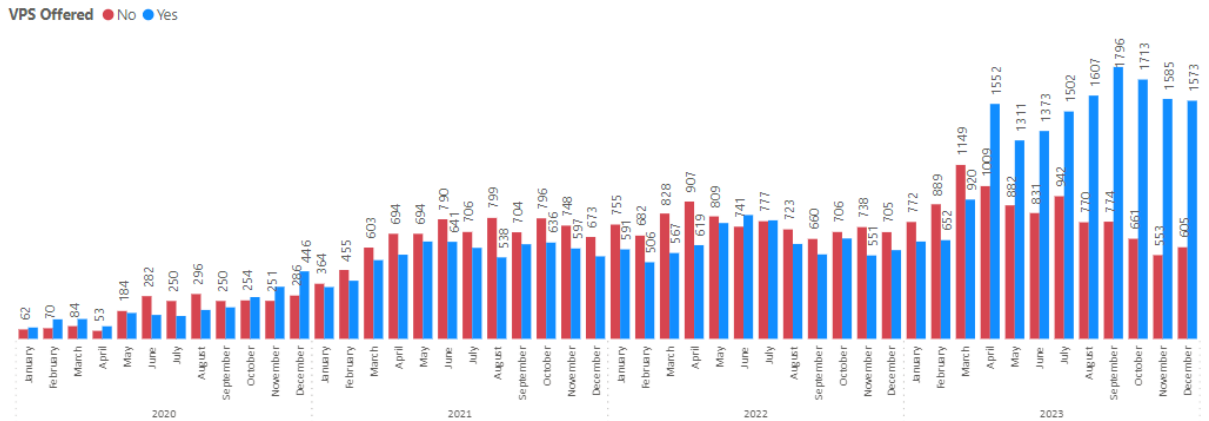
Whilst the Constabulary contribute to all the rights in some way, for the purpose of accountability and recording, only rights 1 (one) to 9 (nine) are assessed and contribute to compliance table (2) however rights 8 and 9 and generally the responsibility of the Witness Care Unit and not the Officer in the case.

Table 2 - demonstrates the overall VCOP compliance across the Constabulary between 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023. This is further broken down by each right and the three Constabulary areas.

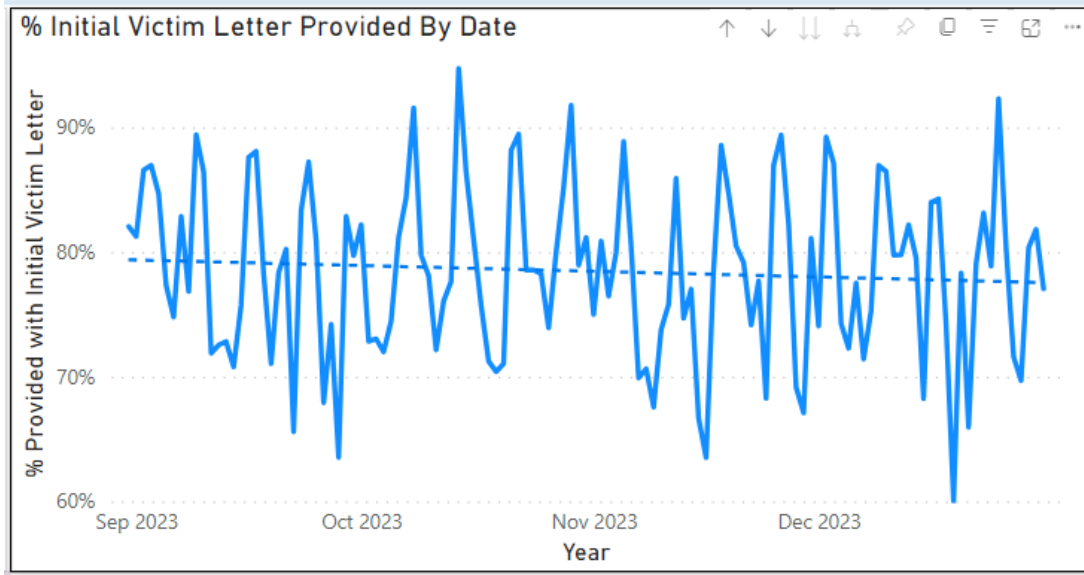


- 3.1 The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is due to become enshrined in law via the Victims' and Prisoners' Bill. Due to the Bill currently going through there is a significant and increased focus on how the police and other criminal justice agencies support victims of crime. New metrics are currently being considered for Forces to report data on from April 2025.
- 3.2 Constabulary data on all victims' rights is collated into a specific VCOP dashboard. This dashboard secures data automatically from the Constabulary Crime and Intelligence system, Athena. The Constabulary reviews performance against the victim's code at monthly force performance meetings. Managers can also access the dashboard to monitor the performance of their teams in respect of VCOP compliance.
- 3.3 Data quality can be challenging because of the way that the Athena system works. If the VCOP right has been completed by the officer, but this is not recorded in the correct field within the system, the data will not accurately reflect VCOP compliance. To combat this, specific training material has been developed and disseminated across the organisation to raise awareness of the fields required. This has highlighted where priorities need to be focussed on compliance and data quality in order that an improved overview of compliance can be formed. These will be updated when the new metrics are confirmed.
- 3.4 The Supporting Victims Subgroup have identified areas of priority with a view to improving compliance in these areas specifically. These are the requirement to offer a Victim Personal Statement (VPS), to provide key investigative updates in a timely manner to victims of crime, and to provide written acknowledgements to victims that their crimes have been recorded. A positive increase in performance has been seen in each of these areas in 2023, however further work continues to support officers in the updating of Athena which can impact this data.
- 3.5 The chart below shows the percentage of Victims being offered the opportunity to provide a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) or Business Impact Statement (BIS) over the last three months. Whilst they can be taken at various times during the length of an investigation, the victim should be offered the opportunity when they report the crime. This has been sitting at around 45% compliance for the last 3 months, so work is ongoing through the subgroup to help officers understand when they need to offer the VPS/BIS but also the importance of

recording this correctly on Athena. Data is drilled down to named officer level and further support and training given.



3.6 With regards to written acknowledgements the last 3 months has shown a 78% compliance for the Constabulary in sending the initial letter to victims. Reminders to officers and staff of the need to accurately update Athena when letters are sent to victims has been shared and where officers or teams are failing to do this further support and guidance is being shared.

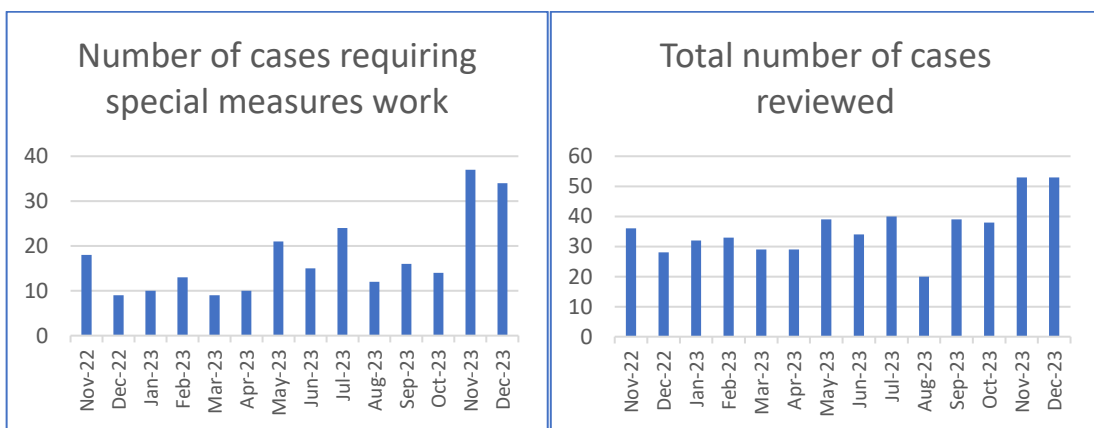


3.7 The key investigative updates has shown a good improvement through 2023 and for the last 3 months this has sat at 76% . This areas continues to be a priority and includes victims being updated throughout their Criminal Justice journey on updates such as arrests, bail updates and changes, outcomes of investigations and decisions on suspect outcomes.



3.8 The Constabulary’s Witness Care Unit continues to carry heavy workloads due to Crown and Magistrates Court backlogs and cases not being finalised as quickly as pre pandemic. Additional temporary resources have provided much needed additional support and enabled the team to keep pace with workloads. It is likely that the Crown Court backlogs will not be eroded until late 2025.

3.9 The Home Office funded Special Measures Advisor (SMA) works jointly between Norfolk and Suffolk. Each month they scrutinise cases that are going to court advising officers and enabling victims and witnesses access to the measures which will help them to deliver their best evidence in court. The concern in respect of the backlogs has been raised through the Local Criminal Justice Board and regionally and nationally through the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Criminal Justice portfolio. The tables below show the cases reviewed and supported by the SMA.



3.10 The Group has agreed to review repeat victims of crime and identify work to reduce this likelihood and/or vulnerability to repeat crime. This includes looking at whether our repeat victims have been supported by the Norfolk & Suffolk Victim Care (NSVC) through their Criminal Justice journey. NSVC are supporting officers with training by their engagement officer to increase referrals and to help officers understand the support that can be offered to repeat victims.

- 3.11 Under the new reporting guidelines where there are multiple offences, and which will then have one overarching offence each victim will still be recorded as a victim of crime and will continue to receive the same service under the Victims Code of Practice/Victims Code.
- 3.12 Meeting the needs of victims in the Criminal Justice System report by Criminal Justice Joint Inspection in December 2023 highlighted 6 recommendations for the national bodies to take forwards. From this report Recommendation 3 recommends minimum standards for the completion of Victims Needs Assessments. This will be looked at through the Supporting Victims Subgroup as there is an opportunity to further develop our proposed activity to look at Victim Needs Assessments in greater depth around timeliness and content and quality of service to Victims.
- 3.13 During the 2023 Peel Inspection in Suffolk by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), 2 areas for victims were highlighted. The Constabulary should make sure that a victim contract is completed where appropriate and the Constabulary should review its practices to ensure that Victim Needs Assessments are completed in relevant cases and additional support needs to be recorded. Both of these areas been highlighted as actions in the Supporting Victims workstreams.

#### **4. VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS (VAWG)**

- 4.1 Violence against Women and Girls, sometimes referred to as VAWG, is an umbrella term that covers a range of abuse against women and girls, such as domestic abuse, sexual assault, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. These offences often contribute to gender inequality and outdated attitudes and prejudice which cannot be solved by policing alone. It is a societal issue that requires a whole system approach. Working together with partner agencies through the Safer Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) is crucial to our local response and together we have developed a strategy to help reduce and prevent violence against women and girls. This is available via <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/asset-library/imported/suffolk-violence-against-women-and-girls-strategy-2022-25.pdf>
- 4.2 The County VAWG Action Plan has been in place since 2022. The current plan is under review to ensure that the partnership response to VAWG remains focused, current and working towards the Suffolk vision of playing their part in preventing and identifying Violence against Women and Girls, creating the safety we all deserve.
- 4.3 There is considerable scrutiny around VAWG and the Constabulary response, through both the VAWG Partnership and the internal governance structure into the Local Policing Board. There has been work undertaken with our analytical department that enables line managers to review team performance against VAWG offences. A review was completed by the Performance Improvement Unit (PIU) into how the Constabulary investigates Domestic Abuse and to identify missed opportunities. Identified areas for improvement are governed through the Domestic Abuse Delivery Board, chaired at Superintendent level.
- 4.4 The Rape Scrutiny Panel meets quarterly, where three rape investigations are subject to an in depth review. It is attended by the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), Survivors in Transition, Independent Sexual Violence Advisers (ISVA's), Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) and Health. The investigations are reviewed to establish whether the investigations have been sufficiently progressed, if there were any missed opportunities, if the victim had received appropriate support and whether the investigation should have been referred to the CPS.

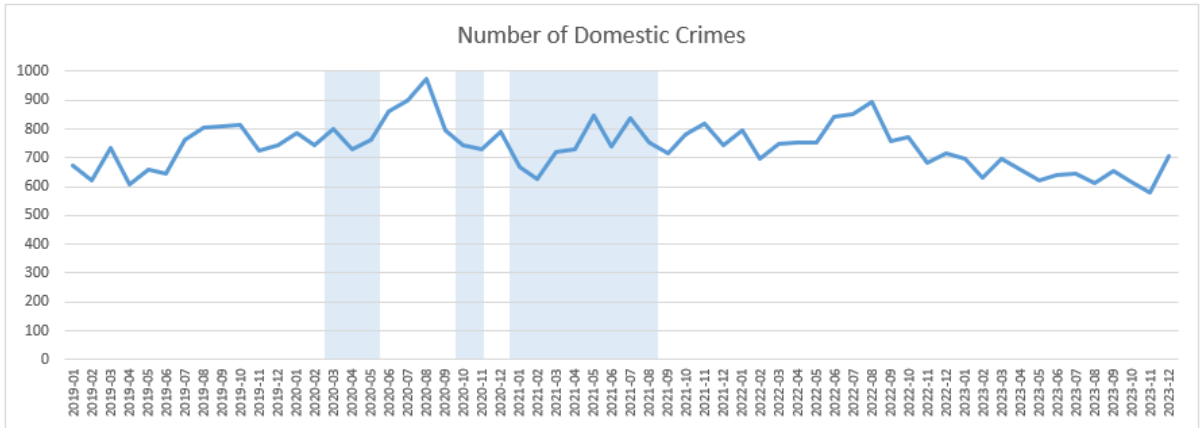
- 4.5 Under Operation Comfort, how the Constabulary targets prolific domestic perpetrators, the Community Policing Teams take ownership on those who reside in their Community Policing Area. This allows for improved monitoring of repeat victims.
- 4.6 The annual White Ribbon campaign took place in November. This was well supported across the Constabulary. There was a targeted social media campaign across the county that focused crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls. This included Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment and Coercive and Controlling Behaviour. Awareness was also raised around the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme.
- 4.7 The Constabulary will be represented at the VAWG Conference that is being hosted by the College of Policing in May 2024 and this will be around improving investigations. The Constabulary attends both the National and Regional VAWG leads meetings, this provides the opportunity to learn about initiatives and challenges to success in this area.

## 5. DOMESTIC ABUSE

### Crimes Recorded

- 5.1 The below chart displays Domestic Abuse (DA) crime demand over the last four years. The volume of DA crimes in the last 12 months (January 2023 to December 2023) has decreased 16.3% to 7817, from 9340 in the previous 12 months (January 2022 to December 2022). There has also been an 13.6% decrease in the last 12 months compared to the long-term average. This reaches the lower exception for number of DA crimes in Suffolk
- 5.2 Demand in Suffolk over the last 12 months has exceeded the lower exception, with the last 12 months being 13.6% below the long-term average. All areas have a decrease compared to the previous 12 months and the long-term average, individually reaching their lower exceptions. Ipswich East, Ipswich Central and Sudbury have over a 22% decrease compared to the previous 12 months, with Sudbury also having the greatest decrease against the long-term average (-19.3%).
- 5.3 The reduction in the volume of Domestic Abuse Crimes can be attributed to the changes to Home Office Counting Rules. This has also reduced the number of repeat victims. The solved rate over the last 12-month reporting period has increased by 1.2% against the previous 12 months. There is a significant amount of work being undertaken to improve positive outcomes for Domestic Abuse investigations. This includes a continuation of the audit work to identify barriers to positive outcomes, a focus on improving investigative standards and an expectation of evidence led prosecutions, where the victim is not engaging. These are intrusively monitored through the DA Delivery Board.





Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
<b>Domestic Abuse</b>					
<b>Crime</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	7817	9340	↓16.3%	9047	↓13.6%
<i>Proportion of all crime which is Domestic Abuse</i>	16.7%	17.8%	↓1.1pp	18.1%	↓1.4pp
<i>Solved number</i>	976	1056	↓7.6%	1054	↓7.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	12.5%	11.3%	↑1.2pp	11.7%	↑0.8pp
<i>Charged number</i>	759	885	↓14.2%	827	↓8.2%
<i>Charged rate</i>	9.7%	9.5%	↑0.2pp	9.2%	↑0.6pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related violence</i>	80.4%	81.4%	↓0.9pp	81.0%	↓0.6pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related stalking and harassment</i>	21.2%	25.3%	↓4.1pp	25.4%	↓4.2pp
<i>Crimes with High Risk Assessment</i>	510	1239	↓58.8%	1353	↓62.3%
<i>Crimes with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	2375	2762	↓14.0%	2457	↓3.3%
<i>Crimes with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	2221	2093	↑6.1%	2067	↑7.5%
<b>Incidents</b>					
<i>Incidents with High Risk Assessment</i>	102	98	↑4.1%	130	↓21.5%
<i>Incidents with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	627	984	↓36.3%	911	↓31.2%
<i>Incidents with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	3526	3413	↑3.3%	3204	↑10.0%
<b>Victims</b>					
<i>Number of victims (Unique)</i>	5794	6590	↓12.1%	<b>Data not available</b>	
<i>Victims per 1000 population</i>	8	<b>No comparison- strategic measure</b>			
<i>Proportion of victims who are repeat DA victims</i>	19.4%	18.6%	↑0.8pp	18.6%	↑0.7pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	53.6%	50.5%	↑3.1pp	49.3%	↑4.4pp
<i>Victim Support Referrals</i>	3059	4438	↓31.1%	4419	↓30.8%
<i>Victim Personal Statements offered</i>	2872	1213	↑136.8%	1305	↑120.1%
<i>Victims linked to Adult Protection Investigation</i>	1093	1299	↓15.9%	1288	↓15.1%
<b>Offender management</b>					
<i>Domestic abuse arrest rate</i>	32.7%	31.7%	↑1.1pp	31.4%	↑1.3pp
<i>Domestic Violence Disclosures (Clare's Law)</i>	852	752	↑13.3%	688	↑23.9%
<i>DVPOs</i>	59	67	↓11.9%	<b>Data not available</b>	
<i>DVPNs</i>	67	71	↓5.6%	<b>Data not available</b>	
<b>Satisfaction</b>					
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	88.9%	95.0%	↓6.1pp	92.3%	↓3.4pp

Data up to end of December 2023

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
<b>Stalking and Harassment</b>					
<b>Stalking</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	921	1114	↓17.3%	1021	↓9.8%
<i>Solved rate</i>	13.1%	11.6%	↑1.6p.p	12.9%	↑0.2p.p
<i>Solved number</i>	121	129	↓6.2%	131	↓7.6%
<b>Harassment</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1933	2392	↓19.2%	2343	↓17.5%
<i>Solved rate</i>	10.7%	7.4%	↑3.4p.p	9.5%	↑1.2p.p
<i>Solved number</i>	207	176	↑17.6%	222	↓6.8%

Data up to end of December 2023

## Victims

- 5.4 In the last 12 months, 19.1% of DA victims have been repeat victims (more than one Domestic Abuse offence reported in a 12-month period). The total number of DA victims has decreased in the last 12 months by 9.0% compared to the previous 12 months, and the percentage of DA repeat victims is lower than the previous 12 months by 5.8pp.

LPC	Total Victims (Not Unique)		Repeat Victims	
	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months
Ipswich East, Felixstowe & Woodbridge	979	1143	14.3%	21.7%
Lowestoft	1050	1039	21.3%	24.6%
Ipswich West & Hadleigh	912	1047	18.0%	23.3%
Sudbury	686	809	20.7%	22.7%
Mildenhall	579	634	15.5%	21.5%
Bury St Edmunds	515	545	17.9%	22.0%
Stowmarket	438	482	18.9%	23.0%
Ipswich Central	376	446	15.2%	24.4%
Halesworth	385	414	14.8%	22.7%
Suffolk Total	5856	6437	19.1%	24.9%

- 5.5 The highest number of victims are within Lowestoft, followed by Ipswich East and Ipswich West. Lowestoft has the highest percentage of repeat victims than any other LPC in the last 12 months at 21.3%, 2.2pp higher than Suffolk.
- 5.6 All Local Policing Commands have a decrease in the percentage of repeat victims in the last 12 months against the previous 12 months. Ipswich East has the lowest percentage of repeat victims at 14.3%, a decrease of 7.4pp since the previous 12 months.

#### Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA)

- 5.7 DARA is now the primary policing tool for identifying risk in Domestic Abuse cases and this has been an area of focus to increase compliance.
- 5.8 Since the last report the OPTIK DA module has now been rolled out to all frontline Officers allowing for investigation creation at scene with the victims.
- 5.9 All high-risk DA incidents have to be subject of a Detective Sergeant review within 24 hours. Unless exceptional reasons apply high risk DA cases have to be investigated by officers or staff who are Detectives or Detective equivalents.

#### Use of Ancillary Orders

- 5.10 A Domestic Violence Protection Notice (DVPN) is an emergency non-molestation and eviction notice which can be issued by the police, to a perpetrator. Because the DVPN is a police-issued notice, it is effective from the time of issue, thereby giving the victim the immediate support they require in such a situation. Within 48 hours of the DVPN being served on the perpetrator, an application by police to a magistrates' court for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO) must be heard. A DVPO can prevent the perpetrator from returning to a residence and from having contact with the victim for up to 28 days. This allows the victim a degree of breathing space to consider their options with the help of a support agency. Both the DVPN and DVPO contain a condition prohibiting the perpetrator from molesting the victim.

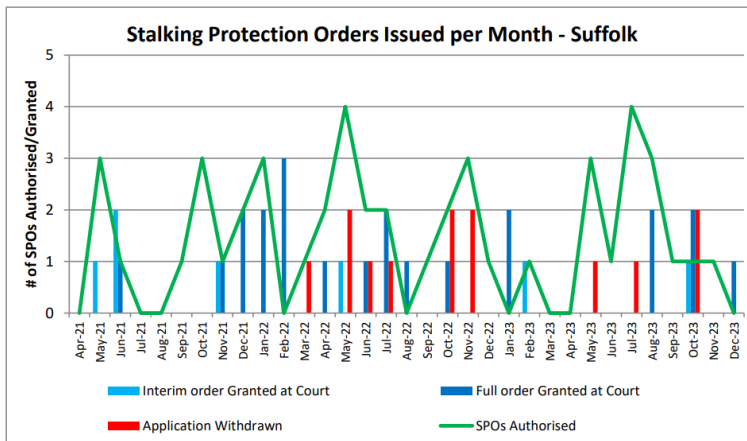
5.11 The table below represents the number of DVPNs issued and conversion to DVPOs. This currently sits at 88.1%.

5.12 When a DVPO is breached the police are empowered to arrest the offender and place them before the court for sanction. Between July 2023 and December 2023 there were 16 recorded breaches enforced by the Constabulary.

Month / Year	DVPNs Issued	DVPOs Issued
Jan-23	5	4
Feb-23	6	6
Mar-23	4	4
Apr-23	4	4
May-23	6	5
Jun-23	8	6
Jul-23	6	6
Aug-23	5	5
Sep-23	4	2
Oct-23	9	7
Nov-23	8	8
Dec-23	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Average/month</b>	<b>5.6</b>	<b>4.9</b>
<b>Conversion rate</b>	<b>88.1%</b>	

5.13 Over the last 12 months, there was an average of 1.3 Stalking Prevention Orders (SPOs) authorised a month, with 0.8 of orders granted. This is a conversion rate of 60%. Reasons for orders not being granted by the court includes successful contest by the subject, or when the application is discontinued due to an alternative protective measure being granted such as restraining orders or civil injunctions.

Month	Suffolk				
	SPOs Authorised	Outstanding Result	Interim order Granted at Court	Full order Granted at Court	Application Withdrawn
Jan-23	0	0	0	2	0
Feb-23	1	0	1	0	0
Mar-23	0	0	0	0	0
Apr-23	0	0	0	0	0
May-23	3	0	0	0	1
Jun-23	1	1	0	0	0
Jul-23	4	1	0	0	1
Aug-23	3	2	0	2	0
Sep-23	1	0	0	0	0
Oct-23	1	0	1	2	2
Nov-23	1	1	0	0	0
Dec-23	0	0	0	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
Avg. Authorised/Mnth	<b>1.25</b>	Avg. Orders Granted/Mnth		<b>0.75</b>	
Conversion Rate	<b>60%</b>				



5.14 In accordance with HMICFRS Areas for Improvement (AFI) recommendations, the Constabulary has developed a model to monitor those offenders subject to a Stalking Protection Order which involves an unannounced visitation and scrutiny schedule. All identified breaches of SPOs are subject of police enforcement.

Domestic Violence Disclosures Scheme (DVDS) - (Clare’s Law)

5.15 The scheme allows the public to request information from the police if they believe their partner may be a danger towards them (the right to ask). It also allows police to proactively make a disclosure to a victim (the right to know) any of the information they may have become aware about where the perpetrator has a new partner and a history of domestic violence and violent acts. It helps an individual to make a more informed decision on whether to continue a relationship and provides further help and support to assist them when making that choice.

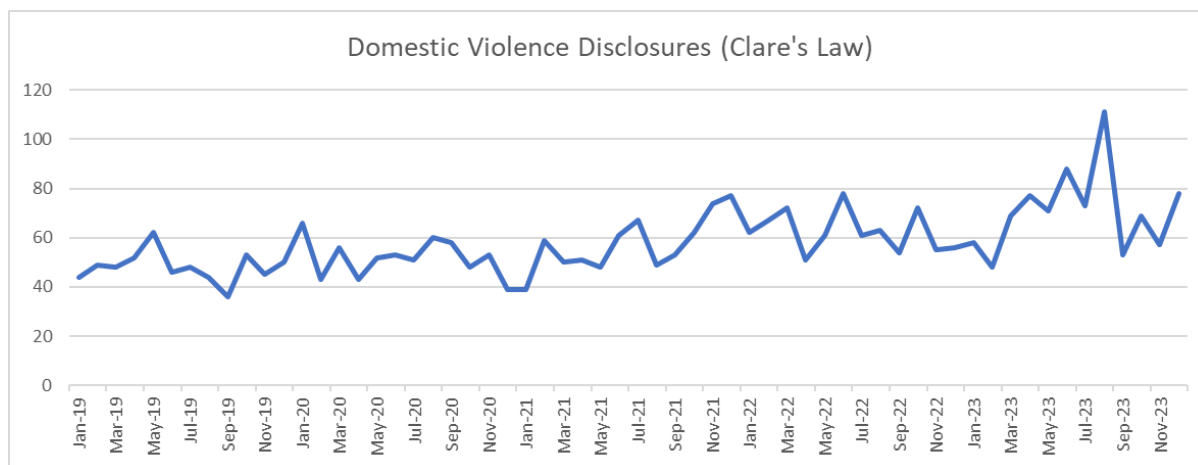
5.16 Applications can be made via the Constabulary website or by calling 101. There is a process set out to manage applications and this requires both time and resourcing to complete. It is anticipated that the newly formed Domestic Abuse Video Response team will be able to enhance efficiency in this area by utilising technological advancements to respond to requests, creating efficiency savings in time and travel.

5.17 In addition the use of live link technology (Domestic Abuse Video Response)) continues to prove successful in reducing process times.

5.18 There has been a gradual upward trend in the volume of DVDS recorded in Suffolk since January 2019 as shown below, with figures continuing to increase.

5.19 Over the last 12 months 74.2% of all Right to Know applications were police generated, demonstrating the drive by the Constabulary to increase performance in this area.

5.20 Right to Ask (public generated requests) made up 44.0% of total applications.



### Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit (DAPU)

- 5.21 The Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Unit work on a one-to-one basis with offenders over an extended period, as well as working with partner organisations, to look at and alter their behaviour. The current establishment consisting of one police constable and two behavioural case workers, has been complimented by a home office funded uplift allowing the recruitment of two further behavioural case workers and a dedicated victim support worker.
- 5.22 The uplift will permit an increase in the number of offenders being able to be accepted onto the course and there is currently a joint stakeholder process in place to enhance the number of individuals being considered for the programme.

### Op Encompass

- 5.23 Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.24 Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after an incident of police attended domestic abuse where there are children related to either of the adult parties involved.
- 5.25 Information is shared with a school's Designated Safeguarding Lead prior to the start of the next school day after officers have attended a domestic abuse incident. This sharing of information enables appropriate support to be given, dependent upon the needs and wishes of the child.
- 5.26 The Suffolk Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has ensured all Primary Schools and High Schools are signed up and have also worked to ensure other educational establishments (including Pupil Referral Units, Specialist Provision; Colleges and Independent Schools) are also signed up to sharing agreements under Op Encompass.
- 5.27 In the last 12 months ending December 2023, 5,921 Op Encompass reports were shared with education settings, enabling schools to offer additional pastoral support to child victims of domestic abuse. This figure continues to fluctuate in line with seasonal trends:

Month reported	Op Encompass reports
Jan-23	531
Feb-23	513
Mar-23	574
Apr-23	469
May-23	470
Jun-23	496
Jul-23	515
Aug-23	466
Sep-23	517
Oct-23	478
Nov-23	446
Dec-23	473

### Domestic Abuse Co-ordinators

- 5.28 The restructured Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator (DAC) Team based in the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) has been in existence for 12 months. The team have completed training in police ICT, personal safety, domestic abuse processes and Advanced Honour Based Abuse (HBA) Safeguarding.
- 5.29 The DACs undertake the following areas of work to support victims of Domestic Abuse:
- Partnership working with Anglia Care Trust (ACT) and Leeway (IDVA)
  - Refer Medium Risk cases to ACT if victim consent is recorded
  - Research and attend Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC).
  - Deliver DVDS and safety planning.
  - Safeguard victims of Domestic Abuse Prison Release Subjects
  - Manage Suffolk Constabularies Domestic Abuse enquires
  - Collate Suffolk Constabularies Domestic Violence Protection Notice/Order and Stalking Protection order data
  - Honour Based Abuse Single Point of Contact
- 5.30 In response to the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection AFI regarding the Constabulary removing its use of a secondary risk assessment in domestic abuse cases, the DACs monitor compliance with DARA completion and quality. Part of this quality control includes ensuring that the Domestic Abuse Research Document, a document designed to improve criminal justice outcomes and safeguarding measures, is adequately completed.
- 5.31 Immediate safety advice is provided by frontline officers at point of crisis and appropriate signposting to relevant support services. Safety planning is carried out again by Independent Domestic Violence Advisors (IDVAs) for high-risk victims, and ACT specialist support workers.
- 6. RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES (RASSO)**
- 6.1 There continues to be effective partnership working in the RASSO arena with close working relationships across the professionals involved in the victim's journey. Victim's journey are now focused on the national Operation Soteria model.
- 6.2 The RASSO Joint Operational Improvement Meeting (JOIM) has continued to meet monthly, and the agenda includes a data pack where all key areas of performance are reported. This assures there is focus on timelines of submissions, and cases moving through the early

criminal justice process. The JOIM has identified significant backlogs in RASSO trial dates for some victims and last-minute Court trial delays which are affecting victim confidence.

- 6.3 Monthly Police RASSO lead and regional Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) RASSO lead meetings are now in place. These provide an excellent opportunity for improved working relationships and the ability to raise positive work alongside specific areas of improvement required both in force and with CPS RASSO.
- 6.4 Following the adopting of Operation Soteria in June 2023, Suffolk has completed the self-assessment process in line with national timescales. The Constabulary is now developing its transformation plan in line with Soteria requirements.
- 6.5 In support of Op Soteria, the force lead at Detective Superintendent level in the Crime Safeguarding and Incident Management (CSIM) department and Safeguarding Detective Inspectors (DI's) have been identified as pillar leads for the work. The work will be managed across 6 pillars representing different areas of focus for RASSO investigations and Investigator wellbeing. The Constabulary Strategic Business and Operational Services (SBOS) department is engaged to compile the data collection and key performance indicator analysis which is required to inform the Op Soteria self-assessment. Suffolk is engaged with the College of Policing and National Leads for Op Soteria.
- 6.6 Suffolk has already trained over 75% of all Safeguarding Investigation Unit (SIU) Investigator and Support Staff in the national Op Soteria Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Investigative Skills Development Programme (RISDP) training package. In addition, all of the Contact and Control Room (CCR) first contact Call Handlers will be trained the RISDP by 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2024. This is one of the highest rates nationally for training in RISDP.
- 6.7 The performance position has improved over the past 12 months, at a time of continued high reporting and staffing demands. Charge and remand rates across the RASSO teams have reduced slightly over the last 12 months. However, there is focus on Operation Soteria investigative elements of Victim-centred, Suspect-focused and Context-led that are aimed at improving performance and victim engagement rates.
- 6.8 There continues to be an increased use of Early Investigative Advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) which continues to drive improved performance and the ability to identify cases for progression at the earliest stage. EIA provides one of the best opportunities for RASSO investigators to achieve a positive outcome for victims.

<b>Supporting vulnerable victims</b>	<b>Last 12M</b>	<b>Previous 12M</b>	<b>Diff against Previous 12m</b>	<b>Long-term average</b>	<b>Diff against long-term average</b>
<b>RASSO</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2045	2266	↓9.8%	2117	↓3.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	5.8%	6.4%	↓0.6pp	5.8%	0.0pp
<i>Solved number</i>	119	145	↓17.9%	123	↓3.3%
<i>Charged rate</i>	5.4%	5.9%	↓0.5pp	5.3%	↑0.1pp
<i>Charged number</i>	111	134	↓17.2%	112	↓0.9%
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.5%	2.2%	↑0.2pp	2.5%	↓0.1pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	48.8%	51.5%	↓2.7pp	48.8%	0.0pp
<i>Evidential difficulties</i>	61.5%	56.7%	↑4.9pp	60.1%	↑1.5pp
<i>Live investigations</i>	704				
<i>Non recent</i>	29.0%	24.0%	↑5.0pp	26.7%	↑2.3pp
<i>SARC attendance - Under 21 years</i>	56	84	↓36.4%		
<i>SARC attendance - 21 years and over</i>	77	88	↓12.5%		

Data up to end of December 2023

<b>Supporting vulnerable victims</b>	<b>Last 12M</b>	<b>Previous 12M</b>	<b>Diff against Previous 12m</b>	<b>Long-term average</b>	<b>Diff against long-term average</b>
<b>Child Sexual Abuse</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	1064	1236	↓13.9%	1246	↓14.6%
<i>Solved rate</i>	11.4%	10.8%	↑0.5pp	10.4%	↑1.0pp
<i>Solved number</i>	121	134	↓9.7%	128	↓5.5%
<i>Charged rate</i>	11.1%	9.3%	↑1.8pp	9.4%	↑1.7pp
<i>Charged number</i>	118	115	↑2.6%	116	↑1.7%
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	34.8%	36.0%	↓1.2pp	33.9%	↑0.9pp
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	2.0%	2.6%	↓0.6pp	2.6%	↓0.6pp
<i>Non recent CSA</i>	28.9%	25.4%	↑3.5pp	28.3%	↑0.6pp

*Data up to end of December 2023*

6.9 The Constabulary continues to encourage victim engagement working with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service and often visits victims jointly to deliver important updates. Staff have a strong working relationship with the ISVA service and a victim journey leaflet was developed jointly to provide clear guidance to all victims at the initial stage of reporting. ISVA's are regular attendees at the rape scrutiny panels and are engaged in the Operation Soteria work in support of victim service.

6.10 The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) contract process has now concluded, and the new SARC contract will commence on 1 April 2024 providing an ongoing SARC journey and service for Suffolk victims.

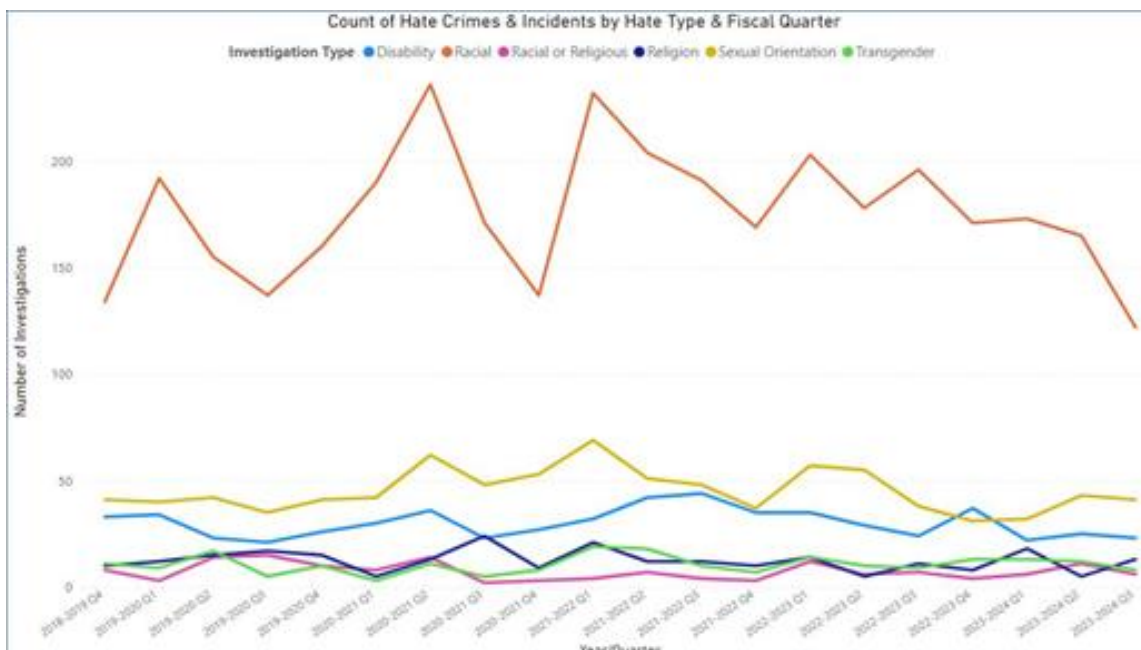
## **7. HATE CRIME**

7.1 Quarterly data continues to be produced in relation to Hate Crime and is shared with Community Safety Partnerships to ensure crime trends, repeat victims and vulnerable victims are identified and that referrals into relevant support agencies are made and that targeted preventative action considered.

7.2 Work is ongoing to develop a dashboard which will provide Hate Crime data by Crime Type, Hate type (Disability, Race etc), victim ethnicity, gender, age, and nationality. The accuracy of the data within the dashboard will, however, only be as accurate as the information recorded within the Athena system as these are not mandatory fields.

7.3 There is no legal requirement for an individual to disclose the specific element of the protected characteristics, and data quality is an issue nationally. A piece of joint work with Norfolk Constabulary is ongoing to explore the possibility of mandating these fields using Optik. There has been an internal training to focus on the use of Keywords when recording offences on Athena, which will increase the accuracy of the data within the dashboard and allow for the early identification of crime trends or specifically targeted groups.





Hate crime - Suffolk	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	% difference last 12 months to previous 12 months	Long-term average	% difference compared to long-term average
Crime volume	842	1001	-15.9%	1004	-16.1%
Solved Rate	17.7%	13.6%	30.3%	15.2%	16.4%
Solved Number	149	136	9.6%	152	-2.0%
Hate Crime - % of Incidents where Investigation is Not Possible	1.7%	2.8%	-40.6%	2.2%	-22.8%
Hate Crime - % of Incidents where Victim is Not Ready to Engage	32.1%	31.4%	2.2%	28.0%	14.3%

7.4 Repeat victims and offenders of Hate Crime are identified by Community Policing Team (CPT) Inspectors and areas using victim, offender, location (VOL) data. Where repeat victims or offender are identified they are discussed, and operational plans and additional support is offered through Area Tasking meetings and the use of Problem-Solving Plans.

7.5 The annual Hate Crime Awareness week took place in October 2023, and themes were chosen to support the delivery of the Hate Action Plan. The themes were Victim Support, Positive outcomes, Data quality, OP Hampshire (specifically Hate crime directed at Police Officers/Staff) and the change to the legislation on recording Non-Crime Hate Incidents. The week was planned in conjunction with partners to ensure consistent messaging and advice, both internally and externally.

7.6 Hate Crime Delivery Board has been re-structured with new governance and the Hate Action Plan has been re-written and aligned to the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice. The plan is split down into four keys areas – Responding to Hate, Community and Partners, Victim and Witnesses and Performance Management.

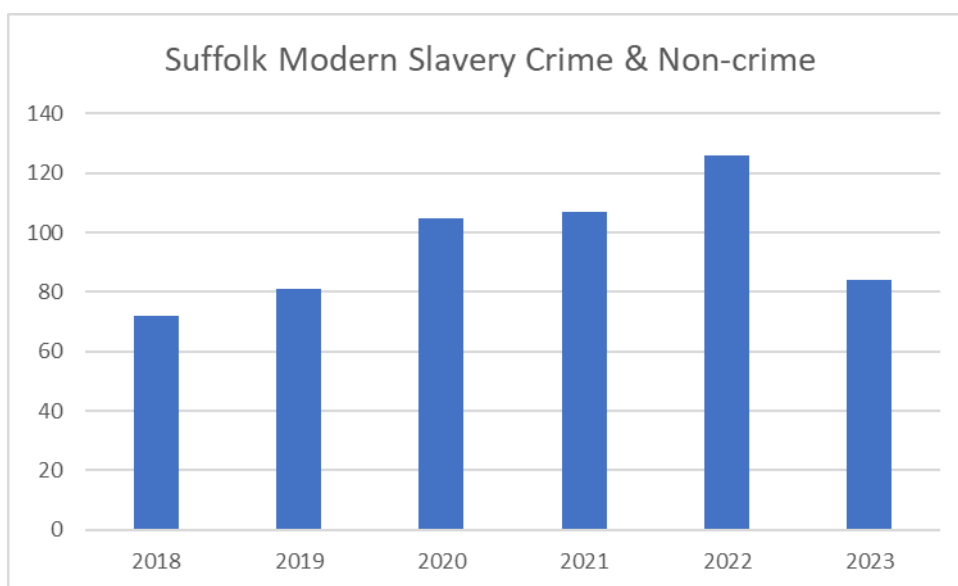
**8. MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING (MHST)**

8.1 Suffolk has 20 Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) across the 3 localities, trained to provide enhanced support when victims are either first encountered, or required to assist with ongoing investigations where additional support and rapport building would be beneficial. The VLO’s have continued to assist investigations either as first responders or during the ongoing process. The VLO’s also have access to the victim navigator network provided through the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU).

8.2 Modern Slavery and Vulnerable community advisors continue to provide support and training to frontline officers and staff in various departments. The joint work with the Unaccompanied

Asylum-Seeking Children team continues with an increase in demand during the last 12 months. The team continues to be proactive in their visits to local businesses and communities highlighting the signs and indicators but also providing advice, support and signposting to those affected. The team has also become more proactive in working with frontline staff to either provide advice or accompany staff on visits.

- 8.3 Operational staff across Suffolk Constabulary continue to be signposted to briefings and training around the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for victims of MSHT. Changes to the Statutory Guidance are reviewed, summarised, and disseminated to all staff within a few days, highlighting that the objective factors requirement in the reasonable grounds process has been removed, replaced by specific evidence which should be relied upon for an appropriate decision to be made. With the threshold being slightly raised we have seen a slight drop in NRM submissions. Joint training with key partners is being delivered during the spring across the three localities.
- 8.4 Officers are continuing to identify potential victims of modern slavery and exploitation during the investigative stage. Many investigations are linked to criminal activities such as drug supply and labour exploitation.
- 8.5 Crime reporting remains consistent with the NRM reporting showing a drop in the last 12 months, Suffolk is in line with the national picture.



Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
<b>Modern Slavery</b>					
<b>Crime</b>					
<i>Crime volume</i>	63	103	↓38.8%	96	↓34.4%
<i>Solved rate</i>	4.8%	2.9%	↑1.9pp	2.9%	↑1.9pp
<i>Solved number</i>	3	3	0%	2	↑50.0%
<i>Charged rate</i>	4.8%	2.9%	↑1.9pp	2.9%	↑1.9pp
<i>Charged number</i>	3	3	0%	2	↑50.0%
<i>NRM</i> s	123	174	↓29.3%	148	↓16.9%

Data up to end of December 2023

- 8.6 The intranet page for MSHT has been redesigned making it easier for staff to access support and guidance when dealing with victims.

## **9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

## **10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS**

10.1 None

## **11. CHIEF OFFICER CONCLUSION**

11.1 The Constabulary has developed strong governance where supporting vulnerable victims is concerned. There are well developed strategic plans in all areas and demonstrable progress has been made where improvement activity has been implemented.

11.2 The response to victims of DA continues to be strong and in particular the stabilisation of the use of the improved risk assessment, support module for frontline officers on the OPTIK system and enhanced detective investigative support for high-risk cases which are key developments that are recognised as good practice.

11.3 VCOP compliance has shown continued improvement but there is more to do to ensure that all opportunities to comply with the code are taken. There are well developed plans and the work of the Investigation Standards Board and Victims sub-group are essential to continuing the improvement journey.

11.4 Overall, the Constabulary position where supporting victims is concerned is satisfactory and improving. There is more to be done to achieve the standards aspired towards in some areas and the Constabulary plans will continue to prioritise the service to victims to ensure the public are provided the support they need.