



SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

ORIGINATOR: CHIEF CONSTABLE

PAPER NO: AP24/40

**SUBMITTED TO: ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL –
13 SEPTEMBER 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 received Royal Assent in May 2024, and a formal commencement date is awaited from the new Government. 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 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 the Victims Code

of Practice (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. This information tool is being updated to support reporting under the new Victims Code.

3. VICTIMS' CODE OF PRACTICE (VCOP) COMPLIANCE

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



Whilst the Constabulary contributes 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 31st March 2024 and 30th June 2024. This is further broken down by each right and the three Constabulary areas.

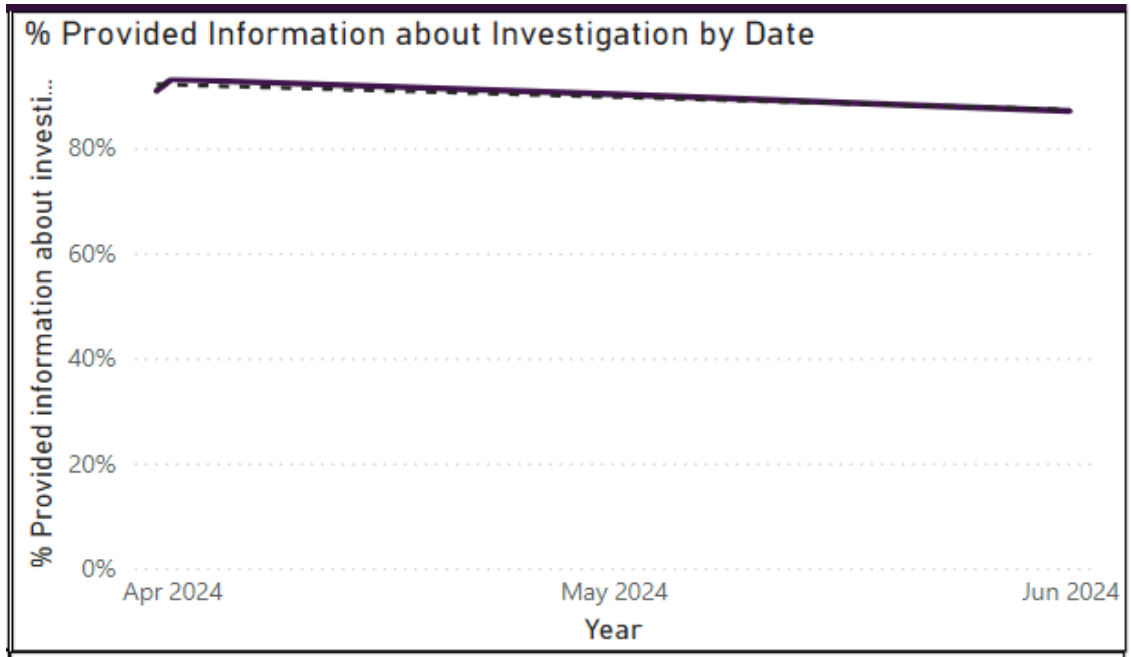
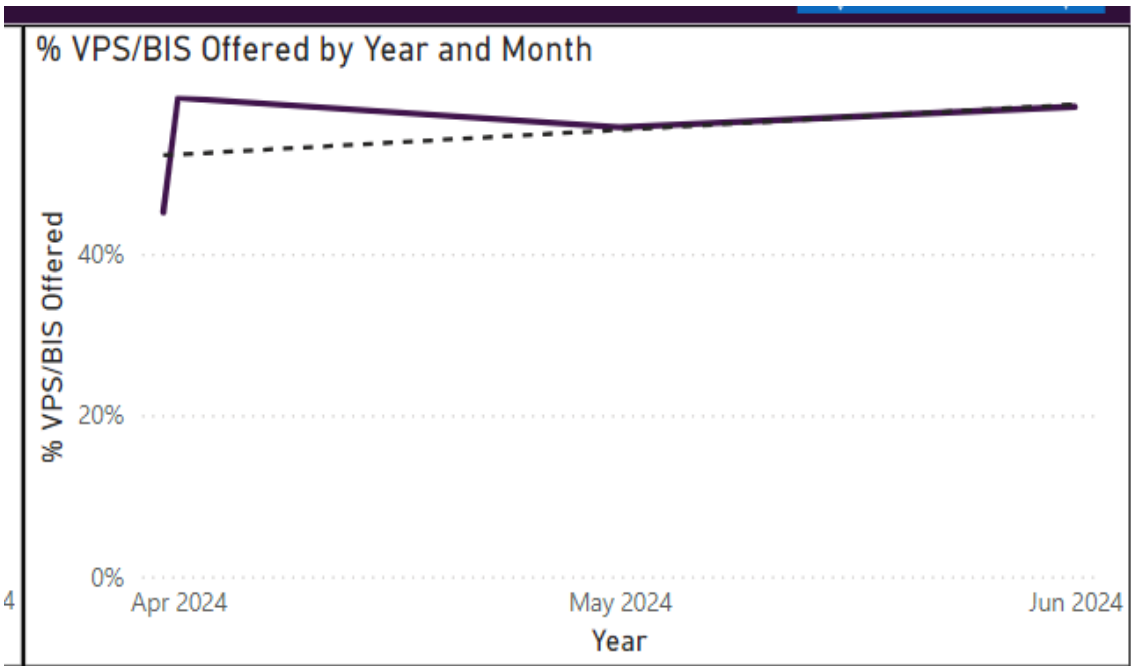
Filter Data		From 31/03/2024 to 30/06/2024		Victims Code of Practice VCOP Data Summary				80.10% OIC Average VCOP Compl...		OFFICIAL - SENSITIVE POLICE NORFOLK & SOUTHWICK	
By Date		By District		By Crime Group		By OIC					
Overall VCOP Rights by OIC											
OIC Unit Section	Total Incidents	OIC Average VCOP Compliance	Right 2: % Recorded within 24 hours	Right 3: % Provided with Initial Victim Letter	Right 3: % Offered Updates	Right 4: % Details sent to VS within 2 days of reporting	Right 4: % IVN Assessment Recorded	Right 5: % Provided with Information about Compensation	Right 6: % Provided information about investigation	Right 6: % Provided Updates within requested timeline	Right 7: % VPS/BIS Offered
Response Investigation Teams (RIT)	4296	79.81%	76.65%	84.03%	91.92%	83.17%	85.66%	84.03%	80.40%	82.01%	53.58%
Safeguarding & Incident Management	894	68.40%	98.77%	53.24%	98.77%	89.12%	53.02%	53.24%	53.47%	96.02%	50.89%
Suffolk Crime	837	94.57%	86.38%	96.65%	97.73%	92.68%	96.54%	96.65%	95.22%	92.24%	94.98%
Community Policing Teams (CPT)	342	74.20%	67.25%	76.61%	91.23%	83.08%	82.46%	76.61%	76.02%	71.96%	47.08%
Suffolk Student Officers	331	80.98%	78.25%	87.61%	90.94%	82.76%	85.50%	87.61%	83.69%	81.63%	52.27%
Custody Investigation Unit	261	84.34%	98.85%	78.93%	91.19%	100.00%	87.36%	78.93%	93.87%	88.48%	53.64%
2.Breckland (CD2)	17	84.44%	88.24%	88.24%	82.35%	100.00%	82.35%	88.24%	100.00%	75.00%	64.71%
	14	86.67%	92.86%	78.57%	100.00%	90.00%	85.71%	78.57%	100.00%	91.67%	64.29%
Specialist Operations	11	65.88%	90.91%	63.64%	90.91%	75.00%	54.55%	63.64%	63.64%	75.00%	27.27%
County Partnership & Prevention Hub (CPPH)	7	55.56%	57.14%	71.43%	85.71%	50.00%	42.86%	71.43%	57.14%	100.00%	0.00%
Norfolk Investigations	4	78.13%	75.00%	75.00%	100.00%	100.00%	75.00%	75.00%	75.00%	100.00%	50.00%
4.South Norfolk (CD4)	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	No Opt-In	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	No Opt-In	0.00%
CPC Specials and Volunteers	1	75.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	No Opt-In	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Moonshot	1	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	No Opt-In	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Norfolk Safeguarding	1	88.89%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Specialist Crime & Intelligence Directorate	1	66.67%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%	100.00%	100.00%	0.00%
Total	7019	80.10%	81.12%	81.17%	93.36%	85.56%	82.58%	81.17%	79.21%	84.65%	57.73%

This page provides an overall summary of the percentage of incidents for which victims have had their rights upheld. Currently it only focuses on Rights which can be tracked via Athena.

The "Average VCOP Compliance" is a percentage representing the average percentage of VCOP rights which have been upheld for incidents. A 100% rating means that all appropriate rights were upheld for all incidents. A 0% rating means that no rights were upheld for any incidents.

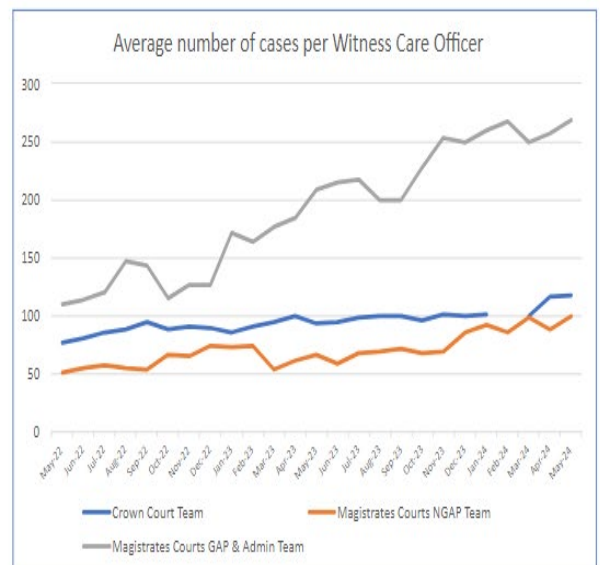
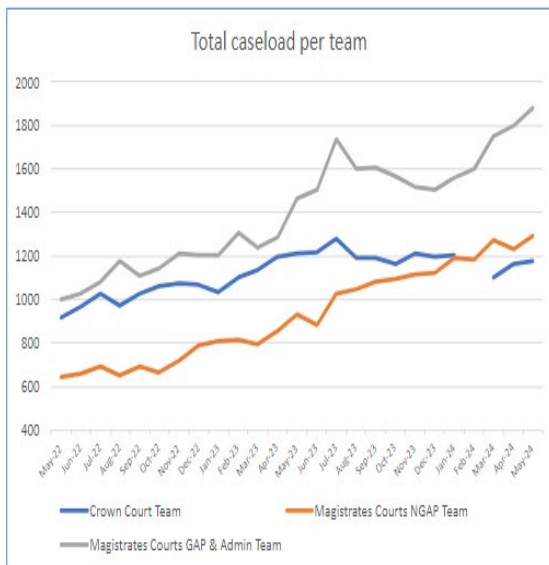
This page may take some time to load changes due to the complex calculations.

- 3.1 The Victims' Code received royal assent in May 2024 in the Victims' and Prisoners' Bill. The new Government will confirm the commencement of the Bill which is expected to be within 6 months from royal assent. New metrics are currently being considered for Forces to report data on from April 2025, and these are being trialled by a number of Forces including Athena Forces before being finalised.
- 3.2 Current 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. The Dashboard is currently being updated to support the new Victims Code metrics.
- 3.3 The Supporting Victims Subgroup have identified areas of priority with a view to improving compliance in three areas specifically. These are the requirement to offer a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) (Right 7) to provide key investigative updates in a timely manner to victims of crime (Right 6), and to provide written acknowledgements to victims that their crimes have been recorded (Right 3). Rights 3 & 6 have remained consistently high in compliance and Right 7 has steadily improved through 2024, but further training in the New Victims' Code will look to support better and improved compliance in this area.

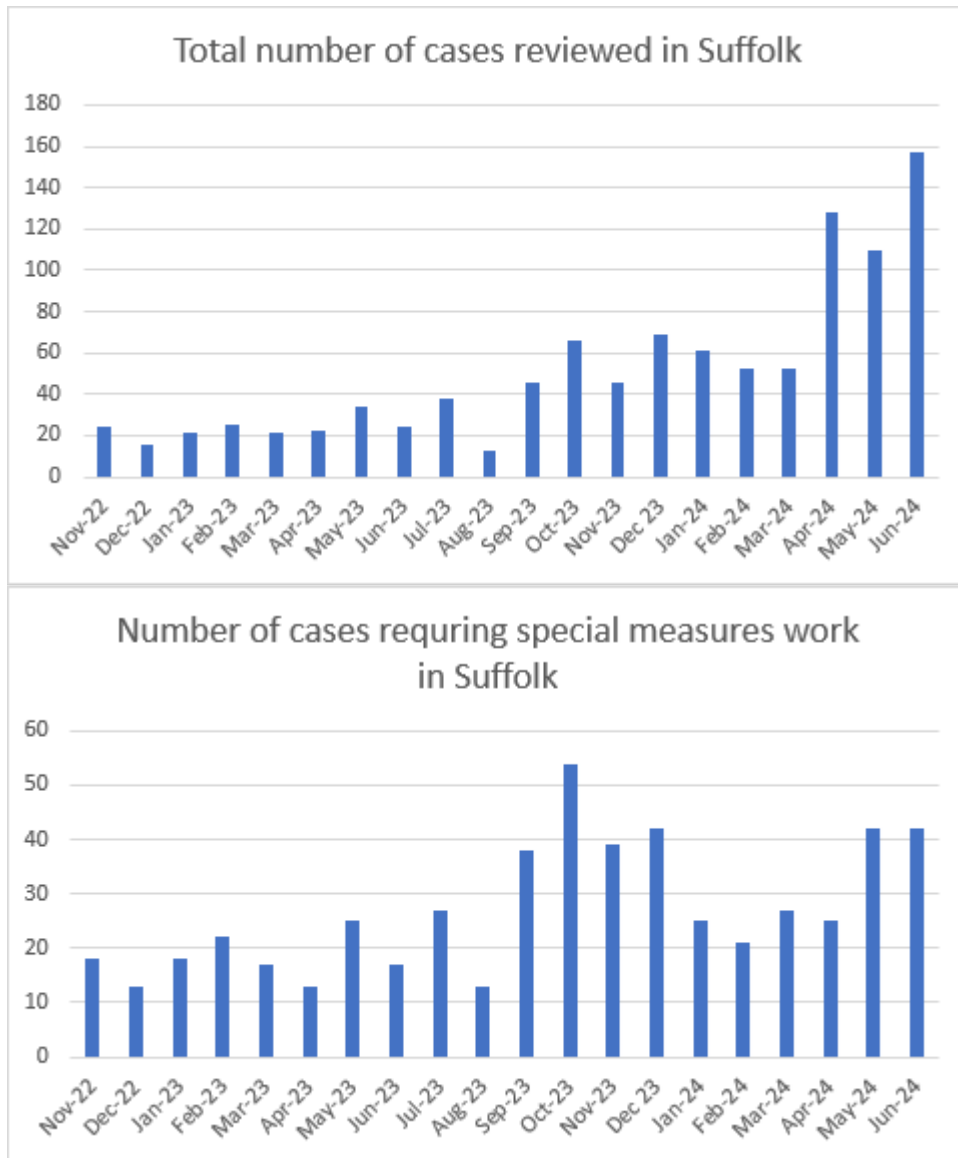




3.4 The Constabulary’s Witness Care Unit continues to carry heavy workloads due to Crown and Magistrates Court backlogs and cases not being finalised as quickly as pre pandemic. Additional temporary resources have provided much needed additional support and enabled the team to keep pace with workloads.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



3.5 The Special Measures Advisor (SMA) role, which was funded by the Home Office, is now included in the temporary staff in which funding is in place until March 2025. The role 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.



- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 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.
- 3.8 Meeting the needs of victims in the Criminal Justice System report by Criminal Justice Joint Inspection in December 2023 highlighted six recommendations for the national bodies to take forwards. From this report Recommendation the 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.

3.9 During the 2023 Peel Inspection in Suffolk by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS), two 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 (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.

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. VAWG is monitored through Local Policing Board. The National VAWG strategy has been released and the Constabulary is working on an internal VAWG strategy to align.

4.4 The response to domestic abuse is monitored through the bi-monthly Domestic Abuse Governance Group, where key metrics are monitored to understand and identify areas to improve the constabulary's response in this area. A new Domestic Abuse Action Plan is being implemented to ensure continual improvement.

4.5 The Rape Scrutiny Panel meets quarterly, where three rape investigations are reviewed. The panel focused on investigations where police have decided on No Further Action. 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 they 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.

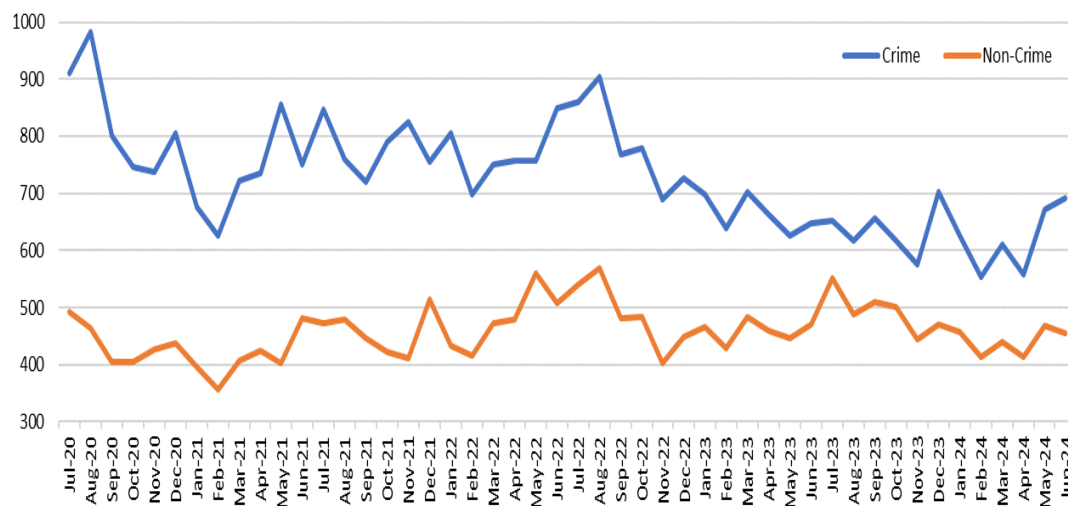
4.6 Under Operation Comfort the targeting of prolific domestic perpetrators, those identified as causing the highest harm are discussed in the tasking co-ordination meetings for further disruption activity.

4.7 The Constabulary was represented at the VAWG Conference hosted by the College of Policing in May 2024 and this was focused around improving investigations, Domestic Homicide Reviews, and prevention opportunities. 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 and non-crime demand over the last four years. The volume of DA crimes in the last 12 months (July 2023 to June 2024) has decreased 13.3% to 7,545 from 8,699 in the previous 12 months (July 2022 to June 2023).



- 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. Halesworth has the largest decrease of 22.7pp compared to the previous 12 months, followed by Ipswich East, Felixstowe, and Woodbridge with a decrease of 16.5pp.
- 5.3 The reduction in the volume of Domestic Abuse Crimes can be attributed to the changes to Home Office Counting Rules. The solved rate over the last 12-month reporting period has increased by 0.4pp against the previous 12 months to 12.5%. The Constabulary continues to work to improve Domestic Abuse outcome rates.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Domestic Abuse					
Crime					
<i>Crime volume</i>	7545	8699	↓ 13.3%	8735	↓ 13.6%
<i>Proportion of all crime which is Domestic Abuse</i>	16.4%	17.5%	↓ 1.1pp	17.6%	↓ 1.2pp
<i>Solved number</i>	946	1053	↓ 10.2%	1045	↓ 9.5%
<i>Solved rate</i>	12.5%	12.1%	↑ 0.4pp	12.0%	↑ 0.5pp
<i>Charged number</i>	756	841	↓ 10.1%	829	↓ 8.8%
<i>Charged rate</i>	10.0%	9.7%	↑ 0.3pp	9.5%	↑ 0.5pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related violence</i>	79.4%	81.3%	↓ 1.9pp	80.8%	↓ 1.4pp
<i>Domestic Abuse related stalking and harassment</i>	20.1%	23.6%	↓ 3.5pp	24.3%	↓ 4.2pp
<i>Crimes with High Risk Assessment</i>	436	863	↓ 49.5%	1121	↓ 61.1%
<i>Crimes with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	2402	2618	↓ 8.3%	2487	↓ 3.4%
<i>Crimes with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	2146	2128	↑ 0.9%	2103	↑ 2.0%
Incidents					
<i>Incidents with High Risk Assessment</i>	92	98	↓ 6.1%	115	↓ 20.6%
<i>Incidents with Medium Risk Assessment</i>	608	793	↓ 23.3%	857	↓ 29.1%
<i>Incidents with Standard Risk Assessment</i>	3557	3393	↑ 4.8%	3327	↑ 6.9%
Victims					
<i>Number of victims (Unique)</i>	4798	5317	↓ 9.8%	Data not available	
<i>Victims per 1000 population</i>	6.3	No comparison- strategic measure			
<i>Proportion of victims who are repeat DA victims</i>	19.0%	18.7%	↑ 0.3pp	18.7%	↑ 0.3pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	53.3%	53.1%	↑ 0.2pp	50.5%	↑ 2.8pp
<i>Victim Support Referrals</i>	2599	3844	↓ 32.4%	3966	↓ 34.5%
<i>Victim Personal Statements offered</i>	3521	1947	↑ 80.8%	1746	↑ 101.6%
Offender management					
<i>Domestic abuse arrest rate</i>	35.6%	32.4%	↑ 3.2pp	32.0%	↑ 3.6pp
<i>Domestic Violence Disclosures (Clare's Law)</i>	1058	772	↑ 37.0%	721	↑ 46.7%
<i>DVPOs</i>	57	65	↓ 12.3%	Data not available	
<i>DVPNs</i>	62	70	↓ 11.4%	Data not available	
Satisfaction					
<i>Overall Satisfaction</i>	89.2%	90.6%	↓ 1.4pp	Data not available	

5.4 *Data up to end of June 2024*

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Stalking and Harassment					
Stalking					
<i>Crime volume</i>	954	1027	↓ 7.1%	1021	↓ 6.6%
<i>Solved rate</i>	13.7%	13.3%	↑ 0.4pp	13.3%	↑ 0.4pp
<i>Solved number</i>	131	137	↓ 4.4%	135	↓ 3.3%
Harassment					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2019	2047	↓ 1.4%	2247	↓ 10.2%
<i>Solved rate</i>	10.15%	9.23%	↑ 0.9pp	9.58%	↑ 0.58pp
<i>Solved number</i>	205	189	↑ 8.5%	214	↓ 4.3%

Data up to end of June 2024

Victims

5.4 19.1% of domestic abuse victims within the last 12 months, had also been a domestic abuse victim at least once in the twelve months prior (from date of that offence). This has increased by 0.4pp compared to the previous 12 months. Sudbury has the highest percentage of repeat victims at 22.0%, an increase of 3.8pp compared to the previous 12 months. This is followed by Lowestoft at 21.2%. Halesworth has the lowest percentage of repeat victims at 15.8%, a decrease of 1.6pp compared to the previous 12 months

LPC	Number of Victims (Total, not Unique)		Number of Repeat Victims		% Repeat Victims	
	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months	Last 12 months	Previous 12 months
Ipswich East, Felixstowe & Woodbridge	1163	1411	204	260	17.5%	18.4%
Lowestoft	1308	1469	277	305	21.2%	20.8%
Ipswich West & Hadleigh	1113	1305	195	253	17.5%	19.4%
Sudbury	871	1003	192	183	22.0%	18.2%
Mildenhall	663	756	125	131	18.9%	17.3%
Bury St Edmunds	631	738	115	126	18.2%	17.1%
Stowmarket	543	582	104	101	19.2%	17.4%
Ipswich Central	463	537	85	111	18.4%	20.7%
Halesworth	405	511	64	89	15.8%	17.4%
Suffolk Total	7254	8411	1385	1575	19.1%	18.7%

Table showing the number and percentage of repeat Domestic Abuse victims broken down into locality area comparative of last 12 months to previous 12 months.

- 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.

Use of Ancillary Orders

- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 The table below represents the number of DVPNs issued and conversion to DVPOs. This currently sits at 91.9%.
- 5.9 When a DVPO is breached, the police are empowered to arrest the offender and place them before the court for sanction. From January 2024 to the end of June 2024 there were 10 recorded breaches enforced by the Constabulary.

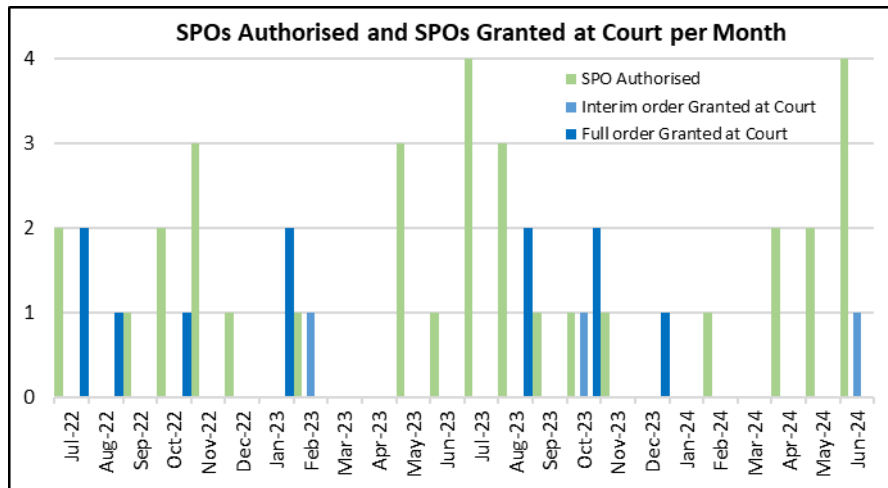
Month	Number of DVPN Issued	Number of DVPO Issued
Jul-23	6	6
Aug-23	5	5
Sep-23	4	2
Oct-23	9	7
Nov-23	8	8
Dec-23	2	2
Jan-24	4	4
Feb-24	3	2
Mar-24	7	7
Apr-24	7	7
May-24	2	2
Jun-24	5	5
Total	62	57
Average/Month	5.2	4.8
Conversion Rate	91.9%	

Table showing the number of DVPN's and DVPO's obtained across Suffolk Constabulary broken down by month

- 5.10 From July 2023 to June 2024 there was an average of 1.5 Stalking Prevention Orders (SPOs) authorised a month, in the same period seven orders were granted by the court. With the change to the burden of proof for the court to issue an SPO, there should be an increase in the number of SPO's applied for and authorised by the courts. This is monitored through the bi-monthly Domestic Abuse Governance Group.
- 5.11 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	SPO Authorised	Outstanding Result	Interim order Granted at Court	Full order Granted at Court	Application Withdrawn
Jul-23	4	0	0	0	2
Aug-23	3	1	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
Jan-24	0	0	0	0	1
Feb-24	1	0	0	0	1
Mar-24	0	0	0	0	0
Apr-24	2	1	0	0	0
May-24	2	2	0	0	0
Jun-24	4	4	1	0	0

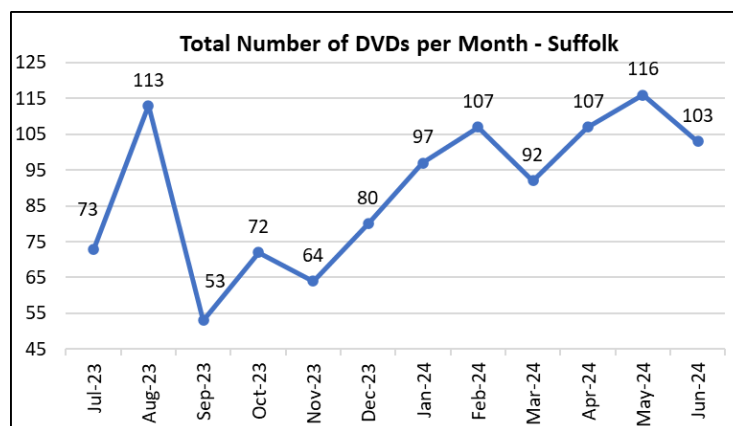
Table demonstrating the number of Stalking Protection Orders authorised, granted or withdrawn



Bar chart showing SPO's authorised and granted at court

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

- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 The total number of requesters under the DVDS has increased significantly over the past 12 months, to a high of 116 in May 2024 then 103 in June 2024, which continues the increasing trend seen in the last few months. Over the last 12 months, 68.4% of all Right to Know requests were police generated. Right to Ask made up 48.6% of all the DVDS requests.



Total DVDS by month 01/07/23 to 30/06/24

Operation Encompass

- 5.16 Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership, enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse.
- 5.17 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.

- 5.18 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 Operation Encompass.
- 5.19 In the 6 months ending June 2024, 2951 Operation 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:

6. RAPE AND SERIOUS SEXUAL OFFENCES (RASSO)

- 6.1 There continues to be extensive requirement under Op Soteria to develop plans, implement training, change mindsets, and incorporate new ways of considering RASSO investigations. This work is being positively embraced across the teams, but requires considerable RASSO lead, Project and Pillar lead support and time to deliver against the expectations.
- 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 Investigator Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and wellbeing forms a significant part of Pillar 4 under Op Soteria, and the Constabulary is focusing on this area during the next period. This will enable a better understanding of officer impact, long term wellbeing and required CPD for RASSO.
- 6.5 In support of Op Soteria, Suffolk has created the transformation plan which has been signed off by Chief Officers. The National team visited the force in August and feedback positively around the self-assessment and the extensive ongoing work which is being progressed across RASSO investigations.
- 6.6 Suffolk has trained 100% of its Investigators, Contact and Control Room (CCR) and DSO's with specialist Rape and Serious Sexual Offences Investigative Skills Development Programme (RISDP) training developed under Op Soteria. All frontline staff will have the first response RISDP training rolled out from October 2024, and the new Specialist Sexual Assault Investigators Development Programme (SSAIDP) programme will be available in Suffolk as soon as the College of Policing release the licence.
- 6.7 Ongoing challenges remain with securing positive charge rates for RASSO cases. This is being reviewed both locally and regionally across Police and the CPS to identify opportunities for cases to be progressed.
- 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. However, CPS are currently struggling to meet 28-day turnaround and there are ongoing pressures with Athena case and CPS case management.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
RASSO					
<i>Crime volume</i>	2016	2207	↓8.7%	2150	↓6.3%
<i>Solved rate</i>	5.2%	6.5%	↓1.3pp	5.8%	↓0.6pp
<i>Solved number</i>	104	144	↓27.8%	124	↓16.3%
<i>Charged rate</i>	4.6%	6.1%	↓1.5pp	5.3%	↓0.6pp
<i>Charged number</i>	93	135	↓31.1%	113	↓17.9%
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	3.2%	2.0%	↑1.2pp	2.4%	↑0.8pp
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	45.8%	52.3%	↓6.5pp	48.4%	↓2.6pp
<i>Evidential difficulties</i>	60.0%	60.6%	↓0.6pp	58.9%	↑1.1pp
<i>Live investigations</i>	765				
<i>Non recent</i>	26.7%	27.1%	↓0.4pp	26.6%	↑0.1pp

Data up to end of June 2024

It has not been possible to provide Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) data this time, so these rows have been removed from the table. There have been some personnel changes and difficulties in accessing the data, but it is hoped that this will be resolved in the coming months.

Supporting vulnerable victims	Last 12M	Previous 12M	Diff against Previous 12m	Long-term average	Diff against long-term average
Child Sexual Abuse					
<i>Crime volume</i>	901	1261	↓28.6%	1190	↓24.3%
<i>Solved rate</i>	12.0%	11.7%	↑0.3pp	10.6%	↑1.4pp
<i>Solved number</i>	108	147	↓26.5%	125	↓13.9%
<i>Charged rate</i>	10.8%	10.6%	↑0.2pp	9.7%	↑1.1pp
<i>Charged number</i>	97	133	↓27.1%	113	↓14.8%
<i>Victim not ready to support</i>	35.4%	35.9%	↓0.5pp	34.7%	↑0.7pp
<i>Investigation not possible</i>	3.2%	2.3%	↑0.9pp	2.5%	↑0.7pp
<i>Non recent CSA</i>	26.6%	27.2%	↓0.6pp	27.7%	↓1.1%

Data up to end of June 2024

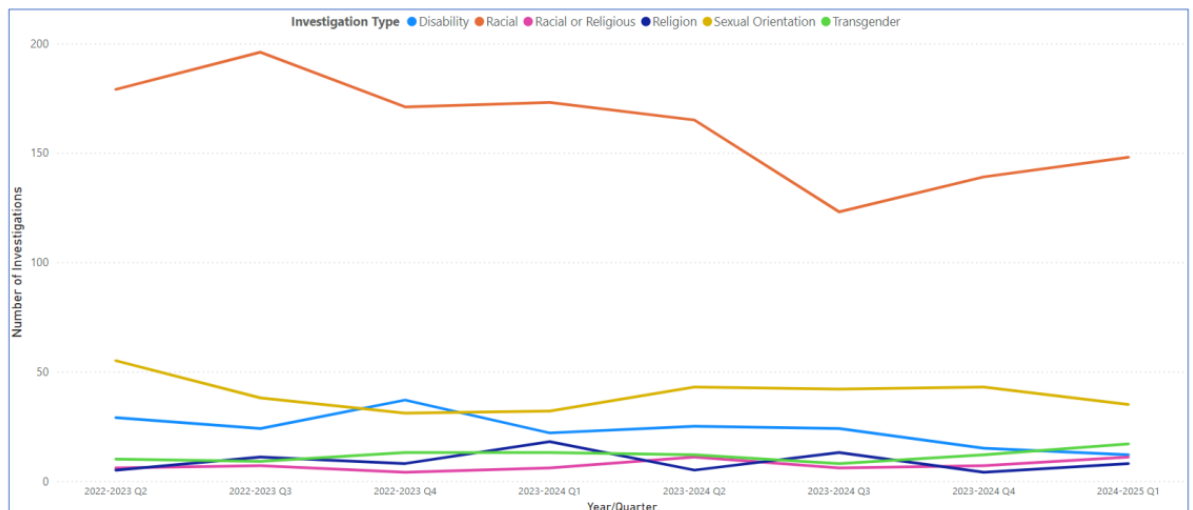
- 6.9 The Constabulary continues to encourage victim engagement working with the Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) service and often visits victims jointly. ISVA funding is subject to ongoing discussions as the current Ministry of Justice (MOJ) grant funding for 5.81 FTE ISVA posts is currently only secured until March 2025.
- 6.10 The Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) contract with Mountain Health Care commenced in April 2024. Early staffing challenges resulted in some victims needing to travel outside of the County for forensic medical examinations, however the staffing in the Suffolk SARC is now close to 100% and victims are required to travel less.
- 6.11 Building plans for the conversion of the new SARC site have been submitted to the Council. There are timescale pressures due to the requirement for ISO accreditation, and ongoing conversations with NHS partners around service provision under the new contract and the future plans for the service.

7. HATE CRIME

- 7.1 Statistical data relating to hate crimes is compiled by analysts and shared both internally and with partners via the Community Safety Partnerships. This is shared every quarter and provides a breakdown of crimes and incidents, crime types, location types, victims, suspects, and crime outcomes.

7.2 Below are the latest crimes and incidents by quarter which provides a breakdown according to investigation type. It remains that there is no legal requirement for an individual to disclose the specific element of the protected characteristic. Athena is the police system which is used to record Hate Crimes and Non-Hate Crime incidents. When recording, there are primary and secondary classifications which can be selected, i.e. hate crime, and includes all protected characteristics.

Crimes and incidents by Quarter - Force



7.3 Suffolk Constabulary County Policing Command adopted a new operating model in December 2023. Since this time all hate crimes are now allocated and investigated by dedicated Community Policing Teams (CPT's).

7.4 CPT's are responsible not only for primary investigation of hate crime offences but to address any emerging threats, patterns or repeat victims. Responsibility for ongoing problem solving and mitigating further hate crimes sits with CPT Inspectors who attend a monthly intelligence meeting and are required to review their area according to Vulnerability, Victims, Offenders and Locations (VVOL) data. Upon review, clear plans of action need to be formulated which can result in problem solving plans or police activity logs.

7.5 CPT's are also responsible for proactive engagement with diverse communities, and this now forms part of a newly devised engagement strategy. The objective is to reach out to diverse communities, which include those with protected characteristics, provide reassurance and support to inform coordinated police activity. In turn, the aim is to prevent hate crime and encourage reporting from those communities who, historically, would not feel comfortable in coming forward. The governance for this sits with the force wide Neighbourhood Working Group Board.

7.6 A recent workstream is underway in partnership with Ipswich Town Football Club (ITFC) to create a streamlined consistent reporting process for hate crimes which take place at the football club. This is to ensure that reporting protocols are communicated both internally and externally, and benchmarking has taken place with other forces and communication with ITFC.

7.7 A Hate Crime Action Plan is in place, having been revised early 2024, and is aligned to the College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice. The next phase will be to reinvigorate a Hate Crime Scrutiny Panel, which will focus on hate crime compliance and victim service quality. A Diverse Communities Coordinator is due to join the Constabulary in August 2024 who will also be able to support hate crime management.

7.8 Audits were completed in relation to the recording of 'Non-Crime Hate Incidents' which showed over-recording since the change was introduced to the code. As a result, further communications have been sent out force wide, and consultation with the Contact and Control Room (CCR) to ensure accurate recording.

7.9 Suffolk are represented at the Southeast Regional Hate Crime Forum and meet with regional force colleagues every quarter to discuss working practices, community tensions by exception and sharing best practice.

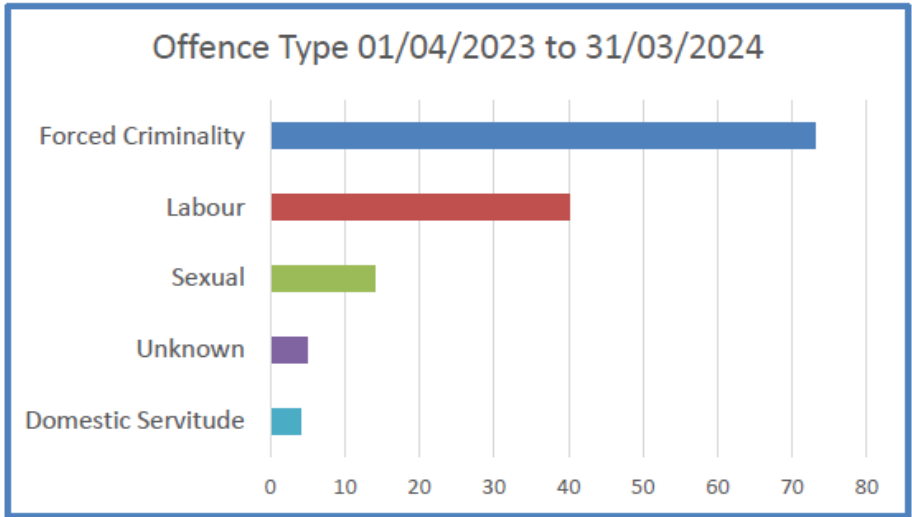
8. MODERN SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING (MHST)

8.1 Suffolk Constabulary has 20 Victim Liaison Officers (VLOs) across the three localities. These offices are 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 A Modern Slavery and Vulnerable Community Advisor continues 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 advisor continues to be proactive in supporting multi-agency visits to local businesses and communities highlighting the signs and indicators but also providing advice, support, and signposting to those affected. The adviser has also become more proactive in working with frontline staff to either provide advice or accompany staff on visits.

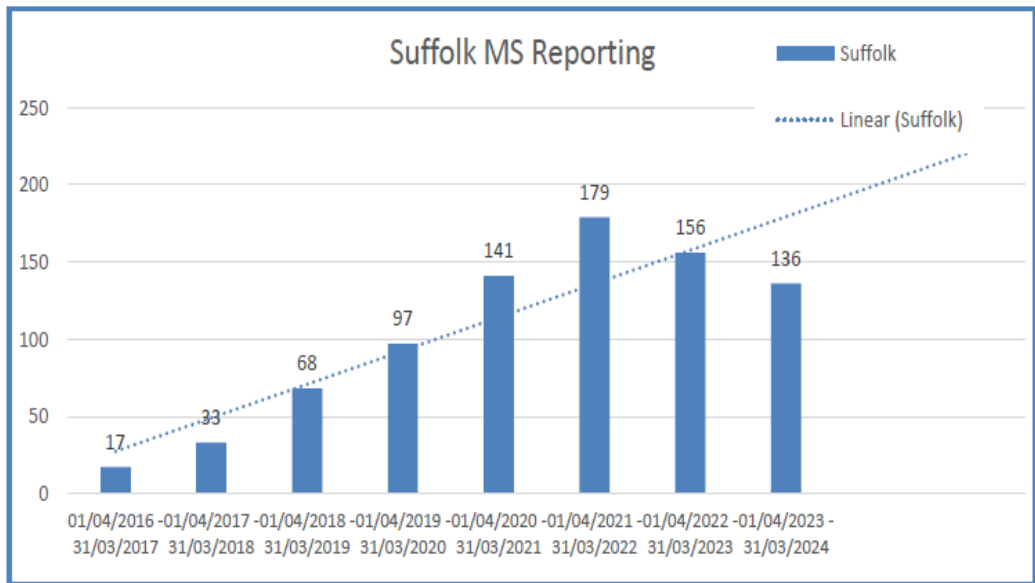
8.3 Operational staff across Suffolk Constabulary continue to be signposted to briefings and training around the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) process for victims of MSHT. The process is managed by the Constabulary Serious Crime Disruption Team. Changes to the Statutory Guidance are reviewed, summarised, 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. Joint training with key partners has been delivered, with a reviewed process to ensure the early sharing of NRM details between agencies where appropriate to do so.

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. The Constabulary Scorpion Teams regularly conduct intelligence led visits in connection to concerns regarding sexual exploitation seeking to provide support and reduce vulnerability.



8.5 The intranet page for MSHT has been redesigned making it easier for staff to access support and guidance when dealing with victims. This continues to be reviewed and updated with current guidance.

8.6 Crime reporting remains consistent with the NRM reporting showing a drop in the last 12 months, Suffolk is in line with the national picture.



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 Op Soteria assessment and implementation is making good progress, but is a significant commitment from the Constabulary towards further improvement to service to victims of Rape and serious sexual offences. Full compliance with the national operating model will be difficult to achieve without additional investment, and plans are still being progressed to ensure Suffolk has a local model that best suits the needs of victims in this county.
- 11.3 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.