



Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week 2024, 5 – 11 February.

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In 2021 the Joint National Action Plan was launched, setting out a clear joint commitment by policing and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to work together more effectively to deliver improvements in both rape investigation and prosecution. Following on from this Devon & Cornwall Police and the CPS have worked closely together to build cases in collaboration from the earliest opportunity to improve engagement and increased outcomes for victims.

Since that time, data shows an in excess of 500% increase in suspects charged with rape in Devon and Cornwall (11 suspects charged in the 12 months from July 2020 to June 2021 compared to 73 suspects charged in the 12 months from to July 2022 to June 2023).

Detective Superintendent Nicky Seager, Force Lead on Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, said: “Through this partnership approach we are working to transform the way that the CPS and police handle these most devastating crimes, working together to build the strongest possible case and ensuring that victims are supported with care and sensitivity throughout every step of the prosecution process no matter how much time has passed since an offence took place. “We want every victim to have the confidence that their case will be fully investigated by the police and that, in every case where our legal tests are met, the CPS will charge and prosecute. Whilst we appreciate that improvements are starting to be seen throughout these crime types, we know that there is still so much more we can do. We hope to see continued and sustained improvement in charge and conviction rates over years to come and it is this commitment that we are fully invested in for the future.”

Devon & Cornwall Police is part of an ongoing national project to improve the investigation and prosecution of rape and other sexual offences. Known as Operation Soteria, the project drives improvement through a victim centred, suspect-focused and context led approach to investigations, seeking to disrupt the behaviour of repeat suspects, and have a trauma-informed, procedural justice approach to victims.

Detective Superintendent Seager continued: “As part of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence Awareness Week, we would like to highlight this work to demonstrate that we are committed to improving outcomes for victims of this serious and traumatic crime.

“We would like to better understand the victim experience of police investigations of rape and other serious sexual offences. To this end we are part of an independent

pilot victim survey for those survivor-victims who have reported a sexual offence to the police. The survey is completely anonymous and asks anyone who is aged 18 or over to give their honest feedback on how police handled their case, regardless of the outcome. It can be completed at any stage of a police investigation.”

The survey can be accessed here: Victim Survivor Survey

<https://orlo.uk/qfjC4>

If you or anyone else is in danger call 999