

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Ellie Ball, ISVA service Manager, Cambridge Rape Crisis Centre (INV0023)

1. Further to the oral evidence provided by myself on the 23rd of June 2021 I would like to add the following in relation to questions posed by committee members.
 - Dehenna Davison raised a question to Vera Baird about the pilot that provided solicitor's advice for victims.¹ It struck me that whilst I think this legal advice is a really good idea, I do think the need for it evidences the absolute lack of compliance to the law within the CPS. CPS prosecutors are lawyers themselves and therefore should know and follow the proper law around disclosure, victims should not need lawyers to ensure that CPS lawyers are following the law and are not trampling all over their Article 8 rights. So whilst I agree with Vera that this scheme is good, we should also be asking ourselves why it is necessary and maybe taking action to address this within the CPS.
 - Laura Farris asked about project Bluestone and asked what a suspect focused investigation would look like.² I felt it important to highlight that part of a perpetrator focused investigation would mean taking robust, timely action in relation to a suspect when a victim comes forward. We see examples of suspects not being interviewed by the police for over a year after the victim reports. Sometimes police do not even interview a suspect at all before coming to their decision to take no further action so I think just to highlight that a suspect focused investigation would mean not focusing inappropriately on victim's behaviour, but also taking robust and decisive action to arrest, interview and challenge the suspect early on, rather than the delays we see currently.
 - Laura Farris also asked about the drop off in referrals for charge and the CPS position that they are not responsible for the lack of cases coming through to them for a charging decision.³ I thought it might be helpful for the committee to know that what we have seen is decision making around when cases are closed has got a lot less clear over the last few years. Previously if police referred a case to the CPS for a charging decision the CPS would either charge or close it, writing to the survivor explaining why there was not enough evidence. What we see frequently now is that the police may advise the survivor that their case is with the CPS, only to subsequently close it themselves as the CPS have refused to make a decision and sent it back to police with often unmanageable or un-actionable further tasks. So essentially the CPS are pushing these decisions back onto police by requiring unachievable actions get completed-such as requesting a mobile phone download for communications between the parties when the offence occurred 15 years ago, and the CPS know this evidence is unlikely to exist. The police then close the cases themselves rather than referring back to CPS, but in reality, the CPS have prompted this decision without taking responsibility for it. We believe the difficulty in getting a CPS charging decision is also influencing the police to refer fewer cases to CPS in the first place.
2. I also refer the Committee to an evaluation document of the first Op Bluestone that I referred to in my oral evidence which I thought the committee might find helpful to have

¹ Home Affairs Committee (23 June 2021) Oral evidence: Investigation and prosecution of rape, HC 193 (Q11).

² Home Affairs Committee (23 June 2021) Oral evidence: Investigation and prosecution of rape, HC 193 (Q16, Q17, Q18).

³ Home Affairs Committee (23 June 2021) Oral evidence: Investigation and prosecution of rape, HC 193 (Q19, Q20).

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sight of.⁴ Whilst I know there is a lot of praise for Op Bluestone and the government are planning to pilot this as Op Soteria in more areas; I think that it is important to consider why the first Op Bluestone was not successful and it is interesting to read that the original Op Bluestone had far higher aspirations regarding increased detection rates than the current Op Bluestone/Soteria and the governments rape review itself. The committee may also be interested to read in the report that the issues identified in 2009 are not dissimilar to some of the issues that are ongoing now and reflect on whether we are taking enough action to address these. I would suggest we are not and if we don't challenge this, we run the risk of still discussing the same issues in another ten years.

Thanks to the committee for their time and interest in this area.

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⁴ [Policy Paper: Operation Bluestone – Tilley 2011](#) (22 August 2011)