

**A Police Specialist Rape Investigation Unit: A Comparative  
Analysis of Performance and Victim Care**

Journal:	<i>Policing &amp; Society</i>
Manuscript ID	GPAS-2017-0230.R2
Manuscript Type:	Original Article
Keywords:	Rape, Policing, Victims, Specialist investigations

SCHOLARONE™  
Manuscripts

## A Police Specialist Rape Investigation Unit: A Comparative Analysis of Performance and Victim Care

This article examines quantitative and qualitative data in an analysis of the workings of a specialist rape investigation unit and compares its performance with a non-specialist investigative approach over a two-year period. Prior to this study, no robust research that compares specialist and non-specialist rape investigations has been conducted. The research finds that the specialist unit outperformed the non-specialist investigative approach in many, though not all performance measures, including charging and 'reached court' rates in rape cases, retention of cases characterised by complex victim vulnerability, allocation of Sexual Assault Investigation Trained (SAIT) officers, rate of referral to Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA) and accuracy of crime recording. Further, police officer interview data suggests that team working and support, communication and a sense of common purpose were definitive features of the specialist unit, when contrasted to experience of working in a non-specialist policing environment. These findings have policy and resource implications for the policing of rape and the need to achieve the best possible investigative standards in sexual offence cases, including the provision of appropriate care and addressing the needs of highly vulnerable victims. The article concludes by arguing that there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that investigative specialism is a crucial element in the police response to rape.

Keywords: Rape, Policing, Victims, Investigative specialism, Specialist units

Funding: This research was supported by a XXXX.

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank XX and XXX for supporting this work.

### Introduction

The response of the police service to the investigation of rape allegations continues to be a major concern for government, criminal justice agencies, media and specialist support services. Amid criticism concerning such things as victim care, investigative standards and case outcomes (Kelly *et al*, 2005, IPCC 2010, Angiolini 2015) the police service in England and Wales has made significant efforts to address these and other concerns (Stern 2010, Horvath & Yexley 2012, Angiolini 2015). One means by which the police service has sought to improve its response to rape has been through the creation of specialist investigation units with the aim of, *inter alia* improving victim care and engagement, the quality of police investigations and inter-agency working. As of April 2012, of 43 police forces, 17 had specialist rape or sexual assault units, five had partially

1  
2  
3 specialist units and two were in the process of creating a unit (Westmarland *et al* 2012,  
4 p. 2). Today, specialist units operate within the context of large year-on-year increases  
5 in recorded allegations of rape and sexual assault (Office of National Statistics, 2018),  
6 increasing case complexity and significantly reduced financial resourcing (APCC 2015,  
7 Barrett 2015, HMICFRS 2017). Further, in a 2011 Association of Chief Police Officers  
8 report, it was observed: ‘... there is insufficient empirical data available on which to base  
9 any firm conclusions as to the benefits of adopting dedicated investigation team  
10 approach’ [sic] (ACPO 2011, p. 5).

11  
12  
13  
14 This article helps to fill this existing evidential gap by using quantitative and qualitative  
15 data to comparatively analyse a specialist and non-specialist policing response to rape. It  
16 examines the performance of Avon and Somerset Constabulary’s ‘Operation Bluestone’,  
17 specialist rape investigation unit, which operated between September 2009 and July  
18 2014 with a non-specialist comparator. The remit of Bluestone was the investigation of  
19 rape and other serious sexual offences in the city of Bristol involving victims 14 years  
20 and older. The evaluation uses new qualitative and quantitative data covering all  
21 recorded allegations of rape/attempted rape over a two-year period to examine the  
22 progression of cases within Bluestone and the comparator, focusing on issues of  
23 attrition, victim care, vulnerability and accuracy of crime recording. This is the first time  
24 an analysis of this type has been conducted on the work of a specialist rape investigation  
25 unit. The article will proceed by examining the history and work of specialist rape  
26 investigation units.

### 31 **The existing literature on specialist policing in rape and sexual offence cases**

32 In the UK, the need for a specialist approach to child abuse and rape cases was identified  
33 from the 1980s onwards (Blair 1985, Lloyd and Burman 1996). One of the earliest  
34 domestic examples of investigative specialism was the creation of a unit comprising five  
35 female police officers by Thames Valley Police following the notorious 1982 BBC  
36 documentary, *A Complaint of Rape* in which a rape complainant was treated in a  
37 dismissive and hostile manner by detectives (Foley 1990). The objectives underpinning  
38 the creation of specialist units have remained largely unchanged over time  
39 (Metropolitan Police Authority 2002; 2002a, Project Sapphire 2002, Avon & Somerset  
40 Constabulary 2011) and while specialist units appear to have public support (Farand  
41 2016) there is only limited evidence illustrating how a specialised response to rape may  
42 deliver benefits in terms of policing performance.

43  
44  
45  
46  
47 The international literature has examined investigative specialism in the context of a  
48 range of crimes, including domestic violence and sexual offences. For instance, recent  
49 research found that a specialist domestic violence police unit led to an increase in the  
50 number of cases progressing through the criminal justice process (Regoeczi and Hubbard  
51 2018). Earlier research on the impact of specialism in domestic violence cases has found  
52 mixed results (van Staden and Lawrence 2010). This has resulted, in part, from differing  
53 study methodologies, lack of scientific rigour and robust comparative data (Regoeczi and  
54 Hubbard 2018, p. 4). Research examining investigative specialism in cases of rape and  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 sexual assault is quite limited, but largely positive. An early, small scale North American  
4 study that compared police responses before and after the introduction of a specialist  
5 sexual offences investigative unit suggested an improvement in officer attitudes and  
6 other improvements that only 'occurred at points of least resistance' (LaFree 1989, pp.  
7 80-89). More recent data from Australia found that victims of sexual assault viewed a  
8 specialist police unit response more favourably than a non-specialist response across all  
9 measures, including victim care, updating, access to services and timeliness of response  
10 (Powell and Cauchi 2013, pp. 238-239). Similarly, in a study of police officers and other  
11 professional stakeholders it was found that Australian specialist unit reforms were  
12 viewed very positively, in several areas including: inter-agency working, victim  
13 satisfaction and facilitation of communication (Powell and Wright 2011-2012).

14  
15  
16  
17  
18 In 2010, the Home Office published the results of a pilot study based on views with  
19 officers who worked in a specialist sexual assault investigation unit. The study found  
20 that officers perceived the unit as creating a 'joint working' approach (van Staden and  
21 Lawrence 2010, p. 12) in which detectives and a SAIT officer<sup>1</sup> worked together in  
22 progressing the investigation. It was argued that this *inter alia* improved victim support,  
23 sped up the investigative process, allowed for continuity in terms of staffing, reduced  
24 victim withdrawal, improved officer confidence in dealing with sexual offence cases and  
25 'increased confidence in each other's ability' (van Staden and Lawrence 2010, pp. 12-  
26 14). In later research, improvements to victim care and investigative expertise were also  
27 suggested by interviewees (Westmarland *et al*, 2012), but neither study examined case  
28 files to test the accuracy of interviewee perceptions or a comparator to measure  
29 improvement.

30  
31  
32  
33  
34 In the context of the broader debate concerning austerity and police funding, forces  
35 now appear to be (re)assessing their strategies with regard to units specialising in sexual  
36 offences. Most recently, Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the Metropolitan Police  
37 reassigned sexual offence unit detectives to local teams (Williams and Keeling 2017,  
38 Beckford 2018, Metropolitan Police 2018). In the case of the GMP, its Serious Sexual  
39 Offences Unit is the latest unit to be disbanded following closures in several other force  
40 areas in recent years. The closure of specialist units runs counter to the findings of  
41 successive HMICFRS reports examining investigative specialism in criminal cases. Most  
42 recently, HMICFRS, noted: 'we found a continuing disparity in the quality of  
43 investigations undertaken in specialist units where the quality of investigation is  
44 generally good and non-specialist units where all too often the quality of investigation is  
45 poor' (HMICFRS 2018, pp. 46-47). It also runs counter to an earlier independent review  
46 of rape investigation in London which recommended investment in specialist units  
47 (Angiolini 2015, para 21, recommendation 29). Further, a recent proposal by the British  
48 Transport Police to disband its specialist sexual offences investigation unit was  
49  
50  
51

---

52  
53 <sup>1</sup> The research makes reference to SOIT (Sexual Offences Investigative Trained) officers. This article uses  
54 the term SAIT (Sexual Assault Investigation Team) officer throughout for the purpose of consistency given  
55 that the Bluestone and comparator area use the term 'SAIT'. The differing terminology reflects differences  
56 between individual police forces.

1  
2  
3 withdrawn following public opposition (Farand 2016) and police in the Republic of  
4 Ireland have recently created specialist units to deal with sexual offence cases (Lally  
5 2017). It is in this context that we proceed by setting out the mixed methodology used  
6 in this study to address some of the gaps in the current literature.  
7  
8  
9

## 10 **Methodology**

### 11 **1. Approach**

12  
13 A mixed-methods approach was adopted for this study allowing for the collection of  
14 both quantitative (case file based) and qualitative (interview) data. All potentially  
15 identifying information was removed prior to extraction and data analysis, and the  
16 research was given approval from the relevant university ethics committee. The  
17 researchers sought to examine the following questions: Do rape investigations  
18 performed by officers in a specialist unit have different trajectories through the criminal  
19 justice system in comparison to those conducted by non-specialist officers? Do specialist  
20 unit investigations provide different standards of victim support compared to the non-  
21 specialist response? How is the specialist model and non-specialist response  
22 experienced and perceived by police officers?  
23  
24  
25  
26

27  
28 Primarily, the research team sought to construct an extensive quantitative database  
29 containing detailed information on the progression and outcomes of a large number of  
30 rape (including attempted rape) investigations conducted by Avon and Somerset  
31 constabulary over a 2-year period. Such an approach of 'reconstructing' investigations  
32 via this method has been successfully used in many studies that have focused on rape  
33 investigations in England and Wales over the last twenty years (e.g. Kelly *et al*, 2005,  
34 Feist *et al*, 2007, Burton *et al*, 2012), though has not been used previously to examine  
35 and contrast specialist vs. non-specialist data. In addition, in-depth interviews were  
36 conducted with nine serving police officers of various ranks, all of whom had experience  
37 of working in a non-specialist policing environment, and most of whom (seven) had or  
38 were working in the Bluestone unit. These interviews provided important insights into  
39 the workings of both approaches to rape investigation, as well as assisting the  
40 interpretation of trends emerging in the quantitative data. Further details on both  
41 elements of this study are provided below.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

### 47 **2. Quantitative Data**

48 Prior to the data collection, Avon and Somerset constabulary provided the research  
49 team with access to its case file logs for all rapes and attempted rapes reported to  
50 Bluestone in the calendar years 2010 and 2011. This data included crimes reported by  
51 both males and females, and given Bluestone's remit, only included victims aged 14 and  
52 above at the time of report. Access was granted to a further set of case files featuring  
53 non-specialist police investigations that took place in the same time period. Through a  
54 process of reading and coding the file data, the research team constructed a  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 quantitative database in the form of an excel spreadsheet, and subsequently performed  
4 an analysis of the data using statistical software packages in both excel and *SPSS*. In  
5 coding the data, binary variables were constructed to denote the presence or absence  
6 of a case characteristic. For example, if a victim mental health concern could be  
7 identified in the case file data, this would subsequently be represented by coding '1' in  
8 the explanatory variable for 'victim mental health issue'. If this factor was not present,  
9 then a '0' would be entered instead. The construction of the database involved  
10 collecting detailed information on both victim and suspect demographics, case  
11 characteristics and other factors that the previous literature has identified as having an  
12 impact upon case progression (e.g. various forms of vulnerability, time between offence  
13 and report amongst others). All were converted into the binary coding framework. The  
14 team also gathered case narratives that lay outside of the framework to aid  
15 interpretation of the quantitative data. Once all case files had been coded, the team  
16 were able to establish key demographic features between a Bluestone (1) and a  
17 comparator (0) sample, as well as descriptive 'performance' (i.e. attrition, victim care,  
18 case outcomes) profiles for both groups. In order to assess whether some of the  
19 differences in outcomes were significant, Pearson's *chi square* tests of association were  
20 used to assess paired observations such as whether victims dealt with under the  
21 Bluestone model and the comparator group differed in the frequency with which they  
22 were referred to victim support. These statistical tests were conducted through  
23 contingency table functions. Where the outcomes of testing delivered *chi square*  
24 probabilities of .05 or less, they are referred to in this paper as 'statistically significant'  
25 and presented as 'P<0.05' accordingly. Results that did not meet the .05 threshold are  
26 not reported as 'significant' in this study, though some of the 'non-significant' results  
27 feature prominently in our discussion, with associated caveats.  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34

35 A key challenge for this study lay in establishing an appropriate comparator (i.e., non-  
36 Bluestone) sample of rape investigations. Bluestone team investigations were confined  
37 to central Bristol and establishing an identical 'like-for-like' comparator that mirrored  
38 the characteristics of this urban area was not possible. The comparator sample was  
39 comprised of all rape investigations in an anonymous non-specialist policing area. As a  
40 result, the Bluestone investigations contained a range of case types that were not  
41 present in the comparator sample that in this instance, were specific to the inner-city  
42 environment. These included reports made in the context of sex work/on-street  
43 prostitution (Bluestone N=38, Comparator N=0) and from victims experiencing  
44 homelessness (Bluestone N=22, Comparator N=0). Furthermore, the comparator  
45 investigations featured 7 cases involving young children that fell outside the remit of  
46 Bluestone, as well as far fewer cases where no suspect could be identified which  
47 impacted upon the ability to proceed beyond the report stage. Such cases reflect the  
48 challenges inherent to police investigations, and are undoubtedly crucial to consider in  
49 academic research, not least because they allow a more robust examination of  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

particular forms of victimisation, vulnerability and related justice issues.<sup>2</sup> However, some of the comparative analysis in this study necessitated the exclusion of these cases in order to facilitate a better understanding of relative performance (specifically, when addressing the case attrition data). The sample adjustments also allowed for the control of the difference in crime recording errors between the two sets of investigations (discussed further below). Without these adjustments, the comparator sample becomes simply too different in composition. The impact of the sample adjustments is detailed in Figure 1 below. This article makes reference to research findings from both the total and adjusted samples and care has been taken to signpost this accordingly throughout.

**Figure 1**

**Bluestone and comparator data adjustments**

		<b>Bluestone</b>	<b>Comparator</b>	<b>Total</b>
	Total cases reviewed	322	119	441
Less:	No crimes (adjusted for compliance)	-33	-13	-46
		289	106	395
Less:	Sex worker/On street prostitution reports	-38	0	-38
		251	106	357
Less:	Victims with housing issues/homelessness	-22	0	-22
		229	106	335
Less:	Suspect not identified	-18	-4	-22
		211	102	313
Less:	<12yr at time report	0	-7	-7
		211	95	306
	<b>Cases compared:</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>306</b>

Although a quantitative, case file analysis is generally regarded as a valuable method in understanding the trajectory of crime reports through the criminal justice system, there are a range of limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, although using electronic recording systems tend to promote consistency of format, researchers remain dependent on the quality of information recorded in the case files, as well as individual officer recording practices. It might also be the case that certain police (in)actions are

<sup>2</sup> The data collected during this project has research application beyond the current comparative study and is part of a broader project concerning rape investigation.



1  
2  
3 not recorded and as such, case files may not be a complete record of the investigative  
4 process (Burton *et al*, 2012). Second, the description and characterisation of evidence  
5 might be dependent on an individual officer's view of that evidence. This might be  
6 problematic where such an assessment is based on incomplete evidence, mistaken  
7 beliefs or unwarranted assumptions. Finally, the views of victims concerning the quality  
8 of the police response is normally missing from case files, and requires additional data  
9 to give voice to this important perspective.<sup>3</sup>  
10  
11

### 12 13 **3. Qualitative data**

14 Using a snowball method, nine officers with experience of working in both specialist and  
15 non-specialist environments were identified and interviewed for the purposes of this  
16 research. The nine officers were comprised of three SAIT officers and six detectives, and  
17 were interviewed using a semi structured interview method themed around the  
18 following areas: experience of rape investigation, perception of the specialised  
19 environment, decision making, interaction with victims and provision of victim support,  
20 victim vulnerability and relationships with partners and support agencies. An interview  
21 guide was developed to ensure consistency of approach between those conducting the  
22 interviews. All the interviews were conducted face-to-face by members of the research  
23 team, and all occurred on police premises, lasting on average of one hour. The  
24 interviews were recorded before being transcribed and coded using an inductive  
25 approach to thematic analysis (Bryman and Burgess 1994). In performing this analysis,  
26 the research team were guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase approach;  
27 specifically that of 'familiarising' with the data, generating initial codes, searching for  
28 themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report  
29 (which in this case, included linking it to the quantitative data). This process, though  
30 time consuming, was considered vital in producing a credible and trustworthy analysis  
31 via the thematic method (Nowell *et al* 2017). Though data was collected by the broader  
32 research team, the process of familiarizing and coding was performed by two project  
33 leads who worked through the entire data set concurrently. During this stage of the  
34 project, meetings were held on a weekly basis to discuss 'draft' themes emerging from  
35 the transcripts. Both project leads worked independently across each transcript, before  
36 agreeing the final themes used in the analysis. Given the need for brevity, and the small  
37 number of interviews, three main themes were identified for the purposes of this paper:  
38 '*the right people*', '*case complexity*' and '*team working*'. Interview excerpts are also used  
39 to support and contextualise the attrition data further in this paper. Key decisions and  
40 the content of meetings between the project leads were recorded, establishing an audit  
41 trail to accompany the development of the analysis.  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

### 51 **Working in a specialist rape investigation unit: police perspectives**

52  
53

---

54  
55 <sup>3</sup> Given the focus of this research was on case trajectories, police perceptions and working practices, the  
56 perspectives of victims was not sought.  
57  
58  
59



1  
2  
3 The interview data offers an insight into officer perceptions of specialist and non-  
4 specialist policing in rape cases. However, the number of interviewees is small (9), so it  
5 cannot be assumed that they reflect the views of all officers. The existing literature on  
6 police attitudes to rape is quite limited with much of it focusing on officers' belief in  
7 rape myths and victim blaming (Sleath and Bull 2017). A number of studies have found  
8 that the training of officers, including those who work in specialist roles with victims of  
9 rape, such as SAIT officers, has only limited or no impact on officers' belief in rape myths  
10 or victim blaming (Lonsway *et al*, 2001, Sleath and Bull 2012, Hines and Murphy 2017),  
11 while others have found a beneficial impact (Darwinkel *et al*, 2013, Murphy and Hines  
12 2018). The current study data differ significantly from this earlier research because the  
13 interviews had a different focus: the experiences and views of officers working in  
14 specialist and non-specialist contexts, rather than a narrow focus on rape myths and  
15 victim blaming. Three main themes emerged from the interview data and are set out  
16 below.

17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23 *Theme one: The right people*

24  
25 The interview data provides useful insights into the nature of team working in the  
26 Bluestone unit, along with the importance of key skills, knowledge and commitment to  
27 rape case investigation. A number of interviewees commented on the importance of key  
28 knowledge and skills in rape investigations. For example,

29  
30  
31 'Bluestone was [about] having officers there who were interested, passionate  
32 and motivated around rape investigation. Having the skill set and knowledge  
33 around rape investigations, around the psychology of the victim, the psychology  
34 of the offender and ... the different ways that victims present' (Interview 7).

35  
36  
37 Several officers also made comparative claims based on their experience of working in  
38 generalist, usually CID investigative contexts. One interviewee made reference to  
39 Bluestone as having motivated officers who 'wanted to be on there' and argued some  
40 non-specialist CID officers, with whom he had previously worked, were 'a bit frightened'  
41 of rape cases (interview 2). Another described some CID officers as 'not being keen' on  
42 rape investigations (interview 6). By contrast, a Bluestone detective linked the voluntary  
43 recruitment of Bluestone officers with professionalism and motivation:

44  
45  
46  
47 'You've got ... volunteers pretty much to work in [sexual offence] work so you've  
48 got that enthusiasm and you can get that professional outlook from the word go  
49 really ... [In CID] you've got people "oh, I don't want to deal with that" ... So you  
50 haven't got that level of enthusiasm ... you know, dedication ...' (Interview 9).

51  
52  
53 The reluctance of some individual CID officers to investigate rape cases - described by  
54 Interviewee 3 as 'dead wood' - is an illustration of one of the ways in which several  
55 interviewees distinguished their experience of working in the Bluestone unit from  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 previous experience of working in generalist CID squads. Interestingly, in an Australian  
4 study of a specialist sexual offence unit it was found that the use of experienced,  
5 knowledgeable officers was perceived positively by victims: 'When victims felt reassured  
6 that the officer assigned to their case was experienced and knowledgeable in this area  
7 of work, they felt valued' (Powell and Cauchi 2013, p. 233-234). The authors of the  
8 research argued that this resulted in improved victim engagement with the investigative  
9 process, reporting and encouraged victims to recommend reporting to others (Powell  
10 and Cauchi 2013, p. 234). While skilled officers work in specialist and non-specialist  
11 environments, it is important to note that Bluestone officer perceptions of their  
12 motivation and development of crucial skills derived from investigative specialism (see  
13 below), dovetails with the views of victims found by Powell and Cauchi.  
14  
15  
16  
17

### 18 *Theme two: Case complexity*

19  
20 The creation of the Bluestone unit was seen as important because rape was viewed as a  
21 'specialist offence' (Interviewee 1) involving complex victim circumstances and  
22 investigative challenges. A SAIT officer observed: 'Rape is a very different investigative  
23 crime and if you get people that want to investigate that it makes such a difference  
24 because you get people that understand rape victims and ... want to utilise the  
25 resources ... including SAIT officers' (Interview 4). Reflecting the specialist nature of  
26 crime, it has been argued that there is need for a specialist response to rape cases  
27 because they have characteristics, including manipulative, predatory offenders, victims  
28 with complex needs, trauma and vulnerabilities, that require highly-skilled officers and  
29 dedicated resources (Angiolini 2015, Pettitt *et al*, 2013, Stern 2010). Bluestone officers  
30 also pointed to the importance of specialism in the acquiring of key skills and  
31 knowledge. For example:  
32  
33  
34  
35

36 [Y]ou just think of things and use that the next time and build up that bank of  
37 knowledge and what you know will help with the case that you might not always  
38 pick up on if you are dealing with lots of different types of offences' (Interview  
39 2).  
40  
41

42 You are aware of the processes ... and I think that's helped in terms of when you  
43 ... do end up in court you actually know what you are talking about ...' (Interview  
44 6).  
45  
46  
47

48 In earlier domestic research, officers suggested specialism improved investigative  
49 expertise (Westmarland *et al*, 2012) and a recent HMICFRS report observed that sexual  
50 offence 'investigations require officers with the highest levels of skills and competence,  
51 which take the longest to acquire' (HMICFRS 2017, p. 52). Findings from the wider  
52 literature, combined with this study's interview data suggest that specialist investigative  
53 units provide an important means of developing expertise necessary to address the  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 challenges of rape case investigation. The next theme adds another important layer to  
4 understand the nature and importance of specialist unit working.  
5  
6  
7

8  
9 *Theme three: Team working*  
10

11 The creation of the Bluestone unit was intended to encourage referrals to specialist  
12 support agencies and a 'joint team approach' between detectives, Sexual Assault  
13 Investigation Team (SAIT) officers and support services to ensure victim co-operation  
14 and reduce the likelihood of withdrawal (Avon & Somerset Constabulary 2011, p. 10).  
15 Interviewees identified four aspects to this team working approach. First, there was a  
16 sense of common purpose: 'we'll talk [about cases] and we're really close because it's  
17 quite a small unit, everyone's you know working towards the same thing so that's a real  
18 benefit' (Interview 3). Second, support and efficient communication was facilitated by  
19 the co-location of detectives and SAIT officers. Earlier research has suggested that when  
20 specialist officers work in the same physical space it facilitates communication (van  
21 Staden and Lawrence 2010, p. 4, Powell and Wright 2011-2012). Several interviewees  
22 concurred and reported that co-location also assisted in facilitating team working and  
23 mutual assistance. For example, a SAIT officer stated: 'Having the investigator on hand is  
24 so much better than trying to track them down with phone calls and emails and what  
25 have you. So they're in the office you can track them down and you work as a team ...'  
26 (Interview 4). A detective added: 'We would all help each other, you would have the  
27 primary investigator ... so you would know if you were the officer in the case. But then  
28 everyone would really help you to get those priority, quick time inquiries done'  
29 (Interview 2). Third, the idea of mutual assistance inevitably involves placing confidence  
30 and value in the skills and abilities of others. Earlier Home Office research involving  
31 officers who worked in a specialist unit reported that its creation improved *inter alia*  
32 officer confidence in dealing with sexual offence cases and 'increased confidence in each  
33 other's ability' (van Staden and Lawrence 2010, pp. 12-14). By contrast, the two non-  
34 specialist unit SAIT officer interviewees pointed to a degree of isolation in their working  
35 lives:  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42

43 'we're sat with CID so we're sort of more of a team of work people but they're not  
44 necessarily dealing with the same work as us. So it's not a team as in work team ...'  
45 (Interview 8)  
46  
47

48 'CID obviously have got their teams and somebody will come back into the office  
49 and they've done their bit and someone else, they'll go "is there anything else can  
50 help you before we go?" ... I haven't got that. And that's [when] sometimes I think  
51 'oh that would be nice if I had someone to ...' (Interview 5)  
52  
53

54 These findings are similar to those of McMillan who interviewed SAIT officers working  
55 with CID detectives. She found some SAIT officers reporting that they were expected to  
56  
57  
58

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

'go it alone' and were not always valued or supported (McMillan 2015, p. 630). This can be contrasted with the Bluestone SAIT officers who emphasised the team working approach: 'I think it's nice working with someone who knows the same job, maybe knows the same victim so that they understand the pressures that are maybe put on you by that victim or maybe the job or whatever ... So you're sharing the load a little bit' (Interview 4). In terms of the perceived value of SAIT officers, a detective contrasted Bluestone with her previous experience of working in CID: 'Outside of Bluestone there was very much a feeling of "I don't need a SAIT officer I can do this myself" or "we won't bother getting them in because they are too far away ..."' (Interview 7). Another Bluestone detective articulated the crucial role of SAIT officers:

'[SAIT officers] were very helpful because you could get on with the investigation knowing the victims were being looked after and being kept up to date ... they would maintain that rapport and that was really good we could just carry on and concentrate on the investigative side and the suspects as well' (Interview 2).

'[W]e really benefited from the SAIT officers taking some of the pressure off us because dealing with the victim, updating them on, making sure they are supported is a big job' (Interview 6).

The importance of team working in the context of demanding and complex investigations led the Stern Review to conclude that the 'police should not have to work on their own to deal with rape complainants' (Stern 2010, p. 118). The willingness of officers to work with other agencies is the fourth team working theme referenced by Bluestone officers and supports earlier findings from an Australian study of specialist unit working practices (Powell and Wright 2011-2012). A Bluestone detective noted: 'The SAIT officers, they were fantastic, working closely with the Bridge [Bristol-based Sexual Assault Referral Centre], that really helped. Good relationship with partner agencies ... for me [the] One25 project [an agency supporting women involved in street prostitution] were fantastic' (Interview 1). The value placed on the role of SAIT officers is reflected in the fact that their allocation in Bluestone investigations was the norm, unlike the comparator, which will be discussed later in this article. Interestingly, an officer observed that his personal approach to rape investigation and the role of team working had changed when serving in the Bluestone unit:

'I think what Bluestone taught me is effective partnership is just key. Looking at what your objective is and then just looking at the easiest way to get there by using partner agencies and just being really aware of that. But when I first joined the police, I thought it was the police's job alone whereas now there are so many people that can help and assist' (Interview 1).

The interview data differ markedly from contemporary descriptions of police attitudes, which are said to be reliant on myths, victim blaming, and the 'real rape' stereotype

(Sleath and Bull 2017).<sup>4</sup> In the current study, however, the interviewees did not exhibit these attitudes. This might reflect the nature of the interview questions which focused on issues such as victim care, vulnerability, team working and rape case investigation. Given the number of interviewees it cannot be assumed that these findings are generalisable to all Bluestone officers. Further, the interview findings do not mean that officers did not hold negative attitudes of some sort, or that such attitudes did not impact on rape case decision-making. By the same token, it should not be assumed that negative attitudes, where they exist, inevitably influence professional behaviour (Barrett and Hamilton-Giachritsis 2013).

## Case file data

### *Sample characteristics*

93.8% of Bluestone cases and 90.5% of comparator cases involved a female victim. 16.4% of Bluestone cases involved victims with a Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) identity compared with 7.0% in the comparator, thus reflecting the more diverse nature of a city-centre environment such as the Bluestone area. In terms of age, 91.5% of Bluestone cases involved victims who were 16 years or older at the time of the report, compared to 80.4% of comparator cases; a difference that reflects the Bluestone remit of investigating cases involving a victim of 14 years or older. Those aged between 16 and 25 made up the largest single group of victims in both the Bluestone investigations (48.0%) and comparator sample (37.0%). The age profile of the victims reflects that found in other studies that suggest young adult females are most at risk of rape (Ministry of Justice *et al*, 2013, p. 14). Bluestone had proportionally fewer cases involving intimates<sup>5</sup> than the comparator (63.8% vs. 76.1%); more stranger rapes (10.1% vs. 4.3%) and more acquaintance rapes (26.1% vs. 19.6%).

One of the more striking features of the data was the number of cases involving victims with multiple vulnerabilities. In defining vulnerability for the purposes of this research, we adopt a broad understanding of vulnerability in line with that used in previous research on rape (Stanko and Williams 2009), and define it to include exposure to economic, social, physical and emotional harm prior to, during and after rape<sup>6</sup>. Such cases have been shown to have lower rates of case progression in earlier research (Stanko and Williams, 2009; Hester, 2016). Although both data sets contained very high numbers of victims deemed to be vulnerable in some way (96.6% Bluestone vs. 93.6% comparator), more Bluestone victims were identified as having two or more vulnerabilities than in comparator cases (54.2% vs. 43.6%), as well as three or more vulnerabilities (18.1% vs. 13.8). The unadjusted data shows a much larger proportion of

---

<sup>4</sup> By contrast, a Bluestone detective stated: 'I like dealing with sexual offences primarily because you put a lot of work [in] I felt like you're really helping a proper victim' (Interview 9).

<sup>5</sup> 'An intimate relationship' for the purposes of this study, is defined as a victim and suspect in any form of intimate relationship, inclusive of violence between partners and family members.

<sup>6</sup> One of the reasons for using this broad definition lies in the frequent difficulty found in distinguishing between pre-existing vulnerability, and post-victimisation vulnerability from the available case file data.

victims with multiple vulnerabilities in the Bluestone sample.<sup>7</sup> The impact of multiple vulnerabilities is explored in more detail below.

**Figure 2**

**Case file comparisons- key characteristics (adjusted sample)**

	Bluestone %	Comparator %
<b>Victim</b>		
Female	93.8	90.5
White	83.5	92.9
BME	16.4	7.0
Age >16	91.5	80.4
Aged between 16 and 25	48.0	37.0
<b>Type of Relationship</b>		
Intimates	63.8	76.1
Strangers	10.1	4.3
Acquaintances	26.1	19.6
<b>Vulnerabilities identified</b>		
1 or more vulnerabilities	96.6	93.6
2 or more vulnerabilities	54.2	43.6
3 or more vulnerabilities	18.1	13.8

**Case attrition**

Attrition is the process whereby cases 'drop out' of the criminal justice system at 'one of many points of exit' (Lea *et al*, 2003, p. 583, Brown *et al*, 2007, p. 355). The main exit points in rape cases are at the police investigative, CPS referral, charging and court stages. Significant levels of attrition exist across various serious crimes (Burton *et al*, 2012, p. 7) with the main point of attrition being at the investigative stage (Lea 2003, Brown *et al*, 2007, Kelly *et al*, 2005, Feist *et al*, 2007, Hester 2013, Hohl and Stanko 2015). There are numerous factors that may influence the progression of cases through the criminal justice process. These include the absence/presence of corroborative evidence (Feist *et al*, p. 89, Hester 2013, p. 18), victim withdrawal, the exercise of police

<sup>7</sup> When considering the Bluestone and comparator samples as a whole, and without the adjustments identified in Figure 1, the differences in the numbers of vulnerable victims was far more pronounced. On an unadjusted basis, Bluestone had more cases featuring victims with two or more vulnerabilities compared to the comparator (60.0% vs. 40.0%), Bluestone also had more cases featuring victims with three or more vulnerabilities (23.0% vs. 12.0%).



1  
2  
3 and prosecutorial discretion, the impact of 'schematic processing' where myths or  
4 stereotypes may influence professional decision making (Hohl and Stanko 2015, p. 328),  
5 guilty pleas, and the standard and burden of proof in criminal cases (Bryden and  
6 Lengnick 1997).  
7  
8

9 Both the Bluestone and comparator investigations shared a similar profile of attrition  
10 with the steepest point of drop out being at the investigative stage with 64.4% of  
11 Bluestone cases and 68.4% of comparator cases falling out at some point prior to  
12 charge. A major contributing factor to this steep decline was the removal of initially  
13 recorded offences under the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR, 2017). The rules exist  
14 to ensure police officers appropriately record reported crime notifiable to the Home  
15 Office. The HOCR set out several grounds in which recorded offences can be 'cancelled'  
16 or 'transferred' (until April 2015 this was known as 'no-criming') and thus be removed  
17 from the recorded crime count.<sup>8</sup> The police service has been criticised for poor crime  
18 recording practices, inaccurate recording and the unwarranted dismissal of allegations  
19 as untrue (HMIC 2014). While problems concerning reporting accuracy have been  
20 consistently reported (HMIC 2014, Public Administration Select Committee 2014, House  
21 of Commons 2014, HMICFRS 2016b) evidence suggests improvement in some force  
22 areas (HMICFRS 2016a; 2016b; 2016c), but problems in other force areas remain  
23 (HMICFRS 2018b). The current research sought to examine the nature and accuracy of  
24 crime recording by Bluestone and comparator area in light of the HOCR.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30 Bluestone transferred or cancelled proportionally fewer cases than the comparator area  
31 in both 2010 and 2011 (18.6% vs. 26.5%; 9% vs. 11.3%). Analysis also revealed that  
32 during the financial year 2010/11 the Bluestone cancel/transfer create was lower than  
33 the overall rate for Avon and Somerset Constabulary (16.4% vs. 20%) (HMIC, 2015).  
34 Therefore, without the lower Bluestone rate, the force cancel/transfer rate for 2010/11  
35 would have been in excess of 20%. Overall, Bluestone officers recorded rape allegations  
36 in compliance with the HOCR more often than in the comparator area (76.7% vs. 64.7%).  
37 In the Bluestone case files, there was evidence that some officers misunderstood the  
38 HOCR or wrongly equated evidential uncertainty and complexity with grounds for  
39 cancellation. In such circumstances, the HOCR state that the 'rape must remain  
40 recorded' (Home Office 2011; 2017, section C). Similar errors were made in some  
41 comparator cases. There were also problems that were unique to the comparator cases.  
42 In one case for example, a recorded allegation was cancelled on the ground of there  
43 being 'additional verifiable information' that no crime occurred because the victim was  
44 not actively engaged with the investigation. Decision-making that equates lack of  
45 engagement with falsity is not unique to this study (HMIC 2014, pp. 77-78) and suggests  
46 a poor understanding of why victims may not engage, including trauma, victim  
47 perceptions of the police and fear. In another comparator case, a senior officer  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52

53 <sup>8</sup> The previous reference to 'no-criming' of cases has been replaced with the use of 'transfer' and 'cancel'  
54 which are divided into four categories. Transferred cases are those that took place in another force area.  
55 Cancelled cases are those where the crime was recorded in error, constitutes part of an already recorded  
56 crime, or where there is 'additional verifiable information' (AVI) that no crime occurred.  
57  
58  
59  
60



1  
2  
3 explicitly acknowledged they were defying the HOCR when cancelling a recorded rape  
4 allegation.  
5

6  
7 Figure 3 shows the general attrition profile of Bluestone and comparator cases, which  
8 indicate several points of attrition: rate of arrest (65.8% vs. 87.3%); charge (35.5% vs.  
9 31.5%); reached court (29.8% vs. 27.3%); conviction of any offence (15.6% vs. 22.1%);  
10 conviction of rape (9.4% vs. 11.5%). The data should be read with care as there are  
11 contextual issues that are important to understand when interpreting the progression  
12 data. For example, one of the most striking differences between Bluestone and the  
13 comparator is the arrest rate in Bluestone cases (65.8% vs. 87.3%,  $P < 0.05$ ). One  
14 explanation for this difference is that as a matter of policy the Bluestone officers were  
15 encouraged to invite suspects to attend interviews on a voluntary basis. One Bluestone  
16 detective observed that under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Codes of  
17 Practice 'there needs to be a necessity for arrest ... [if] there's no necessity to arrest  
18 there should be voluntary interviewing'. The detective went on to explain that arrest  
19 was more likely in 'live' case investigation or where there was a 'need to search, secure  
20 evidence or if there was a danger evidence would be destroyed' (Interview 1).  
21  
22  
23  
24

25 A minor contribution to the attrition rate in both samples was the small number of  
26 victims who did not want a formal police investigation (3% Bluestone vs. 2%  
27 comparator). Under traditional performance metrics of arrest, charge and conviction,  
28 such cases would have no discernible outcome and could be interpreted as a criminal  
29 justice failure. Yet, the victim may regard his or her interaction with police positively.  
30 Robinson notes that successful engagement with the criminal justice process from a  
31 victim's point of view may simply be making a formal statement (Robinson 2009, p. 31).  
32 Thus representing an example of what McGlynn and Westmarland refer to as  
33 'kaleidoscope justice' – the idea that victims' perceptions of justice are dynamic,  
34 evolving and personal (McGlynn and Westmarland 2018). In the case files, victims who  
35 did not want a formal investigation included those who wanted to provide intelligence  
36 to the police or wanted officers to confirm the location of a suspect in another country.  
37 These met the wishes of victims at that time and provide examples of the way in which  
38 victim engagement with the criminal justice process is nuanced and subject to the  
39 wishes of individual victims.  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44

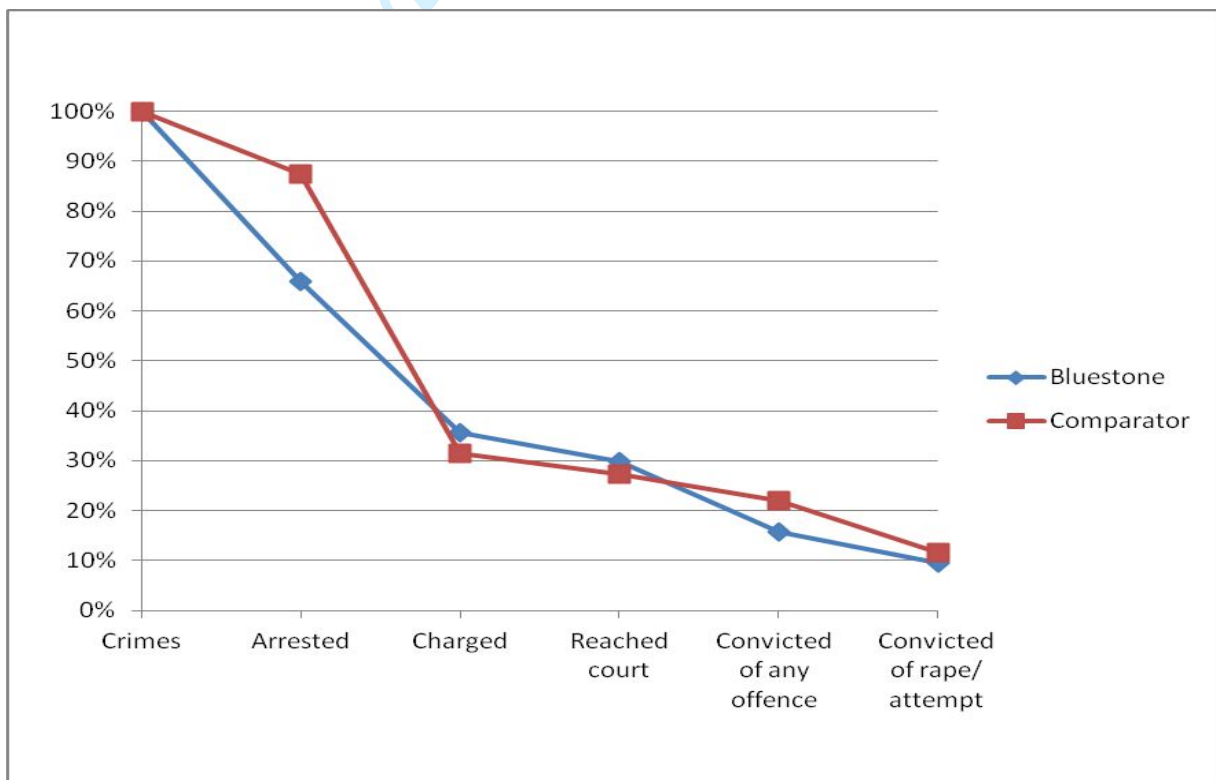
45 The Bluestone investigations exhibited a higher charging rate than the comparator  
46 investigations (35.5% vs. 31.5%), and a somewhat higher proportion of Bluestone cases  
47 also reached court (29.8% vs. 27.3%) despite Bluestone having a higher concentration of  
48 victims with multiple vulnerabilities. The challenges these cases pose for the  
49 investigative process, including victim engagement and higher rates of withdrawal are  
50 significant.<sup>9</sup> For those cases involving victims identified with one vulnerability, Bluestone  
51

52  
53 <sup>9</sup> Linear regression analysis performed on a combined sample of all Bluestone and comparator crimed  
54 cases (n=376) revealed that those with three or more victim vulnerabilities increased the odds of a case  
55 being classified as 'No Further Action' by 240% ( $p < 0.05$ ). Victim withdrawal rates in the combined 3+  
56 vulnerability group were 40.7%.  
57  
58  
59  
60

was able to achieve a greater rate of retention evidenced by higher rates of charge (44.9% n=40 vs. 38.2% n=18) and higher proportions of cases reaching court (38.2% n=34 vs. 31.9% n=15). Bluestone also had a higher charging rate in cases involving victims identified with two vulnerabilities (32.8% n=25 vs. 25.0% n=7) and a slightly higher reached court rate (27.6% n=21 vs. 25.0% n=7).<sup>10</sup> One possible explanation for this is the emphasis that Bluestone placed on victim care, including greater levels of SAIT officer involvement and a higher proportion of victims being referred to an ISVA. The relationship between victim withdrawal and support referrals is discussed in more detail later in this paper.

**Figure 3**

**Attrition profiles for Bluestone and the comparator**



Although good police work in terms of evidence collection and victim care have an influence on the prospect of cases reaching the trial stage, conviction rates at trial

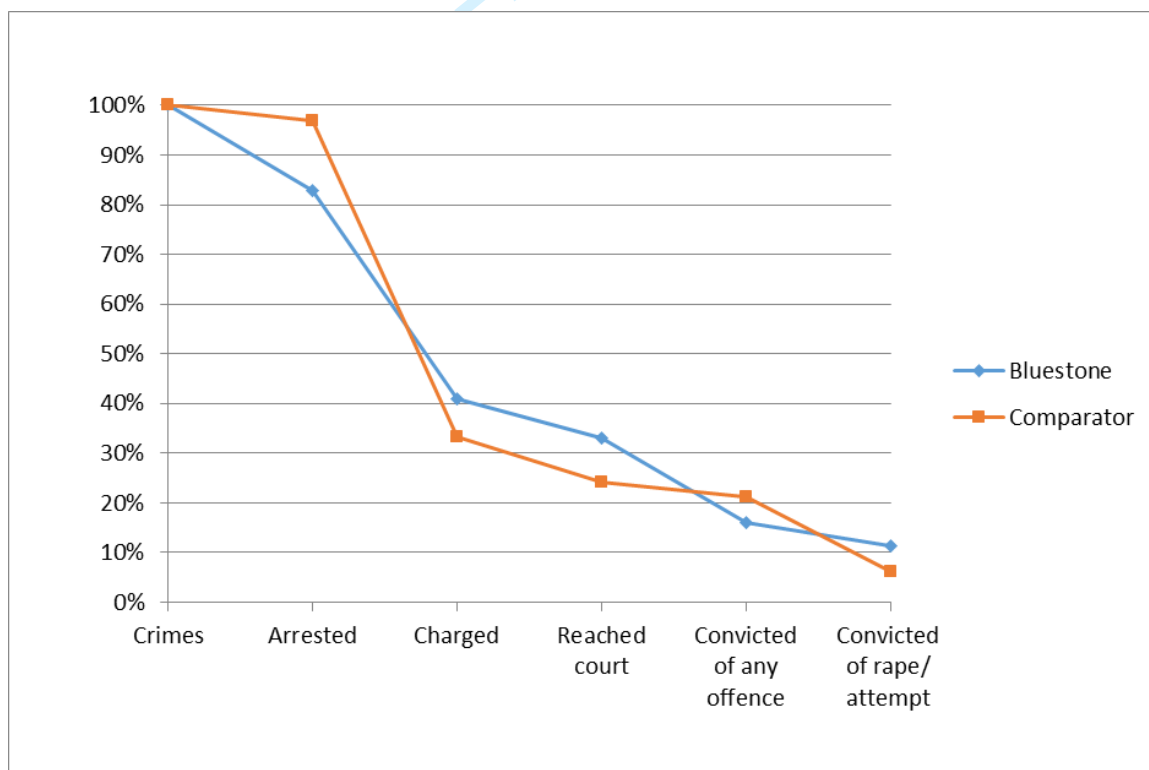
<sup>10</sup> Due to the very small number of comparator cases it is not possible to do a comparison involving cases with three or more victim vulnerabilities.

1  
2  
3 cannot be considered a robust measure of police performance given the range of factors  
4 in operation at that stage of the criminal justice process. For this reason, it cannot be  
5 assumed that the lower rate of conviction in Bluestone rape cases (9.4% vs. 11.5%) and  
6 more noticeable difference in convictions for any offence (15.6% vs. 22.1%) resulted  
7 from comparatively poor practice by Bluestone officers. Indeed, factors that help explain  
8 the differences between the two sets of investigations were identified. For instance, of  
9 cases that reached court, 11.6% of Bluestone defendants pleaded guilty to rape and  
10 6.9% pleaded guilty to a lesser offence. For the comparator, these figures are 31.2% and  
11 6.2% respectively. Such differences are important and may well reflect the differing age  
12 profiles in the two samples. In the Bluestone sample, of rape cases that reached court  
13 7.9% of victims were aged between 13 and 15 at the time of reporting. This figure was  
14 double (15.3%) for the comparator. Given the legal age of consent (16), one might  
15 expect to see a higher guilty plea rate in the comparator. Indeed, 60% of the comparator  
16 guilty pleas involved the rape of a child. A second potential explanation for the lower  
17 Bluestone conviction rate is the higher proportion of cases involving victims with  
18 multiple vulnerabilities. While Bluestone was somewhat more successful than the  
19 comparator in keeping such cases in the process, the higher the number of victim  
20 vulnerabilities identified in a case, the more pronounced the attrition rate.  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

26  
27 Figure 4 illustrates that in several measures, Bluestone had more favourable case  
28 progression and outcomes in 'live' rape cases (those reported within seven days of the  
29 alleged offence and with a greater potential for evidence collection) than the  
30 comparator. This may be linked to the higher proportion of stranger rape cases in the  
31 Bluestone 'live' cases compared with the comparator area. 19.3% of Bluestone 'live'  
32 cases and 9.0% of comparator cases were stranger rape cases. Such cases have been  
33 shown to result in a higher rate of conviction than acquaintance and intimate rape cases  
34 in this, and previous research (Feist *et al*, 2007, Hester and Walker 2016). The Bluestone  
35 'live' stranger rape cases had an overall rape conviction rate of 35.2% and, of cases that  
36 reached trial, 71.4% included evidence of victim injury. In both sets of investigations, the  
37 arrest rate was higher in 'live' case compared to cases generally, perhaps reflecting the  
38 need to secure scenes of crime and maximise the opportunity for gathering forensic  
39 evidence. The gap between Bluestone and comparator arrest rates also narrowed. As  
40 with the general attrition profile in Figure 3, Bluestone's use of voluntary suspect  
41 attendance may have contributed to a lower arrest rate in 'live' case investigations  
42 compared to that found in the comparator case file data.  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

Figure 4

## Attrition profiles for 'live' cases, Bluestone and Comparator



An important factor contributing to attrition in rape cases is victim withdrawal, which can occur at any point in the criminal justice process (Hohl and Stanko 2015, Feist *et al*, 2007). Previous research has identified many reasons for victim withdrawal, including:

1  
2  
3 anxieties about the criminal justice process, a victim wanting to move on and pressure  
4 to withdraw by third parties (Kelly *et al*, 2005, pp. 55-56). The current study identified  
5 similar reasons for withdrawal, with the most common in the Bluestone cases being: not  
6 wishing to go through the investigative/court process (28%), wanting to move on (14%),  
7 health or mental health concerns (11%) and refusal to cooperate with the police (9%).  
8 Despite the enhanced performance of Bluestone across several points of attrition,  
9 Bluestone still had a higher rate of withdrawal compared to the comparator (33.0% vs.  
10 21.2%). One potential explanation for the higher rate of withdrawal is that Bluestone, as  
11 previously noted, had more cases involving multiple vulnerabilities and these had a  
12 progressively higher rate of withdrawal. In Bluestone cases, withdrawal rates for victims  
13 with three or more vulnerabilities was 47%, compared to those with two vulnerabilities  
14 (37%), one vulnerability (31%) and no vulnerabilities (14%).  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19

### 20 **Victim care**

21 Improving victim care and welfare was a key aim of establishing the Bluestone unit  
22 (Avon & Somerset 2011). In the interviews, several officers commented negatively on  
23 the pre-Bluestone approach to victim care. For example, one detective argued that a  
24 'large part' of victim withdrawal prior to Bluestone 'was due to lack of support, or lack of  
25 information, lack of updates ...' (Interview 1). Previous research suggests that using the  
26 expertise and support of ISVAs, may improve certain criminal justice-related outcomes  
27 including 'enabling victims to give their evidence in court, reducing retractions and  
28 obtaining convictions' (Robinson 2009, p. 31). However, such findings were based on  
29 impressionistic assessments by interviewees, and as Robinson observes it was 'difficult  
30 to substantiate these feelings with the monitoring data available at the time of writing'  
31 (Robinson 2009, p. 31). Further, data derived from professionals, while undoubtedly  
32 important, may not match the perception of victims themselves (Campbell 2005).  
33 Previous specialist unit studies have also relied on interviewees who suggested  
34 specialism led to improvements in victim care (van Staden and Lawrence 2010,  
35 Westmarland *et al*, 2012). Australian research by Powell and Cauchi (2013) found that  
36 sexual assault victims viewed the response of a specialist investigation unit more  
37 favourably than a non-specialist response. The current study has sought to examine  
38 issues of victim care via police officer interviews and crucially, two quantitative  
39 measures: the allocation of SAIT officers during the investigative process and police  
40 referrals to victim support services, including ISVAs.  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46

47 SAIT officers are trained to provide care and support to victims of rape, build rapport  
48 and trust, update victims on the progress of the case and act as a bridge between the  
49 victim and investigating officers (Horvath and Yexley 2012). Little research has explored  
50 the work of SAIT officers (McMillan 2015). The case files showed that within Bluestone,  
51 SAIT officer allocation was the norm, with only rare exceptions. For example, in a  
52 historic rape case, the victim said that a SAIT officer was unnecessary and was happy to  
53 be contacted directly by detectives working on the case. By contrast, in the comparator  
54 there was a SAIT officer allocation in just 41.0% of cases. In some of these cases this  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 appeared to be a mere paper allocation in the sense that there were no case file entries  
4 by the allocated SAIT officer or other evidence of actual SAIT officer involvement.  
5

6  
7 In Bluestone cases, SAIT officers played a pivotal role in maintaining contact with victims  
8 and persuading reluctant victims to engage with the investigative process. One detective  
9 reflected on this: 'we've dealt with cases before if it wasn't for the SAIT officer we would  
10 have lost our victims. We would have lost prosecutions. We would have dangerous  
11 offenders still out and about in public' (Interview 6). Previous interview-based research  
12 found that amongst CID detectives, victim welfare 'took second place to their view of  
13 her as a source of information' (Barrett and Hamilton-Giachrits 2013, p. 211). The  
14 authors of the study acknowledge that this finding may have resulted from the  
15 investigative role of detectives and it is worth acknowledging that SAIT officers were not  
16 included in the study, thus leaving out an important source of data regarding victim  
17 care.  
18  
19  
20

21  
22 The Bluestone findings suggest a somewhat more fluid picture in terms of professional  
23 roles and the case files suggest detectives sometimes played a key role in providing  
24 victim care. There were frequent case file entries detailing investigating officers'  
25 discussions concerning the welfare of victims, evidence of intervention by detectives  
26 when problems emerged and examples of detectives giving re-assurance to encourage  
27 continued cooperation with the investigation. For example, in one case, Bluestone  
28 detectives made concerted efforts to find a victim with a long history of vulnerability  
29 after a SAIT officer had been unable to contact her. The detectives found her asleep in a  
30 house while heavily intoxicated and the front door open. In the case file, a detective  
31 logged that they had ensured she was not a danger to herself, made sure nobody else  
32 was in the house and secured the property. In another case, a detective spent several  
33 hours working with a SAIT officer trying to find appropriate accommodation for a young  
34 victim. There were also examples of detectives providing information or support in  
35 order to reduce anxiety. In one case for example, a detective explained to a victim that  
36 his anonymity was legally protected for life after he expressed anxiety that he might be  
37 named in the media. One Bluestone detective discussed his learning from his time in the  
38 Bluestone unit:  
39  
40  
41  
42

43  
44 'On Bluestone, I think I developed a more caring approach to victims of crime,  
45 because it was very much about supporting victims, keeping them on board,  
46 supporting them because, to get the best evidence from them and you need them  
47 to be as happy as possible and supported as possible so I think my time on  
48 Bluestone I learnt how important it is to keep victims happy and support victims'  
49 (Interview 1).  
50

51  
52 The role of Bluestone detectives in victim care partly resulted from the practical needs  
53 of victims, but also from a desire to maintain contact: 'I always like to keep in contact  
54 with the victims. I think it is really important that they've got, they know who the  
55 investigator is as well' (interview 3). The comparator case files also included many  
56  
57  
58  
59

1  
2  
3 examples of detectives providing updates to victims and checking on relevant welfare  
4 issues. However, the far lower number of SAIT officer allocations made this a necessity.  
5 It is not possible to discern whether detectives pursuing two roles – investigative and  
6 victim support - impacted on the quality of the investigation or support offered,  
7 although one Bluestone interviewee noted how SAIT officers enabled him to effectively  
8 pursue his role: ‘the pressure is taken off the [detective] to do the victim side of things  
9 and the SAIT can do that role and allows the [detective] to get on’ (Interview 4).  
10  
11

12  
13 The second measure used to assess victim support in the Bluestone and comparator  
14 cases was the number of referrals to specialist support services, including Independent  
15 Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs). The Stern Review recommended that ISVAs be ‘an  
16 intrinsic part of the way rape victims are dealt with, as the service that enables the rest  
17 to operate effectively and a crucial part of the way in which the State fulfils its  
18 obligations to victims of violence’ (Stern 2010). ISVAs provide professional support to  
19 victims of sexual violence, including: emotional support, help and advice of a practical  
20 nature; help and information throughout criminal justice proceedings and have been  
21 shown to improve multi-agency working to support victims (Robinson 2009, Hester and  
22 Lilley 2015). Within the criminal justice system, ISVAs act as advocates for the victim,  
23 conveying the victim’s views or wishes to criminal justice agencies and accompanying  
24 and supporting them throughout the process. In previous research, Hester and Lilley  
25 found that ISVA support was ‘deemed crucial [by victims] to their progression through  
26 the criminal justice system’ (Hester and Lilley 2015, p. 12). The current research is the  
27 first to use quantitative data to examine whether ISVA support referrals reduce victim  
28 withdrawal from the criminal justice process (Figure 5). The data from the unadjusted  
29 Bluestone sample (n=278) indicates that an ISVA referral was a crucial feature of cases  
30 that did not result in victim withdrawal ( $P < 0.05$ ).<sup>11</sup> This finding is particularly noteworthy  
31 because the unadjusted sample includes cases with victims suffering some of the most  
32 challenging personal circumstances, specifically, housing issues/homelessness and  
33 involvement in prostitution. Rates of support referral and victim withdrawal are  
34 presented comparatively below for the adjusted data.  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53

---

54  
55 <sup>11</sup> The unadjusted Bluestone sample produced a 27.1% withdrawal rate when an ISVA referral was made,  
56 42.8% with any other support referral and 50.9% with no support referral.  
57  
58  
59



Figure 5

Support referrals and victim withdrawal (adjusted data)<sup>12</sup>

	Bluestone			Comparator		
	Support referrals		Withdrawal rate	Support referrals		Withdrawal rate
	N	%	%	N	%	%
ISVA	113	62.0%	26.6%	27	32.9%	22.2%
Other support	42	23.0%	36.5%	37	45.1%	21.6%
Total	155	85.1%	29.3%	64	78.0%	21.8%
No referral	27	14.8%	33.0%	18	21.9%	33.3%

Comparing Bluestone and the comparator, two further findings are of importance. First, in those cases where victim support was recorded there were more support referrals in Bluestone cases than the comparator (85.1% vs. 78.0%) and where a referral was made ISVA referral rates were significantly higher in Bluestone cases (72.9% n = 113 vs. 42.1% n=27, P<0.01). This finding suggests that Bluestone's emphasis on victim care, along with its focus on multi-agency working, meant victims were more likely to be channelled to a vital source of specialist support. It also suggests that Bluestone officers recognised the important role of ISVAs in terms of support. Further, the wider literature emphasises the importance of a 'joined up', multi-agency response to complex cases, particularly to those involving victims with multiple vulnerabilities (Pettitt *et al*, 2013, Angiolini 2015, Ellison 2015). Improving multi-agency working to support victims was a key objective of the Bluestone model (Avon and Somerset 2011). One Bluestone detective contrasted Bluestone with the pre-Bluestone approach:

'There is help out there for all these victims. There's [sic] numerous referrals to other agencies that will help them whereas before we probably didn't have that. They would get a phone call to say "yeah somebody has been arrested, yeah see you in court"' (Interview 6).

The Bluestone case file data suggest two main reasons for not making an ISVA support referral. Either victims already had a history of involvement with support services and did not need an ISVA referral, or a victim did not want to have an ISVA referral. Even with the much higher referral rate, it cannot be assumed that there were not Bluestone cases where ISVA support was needed, but no referral was made. Despite this, the study has been able to establish, for the first time, that ISVA referrals have a statistically

<sup>12</sup> Information available in 182/211 Bluestone cases, 82/95 comparator cases.

1  
2  
3 significant impact on victim withdrawal in cases of rape and provide further evidence of  
4 their value in the criminal justice process.  
5

## 6 Discussion

7  
8  
9 Many forms of criminality, including terrorism, serious and organised crime and child  
10 abuse are commonly dealt with by specialised police units to ensure that challenging  
11 investigations are dealt with by highly skilled officers. It is often argued that rape cases  
12 have unique features that point to the need for investigative specialism, victim support,  
13 specialist training and assessment of officer performance (National Policing  
14 Improvement Agency 2010).<sup>13</sup> Further, it is clear that many rape cases feature complex  
15 investigative challenges that can be explained in a number of ways. First, rape is a crime  
16 that can be difficult to prove to the standard required in the criminal courts given that  
17 many rapes are not witnessed and leave no physical, forensic or other corroborative  
18 evidence (Feist *et al*, pp. 29-31). Second, the absence of corroborative evidence of non-  
19 consent contributes to what the Stern Review report noted as being the 'unique  
20 difficulties' faced by police 'not present when dealing with other crimes' (Stern 2010, p.  
21 45, 71. See also: Angiolini 2015, para. 434). In her review of rape case treatment in  
22 London, Angiolini acknowledged the complexity of rape case investigations, including  
23 those involving victims with complex vulnerabilities. She argued that rape cases pose  
24 'unique challenges, which in their variety and complexity often far exceed the difficulties  
25 encountered in investigating other offences' (Angiolini 2015, para. 30). It is the complex  
26 nature of these cases that has led a series of studies that emphasise the importance of  
27 investigative specialism in cases of rape and serious sexual assault (Stern 2010, van  
28 Staden and Lawrence 2010, Powell and Cauchi 2013, Angiolini 2015).  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33

34  
35 Third, rape cases require a policing response in which officers understand these  
36 challenges and the needs of victims who are vulnerable, traumatised and may struggle  
37 to engage with the investigative process. As previously noted, some of the Bluestone  
38 officers interviewed acknowledged the depth of knowledge and skills they gained  
39 through specialisation, contrasting that with their experience of non-specialist rape  
40 investigations. One detective observed that prior to the existence of Bluestone: 'officer  
41 knowledge wasn't there because you are dealing with so many other things as well'  
42 (Interview 6). The fourth element that arguably sets many rape cases apart from other  
43 offences is the support victims require after reporting to the police. One of the study  
44 interviewees noted a shift in his own views regarding victim care after he joined the  
45 Bluestone unit:  
46  
47  
48

49 [Prior to Bluestone] I treated those victims as the same as a GBH victim or the  
50 same as a fraud victim. It's not the same. I mean crime affects people differently,  
51  
52

---

53 <sup>13</sup> While it is very likely that rape cases have at least some unique features, the uniqueness claim is often made  
54 without reference to robust comparative data featuring other crimes and police investigative practices. For the  
55 purpose of this article, uniqueness is primarily used to denote the challenging and complex nature of rape case  
56 investigations for all involved.  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 but in my experience a victim of rape it doesn't get much worse than rape in  
4 terms of offences that really affects the victim. So, they need that extra level of  
5 support' (Interview 1).  
6  
7

8 As noted earlier in this paper, (see attrition section, above) a further characteristic of  
9 rape cases found in this and other studies (Angiolini 2015, pp. 79-80, Kelly *et al*, 2005, p.  
10 62) are the number of victims with multiple vulnerabilities and complex personal  
11 circumstances who require significant levels of care and ongoing support. The higher  
12 rate of Bluestone SAIT officer allocation and ISVA referrals, compared to the  
13 comparator, provides evidence of the way in which Bluestone, with its focus on high  
14 quality victim care, supported victims who experience complex trauma (National  
15 Policing Improvement Agency 2010, p. 18, 45). Further, the Bluestone unit's focus on  
16 victim care appears to have assisted in retaining a higher number of cases at the charge  
17 stage and marginally higher rate at the reached court stage, despite a greater overall  
18 withdrawal rate and higher number of complex vulnerability cases in the Bluestone  
19 sample. Early North American research that compared police responses before and after  
20 the introduction of a specialist unit found that evidence of change was quite limited and  
21 improvement 'occurred at points of least resistance' (LaFree 1989, pp. 80-89). In this  
22 regard, the Bluestone victim care, crime recording accuracy and case retention data  
23 suggest that a specialist unit can provide benefits in particularly challenging areas of  
24 policing.  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29

30 In addition to the Bluestone 'team working' findings, previous research on the work of a  
31 specialist sexual assault investigation unit found that investigative team working was  
32 aided by co-location as it facilitated support, efficient decision-making and  
33 communication (van Staden and Lawrence 2010). Contemporary developments appear  
34 to be ignoring such evidence. As noted earlier, several police forces are restructuring  
35 their investigative capacity in rape cases, including Greater Manchester Police which has  
36 disbanded its specialist sexual assault investigation unit and re-deployed officers locally.  
37 While a localised response no doubt has benefits, the danger of such a move is that a  
38 concentration of expertise and associated benefits will be lost. Instead of disbanding a  
39 specialist unit, the need for localised investigation capacity might be met by a modified  
40 operational model. For example, specialist unit officers could advise and oversee  
41 investigations locally for part of their working week in the same way that CPS lawyers  
42 would regularly visit the Bluestone unit to provide regular face-to-face advice to officers  
43 (Avon and Somerset 2011). It is difficult to see how the dispersal of officers across a  
44 force area can retain an important and arguably, unique feature of specialist units: the  
45 benefits of close team working, mutual support, and a sense of common purpose and  
46 ease of communication.  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51

52 In 2017, HMICFRS acknowledged in its annual police effectiveness report that the  
53 creation of specialist units focusing on crimes including sexual offences 'was a means to  
54 improve how they supported vulnerable people' and the staffing of these units was seen  
55 as a priority by forces (HMICFRS 2017, p. 45). A year later, HMICFRS observed that the  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 quality gap between specialist and non-specialist investigations was ‘widening’, and that  
4 the use of specialist teams ‘lead to satisfactory results for victims, who receive a good  
5 standard of service throughout’ (HMICFRS 2018, p. 51). In this report HMICFRS  
6 expressed concern that:  
7

8  
9 ‘in some forces prioritising resources for specialist investigative units (supporting  
10 vulnerable victims) is having a detrimental effect on other areas of  
11 investigations. While forces must find ways to support the most vulnerable, they  
12 should not do this at the expense of other victims ...’ (HMICFRS 2018, p. 50).  
13  
14

15 There are serious contemporary challenges in supporting vulnerable victims at a time of  
16 reduced police resources, large increases in recorded allegations of rape (Office of  
17 National Statistics 2018), a national shortage of detectives, high workloads and a growth  
18 in the need for specialist officers (HMICFRS 2018, p. 56). Yet, this prioritisation of  
19 resources is essential if the police service is to continue developing and improving its  
20 response to rape cases. As the HMICFRS report (2018, p. 46-47) suggests, when referring  
21 to investigative specialism generally, this is more likely within a specialist policing  
22 context, given the performance gap between the ‘generally good’ specialist and ‘all too  
23 often ... poor’ non-specialist response.  
24  
25  
26

27 Data concerning the financial cost of creating and maintaining specialist rape or sexual  
28 offence investigation units is limited and while HMICFRS raises concern over the  
29 prioritisation of resources, it provides no robust data on cost. The research that does  
30 exist indicates *inter alia* that concerns around resources were the most common reason  
31 given by forces for not creating a specialist unit (Westmarland *et al*, 2011, p. 19). Of  
32 those forces with units one reported that it ‘top sliced’ its budget to pay for the creation  
33 of the unit, other forces were unable to produce specific figures but stated that it was  
34 either ‘cost neutral ... or allowed them to save money. No force seemed to think it had  
35 been a resource intensive exercise, and many had been established as part of force-wide  
36 restructures’ (Westmarland *et al*, 2011, p. 18). Operation Bluestone was created on a  
37 cost neutral basis by the redeployment of existing resources (Avon & Somerset 2011, p.  
38 2). It is thus important, given the current pressure on police budgets, not to assume that  
39 specialist units are the costliest approach. Indeed, when judging the utility of such units,  
40 any future cost/benefit analysis should take account of a wide range of contextual,  
41 investigative and other factors, including the quality and nature of victim care. The  
42 existing evidence supports the continued existence of specialist rape investigation units  
43 and indeed, the data on investigative specialism generally indicates that specialist units  
44 generally outperform ‘poorly’ performing non-specialist police responses (HMICFRS  
45 2018, pp. 46-47)  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50

### 51 52 **Limitations**

53 There are of course, limitations to the current study findings and methodology. The  
54 interview data was derived from a small sample (9), and the sample size of the  
55 comparator made it difficult to perform some comparisons and prevented the use of  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3 more robust tests in several key areas. Given this is the first study of its type, further  
4 research exploring the factors influencing case progression and outcomes using  
5 different models of policing, including specialist and non-specialist approaches, would  
6 further build the evidence base in this important area. Finally, and most obviously, the  
7 current study did not include victim perspectives on police investigative practices  
8 support and care. While recent evidence suggests that victims view specialist units more  
9 favourably than non-specialist responses (Powell and Cauchi 2013), it would be helpful  
10 for an attempt to be made to replicate this finding.  
11  
12  
13  
14

## 15 **Conclusion**

16  
17  
18 This study has found that the Bluestone specialist rape investigation unit delivered a  
19 number of important benefits over the comparator area. In terms of traditional  
20 performance metrics, the specialist unit delivered higher charging and 'reached court'  
21 rates, delivered more favourable outcomes in several 'live cases' measures as well as  
22 retaining a proportionally higher number of cases involving victims with multiple  
23 vulnerabilities. In addition, Bluestone officers more accurately recorded reports of rape  
24 compared to the comparator. This study also examined performance pertaining to  
25 victim care and found that the Bluestone unit outperformed the comparator in two  
26 areas: the allocation of SAIT officers to cases and ISVA referrals. Analysis of the  
27 withdrawal data indicates that an ISVA referral was a statistically significant factor in  
28 reducing victim withdrawal in cases processed by Bluestone.  
29  
30  
31

32  
33 Interestingly, the comparator had more favourable findings in several areas. The overall  
34 comparator withdrawal rate was lower than for Bluestone cases. In terms of conviction  
35 rates, the comparator had a somewhat higher conviction rate in rape cases in the  
36 general sample and higher conviction rate for 'any offence' in the general sample and  
37 live cases. While our analysis provides various explanations for these findings, including  
38 victim age and victims presenting with multiple vulnerabilities, the findings as a whole  
39 are a reminder of the complexity of measuring police performance and the challenges of  
40 rape case progression that cannot be easily overcome.  
41  
42  
43

44  
45 The police service currently operates under tight financial constraints and in the context  
46 of a large increase in recorded allegations of rape. While flexibility in the allocation of  
47 resources may be an attractive feature of non-specialist responses to rape investigation,  
48 this research indicates that investigative specialism in the form of a unit structure offers  
49 certain strengths. The qualitative data, while limited, suggested a number of positive  
50 aspects, with particular regard to team working and the building of investigative  
51 expertise. These characteristics are arguably harder to replicate in a non-specialist  
52 environment where officers work on a range of offences and, as a result, may lack the  
53 skills and expertise to work with victims of rape. Given the use of specialist units for  
54 other types of serious crime, the findings from this, and other studies, suggest that there  
55 exists a strong case for using specialist units to investigate rape. Indeed, major reviews  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

of the police response to rape and other serious crime have endorsed the need for investigative specialism (HMICFRS 2018) and specifically, rape and serious sexual offence investigative units (Stern 2010, Angiolini 2015).

## Bibliography

Association of Chief Police Officers., 2011. *Rape Support Programme - Use of Dedicated Teams (September 2010-January 2011)*. London: ACPO.

Association of Chief Police Officers *et al.*, 2010. *Guidance on Investigating and Prosecuting Rape: Abridged Edition*. London. Available from: [http://library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/Guidance-Investigating-Prosecuting-Rape-\(Abridged-Edition\)-2010.pdf](http://library.college.police.uk/docs/acpo/Guidance-Investigating-Prosecuting-Rape-(Abridged-Edition)-2010.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018].

Angiolini, D.E., 2015. *Report of the Independent Review into the Investigation and Prosecution of Rape in London*. [Online]. Available from: [https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/dame\\_elish\\_angiolini\\_rape\\_review\\_2015.pdf](https://www.cps.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/publications/dame_elish_angiolini_rape_review_2015.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018].

Association of Police and Crime Commissioners., 2015. *Budget cuts will radically change policing 2015*. [Online]. Available from: [http://www.apccs.police.uk/latest\\_news/budget-cuts-will-radically-change-policing/](http://www.apccs.police.uk/latest_news/budget-cuts-will-radically-change-policing/) [Accessed 9 July 2018].

Avon and Somerset Constabulary., 2011. *Operation Bluestone*. London: Home Office. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/operation-bluestone-tilley-2011> [Accessed 9 July 2018].

Barrett, D., 2015. Don't investigate thefts, assaults or hit-and-runs, police told. *The Telegraph* [online] 6 August. Available from: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/11788142/Dont-investigate-thefts-assaults-or-hit-and-runs-police-told.html> [Accessed 9 July 2018].

Barrett, E.C., and Hamilton-Giachritsis, C., 2013. The Victim as a Means to an End: Detective Decision Making in a Simulated Investigation of Attempted Rape. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 10, 200-218.

Beckford, M., 2018. Met Police 'risking another Worboys' after secretly disbanding it sex crime unit. *Mail Online* [Online] 28 January. Available from: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-5320847/Met-risking-new-Worboys-sex-crime-unit-disbanded.html> [Accessed 9 July 2018].



- 1  
2  
3  
4 Blair, I., 1985. *Investigating Rape: A New Approach for Police*. Routledge.
- 5  
6  
7 Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative*  
8 *Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101.
- 9  
10  
11 Brown, J.M., Hamilton, C., O'Neill, D., 2007. Characteristics Associated with Rape  
12 Attrition and The Role Played by Scepticism or Legal Rationality by Investigators and  
13 Prosecutors. *Psychology, Crime and Law*, 13(4), 355-370.
- 14  
15  
16 Bryden, D.P., and Lengnick, S., 1997. Rape in the Criminal Justice System. *Journal of*  
17 *Criminal Law and Criminology*, 87(4), 1194-1384.
- 18  
19  
20 Bryman, A. & Burgess, R.G. 1994, *Analyzing qualitative data*, Routledge.
- 21  
22  
23 Burton, M., McLeod, R., De Guzmán, V., Evans, R., Lambert, H., and Cass, G., 2012.  
24 *Understanding the Progression of Serious Cases through the Criminal Justice System:*  
25 *Evidence Drawn from a Selection of Casefiles*. Ministry of Justice Research Series  
26 11/12.
- 27  
28  
29 Campbell, R., 2005. What Really Happened? A Validation Study of Rape Survivors' Help-  
30 Seeking Experiences With the Legal and Medical Systems. *Violence and Victims*, 20,  
31 50-68.
- 32  
33  
34 Darwinkel, E *et al.*, 2013. Improving police officers' perceptions of sexual offending  
35 through intensive training. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 40, 895–90.
- 36  
37  
38 Ellison, L.E., 2015. Responding to the Needs of Victims with Psychosocial Disabilities:  
39 Challenges to Equality of Access to Justice. *Criminal Law Review*, 28-47.
- 40  
41  
42 Farand, C., 2016. British Transport Police halts plans to scrap sexual offences unit. *The*  
43 *Independent* [Online] 2 April.  
44 [https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/transport-police-halt-plans-to-](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/transport-police-halt-plans-to-scrap-sexual-offences-unit-a6964756.html)  
45 [scrap-sexual-offences-unit-a6964756.html](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/transport-police-halt-plans-to-scrap-sexual-offences-unit-a6964756.html) Available from: [Accessed 9 July 2018].
- 46  
47  
48 Feist, A., Ashe, J., Lawrence, J., McPhee, D., and Wilson, R., 2007. *Investigating and*  
49 *Detecting Recorded Offences of Rape*. London: Home Office.
- 50  
51  
52 Foley, M., 1990. *Rape: A Feminist Analysis of Recent Public Service Provisions for Women*  
53 *with Particular Reference to the Sexual Assault Referral Centre*. PhD Thesis,  
54 University of Salford.
- 55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60



- 1  
2  
3 Hester, M., 2013. *From Report to Court: Rape cases and the Criminal Justice System in*  
4 *the North East*. Bristol: University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock  
5 Foundation.  
6  
7  
8 Hester, M., and Lilley, S.J., 2015. *More than support to Court: ISVAs in Teeside*. Bristol:  
9 University of Bristol in association with the Northern Rock Foundation.  
10  
11  
12 Hine, B., and Murphy, A., 2017. The impact of victim-perpetrator relationship,  
13 reputation and initial point of resistance on officers' responsibility and authenticity  
14 ratings towards hypothetical rape cases. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 49, 1-13.  
15  
16  
17 Home Office., 2011. *The Counting Rules for Recorded Crime*. London: Home Office.  
18  
19 Home Office., 2017. *The Counting Rules for Recorded Crime*. London: Home Office.  
20  
21  
22 Hohl, K., and Stanko, E.A., 2015. Complaints of rape and the criminal justice system:  
23 Fresh evidence on the attrition problem in England and Wales. *European Journal of*  
24 *Criminology*, 12(3), 324-341.  
25  
26  
27 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary., 2014. *Crime-recording: making the victim*  
28 *count. The final report of an inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in*  
29 *England and Wales* [Online]. London: HMIC. Available from:  
30 [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/crime-](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count.pdf)  
31 [recording-making-the-victim-count.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
32  
33  
34 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Rape Monitoring Group., 2015. *Local Area*  
35 *data for 2014/15, Avon and Somerset*. [Online]. London: HMIC. Available from:  
36 [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/avon-and-](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/avon-and-somerset-rmg-digest-2014-15.pdf)  
37 [somerset-rmg-digest-2014-15.pdf](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/avon-and-somerset-rmg-digest-2014-15.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
38  
39  
40 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2016a. *Sussex*  
41 *Police: Crime Data Integrity inspection 2016*. [Online] HMICFRS. Available from:  
42 [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/sussex-crime-data-](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/sussex-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/)  
43 [integrity-inspection-2016/](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/sussex-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
44  
45  
46 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2016b. *Avon and*  
47 *Somerset Police: Crime Data Integrity inspection 2016*. [Online] HMICFRS. Available  
48 from: [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/avon-and-](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/avon-and-somerset-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/)  
49 [somerset-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/avon-and-somerset-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
50  
51  
52 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2016c. *Greater*  
53 *Manchester Police: Crime Data Integrity inspection 2016*. [Online]. Available from:  
54 [https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/greater-manchester-](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/greater-manchester-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/)  
55 [crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/greater-manchester-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2016/) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60

1  
2  
3  
4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2017. *PEEL: police effectiveness 2016: A national overview*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/peel-police-effectiveness-2016.pdf> [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
8  
9

10 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2018. *PEEL: police effectiveness 2017: A national overview*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/peel-police-effectiveness-2017/> [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
15

16 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service., 2018. North Yorkshire Police: Crime Data Integrity inspection 2017. [Online] Available from: <https://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/publications/north-yorkshire-police-crime-data-integrity-inspection-2017/#rape> [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
21

22 House of Commons. Home Affairs Committee, 2014. *Leadership and Standards in the Police*, Third Report of Session 2013-2014. London: The Stationary Office (HC 67-1)  
25

26 House of Commons. Public Administration Select Committee, 2014. *Caught Red-Handed: Why We Can't Count on Police Recorded Crime Statistics: UK Statistics Authority Response to the Committee's Thirteenth Report of Session 2013-2014*, Fourth Report of Session 2014-2015. London: The Stationary Office (HC 645)  
31

32 Horvath, M.A.H., and Yexley, M., 2012. *Developments in investigative approaches to rape: the investigative heritage'* in Brown, J.M., and Walklate, S.A., eds., 2012. *Handbook on Sexual Violence*. Routledge.  
36

37 Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2010. *IPCC independent investigation into the Metropolitan Police Service's inquiry into allegations against John Worboys*. London: IPCC.  
41

42 LaFree, G.D., 1989. *Rape and Criminal Justice: The Social Construction of Sexual Assault*. Wandsworth.  
44

45 Lally C., 2017. Front-line gardaí will no longer investigate rapes, child sex abuse *The Irish Times* [Online]. 3 June. Available from: <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/front-line-garda%C3%AD-will-no-longer-investigate-rapes-child-sex-abuse-1.3106184> [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
50

51 Lea, S.J., Lanvers, U., and Shaw, S., 2003. Attrition in Rape Cases: Developing a Profile and Identifying Relevant Factors. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 43(3), 583-599.  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58

1  
2  
3 Lloyd, S., and Burman, M., 1996. Specialist Police Units and the joint investigation of  
4 child abuse. *Child Abuse Review*, 5(1), 4-15.

6  
7 Lonsway, K.A., Welch, S., and Fitzgerald, L.F., 2001. Police training in sexual assault  
8 response: Process, outcomes, and elements of change' *Criminal Justice and Behavior*,  
9 28(6), 695-730.

11  
12 Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. & Moules, N.J. 2017, "Thematic Analysis: Striving to  
13 Meet the Trustworthiness Criteria", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*,  
14 vol. 16, 1-13

16  
17 Metropolitan Police Authority, 2002. *Scrutiny Report: Rape Investigation and Victim*  
18 *Care*. London: MPA. [Online]. Available from:  
19 <http://policeauthority.org/metropolitan/downloads/scrutinities/rape-scrutiny.pdf>  
20 [Accessed 9 July 2018]

22  
23 Metropolitan Police Authority, 2002a. *MPS Project Sapphire Strategy Action Plan 2002–*  
24 *2003*. [Online]. Available from:  
25 [http://policeauthority.org/Metropolitan/committees/x-](http://policeauthority.org/Metropolitan/committees/x-pspm/2002/020613/07/index.html)  
26 [pspm/2002/020613/07/index.html](http://policeauthority.org/Metropolitan/committees/x-pspm/2002/020613/07/index.html) [Accessed 9 July 2018].

28  
29 Metropolitan Police 2018. [Online]. *Strengthening Local Policing Programme*. Available  
30 from: [https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-](https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/strengthening-local-policing-programme.pdf)  
31 [us/strengthening-local-policing-programme.pdf](https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/met/about-us/strengthening-local-policing-programme.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018]

33  
34 McGlynn, C., and Westmarland, N., 2018. Kaleidoscopic Justice: Sexual Violence and  
35 Victim-Survivors' Perceptions of Justice. *Social and Legal Studies*, 1-23 [Online].  
36 Available from: <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0964663918761200>  
37 [Accessed 9 July 2018].

39  
40 McMillan, L., 2015. The role of the specially trained officer in rape and sexual offence  
41 cases. *Policing and Society*, 25(6), 622-640

43  
44 Ministry of Justice et al., 2013. *An Overview of Sexual Offending in England and Wales*.  
45 London. [Online]. Available from:  
46 [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf)  
47 [hment\\_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214970/sexual-offending-overview-jan-2013.pdf) [Accessed 9 July  
48 2018]

50  
51 Murphy, A., and Hine, B., 2018. Investigating the demographic and attitudinal predictors  
52 of rape myth acceptance in U.K. Police officers: developing an evidence-base for training  
53 and professional development. *Psychology, Crime and Law*

- Office for National Statistics, 2018. *Crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2018*. [Online]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2018>[Accessed 16 October 2018].
- Pettitt, B., Greenhead, S., and Khalifeh, H., 2013. *At Risk, Yet Dismissed: The Criminal Victimization of People with Mental Health Problems*. London: Victim Support; Mind. Available from: [https://www.mind.org.uk/media/187663/At-risk-yet-dismissed-report\\_FINAL\\_EMBARGOED.pdf](https://www.mind.org.uk/media/187663/At-risk-yet-dismissed-report_FINAL_EMBARGOED.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018]
- Powell, M.B., and Wright, R., 2011-2012. Professionals' Perceptions of a New Modal of Sexual Assault Investigation Adopted by Victoria Police. *Current Issues Crim. Just.*, 23, 333.
- Powell, M.B., and Cauchi, R., 2013. Victims' perceptions of a new model of sexual assault investigation adopted by Victoria Police. *Police Practice and Research*, 228, 14(3), 228-241.
- Regoeczi, W.C., and Hubbard, D.J., 2018. The Impact of Specialized Domestic Violence Units on Case Processing. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1-21.
- Robinson, A., 2009. Independent Sexual Violence Advisors: A Process Evaluation. London: Home Office. [Online]. Available from: <https://orca.cf.ac.uk/24241/1/isvareport.pdf> [Accessed 9 July 2018].
- Sleath, E., and Bull, R., 2012. Comparing Rape victim and Perpetrator Blaming in a Police Officer Sample: Differences Between Police Officers With and Without Special Training. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 39(5), 646-665.
- Sleath, E., and Bull, R., 2017. Police Perceptions of Rape Victims and The Impact on Case Decision Making: A Systematic Review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 34, 102-112.
- Stanko, B., and Williams, E., 2009. Reviewing Rape and Rape Allegations in London: What are the Vulnerabilities of the Victims who Report to the Police? in Horvath, M.A.H., and Brown J.M., eds., 2009. *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking*. Cullompton: Willan.
- Van Staden, L., and Lawrence, J., 2010. A qualitative study of a dedicated sexual assault investigation unit. Research Report 48. London: Home Office. [Online]. Available from: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/116562/horr48-report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/116562/horr48-report.pdf) [Accessed 9 July 2018].

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6 Westmarland, N., Aznarez, M., Brown, J., and Kirkham, L., 2012. *The Benefits of Police*  
7 *Specialist Rape Teams*. A report commissioned and funded by the Association of  
8 Chief Police Officers.  
9

10  
11 Williams, J., and Keeling, N., 2017. Greater Manchester Police's specialist sex crime unit-  
12 which investigates serious sexual offences including rapes – is to be disbanded.  
13 *Manchester Evening Post* [Online]. 23 October. Available from:  
14 [https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/gmps-](https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/gmps-specialist-sex-crime-unit-13802369)  
15 [specialist-sex-crime-unit-13802369](https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/gmps-specialist-sex-crime-unit-13802369) [Accessed 9 July 2018].  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60