

RASSO victim impact assessment (RVIA)

Summary and FAQ

Why has a RASSO victim impact assessment (RVIA) been developed?

- **Research** identified inconsistent and at times poor police engagement with RASSO (rape and serious sexual offences) victims. It found that the development of good practice was often driven by individuals. Research also found a lack of strategic oversight, support and planning for developing policies that carefully considered the rights and interests of victims.ⁱ Research identified instances where policies, procedures and practices were implemented with good intentions for improving victim engagement or experience, but resulted in unintended adverse impacts (for example, unintentionally infringing on victims' privacy rights, or excluding victims with disabilities).
- As a result, a detailed action plan and practice guidance to standardise police approaches to engaging with victims, systematically embedding key principles of procedural justice, has been produced.
- However, more needs to be done to improve local police responses to RASSO victims and a RASSO victim impact assessment (RVIA) has been developed to provide a structured method for police forces to effectively consider victims' rights and interests during the creation or review of policies, procedures and practices.

What is the RASSO victim impact assessment (RVIA)?

- The RVIA is a framework through which victims' rights and interests can be systematically considered, mainstreamed and embedded into policing policies, procedures and practices. The RVIA is about the consideration of victims' rights at a strategic level, separate from work around the rights and interests of individual victims in individual cases.
- The RVIA provides a systematic approach to:
 - identifying how a policy, procedure or practice might impact on RASSO victims, including victims from marginalised and minoritised groupsⁱ
 - putting in place and monitoring actions to prevent or mitigate any potential adverse impacts
 - engaging effectively and transparently with stakeholders throughout

What are the aims and benefits of the RVIA?

The key aims of the RVIA are to:

- 'future-proof' police processes, enabling police to be fully informed when developing policies, procedures and practices about how to uphold victims' rights and interests, with particular prompts to consider more marginalised and minoritised victims
- enable victims, stakeholders and the public to understand police decision-making and outcomes, in particular how the police have considered victims' rights and interests
- help build greater understanding of and attention to victims' rights and interests across policing

As a result, the RVIA should lead to benefits:

- Individual officers can have more confidence that the policies, procedures and practices they are following are doing the best for victims.
- The RVIA may contribute to improving police performance by ensuring the principles of procedural justice for victims are embedded in policies, procedures and practices. This should save policing resources in the long-run by avoiding adverse unintended consequences.

- The RVIA may support improved victim and public confidence in policing through improving both the development of policies, procedures and practices and transparency around that development.
- The process of doing the RVIA may improve partnership working, by engaging with stakeholders in a way that supports their understanding of policing, and develop forces' understanding of their local context for their RASSO victims, through gathering and analysing local information, further helping forces to manage demand and resources.

What are the differences or similarities to other impact assessment processes?

- You may be familiar with other impact assessment tools, such as those required for data protection or equality and human rights. The RVIA is similar to these but focuses on RASSO victims and policing sexual violence.
- The RVIA prioritises meaningful engagement with RASSO victims, their representatives and wider stakeholders as central to the legitimacy and efficacy of the RVIA.
- It also centres and emphasises transparency and accountability meaning that it will be important to share the RVIA with key stakeholders as part of an ongoing process of engagement. The RVIA should be published, unless inappropriate to do so, and shared more widely as part of broader measures to enhance trust and accountability.

What are the standards on which the RVIA is based?

The RVIA is based on the following key principles and policies:

- [Procedural Justice for Victims of Sexual Violence as outlined in the National Operating Model for the investigation of rape](#)
- [The Victims' Code](#)
- [The Equality Act 2010](#), including the Public Sector Equality Duty, and the [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- Other relevant legislation, guidance and policy relating to RASSO and policing

At what stage in the development of policies, procedures and practices should the RVIA be used?

- The RVIA should be considered in the early stages of developing any new or revised policy, procedure and practice. All policies, procedures and practices should be screened to identify whether they may impact on the rights and interests of victims of sexual violence, and if so a proportionate RVIA should be carried out alongside developing the policy, procedure and practice.
- The RVIA may be used alongside other impact assessments, for example equality impact assessments.

Who is responsible for completing RVIA's?

- All police forces should be conducting RVIA's when creating new or reviewing any existing, policies, procedures and practices relevant to the rights and interests of victims of sexual violence. Reviewing includes discontinuing a policy, procedure and practice already in place.
- The person in charge of creating any new, or reviewing existing policies, procedures and practices is responsible for ensuring that screening is carried out and completing an RVIA where appropriate. This may include thematic leads (for example, the force RASSO lead), specific project leads or individuals in central policy teams.
- The person responsible for ensuring the RVIA is carried out may delegate this work. In some circumstances, the force may prefer to bring in external expertise, for example to commission their ISVA service, or a specialist victim service, to carry out an RVIA.
- Chief officers have overall responsibility for ensuring that all new or revised policies, procedures and practices have been screened to determine if an RVIA is relevant and that RVIA's have been carried out to an appropriate standard.
- For more information, see the [RASSO victim impact assessment template and guidance](#). If you have any questions please contact ruth.friskney@glasgow.ac.uk.