



29th April 2022

Dear Home Secretary,

Open letter: Operation Soteria findings

We write as a group of specialist organisations in the Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) sector, to ask for the publication of findings from Operation Bluestone Soteria. As organisations who authored the [“Decriminalisation of Rape”](#) report in 2020 together with organisations and academics from the three ‘deep dive’ areas so far (namely Somerset & Avon, London and Durham), we welcome the commitment and objectives of the project, but are concerned that significant findings related to the police response to victims and survivors have been shielded from the public and from scrutiny. We urge you to make arrangements for these emerging findings to be shared in the public domain, in the interests of transparency and accountability, so that we can progress towards improving the police response to VAWG.

As you will know, Operation Bluestone Soteria was launched in response to the Government’s *End to End Rape Review*, which committed to ‘right[ing] the wrong’, after acknowledging that victims of rape are being failed.¹ Operation Bluestone Soteria brings together leading academics to build a new national operating model for the investigation of rape and serious sexual assault, funded by the Home Office.

In January of this year, a select number of VAWG organisations were invited to attend a Mayor’s Office for Policing And Crime (MOPAC) learning event which shared findings and recommendations from Operation Bluestone Soteria, including research findings concerning the operation of Avon and Somerset police and the Metropolitan police. The event was led by multiple academics involved in Operation Bluestone Soteria and contained important data and evidence in regard to the police response to rape. This event was attended by more than 300 people, however we were informed that the information was not in the public domain.

We were pleased that a parliamentary event was scheduled for the following day [11 January 2022] to provide a broader platform for the independent academics to present their initial research findings and recommendations to interested parties and the wider public. However, this event was cancelled the day it was meant to take place. Since that date, we have made multiple enquiries

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1001417/end-to-end-rape-review-report-with-correction-slip.pdf

to Home Office representatives by email and in stakeholder meetings as to when these findings would be made public. We understand that similar requests have been made by the Victim's Commissioner. On 19 January 2022, we were informed in an email from the Home Office that a new date for the event would be 'shared soon'. On 20 January 2022, the Shadow Solicitor General, Ellie Reeves MP submitted Parliamentary Questions to the Home Office to request a publication date for the findings, to which the Ministers did not confirm². To date, we have had no clarity from officials as to when these findings will be published.

You will be aware that the Ministry of Justice's consultation on a Victim's Law ran from 9 December 2021 to 3 February 2022, which sought to understand how victims can be better supported through and beyond the criminal justice process across England and Wales. Whilst many of the findings from Operation Bluestone Soteria were directly relevant to this consultation process, many VAWG sector organisations and the victims and survivors they support were prohibited from interpreting these findings and recommendations to inform their response to the consultation, and the forthcoming legislation.

We are sure you agree that there is huge public interest in the findings and research being made public. Considerable work is being done to improve police performance and the treatment of victims and survivors of VAWG, through numerous reviews and inspections, many of which we are involved in. A key plank of this work is enhanced transparency and accountability, which we see as undermined by this series of events. Any work being done to improve police performance must be properly armed with the knowledge amassed by the Operation Bluestone Soteria team.

In light of the above, we write to ask for urgent confirmation of the date scheduled for the presentation of the Operation Bluestone Soteria findings in the public domain. We look forward to continuing to work with you to tackle VAWG in all its forms and supporting victims and survivors.

Yours sincerely,

The End Violence Against Women Coalition

Rape Crisis England & Wales

Centre for Women's Justice

RSACC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre) Darlington and County Durham

RASASC (Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre) South London

Somerset and Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (SARSAS)

Solace Women's Aid (who run North London Rape Crisis)

Nia (who run East London Rape Crisis)

Women & Girls Network (who run West London Rape Crisis)

² <https://members.parliament.uk/member/4620/writtenquestions?page=2#expand-1404816>