



**Avon and Somerset Police**  
**BLUESTONE**



# **Operation Bluestone**



- Project Bluestone was an academic project with the objective of analysing our response to RASSO and making recommendations to improve.
- This involved bespoke analysis of three years of RASSO Investigations, 38 in depth case peer reviews, interviews, and national best practice search.
- Police officers and CPS lawyers worked alongside the academic staff to bring their views on the problems we face.
- The idea is not to blame and point fingers, but to improve the whole system for victims of crime.

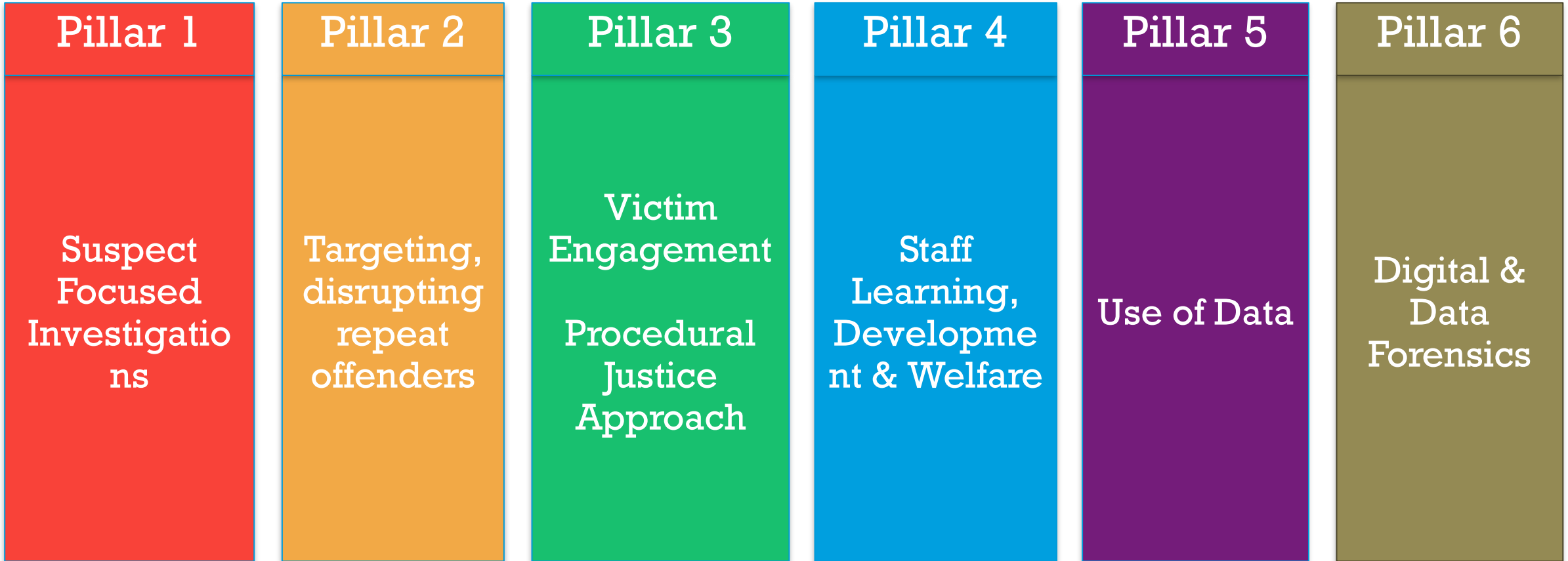
The research for Project Bluestone was a team effort. Lead researchers are: Kari Davies, Katrin Hohl, Miranda Horvath, Jo Lovett, Betsy Stanko and Emma Williams.



# Six pillars for improvement



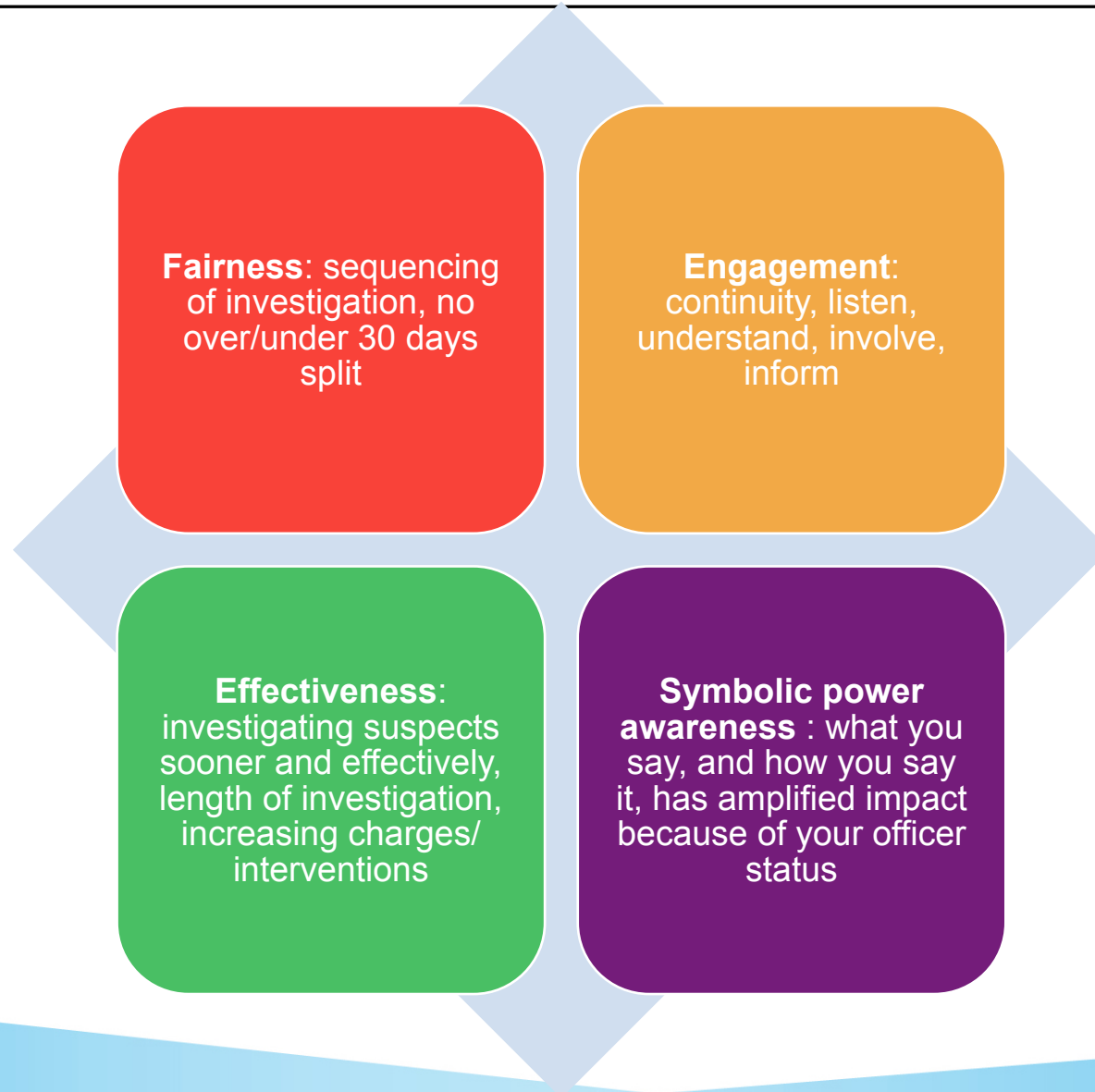
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- Focus on the suspect and their behaviour. Risk assess them and take account of their past
- Understand, look for and evidence grooming behaviour
- Apply the whole story principle in building a case narrative
- Understand the victim in light of the evidence about trauma response and don't mistake vulnerability for untrustworthiness
- Actively identify and tackle rape myths and misconceptions
- Put pressure on the suspect in interview to account for themselves
- Understand that victim and suspect are not equal and opposite, cancelling each other out.
- Limit third party parameters to what is "likely to meet the disclosure test"
- Apply the right test when deciding whether to take a case to CPS.
- "It's one word against another" is not a barrier to prosecution in most cases.

# Procedural Justice Applied to Victim Engagement





# Phase 1 and Phase 2



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- **Phase 1** In phase one, we focussed on developing supervisors to drive suspect-focused investigations and utilising engagement officers to provide single points of contact to victims throughout investigations.
- We also trialled the Bluestone ‘gold standard’ investigation process map which was co created with academics to provide an evidence based operating model for investigating RASSO offences
- Excellent working relationships were developed between Policing, CPS and Partners (ISVA service / The Bridge)
- **Phase 2** In phase two, we are building on the above whilst embedding a large uplift in staff aligned to the Bluestone teams which will also us to deal with all RASSO offences.

# Project Bluestone: Outcomes

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- Adult rape charge rate: from 3% to over 10%

*(HO Codes 19C and 19F; 3 months to September 2019 v to September 2022)*

- RASSO charge rate: from 40<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> nationally

*(Home Office Crime Outcome Data, October 2022)*

- RASSO positive outcome rate: from 37<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> nationally

*(Home Office Crime Outcome Data, October 2022)*

- Reported rape volume: 1498 in the year to September '22; 17% year-on-year increase

*(Avon and Somerset Performance & Insight Team, October 2022)*

- Early Advice in rape investigations: 24 per month (2022) versus <10 (2021)

*(CPS SW RASSO Unit, September 2022)*



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**

# Project Bluestone: Safe Link Feedback

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"I have been blown away by the patience, support and care that you have shown my client throughout this process. The time that you have spent to make her feel as comfortable as possible has not gone unnoticed. You have involved me in each step of the process, which in turn helped her to feel even more supported and for the whole process to run as smoothly as it can. I haven't before seen such a fantastic example of joint working and I just wanted to say how grateful I am for your work."

*Safe Link Independent Sexual Violence Advisor*



**CARING**



**COURAGEOUS**

"I felt sick at the thought of going anywhere near the police but the experience was so different! You (the ISVA) and the officer have made me feel so safe, supported and truly listened to. Both your kindness has made a huge difference to my life whatever happens next."

*Survivor*



**INCLUSIVE**



**LEARNING**