

Operation Soteria Bluestone: Reflections on a deep dive into RASSO investigators' wellbeing

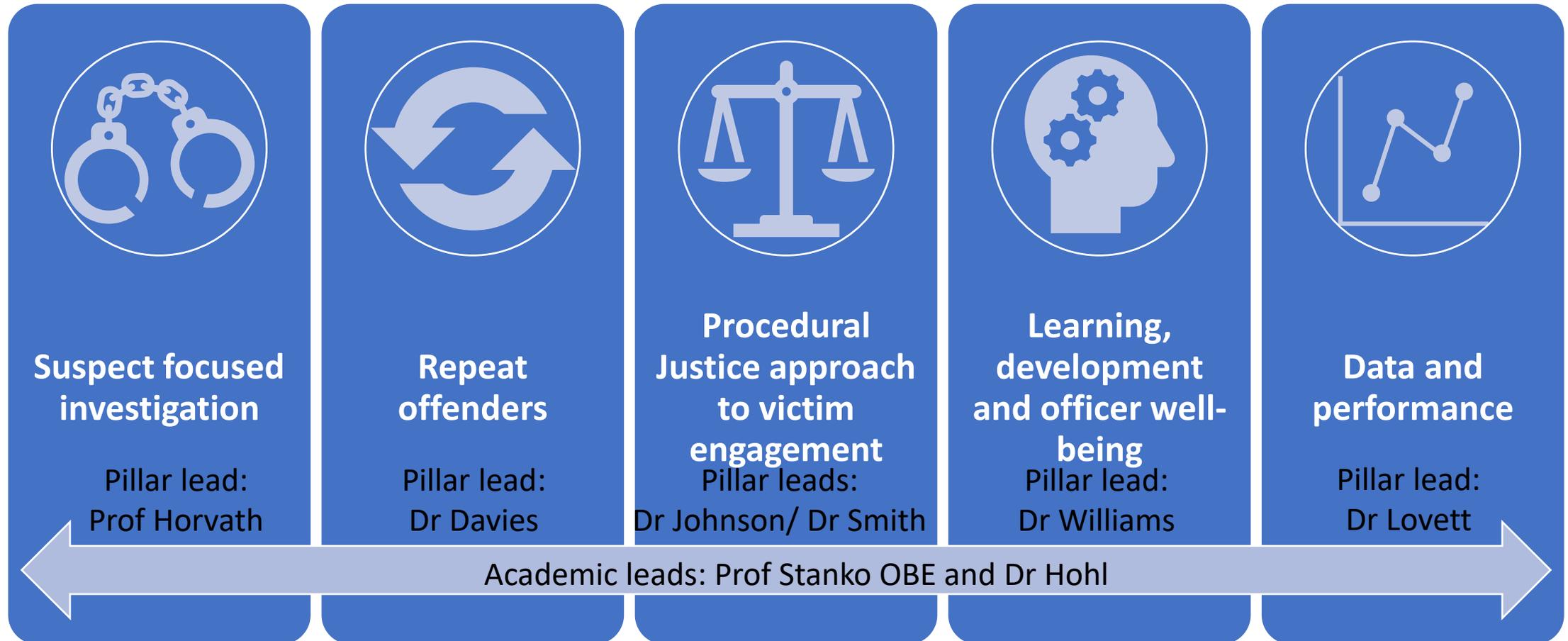
Presentation to St Mary's SARC Conference
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Op Soteria Bluestone

- Home Office funded, NPCC led, MOPAC initiated and host for project
- Builds on Avon & Somerset Home Office funded pathfinder Spring 2021
- Purpose: create a national operating model for the investigation of rape and serious sexual assault
- Harnessing research-led insight from 4 additional deep dives in London Metropolitan Police; Durham Constabulary; West Midlands Police; South Wales Police

Theoretical framework: the five pillars



Pillar 4: Learning, development and officer wellbeing



Dr Emma Williams (pillar lead), Daniela Abinashi, Richard Harding, Dr Linda Maguire, Dr Nicky Miller, Jennifer Norman, Dr Arun Sondhi, Dr Rachel Ward.

Pillar 4 focus

- **Learning and development**
- **Officer wellbeing**
- To identify if continuous training and development is provided and if officer wellbeing is supported (Stanko *et al.*, 2021, previous slide)
- Consider solutions to enable officers to:
 - (1) be better prepared to undertake professional investigations;
 - (2) be in a stronger position to support victims; and
 - (3) create a happier and healthier workforce

Data collection

One year project - mixed methods approach

Interviews, focus groups and a welfare survey – investigators of all ranks and trainers

Pilot study undertaken in Avon & Somerset

Deep dives into four further forces (two completed, two in progress)

Force one: n=8 interviews and n=9 focus groups (total n=51 participants), survey n=198

Force two: n=6 interviews and n=5 focus groups (total n=36 participants), survey n=89

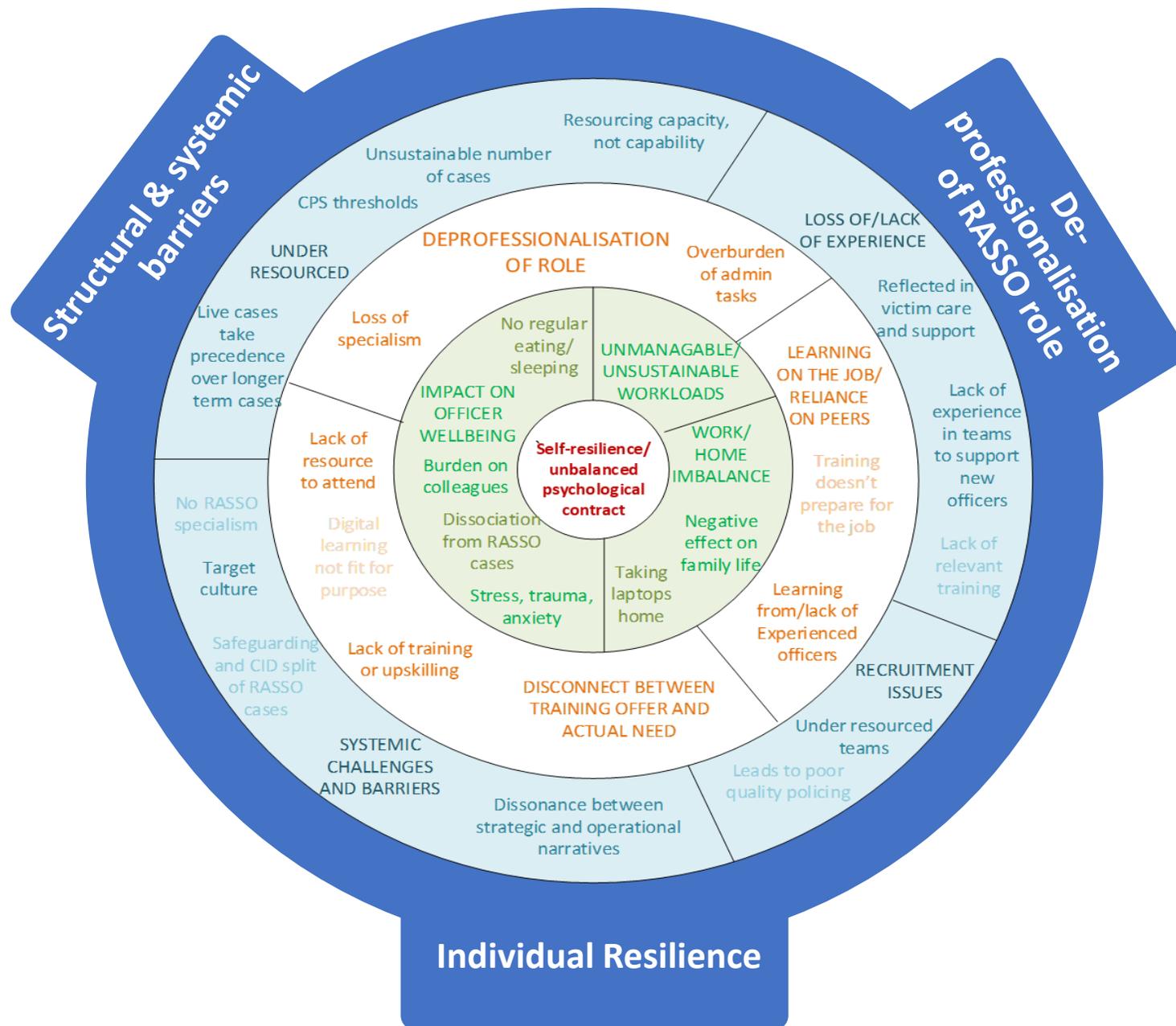
Emergent findings across both forces

Structural and systemic barriers: under resourced, lack of experienced officers, CPS threshold, pressure of live cases

De-professionalization of the RASSO role: learning 'on the job', disconnect between training offer and actual need, lack of training and upskilling, overburden of admin

Individual resilience: unmanageable workload, negative effect on family life, no work/life balance, stress, trauma and anxiety

Emerging underlying and key themes



Key for Pillar 4 MPS data diagram

	RASSO context*
	Learning and Development*
	Wellbeing*
	Officer/self
	Key Themes

Note: the darker the font, the greater the number of mentions in the interviews*

Force 1- survey topline headings

Learning and Development:

70.2% do not think they have time to participate in training (officers want to learn, but are not supported)

28.8% agree that they are provided with training in advanced skills

Wellbeing:

63.1% have felt unwell due to work related stress in the past 12 months

95% have put themselves under pressure to come to work, despite not feeling well enough

Force 1 - survey free text comments

Learning and development:

'Officers with limited experience of rape investigations are thrown in the deep end and have to make do and struggle. Their training and experience comes from their peers' [P686]

Wellbeing:

'Staff are burnt out and a lot of staff have quit or moved to other departments due to morale being so low' [P251]

Force 2: Interviews and focus groups

Learning and Development:

'There were a couple of us who were brought into a briefing room for about half an hour and then we had what we called a yellow booklet [...] it was a case of, this is how you fill the booklet in. This is a rape kit. And then, that's it really' [P523]

Wellbeing:

'My marriage has recently broken down [...] work was a massive factor, the fact I was always late. I couldn't tell them what time I'd be home. Would I be able to pick up my little girl on time?' [P504]

Force 2: Interviews and focus groups

Learning and Development:

After I did my ICIDP course, there was no-one to tutor me. I just got through my jobs, I did my VRIs and my interviews and things, wrote them up myself. I didn't have anyone tutoring me [...] It was a just a case of you do what you need to evidence and then we'll have a look at it at the end. So there was no training for that' [P504]

Wellbeing:

'There's been times when I've suffered panic attacks. I've never ever suffered panic attacks at all, but just knowing that a case had to be back to CPS and the sheer volume of it would make me panic. And other jobs where I've dreamt about the people that I'm working with and had little nightmares about things. Surely, that can't be right?' [P150]

Wellbeing support

Generally available options:

- Employee Assistance Programme
- Occupational Health
- TRiM
- Peer support
- Oscar Kilo
- Mental Health First Aid

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PausePoint: a structured support system for reflection to help maintain wellbeing and good mental health, involving:

- Regular trauma-informed one-to-one meetings with a supervisor
- Psychological health appt. prior to starting role, then annual checks
- A 'pause' or other reasonable adjustments if required by mutual agreement
- Supervisor keeps record of discussion, assessment of wellbeing and any support/adjustments

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Supervisors' Guide to Reflective Practice During the Case Review: links to 6 Reflective Practice Points during a RASSO investigation, and is a 4-step process:

- *Presenting the case* – team welfare check by supervisor, then update on case and a 'relevant officer' identifies one key issue/problem
- *Asking peer questions* – supervisor, engagement officer, disruption officer and others ask questions to clarify issues relating to the investigation, victim, and suspect.
- *Ideas for a way forward* – group reflects and poses critical questions so the relevant officer can identify a solution. Documentation of any improvements/learning/support needs.
- *Reflection and action planning* – relevant officer decides actions to be taken (results of which are fed back at the next meeting). Supervisor feeds back any learning/promising practice to investigation PDU. Any identified welfare issues followed up 1-to-1.

Interlinking well-being, learning, development and professional practice



Final thoughts

- Crossover between learning, development and welfare is clear in the data
- We suggest if officers are well trained and have access to good wellbeing support, they will be better equipped to undertake their investigations
- Investment is required (1) into upfront funding of learning and development initiatives and (2) officer wellbeing, meaning:
 - Retention would improve, experienced officers with knowledge and expertise would remain to support new officers, stronger teams
 - The organisation should be proactive through planning and reflective practice, not reactive to current proposals

Any questions?



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