

evidence was offered. Victim issues accounted for fewer unsuccessful cases by volume and proportion (7%). Victim issues were the reason for less than one in six unsuccessful outcomes. The greatest number and proportion of unsuccessful outcomes were due to jury acquittals at just under 45%. This indicates the need for more multi-agency work with partners to address public awareness and challenge myths and stereotypes within and outside the CJS.

### **Historic abuse**

A series of historic child abuse, rape & indecent assaults were successfully prosecuted, alongside the rape of a defendant's mother in law. All offences occurred in the 1970s & 1980s. Sadly, the mother-in-law died after making a video interview but there was corroboration of her complaint from other witnesses and the trial judge allowed the mother-in-law's evidence to be admitted.

There were numerous conferences with counsel and the victims gave live evidence with the help of special measures. Local Authority unused material was ordered to be disclosed.

The defendant was convicted of all counts and was sentenced to 19 years' imprisonment. The case then went to Appeal on the hearsay evidence of the dead complainant but the Appeal was lost and the conviction upheld.

### **Rape specialist skills**

A young woman was married to the defendant when she was 15 under Sharia law and suffered a period of serious violence and controlling behaviour over a number of years. Following a particularly vicious assault, a report was made to the police. Initially the woman was reluctant to co-operate with the police, believing she should not speak against her husband. When the police explained that it could not be a legal marriage she agreed to an interview and gave an account of serious and sustained domestic violence. During the description of the 30 to 40 assaults, the victim also mentioned to the police that she had had a termination because of her fear of further violence and had attempted to commit suicide.

Early liaison between the police and the CPS allowed a rape specialist to review the full file, picking up on the risk factors in the case. With their awareness that VAW cases can often involve a number of different VAW strands, the lawyer was concerned that the original information only referred to the physical violence, with no reference to possible sexual offences. The lawyer requested that the police conduct a second interview giving detailed direction as to the questioning that should be employed to discover whether this woman had also suffered sexual offences. The woman disclosed a catalogue of sexual offences including rape. Following this further interview, the lawyer authorised three counts of sexual activity with a child and four counts of rape to what was originally an assault case. The defendant denied all the offences in interview.

On the day of trial, the defendant offered guilty pleas to all assaults and three sexual offences. Having consulted the victim (who was said to be very pleased) the pleas were accepted. The defendant was sentenced to four and a half years' imprisonment.

This is a case which was correctly charged as a result of good early consultation with the police and the involvement of a specialist prosecutor whose knowledge of the dynamics of VAW assisted in bringing the offender to justice.

