

# Post-deployment

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This page includes guidance on post-incident procedures, management, welfare and legal issues. The guidance outlines provision of accounts by officers and staff in a broadly chronological manner, provides responsibilities for key roles and sets out approaches to organisational learning and debriefing. The information provided in this module is relevant to any investigation, whether carried out by the force's professional standards department (PSD) or by the relevant independent investigative authority (IIA).

This guidance is only applicable where a death or serious injury (DSI) results, directly or indirectly, from the discharge of a firearm, less lethal weapon, or specialist munition (see [post-incident procedures](#)).

Forces should have a local policy or standard operating procedures which set out how the post-incident procedure will be implemented, and how the key roles and specific responsibilities identified in this guidance are to be carried out.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\) Statutory Guidance to the Police Service for Achieving Best Evidence in Death or Serious Injury Matters](#).

"A DSI matter means any circumstances (unless the circumstances are or have been the subject of a complaint or amount to a conduct matter) in or as a result of a person's death or serious injury, and:

- At the time of the DSI, the person had been arrested by a person serving with the police and had not been released, or was detained in the custody of a person serving with the police

or:

- At or before the time of the DSI, the person had direct or indirect contact with a person serving with the police who was acting in the execution of their duties, and there is an indication that the contact may have directly or indirectly caused or contributed to the DSI. This sub-category excludes contact that a person suffering the DSI had while acting in the execution of their duties as a person serving with the police" (see [Police Reform Act 2002 s 12](#), as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017).

A serious injury is a fracture, deep cut, deep laceration or injury causing damage to an internal organ or the impairment of any bodily function (see [Police Reform Act 2002 s 29](#)).

The circumstances surrounding a DSI may not involve the use of force by a police officer or member of police staff. Where reference to the use of force is made in this guidance, consider whether the specific guidance is relevant or applicable in those circumstances.

Where a chief officer becomes aware of a DSI matter relating to a person under their direction and control, the chief officer must take all appropriate steps for the purposes of [Part 2 of the Police Reform Act](#) to obtain and preserve evidence relating to that DSI matter.

This duty must be performed as soon as practicable after the chief officer becomes aware of the DSI. They should continue to take appropriate steps to obtain and preserve evidence until they believe it is no longer necessary to do so.

The chief officer must take any steps directed by the relevant IIA or local policing body to obtain or preserve evidence.

Under paragraphs 4(1)(a), 13(1)(a) and 14C(1) of Schedule 3 of the [Police Reform Act 2002](#) (as amended by Schedule 12 to the [Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005](#)), police forces in England and Wales have a statutory duty to refer any complaint or incident involving a DSI which has occurred during or following police contact to the IOPC, where there is an allegation or indication that direct or indirect police contact may have caused or contributed to the DSI.

Therefore:

- A complaint must be referred if it alleges that the conduct complained of resulted in a DSI.
- A conduct matter must be referred if the conduct matter relates to any incident or circumstances, in or in consequence of which, any person has died or suffered serious injury.

- All DSI matters (as defined within this guidance) must be referred.

## Article 2 ECHR and the duty to investigate

### Relevant case law

- [Jordan v United Kingdom \(2001\) 37 E.H.R.R. 52](#)
- [Ramsahai v Netherlands \(2008\) 46 EHRR 43](#)
- [Regina \(on the application of Amin \(Imtiaz\)\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2003\] UKHL 51](#)
- [Jordan v UK \(2003\) 37 EHRR 2](#)

The [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\) article 2](#) imposes a duty on the state to conduct an effective official investigation when individuals have been killed (or in some cases seriously injured) as a result of the use of force by the police. According to the European Court of Human Rights, the investigation must:

- be on the state's own initiative (for example, not civil proceedings)
- be independent, both institutionally and in practice
- be adequate and capable of leading to a determination of whether the force used was justified in the circumstances and to the identification and accountability of those responsible
- be prompt
- allow for sufficient public scrutiny to ensure accountability
- allow the next of kin to participate, see [Jordan v UK \(2003\) 37 EHRR 2](#)

The articles of the ECHR are contained in the schedule to the [Human Rights Act 1998](#). These articles are therefore incorporated into UK law.

### Purpose of an Article 2 investigation

The requirements under [ECHR Article 2](#) are relevant and can extend to any situation in which death or serious injury (DSI) occurs during an incident or operation in which police are involved.

The essential purposes of an article 2 investigation are:

- to secure the effective implementation of domestic laws which protect the right to life

- in those cases involving state agents, to ensure their accountability for deaths occurring under their responsibility

The investigation must be capable of leading to a determination of whether the force used was or was not justified in the circumstances, and to the identification and punishment of those responsible, where appropriate.

## Who will investigate?

Investigations may be conducted by the force PSD or IIA such as the IOPC in England and Wales, the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland or, in Scotland, under arrangements set out by the Police Investigations Review Commission. The Health and Safety Executive may also undertake investigations.

## Effective investigation

The aims of an investigation into a police-related shooting are to:

- ensure that the applicable law is properly followed and implemented,
- ensure accountability when the law has not been properly followed and implemented, for instance, through disciplinary and/or criminal proceedings

## Independent investigations

The scope of the investigation is likely to be wide ranging. It will include establishing the facts and drawing conclusions in respect of the DSI the circumstances leading up to the discharge of firearms, less lethal weapons or specialist munitions and all the issues surrounding this, such as police activity, planning and command.

## Investigative function

Following a DSI, the police service should take all appropriate steps to reduce any possible investigative risks and deficiencies, such as failing to secure the evidence. The procedures adopted should demonstrate integrity in all actions and discussions between the officers and staff involved, and must be able to withstand scrutiny.

Nothing in this section should be interpreted as constraining effective action, by the police service or the officers and staff involved, in adopting an operationally necessary procedure to secure best evidence, arrest or bring to justice those who may be involved in ongoing criminal activity, or a follow-up investigative process.

The responsibility for securing evidence and taking appropriate action in an Article 2 investigation remains with the police service until the IIA takes over the investigation. The responsibility of the police force being investigated is to facilitate the investigation through, for example:

- identifying and preserving scenes and exhibits
- identifying immediately available witnesses
- securing physical evidence
- providing experienced family or witness liaison officers

The IIA should be notified without delay, this will enable them to adopt appropriate procedures and agree initial actions required by the police at an early stage.

## Post-deployment procedures

Post-deployment procedures ensure that all armed deployments, irrespective of whether weapons have been discharged, are conducted in a manner which:

- ensures the integrity of the legal process in respect of police action, persons arrested or evidential material seized
- enables follow-up action related to any ongoing crime
- identifies any operational or safety-critical issues in respect of procedures, training, weapons or equipment used
- ensures individual, team and organisational learning takes place and is addressed locally and nationally as appropriate

These procedures range from documenting outcomes to structured operational debriefing. The procedures are scalable and forces should apply them in a proportionate manner according to circumstances.

An auditable log of each armed deployment must be made and signed off by an appropriate supervisor or commander in accordance with force policy.

The [National Decision Model](#) provides a structure which can be used to address post-deployment issues and assist as a structure for any debrief process (see [Debriefing](#)).

Following the deployment of authorised firearms officers (AFOs) consideration should be given to:

- the impact of the deployment on the community (see [community impact assessment](#))
- media management and internal communications related to addressing immediate concerns of the public and police officers/staff (see [media releases](#))
- the nature of any debrief to be undertaken
- the requirement for an explanation or, where appropriate, an apology to the people affected

The appropriateness and sequence of the above issues will depend on the circumstances and whether the [criteria for a post-incident investigation](#) have been met. If a post incident investigation is to be undertaken, the suitability of any of the above considerations should be discussed and agreed with the relevant investigative authority. Relevant issues for when an investigation is conducted are set out in [post-incident procedures](#).

Where the post-incident procedure (PIP) is being applied in the context of a marauding terrorist attack (MTA), it may be necessary to consider some additional principles. The overriding priority remains the protection of the public and the preservation of life, whilst ensuring:

- the effective investigation of terrorist activity and bringing offenders to justice
- the maintenance of public confidence by supporting an independent, effective and timely investigation of the police use of force)

## Post-incident procedures

For further information see APP on [statutory duty to refer to the IOPC](#).

Post-incident is the period following the discharge of a firearm, less lethal weapon or specialist munition by the police, where the criteria for a post incident investigation has been met and an investigation into police action is to be conducted. It is not possible to identify or prescribe a time limit after which a DSI occurs and a PIP may be implemented. Any decision should therefore be based on the circumstances and nature of the investigation.

The associated procedures are scalable and, while all elements of the procedure should be considered, it may not be necessary to apply them every time. This will depend on the circumstances, significance and consequences of the event.

The [Code of Practice on Armed Policing and the Police use of Less Lethal Weapons 2020](#) requires chief officers to ensure that operating protocols exist within their forces that define the action to be taken throughout the various stages of an investigation.

## Criteria for post-incident investigations

Post-incident investigations will commence in all situations where there has been a discharge of a weapon by the police (including those involving a conventional firearm, less lethal weapon or specialist munition), whether intentional or unintentional which has or may have:

- resulted in a DSI (these will be subject to mandatory referral to IIA)
- revealed failings in command or supervision
- caused danger to officers, staff or the public

Where incidents have revealed failings in command or have caused danger to officers, staff or the public, consideration should be given to informing the IIA to provide an opportunity for independent scrutiny where appropriate.

If the above criteria are not met, the force should still consider the proportionate application of these procedures, where appropriate.

Where police officers have discharged firearms and less-lethal weapons, it is in the interests of the public, police and everyone involved in the incident for all subsequent procedures to be open and transparent and demonstrate integrity of all actions. Where a post-incident investigation is to take place, and the matter is subject to referral to the IIA; the IIA should be provided with sufficient information to determine whether an independent investigation is required as soon as possible. Further information given to the IIA should include the action taken and arrangements made for them to begin a post-incident investigation. The IIA will determine the nature of the investigation and the extent of their involvement. Incidents not requiring investigation by an IIA may be investigated by a force's PSD, in accordance with local procedures.

## The implementation of a PIP

The decision to implement a PIP rests with the chief officer or delegated senior officer with overall responsibility. An injury that meets the Police Reform Act 2002 s 29 definition of a DSI, and therefore requires referral to the IIA, will not always require the implementation of a PIP. It will depend on the nature and severity of the incident.

In the following circumstances a PIP must be given serious consideration in every case, and implemented, unless it is clear that doing so would not add any value in terms of securing evidence or maintaining confidence in the investigation (see [Assessing the necessity and/or scale of a PIP](#)).

- The injury suffered is/is likely to be life changing for the injured person.
- The injury suffered is/is likely to be life threatening for the injured person.
- The circumstances of the DSI require/is likely to require the declaration of a critical incident (see APP on [Critical incident management](#))

It may be appropriate to implement a PIP in other circumstances where an investigation is to be conducted and the procedure will assist the investigation.

## **Assessing the necessity and/or scale of a PIP**

In assessing the necessity and/or scale of a PIP, the following may be relevant:

- The nature of the scene – what action, if any, needs to be taken to preserve it?
- The evidential retrieval that can take place:
  - officers/staff personal initial accounts – do these need to be obtained/provided as soon as possible? Are there other evidential retrieval considerations in relation to the officers/staff, such as body-worn video, clothing, CED (Tasers), irritant spray, batons, handcuffs, and spit and bite guards?
  - what other evidence is there that needs to be obtained/preserved, such as forensics, in-car footage and Incident Data Recorder downloads?
- The potential impact if evidence is not retrieved immediately. For example, could it be lost, overwritten or become less reliable?
- The potential impact on public confidence that a delay in evidential retrieval, in particular of witness accounts, could have?
- The staff welfare considerations.

- The length of time elapsed between police contact and police knowledge of the DSI.
- The nature and extent of direct police involvement in the DSI circumstances

While this is not an exhaustive list of considerations, it may help in determining the value that a PIP would have in the subsequent investigation or assisting the officers and staff involved.

The decision whether or not to implement a PIP should be made by the chief officer or delegated senior officer, in consultation with the IIA where appropriate, and should be recorded.

## Initial action

Where weapons have been discharged during an armed deployment, the force control room and/or tactical firearms commander (TFC) (where appointed) must be informed as soon as practicable.

Arrangements should also be made to ensure that the strategic firearms commander (SFC) is informed, and also the chief officer on duty/on call, as soon as practicable. The overall responsibility for post-incident procedures rests with a chief officer or delegated senior officer (who has not been involved in the operational phase). This officer will ensure that a process is in place to initiate a PIP when appropriate. This process should include:

- the post-incident investigation (including informing the IIA)
- post-incident management (where appropriate)

The relevant IIA should be informed so that a decision can be made on whether the incident meets the criteria for a post-incident investigation. Where an independent investigation is to take place, the information given to the investigative authority should include the action taken and arrangements made for them to commence a post-incident investigation.

Incidents not requiring investigation by an IIA may be investigated by the force's PSD, in accordance with local procedures.

There are a number of roles with specific responsibilities within a PIP which are described in this guidance. These are:

- initial investigating officer (IIO)
- investigator from an IIA or force PSD
- chief officer (or delegated senior officer)

- SFC
- TFC
- OFC
- post-incident manager (PIM)
- appointed officer

The responsibilities of those involved in the post-incident process, including the strategic, tactical and operational firearms commanders, are outlined in the [post incident responsibilities](#) section.

## Immediate post-incident command considerations

Following the discharge of a firearm, the TFC should initially establish what has taken place (including the extent of any casualties). The TFC should also establish:

- Is any person injured? If so, are they receiving appropriate medical attention?
- Is there an ongoing threat to life or operational imperative that requires continued action from armed officers?
- Are there any new or emerging threats or risks outstanding to any person?
- What control measures are in place in respect of these threats or risks?
- Are there any critical operational safety issues that require immediate attention?
- Are any subjects at large? If so, what action is required to locate them?
- To what extent have the original operational objectives been met?
- What additional resources are required?
- Have relevant scenes been identified?
- What action is required to secure and preserve scenes and evidence?
- Has the appropriate post-incident procedure been implemented?
- Who are the potentially key police witnesses (KPWs) and have they been reminded of the guidance related to conferring?
- Have relevant staff associations been notified?
- Have arrangements been made to hand over to the IIO?
- Has the force professional standards department been notified?
- Has the SFC been briefed?

The TFC's responsibilities will be relevant until they are relieved of their responsibilities or the incident has been brought to a conclusion.

The initial action taken by the TFC should ensure:

- resources are adequately deployed including medical aid, welfare, operational and technical support
- continuity of command of any ongoing crime-in-action
- integrity of process in relation to securing best evidence
- senior command and the IIA are notified of the event
- the community impact is considered and, where appropriate, actions are taken

For any time delay in the arrival of an IIA or PSD investigator, a command decision should be made as to how, and by whom, the scene should be managed and investigatory issues commenced (for example by appointing an IIO).

## Appointment of an IIO

The force in which the incident occurred should consider appointing an IIO. Where practicable, and depending on the nature of the injury, this should be an individual accredited to PIP level 3 (senior investigating officer) and any appointment should be made in consultation with the IIA. The IIO is responsible for taking early steps in the investigation prior to, and in preparation for, handover to an appointed investigator from an IIA or other department.

## Priorities pending the arrival of the IIA

The priorities will usually be:

- meeting any first aid and medical needs
- establishing the circumstances of the incident (see [providing of accounts](#))
- managing and protecting the scene in order to preserve forensic integrity
- identifying witnesses
- identifying KPWs (see key police witnesses)
- separating KPWs (if it is safe, necessary and practical to do so)
- identifying and securing exhibits
- identifying and liaising with the deceased's family (following consultation with the IIA)

- managing community interest, including the media
- considering measures to protect the identity of KPWs where appropriate (see [protecting the identity of officers and staff](#))

Unless the immediate removal or seizure of evidence is necessary to prevent loss or deterioration, or to protect the public from harm, action should only be taken to preserve and control the evidence. Any other actions in respect of its recovery, removal or analysis should only be undertaken with the agreement of the IIA. Any action which is taken to prevent loss, deterioration or harm should be documented along with the justification for taking that action.

## Managed transition

Initial arrangements should enable a managed transition from the operational phase of the incident to the investigation. In this transitional phase, close liaison between the TFC, the IIO and an officer appointed by the force to manage the post-incident process are important.

## Initial actions of the strategic firearms commander

The SFC should make an assessment regarding continuity of command, coordination and police response, following notification of the incident. They should also consider the strategic issues that need to be addressed in respect of the:

- incident
- family
- community
- police force(s) involved
- service-wide considerations

Responsibilities in relation to the welfare of all staff involved are addressed under [welfare considerations](#).

## Management at the scene

Depending on the circumstances, it may not be possible to immediately identify a specific scene(s). Where a scene is identifiable, the Operational Firearms Commander (OFC), where present or available, should ensure scene and evidence protection until the IIO arrives. Where practicable, the

OFC should remind officers/staff of the guidance in respect of conferring; they should liaise with the IIO and, where necessary, with the scene of crime officer. If the OFC is not present or available, the TFC should take responsibility for scene management, or delegate this, where appropriate. The rationale for any decisions or action taken in respect of scene management should be recorded.

## **Threats neutralised, scene safe**

Where weapons have been discharged, officers should take all necessary and proportionate action to ensure that threats are neutralised, the incident is resolved and that the scene is safe. Officers/staff should remain operationally active until stood down.

## **Communication with control room**

The fact that weapons have been discharged, and details of any persons injured or deceased (where known) should be reported to the control room and/or TFC as soon as practicable. Situational and safety critical information should also be relayed as soon as possible.

## **Medical aid**

Providing medical aid is a priority.

## **Secure the scene**

Where possible, and without compromising security of officers/staff and persons in the vicinity, action should be taken to secure the scene pending forensic examination where considered necessary. The IIO, in conjunction with the IIA, will determine the extent to which the scene and potential exhibits needs to be secured.

## **Secure firearms and ammunition**

Securing firearms and ammunition carried by officers is an important part of the evidence-gathering process. Weapons which have been fired should, as far as practicable, be maintained in the condition they were in immediately after being fired, pending forensic examination. Where any police weapon has failed to fire, was discharged unintentionally, or is suspected of any malfunction, it should be isolated for forensic examination.

All firearms which have been discharged, operationally drawn or pointed during the operation should be identified, as this will be relevant information in the post-incident investigation. The IIO, in conjunction with the IIA, will determine which of these weapons need to be treated as exhibits.

Where a subject was in possession of a weapon and that subject has been shot, the weapon should be removed from them and secured. Any other weapons found at a scene should remain where they are located, unless this compromises public safety or the security of the exhibit. Wherever possible, weapons recovered at the scene should not be interfered with or made safe, unless there is an operational or safety imperative to do so.

## Immediate welfare of officers

An officer who is or appears to be injured, traumatised or in a state of shock should have their weapon removed by the OFC or other appropriate and suitably qualified officer. This should, where practicable, be someone who has not been directly involved in the discharge of firearms. The officer removing the weapon should ensure the weapon's security and prioritise safety and evidential integrity at all times.

## Consider separation

The TFC should consider (in consultation with the PIM where practicable) whether officers/staff who are potentially KPWs should be separated (see [separating KPWs](#)).

## Appoint a scene manager

Appointing a scene manager should be a priority for the TFC. The scene manager will be responsible for securing evidence, deploying forensic experts and ensuring forensic recovery in accordance with forensic strategy. Where practical, this should be developed in consultation with the IIA.

## Record information

If and where any subject's weapons have been recovered, the person finding them should record this and relay the information to the person in charge at the scene. Where, for operational or security reasons, it has been necessary to take any action in respect of a recovered weapon, details of the precise procedures followed should be recorded.

As far as possible, the positions of officers at the scene of an incident where firearms have been discharged should be recorded. The incident may, however, demand the rapid movement of officers/staff. This could involve key actions being taken and weapons being discharged by officers from more than one position during an event that is developing rapidly. Officers/staff may also become involved in detaining or searching a subject and/or in providing medical assistance. In these circumstances, precise and accurate recall of where officers/staff were, at each stage of the incident, may not be possible.

Where there is an operational imperative to remove a person, vehicle or equipment from the scene at an early stage, the reason for this should be recorded along with their initial location, for the purpose of any future investigation.

## Body-worn video

Body-worn video (BWV) should be activated by armed officers when they are deployed to an incident (or earlier if required within force policy).

In the post-incident context, the device should continue to record until their arrival at the post-incident suite and when instructed to turn it off by the PIM or their representative.

This will help to ensure that the officers' consequent actions are captured, such as first aid provision and scene management, and will provide reassurance that inappropriate conferring has not taken place (see [conferring](#)).

If it is necessary to turn BWV off (for example, for welfare or privacy), or if recording ceases due to a fault or battery failure, a supervisor should be notified and the reason should be recorded.

## Deal with police vehicles

Unless there is a safety critical reason, police vehicles in which KPWs attended the scene are not to be removed without the express authority of the TFC or the IIO, in consultation with the IIA.

## Return to police station

As soon as is practicable after the scene has been secured, AFOs involved in the incident should return to a police station, or other suitable location, for post-incident procedures. In most circumstances it will be for the OFC (if present) to coordinate this return. This will assist in securing

the integrity of the scene, and enable officers and staff to attend to post-incident issues, including those of evidence and welfare, in a structured and sensitive manner.

## Safety-critical immediate communications

Where officers have discharged weapons, they are permitted, and may be required, to relay situational and safety critical information to those involved in the ongoing management of the incident or operation (see [providing accounts](#)).

## Post-incident management

During a post-incident investigation, the IIA will, at an early stage, wish to identify the witnesses and KPWs. The early identification of KPWs is most likely to be a consideration for the PIM and TFC. This should be done in conjunction with the IIA and the chief officer with responsibility for the PIP.

## Witnesses

Witnesses may be members of the public, police officers, police staff or other emergency responders acting in their professional capacity who have witnessed the incident (whether by sight or sound).

### Key police witnesses (KPWs)

KPWs are police officers or staff who can give direct evidence of the DSI or the circumstances leading to the discharge of firearm(s) or less lethal weapon(s). This definition is flexible and must be interpreted according to the particular circumstances.

KPWs may include those:

- who discharged weapons
- who were at the scene and in contact with the person(s) deceased or seriously injured
- who immediately witnessed the incident or discharge of weapons
- who authorised or commanded the deployment of firearms officers
- who provided tactical advice

As the investigation unfolds, others involved in the police operation may become KPWs.

Where practicable, in the initial stages of the investigation, all actions taken by witnesses and KPWs must be noted and carefully documented. These actions will include:

- securing evidence
- any discussion undertaken between witnesses and other persons
- any account given or facts recorded of the incident

Prior to any KPWs providing accounts of what has happened, welfare – including offering medical and legal advice – should be addressed. Those exhibits directly related to the provision of accounts should be secured. Where practicable involvement of a KPW in securing exhibits should be avoided to ensure independence.

## Conferring

Officers and staff should not confer with others before making their accounts (whether initial or subsequent detailed accounts). It is important that KPWs individually record their honestly held recollection of the circumstances, particularly where force was used. Therefore, there is no need for them to confer with others about what was in their mind at the time of the incident or when force was used.

The recall of witnesses can be affected by hearing the accounts of others. Arrangements for obtaining all accounts should ensure that this potential is avoided.

This guidance should not prevent any officer/staff member from relaying operational or safety critical information to those involved in the ongoing management of the incident or operation. If there is a necessity to provide such information to another person then, in order to ensure transparency and maintain public confidence, the fact that conferring has taken place must be documented, highlighting:

- the time, date and place where conferring took place
- the issues discussed
- with whom
- the reasons for such discussion

## Role of the post-incident manager (PIM)

The PIM facilitates, manages and ensures the integrity of the PIP. Chief officers must ensure that appropriately selected, trained, assessed and accredited PIMs are available.

When an officer or member of police staff has attended, and satisfactorily completed a course of instruction based on the PIM module in the [National Police Firearms Training Curriculum](#), they will be assessed as occupationally competent to perform the role of a PIM.

Chief officers are responsible for ensuring PIMs maintain operational competence by regularly performing the role, or actively participating in relevant continuing professional development. Forces should consider implementing an auditable period of shadowing, mentoring and performance review as a means of achieving operational competence.

## **Refresher training and re-accreditation**

PIMs must undertake annual refresher training. On completing this, a PIM's operational competence should be formally approved by a chief officer, or a person nominated by them. Forces should maintain records of an individual's refresher training as proof of competence.

PIMs must be formally re-accredited at least every five years, but consideration should be given to reaccreditation between three to five years depending on operational exposure.

## **Nominating a PIM following an incident**

The force to which KPWs belong will usually nominate a PIM. This will apply to any policing incident or operation, including those that cross force boundaries. Appropriate support should be available from the force in whose area the incident occurs.

Forces should consider the possibility of incidents crossing force boundaries and have appropriate joint operational force and regional protocols to deal with post-incident procedures. PIMs often perform their role as part of a PIM team, under the direction of an overall PIM.

## **Initial PIM responsibilities**

Further information:

- [Post-incident responsibilities](#)
- [Stage two – PIM basic facts](#)

The PIM should make and record an early decision on which officers and staff will be considered KPWs. They should take this decision in conjunction with the chief officer or delegated senior officer responsible for the PIP, the TFC and the IIO. The outcome of this decision will depend on the circumstances of the incident.

The PIM's responsibilities will normally commence following the return of KPWs to a police station or other area where the PIP will take place. In some situations (for example, where the officers/staff are delayed at the scene), it may be appropriate for the PIM to go to the scene.

The PIM's role is to:

- facilitate the investigation
- ensure the integrity of post-incident procedures
- explain post-incident procedures and developments to KPWs
- consider the need to separate KPWs and record associated decisions or arrangements
- ensure that the welfare of KPWs is considered
- keep KPWs informed of developments

## Protecting the identity of officers and staff

Forces should consider the need to protect the identity of officers/staff who perform armed policing roles.

In the early stages of a PIP it may not be practical to identify or fully understand the implications for the safety of the KPWs and their families. The PIM should therefore ensure that action is taken to implement and maintain the protection of the KPWs identities. This should be in place until it can be safely concluded that it is no longer necessary, or sufficient information or intelligence is available to review that decision. The decision should be kept under review by the relevant chief officer (or delegated senior officer). Any associated decision and supporting rationale must be documented.

The primary reasons that it is necessary to protect the identities of KPWs should relate to the potential:

- risk to them or their families as a consequence of their identity becoming known
- compromise of their policing role (for example, counter terrorism, covert or surveillance roles)

Where there is a legal obligation for a KPW to provide personal details, such as under the Road Traffic Act, the implications should be discussed with the IIO and IIA. If there is any uncertainty, the PIM should consult with the chief officer responsible for the PIP.

It should be explained to officers/staff involved that the protection of their identity may have to be removed at some stage, and that anonymity may not be granted – for instance, because of a challenge or decision made in subsequent legal proceedings. Anonymity can only be formally granted by a court.

Measures to protect the identity of KPWs include:

- maintaining a list of the names of officers/staff involved in the incident (which should be protectively marked, as appropriate)
- using pseudonyms (anonymous references such as 'A', 'B' or 'C') at an early stage (with a list of such references compiled for inclusion in documents)
- securing and restricting access to systems and documents containing details of KPWs (with appropriate protective marking and other measures)
- removing or omitting officer details and identity from communications and circulations, including media releases
- advising all officers/staff of their responsibility to maintain appropriate confidentiality
- advising the IIA, Crown Prosecution Service and other agencies that anonymous references have been used and requesting that identities remain protected until the chief officer or the officer in question has had the opportunity to make representations

Where a pseudonym is given to a KPW, a written record of the KPW's real name and their associated pseudonym must be maintained. This process should be managed, and decisions regarding protection of identities considered, ratified and documented by a chief officer. Following such ratification, the force's PSD should provide a copy to the IIA as soon as practical. This provides them with the necessary information to progress their investigation and deconflict relevant documentation. The transfer of this information between named individuals should be recorded.

## **Weapons and exhibits**

On return to the PIP location, or before if appropriate, it is imperative to secure and preserve:

- weapons that have been discharged or deployed in the immediate vicinity of the shooting

- other equipment that has been used and is relevant to the incident

Weapons and equipment involved in an incident should be handled in a manner that maintains their forensic integrity as exhibits.

When weapons are unloaded and exhibited, consideration should be given to photographing or videoing the process, protecting identity where appropriate. Where this is not practicable, a detailed record of the weapon's condition and the procedure used for unloading it should be completed.

## **Ammunition countback, storage and examination**

In the event that any police firearms have been discharged during an incident, there will be a requirement to determine the number of rounds that have been discharged from the relevant weapons. Where it is unclear, it may also be necessary to unload and assess other police firearms used during the incident to evidence that they have not been discharged. This process is referred to as 'countback'.

The methodology employed must be transparent and must have evidential integrity. Where practicable, it should therefore be observed by representatives from the IIA, as well as the relevant police federation or staff association.

Where practicable, the countback process should not be undertaken by the KPW who has discharged the weapon. To ensure the safety of those involved, the unloading and assessment of the weapon must be undertaken by an individual with the necessary training and competence. For example, this could be a national firearms instructor or an AFO competent in the weapon system.

Those involved or observing must be wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (such as eye and hearing protection). Where there is a requirement to maintain the forensic integrity and/or packaging of the weapon, the process must be overseen by a suitably qualified forensic investigator.

Where the countback process is to be observed by any KPWs, the process should, where practicable, not take place until after those KPWs have provided a personal initial account. This is particularly relevant if any of the KPWs fired that weapon or another weapon. This should ensure that the KPW's recollection of the incident and the number of rounds discharged is not inadvertently affected. Where this is impracticable or likely to cause significant delay, due consideration should be given to the potential impact of the KPW's recollection and subsequent account.

Where there is a requirement to retain and store weapons for the purpose of further investigation, arrangements should be in place to ensure the security and integrity of those weapons. Where practicable, weapons should not be co-located with other operational or training weapons. Storage arrangements should be discussed with the IIA and/or IIO.

All firearms, ammunition, less-lethal weapons and specialist munitions should be dealt with in a manner which ensures that safety, recording and accountability are properly addressed.

IIOs will consider – in liaison with the IIA, where involved:

- which weapons and equipment are required to be secured as exhibits
- whether clothing should be secured
- whether officers and staff should be examined for forensic traces

IIOs should explain this decision to the officers and staff, as well as their representatives, in person. To avoid danger of cross-contamination, a person who has not been in contact or close proximity to the deceased or seriously injured person should secure weapons and equipment.

All officers and staff involved in an incident are required to assist with the forensic preservation of their weapons and equipment. The PIM or officer coordinating collection of weapon exhibits should ensure that they are unloaded and handed over to the appointed exhibits officer at the post-incident suite or other appropriate location. This should be done in a controlled manner by an appropriately trained person. AFOs train with firearms while wearing operational clothing and regularly visit locations at which weapons and munitions are used and stored. Therefore, the evidential value of their clothing for examination may be limited.

KPWs do not have to await the conclusion of the scene examination before their firearms or other exhibits are taken for examination. Where weapons and equipment are no longer required as evidence, arrangements should be made – in liaison with the IIA, where involved – for it to be returned to the relevant department as soon as practicable.

Where there is a requirement to download and secure body-worn video (BWV), this should, where practicable, not be done by the PIM or a KPW. This will ensure the appropriate separation of those individuals from the evidence gathering and investigative process.

## **No dispute over who fired the shots or used force**

If there is no foreseeable dispute as to who fired shots or used force, there may be no requirement for other measures to identify officers/staff, however post incident procedures should still be complied with. Measures, such as securing clothing or taking swab samples to forensically identify officers/staff involved or contaminated by firearms discharge residue, will normally only be adopted in exceptional circumstances. The seizure of personal clothing and/or equipment (not owned by the force or organisation) will be subject to the agreement of the relevant KPW.

When an investigating officer considers it necessary to obtain additional forensic evidence from officers/staff, the PIM will record the rationale and discuss it with the IIO. If the IIO requires additional forensic evidence, the PIM will explain the rationale to the officers/staff concerned and make a record in their policy log. If clothing is to be taken, suitable alternative clothing must be provided.

## Use of force reporting

Where there is a requirement to report the use of force, the PIM will ensure that this requirement, and any associated force policy, is complied with. Completion of this task by a person who has not been directly involved in the incident, or the use of force, will avoid unnecessary complication in relation to the provision of accounts by a KPW (see [Providing accounts](#)). It will also ensure that completion of the report appropriately reflects any considerations with regard to protecting identities (see [Protecting the identity of officers and staff](#)).

## Welfare considerations

The welfare needs of officers/staff should be addressed throughout post-incident procedures.

These needs include:

- first aid and other medical assistance
- securing weapons and equipment
- access to legal, federation, staff association or union advice
- providing refreshments
- toilet access
- making phone calls to immediate family members or partners regarding officers'/staff wellbeing and possible retention on duty
- showering and appropriate change of clothes (giving due regard to any forensic matters to be addressed)

- keeping officers/staff updated regarding developments and how long they may be asked to remain on duty

## Legal advice and support

KPWs should be supported during the PIP by the PIM, and given the opportunity to consult representatives of their staff association or union, as soon as practicable. Every effort should be made to ensure that early professional legal advice is made available in appropriate cases. This is particularly important where officers/staff have used force, as they may be subject to an investigation which can potentially include conduct and/or criminal offences.

Where a police officer/staff member is not a member of either the police federation, staff association or union, there is no obligation on those bodies, or the force to which the officer/member of staff belongs, to provide legal advice. Unless an individual is a member of their respective staff association or union, they will not receive legal advice unless they have made alternative arrangements.

A police officer or member of police staff who is suspected of a criminal offence or conduct matter should not be part of a PIP. In this instance, long-term support should be provided by their supervisors or line manager, where appropriate.

## Medical examination

A registered medical practitioner should examine officers and staff, where appropriate and subject to their consent, as they may have suffered an injury of which they are not aware. All officers/staff should check for injuries to themselves and their colleagues. Such medical examinations are not intended or required as a means to assess the psychological effect of the incident on a KPW, or their fitness to take part in the process or provide an account. Where, however a registered medical practitioner express any concern in this respect appropriate regard should be given to their medical opinion.

Where a registered medical practitioner is called to examine an officer/staff member, they should be provided with sufficient information to enable them to carry out an appropriate examination. Where there is a requirement to provide any other information which may be relevant to the examination, issues regarding protection of identity and the provision of accounts should be considered (see [Protecting the identity of officers and staff](#)).

The most appropriate supervising officer to brief the registered medical practitioner may be the PIM or a member of their team. This briefing should be documented.

## Welfare support

A DSI may affect those involved differently. It is not possible to say who may be affected and to what extent. Those affected, however, may include people at the scene and those who were directing resources (including control room staff and those making critical decisions). Officers and staff who are not directly involved or injured may also be or appear to be traumatised or in a state of shock.

All those involved in an incident, whether they are KPWs or not, should be able to receive support from the occupational health unit or a professional health adviser. This opportunity should be provided within 72 hours if possible.

## Providing accounts

Further information:

- [IOPC Police Witness Policy](#)
- [APP counter corruption](#)

Following the discharge of a firearm by the police, there will be a requirement for those involved to provide relevant information in a number of formats. This will vary depending on the recipient and the purpose of the information. The information provided may become more detailed as the accuracy of recall evolves.

## Effects of trauma on perception and recall

A person involved in a traumatic or life-threatening encounter may experience a range of responses that could affect their perception, memory and recall of key events. These perceptual distortions may then affect the person's ability, immediately after the incident, to recall what happened accurately, including what may be regarded as important details. Officers or members of staff who subsequently recall further information should record this in an additional account.

Providing information and accounts chronologically is a staged process. Particular circumstances of the incident may make it unnecessary or inappropriate to include all the stages outlined. Where a KPW is suspected of a criminal or offence or conduct matter, stages three or four may not apply. They will no longer be treated as a witness and should be removed from the post-incident procedure. Where a KPW is unfit to make a personal initial account, stage three will not be appropriate.

None of the guidance below is intended to prevent officers relaying operational and safety critical information to other officers involved in the ongoing management of the incident or operation.

### **Stage one – situation report**

Following the discharge of firearms by the police, the TFC and/or force control room must be informed as soon as practicable. This notification may be provided by radio or telephone communication (for example, from an officer or member of staff at the scene of the incident). The information provided should be sufficient to provide a situational report which will enable the TFC to manage the ongoing incident, to assist them with discharging their post-incident responsibilities and to inform the IIA about the incident.

### **Stage two – PIM basic facts**

The PIM is responsible for establishing the basic facts of what has happened. Where possible, this information should come from a source other than the KPWs directly involved in the use of force, (see [initial PIM responsibilities](#)). The basic facts are most likely to be provided at the nominated post-incident location by an individual willing to supply them. The basic facts will be provided (subject to legal advice where appropriate) in verbal or written format. A staff association representative and a representative of the IIA may also be present. It may be appropriate for the PIM to advise all of those present of the need to protect the identity of those involved by using anonymous references or pseudonyms. The basic facts obtained by the PIM should, where possible, be sufficient to:

- confirm which officers/staff were at the scene or involved in the incident
- describe, in brief the role(s) of those at the scene or involved in the incident
- confirm who discharged their weapons or used force

The PIM should confirm the basic facts they record, with the person providing them, for accuracy. On completion, the record should be time-stamped, dated and signed by both the person providing

the facts and the PIM. The PIM should hand the original record to the IIA at the earliest opportunity, and both the PIM and the person providing the basic facts should each retain a copy.

Where the only person able to provide the basic facts has been, or may be, identified as a key police witness, the PIM should:

- offer them the opportunity to take legal advice or consult a federation/staff association or trade union representative before obtaining the information
- be aware of the need to take only basic information
- record, date and time all information provided

If this is the first account that the KPW has given, it will be disclosable in court and any differences between this and the KPWs later account may be challenged.

In obtaining this account, the PIM should be mindful that the recall of witnesses can be affected by hearing the accounts of others and should ensure that this potential is avoided.

### **Stage three – personal initial accounts**

Subject to legal and medical advice, KPWs should provide a personal initial account of the incident before going off duty. The personal initial account should consist only of the officer/staff member's individual recollection of events. KPWs should independently record what they honestly perceived, ie, what they think that they saw, heard and did. Where appropriate (for example, where there is an inexperienced member of staff) the KPW may be provided with some support in recording this account. Care should be taken to ensure that this support does not influence the record. The arrangements for the provision of personal initial accounts should be agreed with the IIA, and the process managed by the appointed officer.

The purpose of the personal initial account is to record the witness's role, what they believe to be the essential facts, and should outline the honestly held belief of the circumstances, including their use of force if they used force. Detailed accounts will be made later.

A personal initial account is disclosable in any subsequent legal, conduct or coronial proceedings. It should therefore be recorded on a formal document (for example, MG11 or equivalent), headed with the appropriate statutory declaration in accordance with section 9 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 and Part 16 of the Criminal Procedure Rules 2015. While it is acknowledged that an individual's account may later change (see [Effects of trauma on perception and recall](#)), the

personal initial account must be true, to the best of their knowledge at that time, and include their honestly held belief of the circumstances at that time.

So far as possible, personal initial accounts should include:

- their identity (or pseudonym if appropriate)
- their understanding of the nature of the operation or incident
- their role in the operation or incident
- essential details of their honestly held belief and recollection of the circumstances
- If force was used: the nature of the force used and what the subject was doing at the time force was used

Each personal initial account should be written (or typed), signed and dated. Where a pseudonym has been provided this should be used. The same guidance relating to conferring applies to personal accounts and detailed accounts.

## **Stage four – detailed accounts, statements and interviews**

Detailed accounts are not normally obtained immediately. They can be left until the KPWs involved are better able to articulate their experience in a clear and detailed format. This is usually after at least 48 hours, but may be earlier for those KPWs not adversely affected by the incident.

The detailed account is also disclosable in any subsequent legal, conduct or coronial proceedings and should therefore be recorded on a formal document (for example, MG11 or equivalent), headed with the appropriate statutory declaration in accordance with section 9 of the Criminal Justice Act 1967 and Part 16 of the Criminal Procedure Rules 2015.

The detailed account should include the witness' full recollection of the incident including the matters set out under personal initial accounts.

### **Statements**

The IIA may wish to have detailed statements from witnesses. These statements may be taken by the IIA or be provided by the witnesses themselves. Individual witnesses, subject to the legal advice they receive, will decide how the statements are obtained or provided. Where officers/staff decide to provide their own statements, these should be submitted to the IIA within seven days of

the incident (except in exceptional circumstances).

### Interviews

The police service should be guided by the [Ethical policing principles and the Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing](#). This is essential to maintaining and enhancing a positive relationship between the police and the public.

Under the [Police \(Complaints and Misconduct\) Regulations 2020](#), the IOPC has a power to compel police witnesses to attend an interview. Where this power is invoked and the police witness is unable to attend an interview on the date requested, the witness must propose a reasonable date and time within five working days of the date specified by the investigator.

Police witnesses may be accompanied during the interview (for example, by a legal adviser, staff association, federation or trade union representative) and cannot be compelled to answer questions. How a KPW provides their detailed account will be subject to the legal advice they receive, but it will ultimately be for the KPW to decide.

## Reference material

Reference material may include:

- body-worn video (BWV) footage
- incident logs
- notes taken at the scene or during the incident
- command logs
- recording of communications

Any available reference material, documentation and BWV footage that may be relevant to a DSI following police contact will be essential to the subsequent investigation. It should be secured and managed appropriately.

### Viewing BWV and other reference material and the provision of accounts

The PIM has responsibility for determining whether an officer or staff member may refer to an item of reference material when providing their accounts. The PIM should make these decisions in consultation with the IIA and the IIO or PSD.

It is essential that a KPW provides the most complete personal initial account possible while their memory is most intact and unaffected (go to [Stage three – personal initial accounts](#)).

A KPW should provide an initial account based solely on their personal recollection of the incident. This is to preserve the integrity of their evidence and to avoid contamination from post-event information.

This accords with requirements in the following, which collectively provide the framework for obtaining and preserving evidence in DSI matters:

- [Police Reform Act 2002](#)
- Standards of Professional Behaviour in [The Police \(Conduct\) Regulations 2020](#)
- [IOPC statutory guidance to the police force on achieving best evidence in death and serious injury matters](#)

It is inadvisable for a KPW to view reference material before completing the personal initial account, because of the potential impact on their perception and recollection of events. However, in some circumstances, it may be appropriate for a KPW to view or listen to reference material other than BWV before providing a personal initial account. Examples include:

- log information
- contemporaneous audio
- written notes

Such material may have captured information that helps a KPW accurately recall relevant and essential elements of an incident.

BWV is a valuable corroborative tool but must not replace a KPW's account. It offers a relatively limited perspective and should therefore be used in conjunction with other evidence sources. It may be appropriate for one KPW to view another person's BWV footage, for example, where two officers or members of staff were acting in close proximity and one BWV did not record.

Where the BWV has recorded footage that provides a significantly different perspective than a KPW's personal BWV would have captured, it should not be viewed. Remote footage, for example, CCTV or drone footage, should only be viewed in exceptional circumstances, and with the agreement of the IIA.

The human memory system does not work in the same way as a camera. BWV may therefore present a different visual perspective from that experienced by the KPW at the time. A camera does not, for instance, accurately capture peripheral vision or tactile cues. BWV may, however, provide visual cues that assist a KPW in describing their experience and perception.

Where incidents or 'use of force' interactions are uncomplicated or occur within a short time period, it may not be beneficial – and could even be prejudicial – to view BWV before providing a detailed account.

Viewing BWV at an appropriate time may assist the KPW in:

- recalling specific details, particularly the sequencing of events in complex or protracted incidents
- helping to ensure accuracy in describing the use of force and its justification
- assist with recall of critical evidence, such as the location of objects, the demeanour of individuals, or environmental conditions

Viewing BWV may, however, influence an officer's memory, consciously or unconsciously. As a consequence, their accounts may unintentionally include details they did not perceive during the incident.

KPWs should therefore not feel obligated to describe everything that the BWV has captured if they have no personal recollection of it. This could prejudice officers' accounts and lead to further scrutiny.

Any decision regarding the point at which a KPW views BWV should be made following careful consideration of the circumstances and the implications for the KPW's memory and recall. This decision, as well as supporting rationale, must be recorded by the PIM following consultation with the IIA and IIO or PSD.

There may be circumstances where there is an understandable difference between what has been captured in reference material and what the KPW has recalled and reported in their personal initial account or detailed account. The KPW may be able to explain any differences within their detailed account or in a subsequent account, depending on whether they view the relevant reference material before or after provision of the detailed account.

If BWV is viewed before providing a detailed account:

- the officer or staff member must document the prior viewing of BWV in their account
- a personal initial account that meets the APP criteria should have been previously completed (go to [Stage three – personal initial accounts](#))
- the PIM must record the rationale for this
- the account should distinguish between what the officer recalls from their own memory and what is observed from the footage to the extent possible
- the reason and timing of the viewing must be included
- the account should clarify, where possible, differences in the personal initial account

## An early requirement for information

There may be circumstances where it is critical, for operational or safety reasons, for officers/staff to provide more detailed information of events that took place at an earlier stage. This could be to address issues associated with a person who is now in custody or in relation to an ongoing criminal investigation, for example, where a person was not arrested at the scene.

Each individual police officer and member of staff involved in the incident is responsible for ensuring that any information relevant to the investigation is reported, recorded and retained. This information should include each individual's observations relating to the incident and any accounts received from witnesses. Once those involved have been able to make their initial accounts, the PIM will make arrangements to secure these accounts and make them available to the investigative authority.

## Separating KPWs

As soon as a firearms has been discharged by police, or it is known that a DSI following police contact has occurred, the TFC should consider and decide whether KPWs should be separated to prevent them from conferring; where practicable, this should be done in consultation with the PIM. The PIM or responsible chief officer will review and may override any decision to separate KPWs, or may decide to separate them at a later stage, as appropriate.

Officers/staff need not be separated as a matter of routine. The decision on whether or not to separate KPWs should be based on the consideration of three separate questions in turn:

### 1. Is separation safe?

Officers/staff should never be separated unless, and until, it is operationally safe to do.

## 2. Is separation necessary?

The TFC may consider that separation is necessary to prevent conferring where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that one of the following is true:

- a KPW has committed a criminal offence
- a KPW has committed misconduct
- this guidance is not being complied with and officers/staff may confer inappropriately

Where there are no such reasonable grounds and where there are sufficient control measures in place to prevent inappropriate conferring (such as the presence of an appointed officer or representative of the IIO or IIA), separation is unlikely to be necessary.

## 3. Is separation practical?

If it is operationally safe to separate officers/staff, and if the TFC decides that it is necessary, they must consider whether it is practical to do so, based on:

- the location of the incident
- the number of officers/staff who might need to be separated
- the resources available to achieve separation

## The decision-making hierarchy

Safety must be the foremost consideration. Where separation is safe, necessity should then be considered. If both safe and necessary, separation may occur only where it is practical in the operational circumstances. For example, if separating officers/staff is practical but not necessary, it is not required. Separation should never occur when it is not safe under the circumstances.

## Record keeping

The rationale for any decision to separate or not to separate KPWs should be recorded, together with the measures put in place to prevent conferring.

## Integrity

The 2023 [Code of Ethics](#) consists of two parts, both of which are non-statutory.

- Ethical policing principles, which provide support in making ethical decisions for everyone in policing.
- Guidance for ethical and professional behaviour in policing, which describes how policing professionals should behave, in a way that makes it easy for them to understand those expectations and avoid unprofessional behaviour.

The Code of Ethics is complemented by a statutory [\*\*Code of Practice for Ethical Policing\*\*](#), which provides chief officers with direction on promoting and supporting ethical and professional behaviour in their forces. Chief officers have a statutory duty to have due regard to the Code of Practice for Ethical Policing in discharging any functions to which it relates.

Police officers and staff should ensure that all activity is transparent and capable of withstanding scrutiny. Where an officer or member of staff has concerns that the integrity of the process is not being maintained, they must immediately address the person in charge of the post-incident process and ensure their concerns are documented. Officers are entitled to legal advice and support. Such legal advice is, however, unlikely to be provided by their force or organisation and is usually provided via police federation, staff association or trade union membership.

Officers/staff involved in the incident should avoid discussing the detail with officers and staff not involved in the incident, unless there is an operational imperative to do so. This is to prevent rumours and to protect the identity of those involved.

## **Supervision by an appointed officer**

A chief officer is ultimately responsible for initiating and managing the post-incident procedure. The chief officer should appoint an officer to supervise gathering KPWs evidence; they must ensure the guidance on conferring has been complied with before their accounts are recorded.

The appointed officer should, where practicable, be of substantive inspector rank (or equivalent) and be an accredited PIM. They must be appointed in addition to the PIM and not have held an operational or investigatory role in the original incident. Their responsibility for ensuring compliance with guidance begins when the KPWs arrive at the post-incident suite. Responsibilities include supervising KPWs while they make personal initial accounts and detailed accounts are made (unless such accounts are provided during an interview or are recorded).

The appointed officer must record their observations and actions in full. The following support may be appropriate:

- establishing who the KPWs are
- ensuring access to legal representation/staff association/trade union or force legal services where necessary or requested
- reinforcing the guidance on conferring to all KPWs
- preventing any inappropriate conferring
- ensuring that any reference material used by officers/staff is secured and handed to investigators against a receipt/exhibit number
- documenting the process by which accounts are provided (including interruptions, breaks, abstractions and any conferring)
- ensuring that all accounts are time-stamped by those making them as soon as practicable after completion

## Supervision by the IIA

Where the IIA requests access to the post-incident suite, it should be provided. This access should be managed by the PIM, but access will not be extended to medical examinations or private consultation with legal or staff association/trade union representatives. KPWs should be appropriately consulted, in the early stages of the PIP, regarding any meeting being considered between them and the IIA.

## Security and welfare of officers

The PIM will initiate an early threat assessment to determine whether there are any security issues that may affect any police officers or staff involved in the incident. This will allow the PIM to recommend that the force puts the appropriate control measures in place to ensure the safety of the officer(s) and staff and, where necessary, their families. An ongoing threat assessment process will continue until it is no longer required.

By their very nature, incidents resulting in a DSI, following contact with the police, attract public interest and can be highly emotive and stressful for all involved. As a consequence, the investigative function and the chief officer's duty of care to officers and police staff involved must be high priority. This also extends to welfare, including physical, psychological and medical support.

Additionally, police staff associations and trade unions have arrangements for providing advice, support and legal advice to their members.

In facilitating these services, investigating officers, PIMs, and staff association and trade union representatives have distinct roles, which include demonstrating integrity in all communications between each other, and in record making, debrief procedures and processes.

## KPW's families and homes

The relevant force(s) should consider whether the families of the KPWs involved should be informed and, if so, this should be done in consultation with the KPW. The families of KPWs may require extended welfare, medical and professional support from force occupational health and welfare advisers. Where contact is made by a force, it will alert families to the possible reactions of those involved in such incidents and afford them the opportunity to discuss this situation.

It is important to consider the security of a KPWs home at an early stage. The cost of any appropriate measures should be met by the KPWs force. Forces should have a policy on providing security and protecting the identity of KPWs in appropriate cases.

The [Police Firearms Officers Association \(PFOA\)](#) offers valuable additional support and appropriate services to relevant officers and their families.

## Family liaison

For further information see APP on [family liaison](#).

In any incident where a person(s), other than a police officer or member of police staff, has died or been seriously injured following police contact, consideration should be given to the use of family liaison officers. (FLOs). Depending on the circumstances, this will often be the IIA's responsibility.

It can also be beneficial to use FLOs to support the families of police officers who have been significantly affected by firearms incidents, especially where the officer's identity has become known to the public.

## Defusing

Defusing is a short and informal welfare-focused process designed to give immediate support to staff. Where practicable, this should be facilitated by trained staff and should take place as soon as possible after the event and, in any case, prior to concluding duty. Where appropriate, occupational health support should be considered.

The defusing process may help officers and staff recognise and manage the reactions and feelings that they are experiencing, or may experience, as a result of what they have been involved in. Care should be taken to ensure that matters directly relevant to the incident are not discussed in order to prevent contamination of any subsequent accounts.

## Early support

Consideration should be given to having a suitable person (for example, a trusted colleague not otherwise involved in the incident) assigned to stay with an officer or member of staff who has, or appears to have been, traumatised or significantly affected during the hours immediately following the incident. In appropriate cases, this person should subsequently accompany the officer home.

## Special leave or suspension from duty

Special or administrative leave may be granted to a KPW when appropriate. There may, however, be circumstances where such leave is not in their best interests. The individual, and their staff association or trade union should be consulted.

Suspension from duty should not be routine. When it is necessary to suspend a KPW, this will be a matter for the appropriate authority for the force concerned. They should still be able to contact colleagues in the police service, provided this will not compromise any subsequent investigation or the circumstances are such that this may not be appropriate. The decision regarding suspension should be reviewed following formal updates on the progress of the investigation every 28 days or 'by exception' following any significant changes. Officers and staff under suspension should continue to receive appropriate medical and welfare support.

## Authorisation

An officer's authorisation to carry a firearm operationally should not automatically be removed because of their involvement in an incident, nor should they be automatically excluded from firearms training or other related duties.

A chief officer within the force should make an evidence-based assessment as to when officers and staff should be permitted to resume their previous duties or any other armed policing role (for example, training). This includes duties or roles in which they have access to firearms. The assessment should be documented and should give due consideration to the status of any outstanding conduct or judicial process, having consulted with the IIA, the force PSD and the occupational health advice provider.

Any decisions made in respect of a KPW's duties should reflect public interest and confidence, and should be formally communicated to all interested parties.

A chief officer should regularly review, in consultation with the IIA, any decision to restrict or remove a KPW from their core role.

Officers who have discharged their firearm must complete a mandatory occupational health post-incident support programme provided by their force.

## Debriefing

Once an armed deployment has been concluded, a full debrief should be considered where potentially time-critical safety issues have been identified. Where such a debrief is being considered prior to the provision of KPW accounts, the IIA should be consulted. Prior to officers/staff finishing duty, the senior supervisory officer should also consider if there are any outstanding issues that need to be addressed.

Large or protracted operations should include arrangements for a specific debriefing session, in order to learn lessons and identify promising practices or areas for development related to, for example, command structure and processes, tactics and/or equipment used. All debriefs should be documented.

## Organisational learning debrief

It may be appropriate to undertake an organisational learning debrief where the criteria for post-incident investigation have been met and an independent investigation has commenced.

Organisational learning debriefs provide an opportunity to identify potential safety related improvements. Forces should use the information collated in organisational debriefs to inform a

wider analysis of patterns and trends, so that they can regularly challenge and improve methods and procedures.

Where conducted in the context of a post-incident investigation, careful facilitation and identified terms of reference are required to ensure that the matters discussed do not compromise the ongoing investigation.

Such a debrief should only take place after providing detailed accounts or evidential statements to the IIA; and where there is an indication that, having considered available evidence, there is no suggestion of criminal action or misconduct on the part of anyone attending the debrief. Where such criminal acts or misconduct have been identified, this should be taken into account in determining whether a debrief is appropriate. Legal advice should be obtained as appropriate.

The IIA, and where required, the police senior investigating officer for the crime investigation relating to the original incident, should be informed that an organisational learning debrief is being considered and they should be provided with the terms of reference. Any observations or objections should be documented for consideration when a decision is made on whether such a debrief is appropriate under the circumstances.

## **Is an organisational learning debrief appropriate?**

Although any decision to undertake an organisational learning debrief while an independent investigation is ongoing will be based on the facts, in general terms the most likely areas for consideration will be:

- safety
- asset allocation
- command structures and access to tactical advice
- tactical capability to respond to an incident

It is not appropriate to address the specific actions of individuals, evidential issues relating to witness accounts or scene, and post-incident management during such a debrief.

The decision relating to conducting an organisational learning debrief should be taken by an individual who did not perform an operational or command role in the incident being debriefed. This decision and its supporting rationale should be recorded.

## Who should conduct an organisational learning debrief?

The individual(s) tasked with facilitating the debrief should have an appropriate knowledge of local and national guidance related to armed policing and should be an accredited PIM who did not perform an operational or command role in the incident being debriefed. Where this cannot be achieved, a trained debriefer, supported by a PIM, should be used.

## Record keeping

A record of those attending the debrief, and a suitable summary of the discussions should be maintained. This summary should include areas of possible good practice and areas for development, which will support the organisational learning and improvement. If officers/staff have had their identity protected, the debriefing process should not undermine this.

The National Armed Policing Secretariat has a responsibility for disseminating good practice and lessons learned. Forces are encouraged to submit early reports to the secretariat at [npcc.national.armedpolicing@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:npcc.national.armedpolicing@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

## Documentation and disclosure

All original documents and statements generated as a result of an incident must be handed over to the force PSD or IIA at the earliest opportunity (see [Reference material](#)). All material obtained in the course of an investigation that may be relevant to the investigation must be retained for disclosure purposes.

## Media releases

Subject to any operational reasons, a cooperative and open media strategy should be adopted in consultation with the IIA. A clear factual account of the incident should be provided at the earliest opportunity and great care must be taken to avoid compromising any subsequent judicial proceedings.

Consideration should be given to the appointment of a specialist media officer who has knowledge of armed policing, such as the nature of training given to officers, the guidelines under which officers may discharge firearms and the kind of firearms carried. Any media strategy should be formulated in accordance with existing protocols with the relevant IIA (for example, [media protocol](#))

**between NPCC and the IOPC**).

It may be appropriate to share information publicly, prior to a decision being taken by the IIA regarding the requirement for an independent investigation. Such a media release may include:

- why something has been referred to the IOPC/reassurance that the incident has been referred to an independent body
- information and circumstances around a pre-planned or intelligence-led operation that has led to a referral to the IOPC or an IOPC investigation
- factually correct information about, for example, why police were in the area or numbers of police in the area
- commentary on any parallel criminal investigation by the police
- other matters impacting on local people or the wider public interest

Once an investigation has been designated as directed or independent, the IIA will take the media lead in relation to its investigation.

Once an investigation has been designated as directed or independent, the IIA will take the media lead in relation to its investigation. For further information see **Communication**.

In circumstances where a provoked shooting has occurred, the detail and content of information released to the media should be carefully considered. See **Suicide and bereavement response – Reporting self-harm and suicide in the media**.

Precautions should be taken to protect the officers/staff and their families from unwanted publicity. The chief officer (or delegated senior officer) must ensure, via the PIM, that where practicable, the KPWs and their representatives are informed of all media releases prior to their circulation, and are able to make representations on their behalf. This may prompt officers/staff to consider their families and others likely to be affected by a media release and allow them to make early arrangements to cater for any foreseeable problems.

The safety and welfare of officers/staff and, where appropriate, any information that might unintentionally identify officers/staff concerned with the incident, should not be passed to the media. Preserve the protection of identities where appropriate, and, in addition, exercise sensitivity in completing internal force publications or reports concerning the incident. Care must be taken when

using communications systems, including mobile phones.

## Progress of the investigation

The [Police Reform Act 2002](#) (England and Wales) defines 'interested persons' and requires that they should be kept informed of the progress of the investigation. Where the investigation is being undertaken by the IIA, this will be their responsibility.

Forces should put procedures in place to ensure that regular updates are provided. The host force should consider providing an ongoing PIM or force liaison officer (either full or part-time) to facilitate this.

While KPWs cannot be 'interested parties', as defined within the Police Reform Act 2002, the act allows (subsection 3) 'the Commission and the police also to treat as interested persons other people whom they consider have an interest in the handling of a complaint or recordable conduct matter and who have consented to being kept informed'.

Procedures for providing updates should be agreed and documented, and may include a meeting with officers/staff involved in an incident as soon as practical after it has occurred. In any event, officers/staff and their representatives should be provided with terms of reference of the investigation within 48 hours. They should be updated on the progress of the investigation every 28 days or 'by exception', following any significant changes.

It will be normal for the IIA to brief the force concerned on the current status of the investigation, usually no later than 28 days after the incident.

## Post-incident responsibilities

The following is a summary of some of the post-incident roles and responsibilities referred to above.

### Operational firearms commander

- remains operationally active until stood down
- reminds officers/staff of the guidance in respect of conferring, where practicable

- in the absence of the TFC, ensures that the scene is protected and that evidence is preserved until the IIO arrives
- ensures that the weapon(s) or perceived weapon of the subject is located and secured in situ, subject to safety and evidential considerations
- ensures officers carry out a weapon safety check
- liaises with the IIO and, where necessary with the crime scene investigator
- supervises unloading the weapons and identifies which weapon was carried by each officer

## **Tactical firearms commander**

- remains operationally active until stood down
- reminds officers of the guidance in respect of conferring, where practicable
- ensures that the scene is protected and that evidence is preserved until the IIO arrives
- considers the safety of the public and police personnel and the immediate welfare of casualties
- considers which officers/staff are to be treated as KPWs (in conjunction with the chief officer or delegated senior officer, IIO and PIM)
- considers whether KPWs need to be separated
- ensures the transfer of officers/staff to the point incident location
- establishes the facts of what has taken place and ensures that all relevant information is recorded
- informs the force control room (where appropriate) of the incident
- informs and briefs the force chief officer (or delegated senior officer)
- determines the rendezvous point for incoming resources
- briefs and formally hands over to the IIO
- informs and briefs the SFC

## **Strategic firearms commander**

- remains in a position to maintain command until the strategic intention of the operation is achieved or they are relieved
- continues to be available to the TFC, if required
- informs the chief officer or delegated senior officer of the incident
- ensures all relevant information is recorded

## **Chief officer (or delegated senior officer)**

- has overall responsibility for post-incident procedures
- initiates the post-incident investigation (including informing the IIA)
- ensures that the investigation and welfare procedures are implemented
- appoints a PIM
- appoints an IIO
- assigns the appointed officer
- ensures that the KPWs are identified
- considers which officers/staff are to be treated as KPWs (in conjunction with the chief officer or delegated senior officer, IIO, TFC and IIA)
- considers referral to the IIA
- subject to referral to the IIA, agrees the media strategy
- ensures, via the PIM, that where practical the KPWs and their representatives are informed of all media releases prior to their circulation
- ensures that all relevant information is recorded

## The IIO

- has early dialogue with the IIA to agree responsibilities and key actions
- opens a policy log and ensures all relevant information and decisions are recorded, including issues related to protecting identity
- agrees initial terms of reference with the chief officer or delegated senior officer
- identifies and preserves evidence
- ensures effective scene management
- considers which officers/staff are to be treated as KPWs (in conjunction with the chief officer or delegated senior officer, PIM and TFC)
- identifies and considers relevant national guidelines
- liaises with the TFC on initial action at the scene
- liaises with chief officers on media policy
- liaises with and consults the PIM
- makes early contact with the appointed investigator from the IIA
- carries out those enquiries deemed urgent and those that may assist in collating evidence which may be lost prior to the arrival of the investigator from the IIA
- agrees initial objectives in relation to forensic evidence
- makes early contact with the pathologist (where appropriate)

- liaises with the scientific support coordinator

## The PIM

- opens a policy log and ensures all relevant information and decisions are recorded, including issues relating to protection of identity
- considers which officers/staff are to be treated as KPWs (in conjunction with the chief officer or delegated senior officer, IIO, TFC and IIA)
- establishes immediate contact with the KPWs and ensures that they are given immediate support
- reminds KPWs of their responsibilities regarding the discussion of the incident with colleagues (see [conferring](#))
- considers whether to assign a member of the PIM team to each KPWs
- advises all relevant members of staff that post-incident procedures have been implemented and explains the PIM role
- meets the IIO or any representative from the IIA
- takes measures to ensure the physical and emotional wellbeing of the staff involved
- considers the attendance of a doctor or health adviser
- ensures access to telephones to enable officers/staff to contact relatives or friends
- informs relevant departments and agencies of the need to attend, if required (eg, the occupational health unit, doctor or FME and staff associations/trade unions as appropriate)
- ensures that any necessary forensic procedures are dealt with as early as possible and that officers/staff are fully informed of the relevance of the procedures (for example, seizing exhibits)
- facilitates the process in which police officers and staff provide initial accounts and ensures these (where made) are provided to the investigator
- secures early legal advice or representation if requested by a represented KPW
- decides whether a KPW may refer to an item of reference material when providing their accounts (this decision should be made in consultation with the IIA)
- maintains dialogue with the IIO and addresses issues with them, including press releases and the progress of the investigation, to update staff involved

## The appointed officer

The appointed officer must fully record their observations and actions. The following support to the PIM may be appropriate:

- establishing who the KPWs are
- ensuring access to legal representation/staff association/trade union or force legal services where necessary or requested
- reinforcing the guidance on conferring to all KPWs
- preventing any inappropriate conferring (and review the decision to separate where appropriate)
- ensuring that any reference material used by the officers/staff is secured and handed to investigators against a receipt/exhibit number
- documenting the process by which accounts are provided (including interruptions, breaks, abstractions and any conferring)
- ensuring that all accounts are time-stamped by those making them, as soon as practicable after completion

## Tags

Armed policing