

# Core planning principles

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First published 23 October 2013 Updated 11 September 2018

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7 mins read

Effective decision making should underpin all planning.

## Role of the police

The police have core operational duties which include:

- protecting life and property
- preserving order
- preventing the commission of offences
- bringing offenders to justice

The police have additional duties that are prescribed under legislation and common law.

When planning a police response, it is imperative that commanders have a clear understanding of the role that police will perform during the operation. Once committed to undertaking a role outside the core or otherwise statutory and common law duties and obligations, individual commanders may be held accountable for any police activity or inactivity regarding that commitment. Chief constables (or their equivalents) are also likely to be held responsible (for example, when taken to court). Chief constables, as the employers of police staff, may be accountable in respect of police staff actions.

## Human Rights Act 1998

The Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA) requires all public authorities, including the police, to act in a way which is compatible with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) unless they are prevented from doing so by primary legislation, or by secondary legislation made under the primary legislation which cannot be interpreted compatibly with the convention. The ECHR Articles incorporated into UK domestic law which are most relevant to policing include:

- [ECHR Article 2](#) (the right to life)
- [ECHR Article 3](#) (the prohibition of torture)
- [ECHR Article 5](#) (the right to liberty and security)
- [ECHR Article 8](#) (the right to respect for private and family life)
- [ECHR Article 9](#) (freedom of thought, conscience and religion)
- [ECHR Article 10](#) (freedom of expression)
- [ECHR Article 11](#) (freedom of assembly and association)
- [ECHR Article 14](#) (prohibition of discrimination)
- [Protocol 1, Article 1](#) (right to peaceful enjoyment of property)

Human rights principles underpin every area of police work. From basic probationary training through to senior management courses, officers learn that human rights must sit at the heart of the conception, planning, implementation and control of every aspect of the operations of the police service. [Section 3 of the HRA](#) requires that the police must interpret and apply their legislative powers in a manner which is compatible with the ECHR.

## Police use of force

Whenever the use of force is necessary, both the general public and members of the police service expect police forces to:

- respect and protect human life, and minimise damage and injury
- exercise restraint in such use and ensure that their responses are proportionate and necessary in the circumstances and consistent with the legitimate objective to be achieved
- ensure that assistance and aid are rendered to any injured or affected persons at the earliest practicable opportunity

Staff responsible for planning and conducting policing operations where the use of force is a possibility should plan and conduct them so as to minimise, to the greatest extent possible, recourse to the use of force.

## Planning for interoperability

It is good practice to have regular, joint local training, exercising and meeting between individuals and organisations who will work together during major events. This is essential to engender trust,

understanding and familiarity, which support information sharing and aid the collective problem-solving process.

Five considerations help to foster the interoperable approach to operational planning.

For further information see [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#).

## Plan in partnership

Multi-agency planning can be of benefit only if the emergency services and partner agencies work to a common aim and understand each other's capacity and capabilities. In addition, understanding the roles and responsibilities of each service and agency, and the individuals within those organisations assists in ensuring that the common aim and objectives are met. In some cases there is a statutory duty to plan in partnership.

## Plan to scale up

Practices, processes and systems that operational staff and communications operators use daily to deliver interoperability can simply be scaled up when required. Processes and systems that are unfamiliar to staff can present an obstacle to effective working.

## Set up systems

Organisations need to ensure that their systems are prepared for interoperability. When using Airwave radio, for example, there should be a profile available on an integrated command and control system (ICCS) and fully integrated command and control system (FICCS) to reflect the range of talk groups required during a major incident. This enables communications operations to rapidly switch from their normal working profile to a major incident command and control profile with which they are familiar.

## Train staff

Staff should be trained to make the best use of the plans and systems created. This is particularly true for communications operators. The skills they require in multi-agency command and control for communication and coordination during a major incident are usually different from those used during normal business.

## Exercise the plans and processes

Ensure that appropriate staff are trained and skilled in understanding the systems and processes within their own organisation, and the way in which they interact with their partners. Organisations must exercise the plans together to test knowledge of each plan and its operational validity.

## Communication

Effective communication is essential to resolving every type of incident or operation. Everyone involved in the process of command should be clear about their roles and responsibilities, particularly where partner agencies are involved in delivering the strategy.

Full interoperability between the police service and partners can help to support decision making and improve understanding of the incident or operation. Effective interoperability can also help brief those staff involved in the response, and provide a mechanism that ensures the public receives consistent information. [JESIP](#) provides further detail.

## Benefits

The benefits of effective communication to a police operation may include:

- a no surprises approach to the police response
- building trust and confidence
- establishing and maintaining links with communities, groups, partners and other stakeholders
- ensuring the most appropriate policing style is adopted
- identifying and mitigating any potential for escalation of threat

## Communications plan

Communication issues can be complex. The gold commander's strategy should include a documented communications plan to assist with the coordination of internal and external communications.

For further information see the [APP on engagement and communication](#).

## Media plan

The gold commander's strategy should also include a plan to coordinate the police management of the media.

This plan details how to use the media to:

- support and maintain public safety
- provide information to the public
- gather information from the community
- promote public confidence in policing
- minimise the fear of crime

## Public liaison during an operation

In some cases the police operation may result in a large demand for information from the public. This applies particularly to major or critical incidents.

Although not always obvious, information and apparently trivial details might have considerable significance for those people making inquiries. The gold commander's strategy should clearly define the amount and style of information to release to the public.

Communication between the police and the public is possible via the police use of digital and social media. If this is used, care should be taken in the manner in which information is released, and assumptions should not be made about how that information may be interpreted by the public. Plain language must be used.

## Record keeping

With the benefit of hindsight, it is easy to criticise a decision if the rationale that underpins it has not been recorded. If a police operation results in a case review, complaint or public inquiry, it may be several weeks, months or years before an officer is asked to recall what happened and why decisions were made.

Where practical, each level of command should maintain a record/log (for example, written or audio/video-recorded) to provide an audit trail of decisions and supporting rationale.

The record may be subject to disclosure. It should be used for one operation only, and created and maintained in accordance with Government Protective Marking Scheme (GPMS) guidelines.

## Regional operations

A regional operation or incident has implications for more than one police force within a particular region. Where an operation or incident crosses police force boundaries, the chief constables (or equivalents) of the forces involved should consult each other and establish a formal command structure under a single regional coordinator. Where an operation or incident requires multiple force collaboration, forces should consider using the most appropriate and readily available resources and should not be constrained by regional boundaries.

## National operations

A national operation or incident has implications for all the police forces in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The nature and scale of a national operation or incident is likely to involve the activation of the Cabinet Office briefing room (COBR) and will require regional and local coordination.

Response to a national operation or incident of a terrorist nature will involve the use of counter-terrorism coordination structures.

## Tags

Operations