

Homicide prevention debrief process

A debrief process for homicides or 'near miss' incidents, completed as soon as appropriate after the offence to capture early learning and good practice.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Homicide Investigation Leadership, development and learning
Organisation	Essex Police
Smarter practice	Essex rapid debrief process – Homicide prevention framework
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Region	Eastern
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Scale of initiative	Local

Key details

Target group	Adults Children and young people General public Offenders Victims
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Aim

The aims of the debrief process are to:

- help understand risk and vulnerabilities in relation to a specific homicide or near miss homicides
- support the effective management of ongoing incidents
- promote reflective practice between police and partner agencies
- identify 'quick-time' learning to prevent future homicides

Intended outcome

The debrief process has four main intended outcomes.

1. Identify learning for offender management and safeguarding.
2. To quickly identify, understand and learn from any previous contacts between the police, victim and/or offender prior to the incident, to see if any opportunities for intervention were missed.
3. To assess whether any of the learning from the particular incident can help improve responses to future crimes.
4. To provide recommendations for action based on lessons learned.

Description

Incidents considered eligible for a debrief process are primarily identified through force daily management meetings. Incidents currently considered in scope include homicides and near miss offences resulting from domestic and non-domestic serious violence.

Homicide prevention debriefs are primarily an internal police process. Partner agency involvement is however seen as positive and is encouraged. Attendance is by invite on a case-by case basis. Where not directly achievable through the debrief process, recommendation can still be made to pursue through existing partnership arrangements.

Resourcing

The Essex Police review team has ownership for the debrief process. The review team is a dedicated resource that provides a review function to the Serious Crime Directorate and wider force. The team consists of two review officers and one assistant review officer.

Debrief process

The review team starts the debrief process by defining the parameters of the incident being debriefed. The team also produces a chronology document outlining key issues, which they use to support a debrief meeting.

Attendees at the debrief meeting analyse the incident of serious violence or homicide. A document of learning and actions is produced from this meeting.

A debrief working group ensures in-force accountability for any learning and actions from the debrief meeting. Governance oversight is held by a homicide prevention board.

Overall impact

The debrief process has led to Essex Police revising some of its working arrangements in relation to homicide. These improvements have included:

- additional and improved training
- improved relationships with partner agencies
- more effective processes for dealing with mental health calls to the police
- more robust risk assessment processes
- a proactive approach towards homicide prevention

Examples of targeted improvement actions achieved to date include:

- updated management of s135 warrants

- the creation of a mental health risk management board
- updated training on coercive control
- updated governance for the grading of risk assessments

Following the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services' (HMICFRS) [Homicide prevention: An inspection of the police contribution to the prevention of homicide](#) in August 2023 a workshop was held by the national homicide working group to promote the debrief process.

Learning

Essex Police highlights the following considerations for forces seeking to implement a debrief process.

Where possible, forces should include those with knowledge of the particular incident in the debrief process. Having this knowledge can speed up the process and avoid creation of additional work for the team leading the debrief process.

Officer nervousness around their actions being scrutinised can lead to hesitancy about putting forward cases for a debrief. In this respect, the learning ethos behind the debrief process needs to be filtered through to all levels.

There is potential risk for debriefs to overlap with criminal investigations and/or statutory reviews. While this risk is considered minimal, any concerns in this area should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Risks are considered to be minimal due to:

- debriefs being conducted within policing and trusted partners, not with victim family members or witnesses
- the senior investigating officer of the criminal investigation being involved in the debrief process
- debriefs being conducted too early to contribute to statutory reviews

Using existing partnership frameworks or official processes for contacting partner agencies can expediate identifying the right external attendees for the debrief process.

Forces should consider having officers trained in both debriefs and reviews in their review team. Nationally trained debriefing officers who also have investigative and review experience will be well

placed to conduct homicide prevention debriefs.

The debrief process should be initiated and piloted with recognition of the fact that the process may not be perfect. The process will need to be reviewed and tweaked along the way to suit the force, its partners and local circumstances.

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Tags

Homicide