

# Senior responsible officer (SRO) role

Role and responsibilities of the SRO when implementing Right Care Right Person in force.

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## About this guidance

This guidance outlines the:

- role and responsibilities of the senior responsible officer (SRO) in the project delivery of Right Care Right Person (RCRP)
- relationship between the SRO, partners and other key leadership roles in RCRP
- wider organisational impact of RCRP
- key considerations for critical success factors, risks and implementation advice

This guidance was developed in consultation with police stakeholders, partners and forces that have implemented changes incorporating RCRP principles.

## Who this guidance is for

This guidance aims to provide direction and advice for:

- the SRO in fulfilling their duties
- senior management teams when appointing SROs and overseeing their implementation of RCRP
- people working closely with SROs, such as project managers and departmental leads

Confusion about leadership roles can be a risk to strategic project governance and can undermine accountability. This can jeopardise the success of RCRP. It's therefore important to clarify what each role is accountable for and how they relate to each other.

- [Smarter practice example – how RCRP works in practice in Humberside](#)

## Scope of this guidance

RCRP implementation should initially focus on force control rooms. This is the focus of this SRO guidance.

Other functions within forces are also impacted by RCRP – for example, vulnerability hubs and multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH). These functions are outside of the scope of this guidance. However, they are equally as important and the impact on these areas must be understood from the outset. Significant culture change is required to implement RCRP and maintain sustainable changes organisationally.

## SRO role and responsibilities in implementing RCRP

The SRO has ownership of:

- project leadership – ultimately ensuring that vulnerable people are given the right support when they need it
- outcomes and defining what success looks like – including monitoring and evaluating impact, effectiveness and learnings
- managing stakeholder relationships and partnership engagement

### Project leadership

A phased approach in consultation with partners is recommended when implementing RCRP. Each phase needs strong leadership with clear accountability to be successful.

The SRO provides direction by:

- taking ownership of the business case and objectives
- chairing the project or programme board
- making decisions about the future of the project, while considering changes to the overall partnership, social, environmental or technological context, and any risks
- ensuring that the project remains justifiable and that assurance reviews and approvals are undertaken at the right time
- working with partners to address any barriers to ensure successful delivery
- taking corrective and preventative actions where required to meet project milestones
- ensuring the solution meets the needs of the organisation
- ensuring the project represents value for money, and has continuing strategic fit and relevance
- keeping the senior management team informed of progress, risks and issues

- referring any decisions above their delegated authority to the senior management team

## Outcomes

The SRO is accountable for realising the benefits of RCRP. They need to understand:

- what the benefits of RCRP are
- how delivery of the project leads to the required benefits
- how these benefits are quantified and measured through baselining and evaluation

The SRO is accountable for ensuring that the benefits are aligned to force's policy or strategy, such as their departmental objectives.

The SRO remains accountable for the project decisions they make during implementation until after the project ends. However, the responsibility for realising RCRP's benefits may be transferred to another person after project closure. As such, the senior responsible owner needs to understand who will own each benefit and how they will be reported on. While this is likely to be departmental heads, it still needs consideration.

## Defining success

The SRO owns the requirements for the project by defining what success looks like. They provide a common understanding of the outcomes for all phases of RCRP on behalf of the senior management, project team and stakeholders. This may involve the SRO having to negotiate and reach compromises with senior stakeholders who have conflicting requirements or needs.

The SRO is accountable for ensuring that RCRP:

- aligns to the agreed principles of the [national partnership agreement](#)
- achieves the outcomes set out in the project plan

## Stakeholder relationships

The SRO must champion the project to ensure ongoing support from internal and external stakeholders and partners. This can include building relationships and collaborating with:

- partner agencies, including charitable and third sector organisations
- senior and operational leaders

- people with lived experience of receiving the right care from the right emergency service

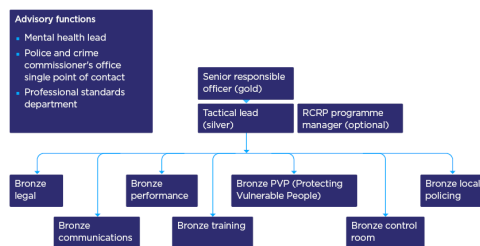
The SRO should use these relationships to make sure that the objectives and benefits of the project are communicated and understood, and to address any concerns.

- [Communications plan considerations for RCRP](#)

## Governance and command structure

The following structure is a suggested representation of who may be involved in a RCRP implementation board. This list of roles is not exhaustive. It should be adapted to meet local needs.

1. Gold command – SRO.
2. Silver command – tactical lead and optional RCRP programme manager.
3. Bronze command – legal, communications, performance, training, protecting vulnerable people (PVP), control room, local policing.
4. Advisory functions – mental health lead, police and crime commissioner's office single point of contact, professional standards department.



Command structure for RCRP

## Critical success factors

The following factors have been identified as critical to the success of implementing RCRP in forces.

## Planning and infrastructure

- Review current demand to identify a baseline. This is used to monitor progress and evaluate the impact of implementation.
- Buy-in at chief officer and PCC level.
- Regular feedback and reporting to the PCC and regular monitoring of the risk register.
- Investment in a dedicated implementation team.
- Governance structures that involve internal and external stakeholders at the right level.
- Ongoing consultation with ethics committees and independent advisors.
- A comprehensive internal and external communications plan.

## Policies and procedures

- A partnership escalation procedure embedded within force policies.
- Adherence to the principles of RCRP.
- Ensuring that policy and decision making is in line with legal responsibilities and duty of care thresholds.

## Implementation

- Involving mental health leads and subject matter experts in the implementation process.
- Access to a police mental health advisor based within the control room.
- Training designed to support the principles and implementation phases of RCRP.

## System change and partnership considerations

Effective working with partners and key stakeholders is essential for the success of RCRP.

Identifying and working with partners at an early stage ensures a joined-up approach to achieve good practice and build confidence in the delivery of RCRP locally.

Key considerations include:

- understanding the [national partnership agreement](#) and its principles before conversations with partners
- identifying key stakeholders and partners by conducting a comprehensive stakeholder analysis
- developing and maintaining a stakeholder engagement plan

- undertaking a review with partners to understand the challenges and opportunities in implementing RCRP – consider SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) and gap analysis
- engaging partners early and identifying where you are in terms of general compliance with RCRP principles
- establishing a partnership governance structure and terms of reference, which may include involving partners within task and finish groups
- setting realistic and achievable timescales with partners. (Consider the internal governance of partner organisations, specifically where partners may need to amend services that may require commissioning, policy, and internal implementation processes.)
- the role of the SRO in maintaining engagement between chief officer and chief executive levels, who are pivotal for gaining buy-in and building trust and confidence
- the SRO needs to be empowered by the chief officer team to ensure the implementation of RCRP is maintained in line with the agreed timescales. (While police forces ultimately determine the time frame for implementing the RCRP approach locally, it should be established following engagement with health, social care, and other relevant partners.)
- the role of the SRO in establishing good practice and service improvement opportunities
- determining and communicating the risks to implementation, including oversight of the risk register by the PCC

## Partnership protocols

The need to agree and fully understand each agency's role and their jurisdiction is embedded within the core principles of RCRP.

Protocols will need to be developed at a local partnership level to set out the lines of responsibility for each agency. Once agreed, these changes to ways of working must be communicated to staff within each agency and guidance provided.

The SRO should oversee a review of the partnership protocols as part of the implementation of RCRP, to include consideration of the following aspects.

- Identifying the lead agency and defining the role of others in responding to specific types of incidents.
- A review of applicable force policies in line with RCRP national legal advice (consult with your force's legal team).

- Identifying the need for the creation of additional force policies or expansion of current policies from gap analysis.
- Where a partnership response is required, detailing an agreed approach to how will each agency's role be communicated and recorded for post-incident scrutiny and learning purposes.
- Agreeing a formal review process for partnership protocols at relevant time intervals or following significant change, such as new legislation.

## Information sharing considerations

The SRO should ensure the force has well-developed and clear information sharing agreements (ISAs) with relevant partner agencies to cover any protocols impacted by RCRP implementation. These ISAs should be regularly reviewed at force level by appointed information managers.

For detailed guidance on information sharing, see:

- [SHARE: consent, confidentiality and information sharing in mental healthcare and suicide prevention \(Department of Health and Social Care, 2021\)](#)
- [The Caldicott Principles \(National Data Guardian, 2020\)](#)
- [our Information management authorised professional practice \(APP\)](#)

## Control room considerations

Our [Policing in England and Wales: Future Operating Environment 2040](#) report outlines the challenge of the scale of change required in policing. This applies to the response to vulnerability in the processes within our police control rooms.

The report illustrates the depth of the challenge faced by policing to modernise our approach.

*Policing faces difficult choices about how to upgrade its processes, capabilities and governance structures to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century – simply patching up or tinkering with existing processes or structures may not suffice. If policing is to meet the challenges and demands of the next 20 years (and beyond), it may need to explore radically different models of leadership, governance, citizen engagement and service delivery, potentially ceding sovereignty on a variety of issues to communities or private actors.*

### **Future Operating Environment 2040, College of Policing**

Control room staff can find it difficult to decide that police will not be attending a call for a service – particularly where it involves vulnerable people or a request from partner services.

Control room staff may be concerned about the consequences of adverse outcomes and whether there will be criticism of their decision. These are often difficult decisions, particularly where complex mental health legislation comes into play.

Key considerations include the following.

- Explain that RCRP is about ensuring that members of the public receive the right care, from the right agency and why this is important.
- Engage with staff and listening to their concerns.
- Build confidence by explaining the level of chief officer and organisational support, which is reflected in policies.
- Set out the importance of using the decision-making toolkit or THRIVE (threat, harm, risk, investigation, vulnerability and engagement), and recording their rationale for decisions.
- Explain that training and support will be available during implementation.
- Highlight that the RCRP programme is built on extensive legal advice and is underpinned by national guidance.
- The force response to adverse outcomes is an important factor in maintaining staff confidence.
- Identify any risk of incident reporting outside of the control room processes, where there may be other routes to request assistance from the police by partners or the public. (This may include direct contact with safeguarding, PVP teams, or community teams.)
- Introduce a quality assurance system for control room staff and senior leadership team decision-making, to support continuing professional development.

## **Frontline policing considerations**

It's important that frontline police officers and staff understand the RCRP decision-making thresholds within the force control rooms. This ensures that officers have trust and confidence that incidents have gone through a robust decision-making process before allocation, which is underpinned by policy and protocol.



The decision to attend an incident is determined by assessing that it meets the RCRP threshold. The decision to use powers under the Mental Health Act is made by an officer at the scene of an incident.

Key considerations include the following.

- Frontline officers may be risk averse when making decisions to detain a person under section 136 of the Mental Health Act, which may lead to increased detention rates.
- Frontline officers should understand how to access professional advice and policies to support decision making.
- Frontline officers should understand the risk factors that make it appropriate to remain with a person at a place of safety.
- Frontline officers should understand when it is appropriate to support the voluntary attendance of a person at a health facility.
- Delivering RCRP training to frontline officers and supervisors can support better understanding of legal responsibilities and force policy.
- Ensure that frontline officers are aware of the escalation process and have confidence to use it where required.
- Explore opportunities to ensure that data is captured within frontline policing to better understand demand, to review the effectiveness and impact of RCRP, and to capture use of the escalation process.
- Ensure that the internal communications plan includes regular targeted communications and updates to front line officers.

## Risks and assurance

Early identification of potential risks is critical to the success of implementing RCRP. It ensures risks can be recorded in risk registers, before being managed and responded to.

See our [APP on Risk – Principle 5](#) for guidance on managing risk.

## Three lines of defence model

A risk assurance process should be in place from the start of the RCRP project until RCRP becomes business as usual. This process should be open to scrutiny through relevant PCC scrutiny

and assurance routes.

The impact of RCRP extends across several business areas. The selected risk assurance method should therefore ensure that forces can fully assess the impact of each implementation phase.

One method is the three lines of defence model. This separates assurance into three broad categories by defining roles and responsibilities and how they should operate in an integrated way. The model can be used for RCRP projects at the following levels.

1. First line of defence – each department that owns and manages routine operational risk to ensure appropriate standards are being used.
2. Second line of defence – each senior management team, independent of operational management, to ensure first level of assurance is properly designed, in place, and operating as intended.
3. Third line of defence – use of independent audit to provide senior management with a critical and objective opinion on the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal controls, including the effectiveness of the first and second levels.

## Key considerations

Key considerations include the following.

- Lack of understanding of the RCRP principles.
- Absence of chief officer and PCC level buy-in.
- Unclear governance structure involving internal and external stakeholders.
- Maintaining effective partnership relationships.
- Lack of investment in a dedicated implementation team.
- Inability to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation due to lack of data.
- Inconsistent approach leading to challenge and resistance.
- Ineffective internal and external communications strategy.
- Absence of any partnership escalation procedure.
- The force response and management relating to any adverse outcomes.

## Go-live checklists

## Key milestones

**Download the key milestones checklist as an editable Word document.**

- SRO identified and command structure established (gold senior management team, silver SRO and bronze department).
- Early and regular engagement with the PCC or relevant police governance lead in recognition of their responsibilities. This involves ensuring an open and transparent approach between the chief officer and PCC.
- Programme manager identified and implementation plan developed.
- Evidence base – understanding vulnerability and mental health demand across each business area.
- Determine RCRP phasing and implementation timeline – programme management and review points established.
- Key policy decisions made by the SRO for each phase of RCRP.
- External stakeholder analysis and mapping.
- Senior leaders partnership group established.
- Tactical partnership group established.
- Force communications plan developed.
- Stakeholders briefed in accordance with engagement plan.
- Staff survey and engagement plan with unions and Police Federation before going live.
- Mental health expertise embedded in RCRP implementation plan.
- College of Policing APP reviewed for consistency with RCRP-based policies.
- Key performance indicators agreed and communicated.
- Evaluation plan agreed with performance team.

**Absent without leave (AWOL) and walk out of healthcare facilities****Download the AWOL and walk out of healthcare facilities checklist as an editable Word document.**

- Evidence base – understanding demand – review AWOL and walk out of healthcare facilities incidents using the contact officer decision-making toolkit to understand the potential impact of RCRP.
- AWOL and walk out of healthcare facilities policy in place or embedded in existing force policy.

- Stakeholder engagement conducted and key internal and external stakeholders briefed.
- Training of contact officers completed (more than 90% of contact officers trained).
- Date identified for go-live and consideration of smaller-scale go-lives for each new shift that comes on duty.
- Media considerations and draft media statement.
- Floorwalkers identified for control rooms and plan of support.
- Quality assurance plan in place to assess quality of decision making (including qualifiers added to systems).
- Escalation policy in place and agreed with partner.
- Train the trainers identified and trained.
- Wider force training on AWOL and walk out of healthcare facilities.
- Human rights and equality impact assessment completed.

## Concern for welfare

**[Download the concern for welfare checklist as an editable Word document.](#)**

- Evidence base – understanding demand – review a day's worth of concern for welfare and mental health calls for service using the contact officer decision-making toolkit to understand the potential impact of RCRP.
- Concern for welfare policy in place or embedded in existing force policy.
- Contact officer decision-making toolkit designed, tested and ready for use.
- Trial of the contact officers' use of the toolkit to determine any difference in average handling times.
- Train the trainers identified and trained.
- Baselining conducted and additional qualifiers added to system.
- Policy decision on whether checks will be conducted by contact officers prior to a decision not to deploy.
- Training of contact officers completed (more than 90% of contact officers trained).
- Stakeholder engagement conducted and key internal and external stakeholders briefed.
- Media considerations and draft media statement.
- Date identified for go-live and consideration of smaller-scale go-lives for each new shift that comes on duty.

- Floorwalking plans put in place – identify individuals and upskill for floorwalking and develop floorwalking rota (minimum of six weeks of floorwalking recommended).
- Escalation policy in place and agreed with partners.
- Wider force training on RCRP concern for welfare.
- Human rights and equality impact assessment completed.

## Conveyance

**[Download the conveyance checklist as an editable Word document.](#)**

- Evidence base – understanding demand – review police conveyance incidents to understand the potential impact of RCRP.
- Relevant force policy areas reviewed and updated.
- Formal handover form developed (compliant with Webley 2015 principles) and consideration as to how to capture data.
- Stakeholder engagement conducted and key internal and external stakeholders briefed.
- Memorandum of understanding agreed and signed (for example, ambulance trust and commissioned service through health).
- Escalation policy in place and agreed with partners.
- Date identified for go-live and consideration of smaller-scale go-lives for each new shift that comes on duty.
- Media considerations and draft media statement.
- Train the trainers identified.
- Frontline resources trained on Webley handover and data capture requirements.
- Quality assurance plan in place to assess quality of decision making (including qualifiers added to systems).
- Human rights and equality impact assessment completed.

## Mental Health Act s136 and voluntary mental health patients

**[Download the Mental Health Act s136 and voluntary mental health patients checklist as an editable Word document.](#)**

- Evidence base – understanding demand – review force section 136 of the Mental Health Act detentions and voluntary mental health admission incidents to understand the potential impact of

### RCRP.

- Stakeholder engagement conducted and key internal and external stakeholders briefed.
- Relevant force policy areas reviewed and updated, and medical incident policy signed off.
- Train the trainers identified.
- Trial of the contact officers' use of the toolkit to determine any difference in average handling times.
- Training of contact officers completed (more than 90% of contact officers trained).
- Baselining conducted and additional qualifiers added to system.
- Webley handover form developed and consideration as to how to capture data.
- Date identified for go-live and consideration of smaller-scale go-lives for each new shift that comes on duty.
- Media considerations and draft media statement.
- Floorwalkers identified and plan of support.
- Wider force training on RCRP section 136 and voluntary admission.
- Quality assurance plan in place to assess quality of decision making (including qualifiers added to systems).
- Human rights and equality impact assessment completed.

## References

- Axelos. (2017). 'PRINCE2 6th edition'.
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## Tags

Mental health   Operational policing