

Rapid debrief process – Essex Police

Essex Police operates a rapid debrief process for incidents of homicide and serious violence that could have resulted in homicide.

First published

19 October 2022

Key details

Topic	Violence including homicide
Organisation	Essex Police
Target group	Adults General public

Smarter practice

Overview

The aim of the rapid debrief process is to:

- identify early learning to prevent future homicides
- support the effective management of ongoing incidents
- promote reflective practice and the reviewing of police and partner agency actions

The rapid debrief process exists to identify lessons learnt. It also helps understand risk and vulnerabilities in relation to a specific incident and wider organisational matters. Most importantly, the process offers opportunities to prevent future homicides.

Problem

Essex Police began rapid debriefs in early 2022 following an unusually high number of incidents of homicide and serious violence over a short period of time.

The force was looking for a way to analyse key homicide issues more quickly, to inform the development of targeted preventive action. In particular, they wanted to gain golden hour learning from near misses of homicide.

The force therefore initiated a short pilot to develop and implement a rapid debrief process in relation to homicide prevention. The process is subject to ongoing development and refinement.

Response

The rapid debrief process involves a meeting to conduct a swift and early analysis of an incident. This includes police and partner agencies, where appropriate. The parties:

- review the response to the incident
- assess the arrangements in place and any learning to be taken to inform the prevention of future homicides

Rapid debriefs have been deliberately labelled as debriefs rather than 'rapid reviews'. This is so the terminology reflects the intention for these debriefs to be agile and timely, as opposed to a review which can be more detailed and in-depth.

The rapid debrief process has four main purposes.

1. To focus on a particular incident and the people connected to it, to identify learning for offender management and safeguarding.
2. To 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 learnt.

Rapid debriefs were originally intended to focus only on non-domestic serious violence and homicide near misses. Their scope now also includes homicides and incidents of domestic violence.

Essex Police define homicide near misses using the following offence categories.

- Attempted murder (002/00).

- Cause/allow death or serious physical harm to child or vulnerable person (004/07).
- Conspiracy to murder (003/02).
- Wounding with intent to do GBH (005/01).
- Malicious wounding excluding sub-category of minor wound without intent (008/01).
- Arson endangering life (056/01).
- Endangering life (5E all sub-categories).

This change was driven by requests for a rapid debrief process from senior officers leading homicide and domestic violence criminal investigations. The ability to flex the original scope of the rapid debrief process reflects the ethos of continuous learning behind the process.

Rapid debrief logic model

Problem

- High volume of homicides and serious violence in Essex over short period of time.
- Ministerial concern over homicide levels in the county.

Response – rapid debrief process

- To provide golden hour learning.
- To inform the development of targeted preventive action to reduce homicide.

Response – resources

- Essex Police review team.
- Senior investigating officer of homicide/serious violence incident.
- Internal stakeholders linked to homicide/serious violence incident.
- Partner agencies linked to homicide/serious violence incident.
- Internal stakeholders to share learning, for example, learning and development department.
- Detective chief superintendent for rapid debrief process approval and oversight.
- Assistant chief constable for rapid debrief process approval and oversight.
- Rapid debrief process working group.
- Homicide prevention board.

Response – meetings

- Daily management meetings – identification of incidents for rapid debrief process.
- Rapid debrief meeting – subject matter expert discussion.
- Rapid debrief working group – review of actions and outputs from rapid debrief meeting.
- Homicide prevention board – governance for rapid debrief process.

Response – documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meeting research into the incident of homicide/serious violence and to establish rapid debrief process parameters. • Post-meeting documentation of learning and actions for force/partner agencies.
Outputs	<p>Examples of targeted improvement actions achieved to date include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updated management of section 135 warrants(opens an external website in the same tab) • creation of mental health risk management board • updated training on coercive control • updated governance for the grading of risk assessments
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved, intelligence-led force approach to homicide prevention.

- [View the logic model as a poster](#)

Implementation

How the rapid debrief process works

Incidents currently considered in scope for a rapid debrief process include homicides and near misses of homicide resulting from domestic and non-domestic serious violence.

Incidents considered eligible for a rapid debrief process are primarily identified through force daily management meetings. However, individuals can also request for an incident to be reviewed if it fits the homicide or serious violence criteria. A detective chief superintendent or local policing assistant

chief constable approves each referral.

The Essex Police review team has ownership for the rapid debrief process. The review team is a dedicated resource that provides a review function to the Serious Crime Directorate. The rapid debrief process is one of their key functions. The team consists of two review officers and one assistant review officer. The team benefits from retired police officers working in some key roles, helping the team to understand the strategic aim of the rapid debrief process right from the pilot stage.

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

The review team ensures that relevant subject matter experts and partners attend the rapid debrief meeting. The meeting aims to bring together those with knowledge of the incident (including the senior investigating officer) and those who can deliver improvements as a result of the learning, such as the force learning and development department.

The rapid debrief meetings take approximately 90 minutes and are chaired by a member of the review team. [Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act \(CPIA\)](#)[\(opens an external website in the same tab\)](#) impacts are recognised, and a warning to this effect is read out at the start of the meeting.

Following the meeting, the review team produces a succinct summary of learning (one or two pages). This document highlights action points to be followed up based on the identified learning. Where relevant and appropriate, the review team distinguishes between organisational, project and partner level action points. Where examples of good practice are seen, these are also highlighted in the report. (From February 2022 to July 2022, the review team has conducted eight rapid debriefs and 67 actions have been generated.)

The review team aims to complete the rapid debrief process within seven to fourteen days of the homicide or serious violence incident occurring. However, when scheduling the rapid debrief, the team considers whether the timings could cause any potential disruption or resource pressures for the ongoing criminal investigation. The team also considers the risk of missing important information the force is not yet aware of by conducting a rapid debrief process too early. For

example, previous history, intelligence and history with partners.

Learning from the rapid debrief process is disseminated and delivered through the force governance structure. This includes a rapid debrief working group and homicide prevention board.

The working group meets every six weeks to ensure that action points from the rapid debrief process are disseminated appropriately across the force. The group also ensures that any action points discussed in previous working group meetings have been followed up.

Rapid debrief process summary

1. Homicide/serious violence incident identified for rapid debrief process (RDP) at daily management meeting.
2. RDP approved by detective chief superintendent or assistant chief constable.
3. Review team creates parameters for RDP and establishes key incident information.
4. Rapid debrief (RD) meeting held with key internal stakeholders and partner agencies.
5. Document of learning and actions produced.
6. RD working group ensures in-force accountability for learning and actions.
7. Governance oversight held by homicide prevention board.

Rapid debrief process summary

Enablers for implementation

Senior level engagement

A chief superintendent created the initial process document introducing the rapid debrief process and outlining intended objectives. The proposal for rapid debriefs was subsequently presented at the force homicide prevention board where a two-month pilot was agreed.

Organisational culture

The willingness to flex and evolve the rapid debrief process has been considered key to its success in Essex. There has been organisational support for the learning ethos behind rapid debriefs, with the process benefitting from chief officer awareness and sponsorship.

Flexibility of the process

The rapid debrief process has been adapted and improved continuously since initial implementation, acting on learning in real time. The force did not strive to have a fully sophisticated process developed before they started the pilot.

Most key decisions made during the rapid debrief process are conducted by professional assessment. Being able to operate without strict and unmovable criteria enables the review team to assess the requirements for a rapid debrief process (including start date, key stakeholders and report length) on a case-by-case basis.

There is some flexibility to exceed the 7 to 14-day timeframe of the rapid debrief process. This flexibility enables a balance between allowing attendees time to prepare for the rapid debrief meeting and having enough proximity to the incident to capture relevant learning. This flexibility also allows the senior investigating officer of the criminal investigation to participate in the rapid debrief process without disruption to their own investigation.

Governance structure

A key consideration with rapid debrief processes is ensuring that learning from the process is distributed back across force. Essex Police manages this through their governance arrangements. The force homicide prevention board and the rapid debrief working group form key structures to distribute and act upon learning.

Resources

The expertise, knowledge and experience of the individuals who lead on the rapid debrief process is felt to be a real enabler to the successful implementation of the initiative. The review team's leadership skills, organisational knowledge and understanding of risk, vulnerability and homicide were reported as being important to the delivery of the rapid debrief process.

Essex Police has identified that there is enough workload generated from rapid debriefs for a single individual in the review team to be in charge of the end-to-end process as a full-time role. Secondments have been identified as a potential way to increase capacity in the team.

Partnership working

Essex Police operate both single and multi-agency rapid debrief processes. The multi-agency participation provides opportunities to develop collaborative working arrangements, such as the sharing of data and the early identification of required interventions. Including partner agencies in

rapid debriefs is believed to be a key factor in ensuring a rounded and inclusive gathering of views.

Outcomes and impact

There is currently no formal measure of impact in place for the rapid debrief process. Assessments on the effectiveness of the process have been based on feedback from those being debriefed, those doing the debriefing and those in force receiving the end product. The force recognises the need for additional evaluation.

However, the rapid debrief process has led to Essex Police enhancing some of their working arrangements in relation to homicide.

These improvements have included the following.

- Additional and improved training. For example, a rapid debrief identified that officers did not have consistent understanding of what coercive control looks like. Coercive control was updated in officer training packages within weeks.
- Improved relationships with partner agencies. For example, a rapid debrief identified a problem with the management of mental health warrants. Rectifying this issue has improved relationships with mental health services.
- More effective processes for dealing with mental health calls to the police. For example, a rapid debrief identified that some mental health partners were failing to disclose incidents of abuse from patients to the police. This finding resulted in updated training for officers to give mental health partners confidence in police responses.
- More robust risk assessment processes. A rapid debrief has resulted in risk assessment grading amendments needing to be approved at detective inspector rank.
- A proactive approach towards homicide prevention.

Learning and recommendations

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

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

- Officer nervousness around their actions being scrutinised can lead to hesitancy about putting forward cases for a rapid debrief. In this respect, the learning ethos behind the rapid debrief process needs to be filtered through to all levels.
- There is potential risk for rapid 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:
 - rapid debriefs being conducted within policing and trusted partners, not with victim family members
 - the senior investigating officer of the criminal investigation being involved in the rapid debrief process
 - rapid debriefs being conducted too early to contribute to statutory reviews
- Having a partnership framework or official process for contacting partner agencies can expediate identifying the right external attendees for the rapid debrief process.
- Forces should consider having officers trained in both debriefs and reviews in their review team. Nationally trained debriefing officers need to have investigative/review experience as well as being able to construct a debrief.
- The rapid 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