

# Media briefings

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 23 February 2026

Media briefings may be considered at any point during an investigation or critical incident and can also be considered for strategic purposes, such as:

- setting out a force's priorities and challenges and mid-term to long-term plans
- in response to a trust and confidence issue
- to provide clarity around misinformation or disinformation being shared online
- in response to a review, inquiry or inspection
- to launch a campaign or initiative

Circumstances where a media briefing might take place include:

- to provide information that is in the public interest
- to support operational or strategic objectives
- to reassure the public and highlight good police work
- to inform the public and local community of an innovative technique or noteworthy inter-agency cooperation
- to deter future offenders or prevent crime
- to help manage media needs in a high-profile case
- to encourage accuracy and informed reporting of a complex case
- to inform potential debate after a trial

Media briefings should be for accredited media who hold a UK Press Card. and include those with a letter from the editor of a title regulated by the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) or Ofcom or similar. Requests from individuals who do not hold a UK Press Card may be considered on a case-by-case basis and a record should be kept of this decision.

Senior investigating officers (SIOs) should liaise with corporate communications departments (CCDs) about planning and arranging briefings. The rationale for the briefing must be recorded by either the CCD or the SIO. This should consider whether or not an embargo agreement is required. If one is required, it should have signed agreement from the media and should be retained for audit

purposes.

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) should always be consulted prior to any police-only briefings held in respect of criminal investigations or proceedings. This is to advise on the risk of prejudice to any criminal justice proceedings presented by the release of information at the briefing.

## Supplementary products

Other products that may form part of the wider communications package include:

- press releases
- fact sheets
- interviews (broadcast and print)
- digital content for owned channels

## Briefing categories

It is up to the officer-in-charge (OIC) and media representative to clarify the basis on which a media briefing is taking place. It is also important to clarify the language that should be used to describe these briefings in conversations with journalists, to ensure a mutual understanding of what is expected.

There are three types of media briefing that could be deployed:

- reportable briefing
- non-reportable background briefing
- non-attributable background briefing

## Reportable briefing

Reportable briefings are when all disseminated information is attributable to the speaker and reportable by the media. This is the preferred option of the three types of media briefing. It should be regularly considered by forces where it is appropriate to engage with the media – for example, on:

- investigations
- operations

- major critical incidents
- any strategic purposes previously listed

## Press conference

A press conference is a form of reportable briefing that is usually a formal and scheduled event.

Press conferences can:

- include a statement or announcement
- include a Q&A session with journalists
- be for live broadcast

## Non-reportable background briefing

A non-reportable briefing is a briefing where all disseminated information is, at the time, for guidance or direction. By default, the information is not immediately reportable by media. This is an important way of communicating with the media on information not available to be made public. It is most commonly used during:

- fast-moving incidents
- ongoing high-profile investigations
- major incidents

## Non-reportable briefings and court cases

Non-reportable briefings may be considered ahead of some criminal cases going to court. This can:

- inform journalists of the facts of a case or incident
- provide guidance on otherwise unknown sensitivities
- provide guidance on legal points
- provide information on details that could have an operational impact

Communications teams should always record the rationale for a briefing not being reportable. They should agree this with the head of communications and senior operational lead.

## Non-attributable background briefing

A non-attributable background briefing is reportable but not attributable to a named police source. Non-attributable briefings should generally not be used. Where they are used, this should be only

on a case-by-case basis by exception.

## Media briefings linked to criminal proceedings

Media briefings linked to criminal proceedings, particularly in high-profile or sensitive cases, should be considered. Embargoes may be used to delay the release of information shared in a media briefing.

Any media briefing linked to criminal proceedings must follow the [CPS Media Protocol](#).

### Pre-trial briefings

Pre-trial briefings are:

- embargoed briefings given to the media before the start of a trial
- most commonly used in high-profile, sensitive or complex trials
- used where briefing will help the media to report a case accurately and improve the management of release of materials used in court by planning ahead
- disclosable to the defence

Pre-trial briefings are held where the police and CPS jointly agree.

### Pre-verdict briefings

Pre-verdict briefings are embargoed media briefings that take place after a trial has started but before a verdict is given. It should be made clear to the media that any information supplied that may prejudice a trial must not be printed or broadcast until the end of a trial and only then in the event of a guilty verdict. Media organisations should sign an indemnity agreement before the briefing and communications officers should record the content of the briefing.

All media briefings provided for broadcast or publication before the conclusion of a trial, including interviews with officers, must be impartial and must not comment or speculate on whether a defendant is guilty.

Forces should assess the risks in deciding whether to grant media pre-recorded interview requests.

### Pre-sentence briefings

Pre-sentence briefings are briefings that take place after a verdict but prior to sentencing. The same guidance applies and, in this case, pre-recorded interviews on guilt can be undertaken.

## Tags

APP