

Multi-agency response training for child death incidents

An immersive training course for police and partner agencies focusing on how to respond to complex child death incidents.

First published

21 April 2026

Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Public Protection, Safeguarding & Vulnerability Child abuse Investigation
Organisation	Staffordshire Police
HMICFRS report	National child protection inspections: Staffordshire Police 12–23 May 2025
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Key details

Partners	Police Education Health services Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2024
Scale of initiative	Regional
Target group	Children and young people

Aim

The aim of the training is to provide a clear understanding of relevant legislation, while equipping participants with the confidence to sensitively explain the processes to families in acute and challenging environments.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the training are to:

- improve multi-agency collaboration to adhere to statutory guidance
- improve attendees' confidence in responding to child deaths

Description

Staffordshire Police conducted a review of current training provisions and identified a gap in how the force and partner agencies respond to child deaths. In response, the force developed a child death simulation training package to improve early identification of criminality, and support staff welfare throughout the process.

Planning process

The content of the training was agreed at the force's bi-monthly child death investigation forum. The child death co-ordinator presented potential scenarios and the responses of partner agencies. After the content was agreed, a working group was established six months prior to the launch and included representation from:

- Staffordshire Police
- West Midlands Ambulance Service
- University Hospitals of the North Midlands
- local social care providers

The purpose of the working group was to design the scenarios and training. The training was reviewed and approved by the learning and organisation department to ensure the initiative met the force's objectives.

Child death simulation training

The child death simulation training was launched in July 2024, brings together colleagues from all statutory agencies (police, health, ambulance and children services) to create an environment which encourages shared learning and responsibilities.

The training is held on an annual basis for 50 participants across the partner agencies. The training is now mandatory for all inspectors in Staffordshire Police. Officers and staff are allocated places based on their skills requirements.

Each scenario has been designed to reflect local challenges, risks, and emerging issues across the county. The simulated child death cases are delivered within the University of Staffordshire's simulation suite. The scenarios include:

- a fully furnished flat for the initial scene response
- ambulance transport
- arrival at the emergency department
- initial resuscitation
- partner agency investigative activity
- engagement with the family

- multi agency review meeting

At the end of each stage, a structured debrief is conducted with all participating agencies. This is a safe space to explore decisions, reflect on practice, and understand participants' roles.

Collaborative reflections encourage participants to embed learning, strengthen professional relationships and deliver high-quality responses across the region. The debriefs also enable Staffordshire Police to identify good practice and areas of improvement.

The course is reviewed and refined after each delivery to ensure the maintenance of professional competence, safeguarding quality, and that the training is fit for purpose. Feedback is gathered through verbal and written feedback channels, and live video feedback is captured by the force's corporate communications team.

Cost

The training is funded by Staffordshire Police the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Community Safety Partnership (CSP). The course costs £3,000 to run and includes hire of the immersive suite, IT support, additional room hire for de-briefing, and refreshments.

Overall impact

- To date, 100 people have attended the training. Attendees feedback has been positive, with partners consistently describing the training as highly valuable and transformative. Officers and staff have reported an increase in confidence, enabling the strengthening of the multi-agency response and improving the quality of joint working.
- As the training has evolved, the force have seen significant growth in strategic partnership oversight and increased levels of multi-agency participation.
- Demand for the course continues to grow, with a substantial waiting list indicating its value and relevance to practitioners across the region.

Learning

- The training has been designed to create a supportive, psychologically safe learning environment that strengthens positive partnership engagement. It is important to focus on learning rather than performance to ensure attendees can explore complex scenarios without fear of judgement.

- A limitation has been expanding the course beyond Staffordshire. Replicating the training in other forces will depend on the availability of appropriate simulation facilities within each area, as well as budget considerations.
- The emotional impact of child death deployments on staff is significant, and the training recognises the importance of acknowledging and supporting professional wellbeing. The ability to rehearse decision-making, communication, and joint responses within a safe, simulated environment has made a substantial difference to colleagues' confidence.

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