

Assault debrief process to support officers' wellbeing and safety

A debrief process using body-worn video (BWV) footage and reflective learning to support officers following assaults, enhance personal safety learning and reduce repeat victimisation.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Organisational
Topic	Assault and violent crime Ethics and values Wellbeing
Organisation	Staffordshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2025–27 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Staffordshire Police
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Partners	Police

Key details

Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	May 2026
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Workforce

Aim

The aim of the assault debrief process is to provide timely support, learning opportunities and wellbeing interventions for officers who have been assaulted while on duty.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the assault debrief process are to:

- increase the number of assaulted officers receiving targeted wellbeing and learning support
- increase officer engagement through post-assault reflective practice
- increase the workforces' confidence in managing conflict and violence
- reduce the repeat victimisation of officers following an assault
- improve organisational understanding of assault trends
- increase opportunities for learning from body-worn video (BWV) footage and operational experiences
- reduce the rate of assaults on officers

Description

Staffordshire Police conducted a review of the support provided to officers who experienced assaults while carrying out their duties. The force's assault data identified that a number of officers, particularly those in the early stages of their service, were being exposed to violence and aggression. Although existing welfare provisions were available, there was no consistent

mechanism for providing tailored personal safety learning, reflective practice and wellbeing support following an assault.

To address this, Staffordshire Police developed the assault debrief process. The initiative was designed jointly by public and personal safety training (PPST) staff and operational colleagues to ensure that officers who have experienced an assault can access appropriate support and learning opportunities.

A Microsoft Power BI dashboard has been developed to identify officers who meet the following predetermined criteria:

- officers with less than three years' service who have been assaulted
- officers who have experienced repeat assaults
- officers whose assault history, circumstances or emerging trends indicate that they may benefit from intervention

Once identified, officers are contacted and offered an assault debrief. Prior to the discussion, the PPST manager or a trained member of the team reviews the available BWV footage and incident details. The debrief is conducted from a wellbeing and learning perspective rather than a performance management perspective.

The discussion focuses on:

- officer welfare and wellbeing
- the circumstances surrounding the assault
- personal safety tactics
- reviewing BWV footage
- reflection and learning opportunities
- advice on reducing future vulnerability

While participation in the process is mandatory for new recruits, it remains voluntary for more experienced officers.

The assault debrief process has been implemented using existing force resources and has not required additional external funding. Implementation has been delivered by the PPST team as part of their existing responsibilities, supported by the data provided through established business

intelligence systems. The Power BI dashboard reporting function enables the consistent identification of qualifying officers and provides oversight of activity and outcomes.

Senior leadership support has been secured through the force's wellbeing and officer safety governance arrangements. The senior leadership team recognise the importance of supporting officers who have been assaulted and the potential benefits of reducing repeat victimisation.

Overall impact

The assault debrief process has become fully embedded within Staffordshire Police and provides a structured approach to supporting officers following assaults. The intervention has observed an improvement in the force's ability to identify officers who may benefit from additional support, particularly those who are new to service and those who have experienced repeat victimisation.

Feedback from participating officers has been consistently positive. Officers have described the process as "valuable", "beneficial" and "worthwhile". A recurring theme within the feedback has been that officers feel supported and valued by the organisation, recognising that the process focuses on learning and welfare rather than criticism or performance management.

Participants reported that the debriefs provided a safe environment in which to reflect on incidents, discuss decision-making and review BWV footage with experienced PPST staff. Officers particularly valued the opportunity to explore tactical options, identify warning signs that may have been missed during an incident and consider how learning opportunities could be applied to future encounters. Several officers stated that the debrief increased their confidence, enhanced their situational awareness and encouraged a more considered and effective approach to managing conflict.

The intervention has also demonstrated encouraging outcomes in relation to repeat victimisation. Since implementation, 42 officers have received an assault debrief. Of these, 15 officers have not experienced a further assault. While 27 officers subsequently experienced another assault, only seven officers of those debriefed experienced a repeat assault of the same type that formed the basis of their initial debrief. A further 20 officers experienced a different type of assault. This suggests that the learning, reflection and personal safety advice provided through the intervention may help officers reduce their vulnerability to recurring assault behaviours.

Learning

One of the primary drivers for the initiative was the identification of a gap in the support available to officers following assaults. Although welfare provisions, supervisory oversight and use of force reviews were already in place, there was no consistent mechanism for identifying officers who may benefit from targeted intervention. Prior to implementation, identifying eligible officers relied on supervisors or departments recognising patterns and making referrals, which was both resource intensive and vulnerable to inconsistency.

The introduction of the Power BI dashboard was essential in overcoming this challenge. The automated identification process enabled the force to proactively identify officers who met the agreed criteria and ensured that support could be offered consistently across the organisation. The force learned that robust data and effective identification processes are critical to the success of such an intervention, as officers most in need of support may otherwise go undetected.

Another key learning has been the importance of communication. During the initial stages, some officers were apprehensive when contacted as part of the process and perceived the intervention as a form of scrutiny or performance management. Considerable effort was therefore invested in ensuring that communications clearly emphasised that the process was intended to provide support, wellbeing interventions and learning opportunities following an assault, rather than to criticise performance. The decision for initial contact to come directly from PPST staff, rather than line managers, proved particularly effective in building trust and encouraging officer engagement.

The force also learned the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between supportive interventions and accountability processes. The assault debrief process operates alongside mandatory supervisory reviews of use of force incidents. While the vast majority of cases focus solely on officer welfare, learning and personal safety, there have been occasions where reviews identified matters requiring referral to professional standards. Clear governance arrangements and transparency regarding these processes have been essential in maintaining confidence while ensuring appropriate standards are upheld.

For organisations seeking to implement a similar approach, it is recommended that they develop a reliable method for identifying eligible officers, invest time in communication from the outset, and ensure that the intervention is clearly positioned as a wellbeing and learning opportunity. Securing supervisor support is also important to ensure officers are given protected time to participate and gain maximum benefit from the process.

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