



Critical Incidents Policy

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Table of Contents

Purpose	1
Section 1 – Policy wording	1
Section 2 – Procedural guides.....	6
Relevant Legislation: (Human rights/diversity/specific).....	6
Related References:.....	6
Identification, Monitoring and Review.....	7

Purpose

A critical incident (CI) is defined as:

- **any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.**

A wide range of incidents or operations have the capability to become a critical incident, including anti-social behaviour or hate crime, pre-planned events or internal incidents.

Critical Incident Management (CIM) provides a response which satisfies the needs of the victim, their family and the community, and an effective and proportionate outcome to an incident.

The definition is deliberately broad and should ensure that incidents which are likely to escalate into a CI are not missed. It recognises the fundamental importance of community confidence and trust in the police response to CIs, and applies equally to serious, less serious and internal incidents.

Policy should enable consistent and effective decision making. Occasionally, operational or managerial circumstances may require a decision that would adversely affect adherence to the policy or procedure, in line with the ‘Statement of Intent’ of the constabulary and the police service ‘Code of Ethics’. If an officer/ police staff member believes that they need to make a decision that steps outside of policy and procedure they should do so, provided that:

- the officer/ police staff member raises the matter at the earliest opportunity (and ideally before any such decision is made) with their line manager declaring their intended (or actual) course of action if notification is made after the decision is taken,
- produces, in a timely manner, a signed and dated written explanation of why it is/ was deemed necessary to step outside of policy and procedure, and
- maintain an adequate record of this written rationale for audit purposes appropriate to the circumstances/ contravention

Section 1 – Policy wording

An incident which has the likelihood to escalate into a critical incident should be addressed promptly and efficiently. Reassuring and maintaining confidence is fundamental to managing a CI, as is restoring confidence where it has been lost.



Critical Incidents Policy

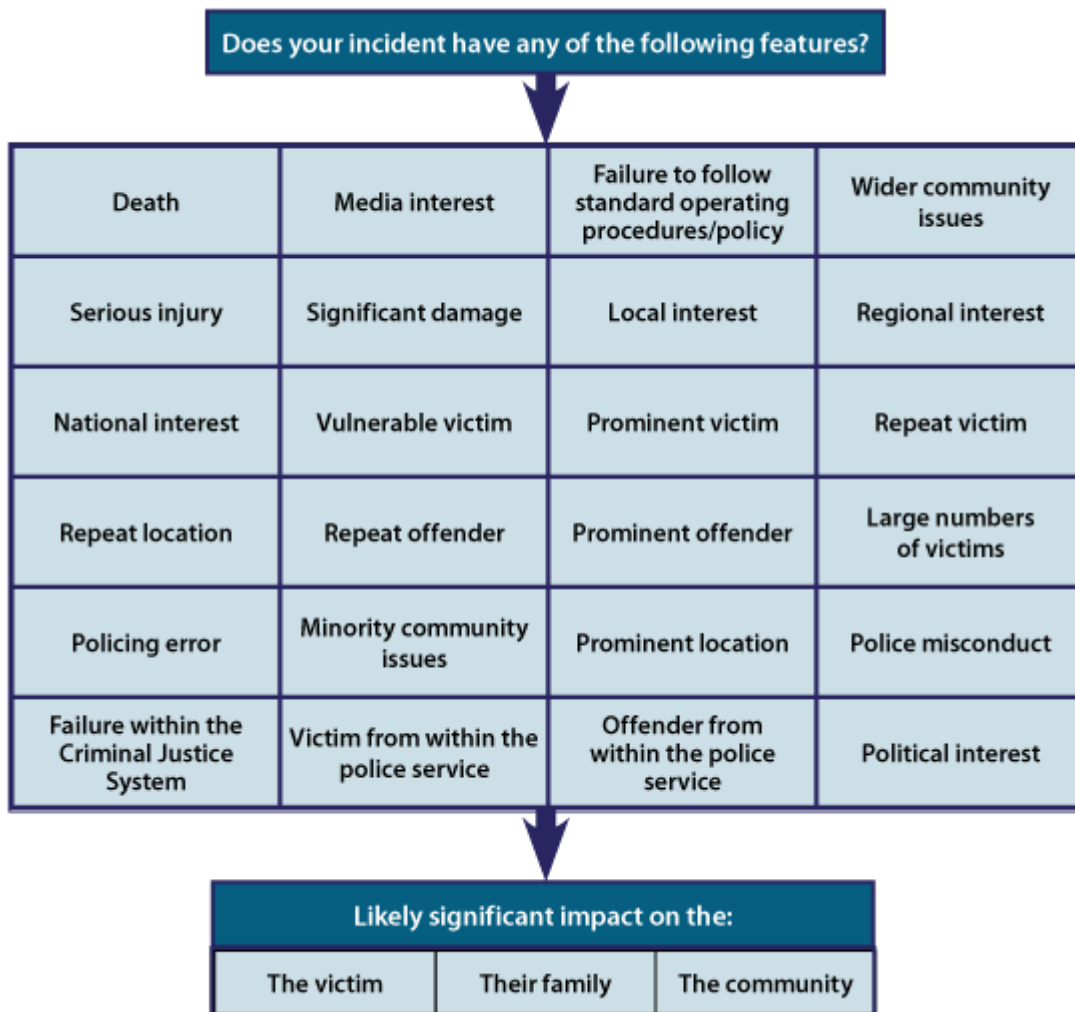
There are three phases of CIM.

Preparing for CI's; managing CI's and restoring public confidence.

A CI may have a significant and potentially long-term impact on community engagement and neighbourhood policing. It may also generate insecurity among vulnerable members of the community and increase fear of crime and disorder. There is an additional risk that failure to provide an effective response may cause repeat victimisation.

Effective decision making is essential to successfully manage and resolve a critical incident. Use of the Joint Decision Making model [Joint Decision Making model](#) (JDM) will assist managers in making clear and accountable decisions based on available information at the time.

Any of the following can increase the likelihood of a critical incident developing;





Critical Incidents Policy

Phase one – preparing for critical incidents

Early intervention can prevent a minor problem escalating into one which could have a significant impact on the overall quality of the police response. A range of Constabulary policies and procedures have developed over time and incorporate current legislation and identified good practice. Their implementation combined with effective management and decision making is the most efficient way of reducing the number of CIs each year. These policies are held by the FIM who can deploy appropriate resources and inform relevant personnel.

Police constables, police community support officers (PCSOs) and call handlers are on the front line and usually provide the initial response to an incident. They need to understand their role in CI management which is to continually ask:

- *what am I dealing with?*
- *what might develop?*
- *what the impact of the incident and/or the police response might be?*
- *whom they should tell if they believe the incident they are dealing with has the likelihood to escalate into a CI?*

Phase two – managing critical incidents.

Management of a CI should start with early identification and notification. It is particularly important that small-scale CIs are identified early, as even these can have a long-term impact on community confidence if left unchecked. Particular attention should be paid to the needs of the victim, their family and the community.

Media and communication strategies should be considered at an early stage and be based on openness and transparency, keeping in mind the particular needs of the investigation or operation.

Ongoing monitoring of CIs ensures that resources are used effectively and appropriately.

Managers and staff should be aware that;

- any incident can become a CI and may include crime and non-crime incidents or operations. They can be spontaneous or pre-planned,
- the quality of the police response can be undermined by one or more issues which can be compounded by poor quality assurance, poor victim care and/or poor community engagement,
- the impact the incident will have on individuals, irrespective of the police response, cannot be predicted

Who can identify a potentially critical incident?

All officers or police staff dealing with an incident (including call handlers and first attending officers) should continually ask these questions:

- what am I dealing with?
- what might it develop into?
- what impact might this incident have?
- whom should I tell if I think this may escalate into a CI?

Where, in an officer or staff member's opinion, an incident is, or has the likelihood to escalate into a CI, it is essential that this is communicated immediately to an appropriately trained senior officer. This may be a Duty Inspector, the Force Incident Manager (FIM) or another line manager. Senior officers should not discourage officers or police staff from reporting these incidents because the next one may be a CI with significant implications for the force.



Critical Incidents Policy

Who can declare a critical incident?

Only a designated senior officer, e.g., the Duty Inspector, or FIM can declare an incident as critical. This acts as a quality assurance mechanism to avoid inappropriate declarations. Notification should not prevent the provision of an ongoing police response in line with the policy or procedure relevant to the incident.

Assessing the declaration

Senior officers who are notified of an incident that is, or has the likelihood to escalate into a CI needs to decide whether the:

- report is valid,
- current deployment will deliver an effective response,
- the incident should be escalated further and/or declared a CI.

The decision to declare an incident as critical should be based on at least one objective reason why the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family or the community.

ANY DECLARATION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT SHOULD BE BROUGHT TO THE ATTENTION OF THE FORCE INCIDENT MANAGER FOR DETAIL TO BE ADDED TO THE DAILY BRIEFING SHEET FOR CONSIDERATION AND REVIEW AT THE NEXT DAILY FORCE TASKING MEETING

Declaring a critical incident

Declaring a CI needs to be done when information is sparse, but there is pressure to make the right decision quickly. To do this, declaring officers should ensure that they have access to all sources of information available at the time including shared situational awareness from partner agencies involved in the incident. Effective use of the JDM will assist in a rational and auditable decision making process.

Each incident should be assessed on its own merits. CIs should only be declared when it is necessary and appropriate to do so, and the response should be proportionate to the scale of the incident.

Declaration is a means of supporting a competent and well-managed police response in line with standard policies and procedures. National and local policies and procedures are intended to ensure that there is a consistent and effective police response to a wide range of incidents. They incorporate key legislation and good practice, where this has been identified.

However, there are times when deviating from recognised policy and procedure can be the appropriate thing to do. Officers should clearly record their decision for this and the rationale behind it where this occurs. Where an incident is declared critical; the response should quickly identify the cause.

Management action and plans should be implemented to ensure or restore the quality of the police response and maintain or rebuild confidence. A prompt and coordinated response enables the police to reassure the victim, their family and the community, and restore public confidence in the police service.

Command and control

Clear command and control that outlines the roles and accountability of the personnel involved is required in critical incidents. The Duty Inspector and FIM shall work together to ensure the necessary resources are deployed to deal with the incident as effectively as possible.

The Duty Inspector (or other senior officer as agreed) shall have responsibility for management of the CI.

It may be necessary to consider police mobilisation and mutual aid to get the necessary resources and this will be a decision requiring the support and authorisation of the duty Gold senior officer.



Critical Incidents Policy

If there is a requirement for a multi-agency teleconference at either tactical, strategic or just a 'for information' level, this can be set up within an hour by making a request to the FIM to activate LRF Operation Link.

Phase three – Restoring Public Confidence

During a live critical incident (CI), it should be possible to identify the reason why public confidence has been lost and to implement a management plan to recover it. Once an incident has closed, the opportunities to do so diminish.

Restoring public confidence involves dealing with the issues raised and being seen to deal with them in a prompt, equitable and transparent manner by those people most closely affected. The police service needs to learn from its mistakes and take positive steps to prevent them from happening again. Failure to respond competently and diplomatically to complaints may compound the situation and cause another CI.

Community Impact Assessments (CIA) and structured debriefs should be considered to gauge the effect on the community and to identify any lessons to be learnt by the organisation.

Early engagement with the Communications and Engagement department should take place to ensure that appropriate messages can be put out to 'traditional' media sources and on social media.

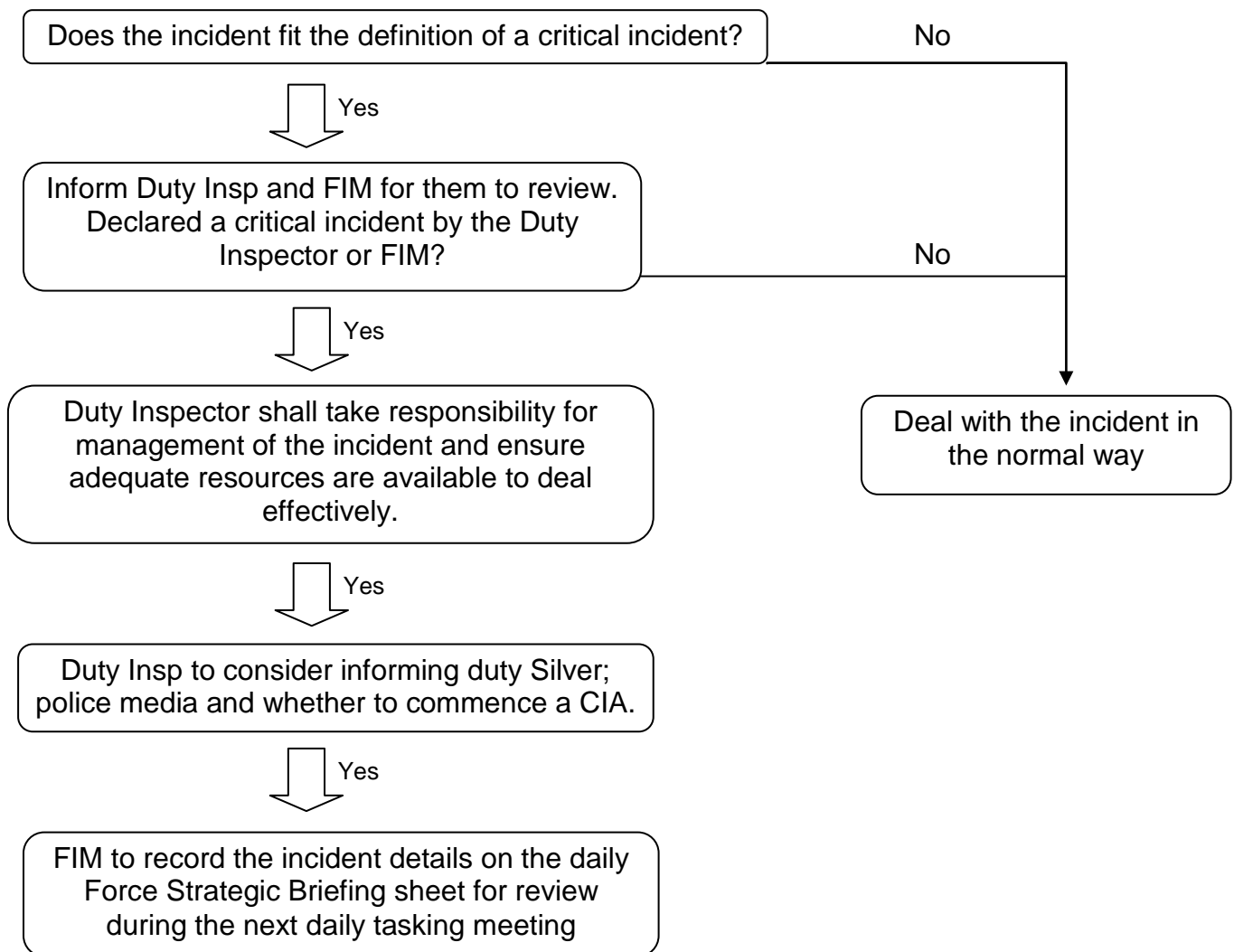


Critical Incidents Policy

Section 2 – Procedural guides

DEFINITION OF A *CRITICAL INCIDENT*;

Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community



Relevant Legislation: (*Human rights/diversity/specific*)

European Convention on Human Rights; Equality Act.

Related References:

- [College of Policing APP - Critical Incident Management](#)
- [College of Policing APP - National Decision Model](#)



Critical Incidents Policy

Identification, Monitoring and Review

The Policy should enable consistent and effective decision making. Where operational or managerial circumstances

require any decision making that would adversely affect adherence to the policy or procedure, in line with the 'Statement of Intent' of the constabulary and the police service 'Code of Ethics', if an officer/ police staff member believes that they need to make a decision that steps outside of policy and procedure they should do so, provided that:

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Critical Incidents Policy			
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Policy		e.g. G005	CCEB
			Author/Reviewer
			Name Insp 256 Templeton 30/01/2017
Version	Date	Changes (ensure public copy amended and uploaded to external website)	
2.2	March 15	Full re-write	
2.3	30/11/15	Review	
2.4	31/1/2017	'Purpose' section (Page) updated regarding authority to step outside policy when making decisions under certain circumstances.	
2.5	2/2/2018	Annual review completed – changed the NDM to a JDM link and decision making wording added	
Next Document Review Date: 2/2/2019			
EIA		EIA Sign Off	EIA Review
<u>LOW</u>			
<i>This version will be placed on the public domain website</i>			
If this version cannot be placed on the public domain website, provide reason and relevant COG authority			

Previous policies can be found with the continuous improvement team.