

# Family Liaison Policy To Include Crime, Roads Policing and Disaster Victim Identification



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## Section 1 – Policy Intentions

This policy will explain the procedures that Gloucestershire Constabulary will adopt in respect of the management and deployment of Family Liaison across all business areas (Crime, Roads Policing and Disaster Victim Identification, known as DVI).

The policy will be used in conjunction with the NPIA Family Liaison Guidance 2008, NPIA Disaster Victim Identification Guidance 2011, NPIA Road Death Investigation Manual 2007, Murder Investigation Manual 2006 and Major Incident Room Standard Administration Procedures 2005.

The force strategic lead for Family Liaison is the DCI Major Crime Investigation.

The strategic lead for the region are Devon and Cornwall Police (Major Crime Investigation).

Family liaison is one of the most important considerations throughout the investigation of a death. Families are an integral part of an investigation. They must be treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and according to their diverse needs. This principle must be reflected at all levels of the Police Service and due consideration given to any police action which may impact on a family, from the media statements made by a Chief Constable, to the telephone operator who responds to a query from a family member.

## Section 2 – Policy wording

### Deployment Criteria

Roads Policing operate a formal on call system for FLC's to ensure deployments are effectively managed. (Initiated via FCR FIM)

Crime do not operate any on call system as it is not operationally necessary. Any deployment will be managed via the SIO and FLC.

For further explanation of the roles and responsibilities of the SIO, SIM, RPLI and FLC please read the guidance documents referred to above.

Family Liaison should be deployed when investigating any homicide, road death or mass fatality incident.

Or

Any other 'critical incident' where family liaison might enhance the effectiveness of the police response, for example, a missing person enquiry, a death abroad or an allegation of hate crime.

To ensure the Force retains its capacity and capability to effectively deploy the force will appoint a Strategic Lead and a Deputy to hold the portfolio of Family Liaison (Force Lead). That Force Lead will be responsible for:

- a) Reviewing the current FLO/FLC structure to ensure it is fit for purpose to provide the right level of cover across the Force.
- b) Reviewing the staff who make up that structure, to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- c) Identifying training/ mentoring/ coaching needs and taking steps to address them. This should also include provision for kidnap & extortion, terrorism, suspects within the family, mass fatality, road death investigations and IPCC investigations.
- d) Providing a support structure for the FLO/FLCs.
- e) Managing the expectations of Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) and FLC.
- f) Ensuring the FLO system is fit for purpose for Disaster Victim Identification (DVI).

In recognition of the differences within their roles, the Force will maintain two types of Family Liaison provision, namely Crime and Traffic FLOs.

2.4 The Force will adopt the following operating principles/ expectations for the deployment of FLCs/FLOs:

- 1) FLOs will not be deployed without the authority of the Force Family Liaison Lead, Senior Investigation Officer (SIO), Major Crime Investigation Team (MCIT) SIO or Alliance Operations Department equivalent in the case of Road Death Investigation. Once this decision is made they will task a Family Liaison Coordinator (FLC) to manage, facilitate and support the deployment and offer tactical advice.
- 2) Following authorisation the deployment of FLOs to an investigation/enquiry will be the responsibility of the FLC.
- 3) FLCs have the responsibility for developing the Family Liaison Strategy on behalf of the SIO or equivalent. This will include securing the services of Family Liaison Officers. The FLC will be the minimum rank of Detective Sergeant. The FLC will ensure a rapid deployment of FLOs. The deployment of a FLO should be seen as a Force and not a local requirement and therefore every effort should be given to support each deployment by local management. On some rare occasions this may mean FLOs being deployed from other force areas to ensure a rapid response. In this scenario those FLOs will be replaced with FLOs from the same geography/area of the enquiry/investigation at the earliest opportunity. The main priority is for FLOs to be deployed as soon as possible.
- 4) The FLC will draft a Family Liaison Strategy, which will be considered and, when agreed, authorised by the SIO. The Strategy will include a Risk Assessment, giving due consideration

to deployment and on-going welfare of the FLOs, taking into consideration the needs of the investigation, level of expertise of FLO(s), the number of FLO deployments that FLO currently has, the FLO history of that officer and projected long term absence (annual leave, courses etc.). This is to ensure the workload for FLOs is spread out fairly and that their welfare is always considered.

- 5) Once the FLC has identified the FLO resources required to support the Investigation, unless there are exceptional circumstances, those officers (FLOs) will remain FLOs on the investigation for the duration of the investigation, and until such times as an exit strategy has been agreed by the FLC and SIO/equivalent. SIOs/equivalent and FLCs should recognise the demand curve of the FLO, which, after the initial demands, will enable FLOs to return to their normal place of work and manage the FLO commitment from there.
- 6) Managers will release officers requested by the FLC to undertake FLO commitments. Resistance to the release of the FLO will be a rare exception and if required, facilitated following discussions between the FLOs C/Insp or Superintendent and the Force FLO Lead, Head of Major Crime or Force SIO. The Head of Major Crime/Force SIO will have the final say in this matter.
- 7) FLCs and FLOs will, taking into consideration the investigative needs and Police Working Time Regulations agree on the hours to be worked whilst deployed on the investigation.

## **Objective**

The main objectives of a deployment are;

To gather material from the family in a manner which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity;

To provide information to, and facilitate care and support for, the family, who are themselves victims, in a sensitive and compassionate manner in accordance with the needs of the investigation;

To secure the confidence and trust of the family, thereby enhancing their contribution to the investigation;

To support the family through any criminal justice or coronial process;

To assist the family in the management of any media interest and interaction;

To sign post the family to other partner agencies to facilitate their ongoing support (e.g. BRAKE and Homicide Support Service).

## **Deployment**

FLO's should initially be deployed in pairs, if this is not operationally possible then reasons for this must be documented by either the FLC, SIO, SIM, RPLI;

FLO's should record all contact and notes in a dedicated family liaison log for that deployment. Copies of all contacts should be provided expeditiously to the OIC, Receiver, Incident Room;

The FLO should have regular meetings / briefings with either the FLC, SIO, SIM, RPLI. These should ensure that the investigation is managed effectively, that the family's needs are discussed, that the FLO

is being tasked appropriately, that the FLO is supported throughout the deployment and any issues are quickly identified;

## **Selection and Training**

The policy and selection of staff will comply with the Equality Act of 2010, it will promote equality and seek to tackle unfair and unlawful discrimination. It will provide opportunity to all suitably qualified staff.

Roads Policing FLO's and FLC's are selected by way of Expression Of Interest with their Line Manager's support. This process is managed by the lead RPU FLC of supervisory rank. The training of FLO's is held internally and is RPU specific. The training of FLC's is sourced from the region;

Crime FLO's and FLC's are selected by way of Expression Of Interest with their first and second Line Manager's support. This process is managed by the Force Lead, who oversees the training courses and welfare support. The training of FLO's and FLC's is sourced from the region. (Devon and Cornwall Police);

All newly qualified FLO's will be mentored on the first deployment and will work alongside an experienced FLO.

All FLO's will be suitably qualified, Crime PIP II; RPU FLO's are mentored.

Have attended a recognised Family Liaison course;

Maintained annual CPD by way of annual deployment or annual regional conference;

(National occupational standards are being sought from the COP for both FLO and FLC)

## **Welfare and Support**

Welfare and support of the FLO is primarily the responsibility of the FLC and then the SIO, SIM, RPLI;

Regular contact and briefings during a deployment should be maintained to ensure any welfare and support requirements are met;

The force Occupational Health Department will conduct an annual health check of all FLO's and FLC's;

All officers can access free counselling via 'Health Assured'.

Any supervisor can refer any FLC / FLO to Occupational Health at any time should a need be identified.

## **FLC Responsibilities**

The FLC will have 3 core responsibilities towards the FLO deployment and the investigation;

- i) To ensure the FLO is fit for deployment;
- ii) To ensure the deployment is risk assessed, any risk identified is mitigated or managed, that a risk assessment is documented;

- iii) To ensure that a deployment strategy is provided on behalf of the SIO, SIM, RPLI, to include any exit strategy.

### **Disaster Victim Identification (DVI)**

In a mass fatality incident the SIM and FLC should consider the joint deployment of both RPU and Crime FLO's. The joint deployment will add greater resilience and operational effectiveness in serving a large number of families. Both specialisms are trained in DVI and the recovery of ante mortem data;

In circumstances where large scale resources are required then support can be obtained from within the Tri Force Major Crime Collaboration;

For further detail please refer to the NPIA Disaster Victim Identification Guidance 2011

### **IPCC Cases**

It is recognised that Family Liaison is a significant role for the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to undertake as it goes to the heart of its Independence. The IPCC also recognises that whilst the need to remain independent from the police is crucial, we should do so without losing the skills and level of expertise already accrued by the Police Service in this area of investigation. As a starting point our staff will be referred to as Family Liaison Manager (FLM) and the term Family Liaison Officer (FLO), in relation to IPCC staff will not be used.

There are four types of investigation;

- Independent Investigation
- Managed Investigation
- Supervised Investigation
- Local Investigation

In cases where there is a joint investigation it is critical that then the responsibilities for family liaison are quickly established, this should be a policy decision of the SIO, SIM, RPLI in consultation with the FLC;

Any handover of a family between FLO and FLM should be face to face. A full briefing should be given to include copies of any contact logs and any respective risk assessment and strategy;

In some circumstances an FLO and FLM may be deployed at the same time, a detailed and agreed strategy would be required in this scenario;

For further detail please refer to the NPIA Family Liaison Guidance 2008.

### **Suspect Within The Family**

When there may be a suspect in the family group, a risk assessment must be carried out prior to deploying a FLO and the following issues should be taken into consideration:

FLO's are overt investigators;

Enhanced monitoring of the work and interaction with the family including FLO welfare and safety;

The level of information disclosed to the FLO and, in turn, the family;

How any intelligence that arises from the FLO contact with the family is to be managed;

In view of the potential for intelligence and evidence gathering, there is a need for the FLO to be clear concerning his or her interaction with the family in respect of the requirements of law, policy and procedure;

The importance of fully documenting all contact and interactions with the family;

The deployment of a new FLO when a suspect is arrested;

Investigative and/or evidential impact of deployment;

The FLC/FLA's advice should be sought in developing a strategy concerning such Deployments;

An FLO must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them. Care must be taken to ensure that the FLO does not stray into the area of Covert Human Intelligence Source.

### **Section 3 – Procedural guides**

The provision for FLOs is governed by the following national guidelines:

NPIA Family Liaison Guidance 2008,  
NPIA Disaster Victim Identification Guidance 2011,  
NPIA Road Death Investigation Manual 2007,  
NPCC Major Crime Investigation Manual 2021,  
Major Incident Room Standard Administration Procedures 2005.  
Authorised Professional Practice: Road Policing module – Investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions  
College of Policing (2014) National Policing Hate Crime Strategy  
College of Policing (2014) Hate Crime Operational Guidance  
Authorised Professional Practice: Critical Incident Management module

These guidelines are supported by the Major Crime Branch working practices.

### **Section 4 - Relevant Legislation: (*Human rights/diversity/Health & Safety/any other specifics*)**

Human Rights Act 1998  
Equality Act 2010  
Health and Safety at Work Act 1974

This working practice has been drafted and audited to comply with the principles of the Human Rights Act. Equality and diversity issues have also been considered to ensure compliance with Equality legislation and policies. In addition Data Protection, Freedom of Information, Management of Police Information and Health and Safety issues have been considered. Adherence to this working practice will therefore ensure compliance with all relevant legislation and internal policies.

This working practice will be reviewed every 2 years by the Force Policy Unit in conjunction with the Force FLO lead. Review and ownership of this working practice is the responsibility of the Crime and Criminal Justice Commander.

#### **Section 5 - Related References:**

N/A

## Section 6 - 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:

- 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

<b>GSC Security Marking:</b>	<b>OFFICIAL/OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE</b>
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<b>EIA</b>	<b>EIA Sign Off – name and date</b>	<b>EIA Review – name and date</b>
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**Link to EIA – G&C to complete hyperlink action**

<b>SIA – if required</b>	<b>SIA Sign Off</b>	<b>SIA Review</b>



***If this version CANNOT be placed on the public domain website, please provide a FOI redacted version.***

## **1. Procedures [FOIA – Open]**

1.1 The provision for FLOs is governed by the following national guidelines.

- [NPIA FLO Guidance 2008](#)
- [NPIA Major Crime Investigation Manual 2021](#)
- Authorised Professional Practice: Road Policing module – [Investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions](#)
- Authorised Professional Practice: Civil Emergencies module – [Civil contingencies](#)
- [College of Policing \(2014\) National Policing Hate Crime Strategy](#)
- [College of Policing \(2014\) Hate Crime Operational Guidance](#)
- Authorised Professional Practice: [Critical Incident Management](#) module

These guidelines are supported by the Major Crime Branch [working practices](#).

2.2