

Major Crime Investigation Manual (MCIM 2021)

Version 1.0 November 2021

The National Police Chiefs Council with the College of Policing has agreed to these revised guidelines being circulated to, and adopted by, Police Forces in England, Wales & Northern Ireland.

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Document information

Protective marking:	Official
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Version:	MCIM v1.0 November 2021

Preface

This new Major Crime Investigation Manual has been developed by the NPCC Homicide Working Group, and approved by the NPCC Crime Coordination Committee.

Murder has a devastating impact on the victim's bereaved family and friends, it affects communities and the wider public. The police have an important role to prevent homicides, but when such crimes are committed, to engage with bereaved families, investigate and bring those responsible to justice.

This first edition of the Murder Investigation Manual was published in 1998 following the murder of Stephen Lawrence. It was written by a group of experienced Senior Investigating Officers in conjunction with experts, to document good practice and provide a reference manual for other SIO's. The second edition was published in 2000 and the third in 2006. Each subsequent edition included changes to legislation and case law, technical and scientific advances and the national improvements to standards of investigation.

Since the 2006 edition, much has changed in policing and investigative practice, not least the introduction of the College of Policing and national Authorised Professional Practice. There have also been considerable developments in homicide and major crime investigations and the types of investigations led by Senior Investigating Officers.

The NPCC has therefore decided to withdraw the 2006 edition of the Murder Investigation Manual, and replace it with the new Major Crime Investigation Manual (MCIM)

The new MCIM is intended to be a core national policing guidance document for the investigation of homicide (murder, manslaughter and infanticide) and other large major investigations. It should be considered in conjunction with other national guidance, including Authorised Professional Practice issued by the College of Policing and guidance issued by NPCC, such as the Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP 2021).

NPCC would like to express its thanks to all those involved in the development of this guidance, including the NPCC Homicide Working Group, NPCC HOLMES Working Group, NPCC Investigation Standards Working Group, the National Crime Agency, the College of Policing and all those individuals who gave their advice and contributed to this final document.

Any queries relating to this document should be directed to either the author detailed above or the NPCC Business Support Office.

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Part 1 - Strategic Management

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1.1 Introduction

This advice supports those responsible for the investigation and oversight of homicide and major crimes, eg, high profile and complex investigations into serious sexual offending, acquisitive, organised and other violent crime. The principles and guidance set out are transferrable across a broad range of homicide and major crime investigations.

The investigation of major crime presents a range of challenges to investigators. There will often be a great deal of pressure on senior investigating officers (SIOs) to identify the perpetrator quickly because of the seriousness of the offence. This pressure will be intensified where there is heightened political, public or media interest. Chief Officers are responsible for managing the potential threat, risk and harm of caused by an offence on the family and community.

Other challenges will arise from the way the crime has been committed. Every crime is different and there will be variation in how material has been generated, and the way it is distributed, for example at scenes or among witnesses. This is also known as the information profile.

Identifying and recovering this material will require SIOs to apply a range of problem-solving techniques. They will need to consider what would motivate a witness or suspect to withhold or disclose material, and exploit often novel opportunities to maximise the material that can be gathered and analysed.

Investigations are becoming more complex, often requiring the analysis and interpretation of vast amounts of digital media, call data and other intelligence products. The number of major crime investigations has also increased in recent years, requiring SIOs to manage these demands, simultaneously, across a number of live or cold case enquires.

In many cases SIO's, and those overseeing major crime investigations, should consider the susceptibility of victims, witnesses and suspects to harm, ensure safeguarding is considered and information is shared appropriately with partner agencies and [parallel proceedings](#).

Chief Officers and SIOs will need to manage finite resources, considering the abilities and experience of their investigators, and the personal wellbeing of individuals under their command.



1.2 Types and categories of investigations

1.2.1 Homicide and major crime

Homicide and major crime investigations are categorised for the purpose of command and resourcing. The terminology is widely used in policy and practice, however when considering resource allocation system, it should be supported by an assessment of threat, harm and risk as the investigative knowledge grows.

Category A+	A homicide or other major investigation where public concern and the associated response to media intervention is such that normal staffing levels are not adequate to keep pace with the investigation.
Category A	A homicide or other major investigation which is of grave public concern or where vulnerable members of the public are at risk, where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent, or the investigation and the securing of evidence requires significant resource allocation.
Category B +	A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent, the continued risk to the public is low or unknown, and the investigation or securing of evidence requires additional force resourcing or other considerations, due to added complexities or aggravating factors.
Category B	A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is not apparent, the continued risk to the public is low or unknown and the investigation or securing of evidence can be achieved within normal force resourcing arrangements.
Category C +	A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is known from the outset and the investigation or securing evidence can be achieved easily, but may requires additional force resourcing or other considerations, due to added complexities or aggravating factors.
Category C	A homicide or other major investigation where the identity of the offender(s) is apparent from the outset and the investigation or securing of evidence can be achieved easily.

Aggravating factors and complexity will vary according to context, but could include:

- significant community impact
- significant public interest
- significant media interest
- significant local vulnerabilities
- gang crime
- gun crime
- organised crime
- multiple offenders
- child homicide
- serious youth violence
- mental health
- professional standards issues
- complex international connections
- linked series.

The categorisation of a crime by itself will not determine the resources that should be provided to the investigation. The nature of every case should be considered. Once the facts of the incident are clear, a detailed assessment of the resource requirements should take place.

The categorisation and aggravating factors will enable managers to identify incidents that will require different approaches to support the investigation and address public confidence or media concerns to varying degrees.

1.2.2 Critical incidents



A **critical incident** is one where the **effectiveness** of the police response is likely to have a **significant impact** on the **confidence** of the victim(s), their family and or the community.

Not all homicide and major crime investigations will be critical incidents, but many are. In such cases, the SIO should work with the chief officer, gold support and a strategic investigator to manage the threat, risk and harm. It is important that the limits of the SIOs responsibility are clear so that they are not drawn away from their primary responsibility to investigate the incident.

See also the [Role of Chief Officer](#) and [Strategic Investigator \(PIP 4\)](#)

1.3 Roles and responsibilities

1.3.1 Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)

The primary role of the SIO is team leader, providing investigative focus, coordinating and motivating the team. They are accountable for every facet of the enquiry, and should manage a range of internal and external resources to maximum effect. See [PIP3](#), which also sets out requirements for professional development, registration and continuing professional development (CPD).

The role combines two elements, **lead investigator** and **manager**.

Lead investigator

The SIO performs the role of officer in charge of an investigation as set out in the Code of Practice under Part II of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996

They should be able to develop investigative strategies based on the unique circumstances of each case, making effective use of the National Decision Model. They should be able to continually assess and modify their strategies as new material becomes available. SIOs should also ensure that information management systems are established to enable the investigation to manage the volume and variety of information that will flow into and out of the investigation.

Investigations often require unique problem-solving techniques and therefore SIOs should keep up to date with new and existing investigative techniques.

SIOs should have knowledge of:

- the criminal law and processes
- the Victim's Code
- the circumstances in which major crimes are committed
- the ways in which offenders, witnesses and communities are likely to respond following the commission of a crime and during the investigation
- local and national policies relating to criminal investigation including Authorised Professional Practice (APP) and Practice Advice on Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP)
- the principles of criminal investigation and supporting disciplines.

See also [Principles of investigation](#)

Manager

The SIO should identify and request the resources necessary to undertake an effective investigation.



An investigation will often require officers and staff from within the police service and specialists from outside. In a complex case, the investigation may require the management of over 100 people who have some level of professional involvement.

This can create a challenge for the SIO to ensure this temporary team works effectively. SIOs should apply management and leadership to all aspects of the team. In some cases, the SIO may also be responsible for a devolved budget, which may include forensic budgets, overtime costs and staff costs such as travel and subsistence.

The SIO is responsible for the conduct of the investigation, in particular their own decision-making. They are not, however expected to be an expert in all aspects of every type of major investigation.

One of the skills of the SIO, is to use the knowledge and experience of other people to address key investigative issues. This is often demonstrated by the use of a management team approach. The composition of the management team will depend on the individual circumstances but will frequently include some of the following roles:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| • SIO | • Media officer |
| • Deputy SIO | • Behavioural investigative adviser |
| • Investigative team leaders | • Interview adviser / coordinator |
| • Office manager | • Intelligence manager |
| • Scientific support manager | • CCTV coordinator |
| • Crime scene manager / coordinator | • Digital media investigator |
| | • Safeguarding bronze commander/adviser |
| • Forensic specialist adviser | • Disclosure officer |
| • Analyst | • Family liaison coordinator |
| • House-to-house team leader | • Community awareness specialist |
| • Search advisers | • Other specialists |

See also the College of Policing professional profile for [Senior Investigator \(PIP 3 SIO\)](#) and the [NPCC \(2021\) Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#).

Resilience and wellbeing

The SIO has a responsibility to consider the resilience and wellbeing of the whole investigation team, including themselves. The role of the SIO, and many of their team will be performing high risk roles where research has shown there may be a greater risk of staff suffering from stress or mental ill health.

Major crime investigation may require teams to work long periods of duty under pressure. This is most likely during the early stages of an investigation, but may also occur at key milestones, such as suspect arrest and interview. The SIO is likely to want to direct these aspects of the case personally.

Pressure may be intensified by high profile critical incidents that attract public, media and political scrutiny.

SIOs, and those responsible for managing them, should recognise that this intensity of pressure could have an adverse effect on the SIO and their team's general health and welfare as well as performance in the role.



The SIO together with their line manager / PIP4 should prepare a wellbeing strategy for the investigation, which should include:

- monitor the hours worked and encourage adequate rest and leave
- psychological risk assessments to identify particular risks.

The College of Policing [Blue Light Wellbeing Framework](#) is a sector-specific framework for the emergency services with risk assessment templates. See also the [Oscar Kilo website](#).

Where possible the SIO should delegate work that does not require their direct management. In doing this, however, they should ensure they do not overburden others who may also be working under pressure.

Resources and wellbeing should be kept under continual review.

SIO accreditation

To deliver the investigative and management challenges of a homicide or major crime investigation, SIOs should be accredited and registered as a PIP 3 SIO, or as a minimum progressing to accreditation. See College of Policing (2018) Professionalising Investigation Programme (PIP) policy.

Those who have only recently completed their registration, or who have not been involved in a wide range of investigations since registration, may not have the breadth or depth of experience for all aspects of a complex investigation.

As an investigation develops, and at key stages, line managers and chief officers should satisfy themselves that the SIO allocated to a particular case has the right experience to effectively progress that investigation.

As part of an SIO's registration requirements, they are required to complete annual continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain and enhance their knowledge. See the PIP Policy.

SIOs should build their experience through doing the role of an SIO, but they should also undertake self-directed learning and research activities, or work with those who have specialist knowledge or experience to build their own knowledge and awareness of new opportunities and techniques.

Some types of major crime can be unusual or rare, and even the most experienced SIO will not have first-hand experience of every type of case. SIOs should know where to go to access specialist support and advice. This will increase their knowledge and improve their approach to all investigations.

1.3.2 Deputy Senior Investigating Officer

In all but the most straightforward investigations, it is likely that a deputy SIO (DSIO) will be appointed to support the SIO. The primary role of the DSIO is to control and direct the investigation in the absence of the SIO. They will also have specific responsibility for managing key areas of the investigation thereby releasing the SIO to focus on other strategic issues.

The exact role of the DSIO will depend on the circumstances of each case, the type and number of resources that are being used and the investigative strategy.

The DSIO could:

- deputise in the absence of the SIO



- help to develop the investigative strategy
- manage the logistics of the investigation
- implement aspects of the investigative strategy

DSIO will often take responsibility for the conduct of the investigation and may have to make significant decisions; therefore, DSIOs should be accredited at PIP 3, or actively working towards accreditation. Senior managers should satisfy themselves that DSIOs have sufficient training and experience before they are appointed.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to deploy a detective sergeant or inspector (or police staff equivalent) for parts of this role as a development opportunity. This is likely to be in straightforward cases where the offender is known.

Where SIOs are likely to be absent for substantial periods, eg, taking annual leave, they should ensure that the DSIO has clear guidelines on the way the investigative strategy is to be pursued. They should also be given a point of contact with a more experienced SIO for advice or support. In some cases it may be more appropriate to hand over to another registered SIO.

1.3.3 Strategic Investigator (PIP4)

In high profile, complex major crime investigations, serious and organised crime investigations, or critical incidents an effective police response may benefit from the deployment of a strategic investigator (PIP4). This role provides support for the strategic management of an investigation and the overall police response. The strategic investigator will support both the overall police commander (gold commander) and the SIO.

Chief Officers have overall responsibility for the management of criminal investigations and an important leadership role to ensure that complex investigations are conducted to a high standard. A strategic investigator can help to fulfil this responsibility.

The purpose of the strategic investigator

A PIP4 strategic investigator is not the SIO. Their purpose is to provide strategic management, oversight and support for complex investigations. Not every major investigation will require the deployment of a strategic investigator.

In many police forces and/or collaborative arrangements, the head of the major crime unit may also be a registered strategic investigator, as well as line manager for SIOs. In these circumstances, they would typically have day-to-day responsibility for all investigations under their command, akin to that of the strategic investigator.

PIP4 strategic investigator have a responsibility to report to chief officers those investigations that are growing in complexity or have the potential for reputational impact that may need to be managed under a more formal gold group structure.

Appointment of a PIP4

The responsible chief officer or gold commander will appoint a strategic investigator where they believe that risks, resources and circumstances merit it. These investigations are often highly complex, have or are likely to have public interest and media scrutiny, political analysis and/or potential for civil litigation. These cases are likely to include:



- homicides
- significant cold case investigations
- crimes in action
- serious and organised crime
- complex / high profile professional standards investigations
- counter terrorism and domestic extremism
- child sexual exploitation and abuse
- cyber crime
- linked series.

Terms of reference

The gold commander will set out terms of reference for a strategic investigators deployment, which will normally cover a range of [strategic areas](#). In practice, strategic investigators will often help to develop their terms of reference, ensuring this supports the gold strategies.

See an example [strategic investigator terms of reference](#)

Strategic investigators will:

- set and agree parameters and responsibilities with the SIO. These should be recorded and reviewed in consultation with relevant command roles
- provide regular updates to the gold commander on the progress of an investigation. This will support gold's strategic oversight and provide reassurance on how the investigation is being conducted
- review the operational and strategic aspects of an investigation to provide additional capacity and expertise to investigative team(s). They will provide advice, guidance and will act as critical friend to the SIO, ensuring they have sufficient support to manage the investigation and support the SIOs personal welfare
- meet regularly with the SIO to review the progress of the investigation. In most cases the PIP4 will attend the gold group in place of the SIO
- share best practice with peers via the NPCC PIP4 sub-group and other organisations about investigation techniques and management to enhance national practice, and help in the development of policy
- conduct peer reviews and analyse trends in resource requirements to assist chief officers/gold commanders in resource planning, finance, workforce planning and strategy.

Depending on the complexity of the investigation as it progresses, the strategic investigator's involvement may not be required for the full duration of the investigation, alternatively they may maintain oversight throughout the investigation.

See an example [strategic investigator's 'reflect and review' grid](#).

Responsibilities

Strategic investigators (PIP4s) are required to be accredited PIP3 SIOs, and are expected to have experience of managing linked, high-profile, complex, serious and organised crime, or major crime investigations and working with gold groups.

They are skilled decision-makers and should have extensive experience in the crime area they are deployed to support.



For further information on registration, qualification and CPD requirements see College of Policing professional profile for [Strategic Investigator \(PIP 4\)](#)

The gold commander will set the responsibilities of the strategic investigator within the agreed terms of reference. They are likely to include:

- **Strategic command and leadership**
 - Appointment and review of SIO, including technical experience and relevant accreditation
 - Explanation of relationship between gold and SIO in support of strategy.
 - Ongoing strategic investigative review, advice, oversight and support for gold and SIO
 - responsibility for wellbeing strategy, ensuring support for the SIO and other high risk roles.
- **Resource management**
 - Resource and skills levels in proportion with investigative aims.
 - Core roles and specialist resources and/or national support identified.
 - Logistics, financial and/or mutual aid.
- **Public confidence and consequence management**
 - Assessment of public confidence and wider political issues with public/partners.
 - Ongoing strategic assessment of threat, harm, vulnerability and risk.
 - Contingencies for ongoing investigative activity and wider consequences.
- **Stakeholder and partnership engagement**
 - Identification and support of strategic investigative partners and their role.
 - Awareness of gold group membership in support of strategic aims and ongoing engagement.
 - Strategic areas of responsibility agreed and link to investigation/stakeholder aims.
- **Management of information and communication**
 - Conduit of information flow to gold group and strategic partners.
 - Strategic oversight of communication/information flow including cross border and/or national.
 - Oversight of media strategy in support of SIO strategy and to carry out briefings to the media as appropriate.

1.3.4 Chief Officer

If the conduct of major crime or homicide investigation is called into question, this may affect public confidence in the police and potentially the force's, and the police service's reputation. The public expect these crimes to be investigated effectively and professionally, by officers and staff who are appropriately skilled and experienced.

To ensure that the police meet their obligations under Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Crown Prosecution Service states that homicide investigations should be:

- led by an SIO and investigators who are trained and experienced
- that they are effectively supervised



- that the investigations are reviewed
- that records are kept.

Key principles

To achieve this, chief officers should:

- appoint a lead chief officer for the force or collaborative policing area with specific responsibility for homicide and major crime investigations
- ensure that major crimes are investigated to a high standard
- develop and maintain their knowledge of issues related to homicide and major crime investigation
- take responsibility for local working practices and the force's ability to resource major crime investigations
- take a strategic rather than an investigative role (except where appointed as the Officer in Overall Command of a linked series of offences)
- have varying degrees of involvement in investigations depending on the complexity, community impact and the likelihood of success in the investigation
- be responsible for the selection and appointment of SIOs, and to make sure development and training needs are met
- be responsible for commissioning reviews and debriefs in their force.

Strategic capability

Forces should have defined structures, resources and policies in place to support the strategic management of homicide and major crime investigations. This capability should reflect the strategic assessment of risk for this type of criminality.

Dedicated teams should be appointed to respond to homicide or major crime investigations, which supports the development of specialised and experienced staff in key roles. Many forces will have a Detective Chief Superintendent Head of Crime or head of specialist department role to manage this function. The chief officer should clearly set out what is expected of this role.

Resource management

Investigations should be resourced and allocated according to the needs and circumstance of the incident and complexity of the investigation. Chief Officers should consider the effective resourcing of the major crime team and each case should be assessed and allocated to a lead investigator. The decision should not be based solely on rank, seniority or availability of resources. Chief Officers have a responsibility to formally consider the demands on the SIO, and who is best placed to meet those demands.

See the [Allocation](#) section of Critical incident management APP and [Strategic Investigator \(PIP 4\)](#)

The [A+ to C+ categorisation](#) system is an assessment tool based on threat, harm and risk together with an indicative resource demand and an assessment of the criticality or complexity of the case, and what investigative opportunities exist to resolve the enquiry. They will also need to consider the potential family and community impact.

Where a [linked series investigation](#) is identified, it will provide specific challenges for the police response. The chief officer should ensure an officer appointed has the appropriate skills and experience to act as officer in overall command (OIOC).



The OIOC is responsible for directing all aspects of the linked investigations. Where the linked series crosses one or more force boundaries, a lead chief officer should be appointed to be responsible for the appointment of the OIOC. It is accepted practice that the lead chief officer and the OIOC should be from different forces, however this independence may also be achieved within a force collaboration.

Continual assessment

All case should be reviewed regularly to make sure the allocation and resourcing remains sufficient to the needs of the investigation. Some apparently simple cases, for example, where the offender is known from the outset may require additional support (for example, because of the volume of third party or digital material). Similarly, a case initially assessed as complex can become more straightforward following the identification of the offender. Each case should be assessed separately, rather than using a simplistic formula without regard to the circumstances and complexities of the offence.

The PIP policy states that all category A and B investigations should be allocated to a PIP 3 SIO. Seemingly straightforward category C cases, for example domestic homicides, should be allocated to the most appropriate investigator. This may be a PIP 3 SIO or a competent [investigator](#) with oversight from a senior investigator. In making this decision, consider the complexity of the investigation, and regularly review decision-making. This approach provides development opportunities, succession planning and maintains operational resilience.

Chief Officers should ensure adequate financial provision for each investigation. They should also retain oversight of major crime briefings. This will help chief officers have an objective assessment of the investigation. This can be done by a [strategic investigator](#) (PIP4), where deployed. When conducting briefings, the views and opinions of all team members should be considered. See Essex Police (n.d.) A Review of the Bamber killings Investigation (To obtain a copy of this report contact the [National Police Library](#).)

Gold oversight

The use of a gold group to manage the police response is no longer limited to [critical incidents](#). It has become an effective method of coordinating police and partner activity to achieve a shared objective, generally a return to normality in the community and the removal of any threat or risk.

The appropriate command structure should be determined by the chief officer, whether this is a local or cross border structure. The nominated gold commander will establish a gold support group - the functions, membership and content of which will inevitably vary according to the nature of the crime under investigation.

Where a gold group is established it is suggested that a [strategic investigator](#) provides the link between the gold group and the SIO, avoiding the need for the SIO to personally attend every gold meeting.

Terms of reference should include:

- developing a gold strategy
- identifying and addressing any risks or potential areas of criticism regarding the incident, matters leading up to it or matters since it occurred
- addressing risks to the investigation
- considering issues for the victim's or suspect's, family or families and community or communities through family liaison strategies and community impact assessments



- considering the impact to or from any other agency or public body
- considering the media requirements of the force
- overseeing, advising and, if necessary, directing the investigation and ensuring access to expert advice. considering the need for resources to match the demands and assess appropriate requests
- Identifying any points for learning or changes in policy (for debrief)
- ensuring full records are kept of any meetings or decisions
- satisfying the requirements for disclosure
- considering any emerging legal issues.

If the gold group or a strategic PIP 4 investigator make investigative policy decisions these should be recorded in the policy file, clearly setting out who is making that decision and why.

Although the agenda for gold meetings will depend on the situation, the following should be considered as standing items:

- Terms of reference (to be agreed and regularly reviewed for fitness)
- Investigation update (from SIO via the strategic investigator (PIP4))
- Critical issues
- Forensic update
- Family update
- Community update
- Multi- or cross-agency working
- Resources
- Media
- Ethics (which will be specifically addressed in the ethics group)
- Staff welfare.

The gold commander should ensure that, where necessary, the SIO has access to specialist investigative support, peer support and investigative reviews where needed.

Family liaison and community engagement

A chief officer or gold commander will not normally meet with the family or the community during an investigation; however, there may be occasions where this is necessary. If it is necessary, the SIO should be consulted before the meeting takes place, and the family liaison officer should accompany the chief officer/gold commander, or at least be aware that a visit is taking place. Chief Officers should avoid giving families direct contact that bypasses the family liaison strategy and structure. When meeting with the community, the chief officer/gold commander should consult the SIO and the local policing commander prior to the meeting.

A record should be kept of any meetings with the family or the community.

Community assessment

Chief Officers should ensure that a [community impact assessment](#) (CIA) has been conducted, and that they are satisfied that it represents an accurate interpretation of the impact of the crime on the community, and that the overall response to community impact is effective.

Note: A community can be large or small, concentrated in a specific geographical location or widespread throughout a larger or even national community. Some crimes, eg, crimes against women and girls, may disproportionately affect a wider community, and might be a national issue.



The accuracy of the CIA is particularly important when the chief officer is interacting with community representatives, Members of Parliament and other policy makers and practitioners.

The CIA should be regularly reviewed during an investigation.

Media

The chief officer's strategic role is primarily one of quality assurance and ensuring community reassurance. There may, however, be some cases where the impact of either the offence or the investigation merits their direct intervention as a result of force, regional or national implications. In critical incidents this will be managed by the gold support group.

Management oversight and review

Chief Officers may commission and manage [reviews of investigations](#). Independent reviews are a proven means of helping to detect crimes under investigation, and quality assure the work of the SIO and enquiry team. They also help to identify good practice and learning. Reviews may also support improvements to force systems and procedures.

Chief Officers should liaise with the strategic investigator (PIP4), where one has been appointed, prior to commissioning a review.

Closing major investigations

Not all investigations will be resolved. Although relatively rare, cases can reach a point where there are no further reasonable lines of enquiry, and the SIO will need to consider closing the active investigation phase. The decision is likely to have significant impact on the victim, their family and the local community.

To comply with Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 (which requires the state to conduct an effective investigation into crimes involving serious violence to persons), it is good practice that a chief officer, after consideration of the investigation to that point, takes the decision to close an investigation. See also [Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis v DSD and another \[2018\] UKSC 11](#).

This decision may include an assessment of the investigation by an independent review or through the submission of a [closing review](#) report from the SIO with line manager's approval.

Generally, the more serious the offence under investigation, the greater the scrutiny required in order to ensure there are no remaining reasonable lines of enquiry.

If the active investigation phase is closed, the chief officer's decision will usually include a recommendation for the future review of the case and a relevant time period for review to allow new investigative opportunities and forensic advances to be exploited. Any new information will bring the case back into active assessment (for example, a similar offence, fresh intelligence or a new witness).

The risk of further offending should be the most significant factor determining the review frequency. This can be from two years to never to be reviewed again. The rationale should be recorded. See also [major crime reviews](#).

A range of factors will determine the frequency of future reviews, including:

- the risk of the offender committing further offences



- outstanding forensic evidence or opportunities
- whether there are identified suspects but, for example, insufficient evidence to charge
- the availability of offender imagery (such as CCTV or similar pictures of suspect as yet unidentified)
- the public profile of the investigation.

1.4 The strategic phases of an investigation

1.4.1 Introduction

Major crime investigations typically have three distinct strategic phases.

- Instigation and initial response
- The investigation
- Case management

There will be some overlap between these phases; for example, SIOs arriving at scenes during the initial response are likely to start issuing actions relating to the investigation phase while the initial response is still being completed. Similarly, once a suspect is charged, there will be some investigative actions that need completing while the prosecution file is being prepared.

SIOs should not view these phases in isolation but should consider how the actions carried out in one phase will impact on the next.

1.4.2 Instigation and initial response

An SIO will often only become involved in an investigation once it has been determined that the incident may be a homicide or a major crime.

The actions taken by the first officers attending the scene of a homicide or major crime incident are critical to the success of the investigation. From the outset, responders should be professionally curious and apply the investigative mind-set. Some incidents may obviously be a homicide or major crime, other less so.

The first response should assume a major crime until the contrary is established. For homicide this has been expressed as 'Think Murder' until you are sure it's not. Reasonably applied, this will ensure that material is not lost to an investigation.

For further information, see the [Initial response](#) section of Investigation APP.

Preservation of life

Trying to save someone's life, whether it is an officer giving first aid or an ambulance crew, will inevitably disturb the scene as treatment is given. It is important that an accurate record is made of the scene, and any actions taken, so that important material is not lost to the investigation.

Establishing a single route into and out of the scene (known as a common approach path) will help to minimise disturbance. Note the original and eventual position of any items within the scene.

If a victim is taken to hospital, continue to secure information and evidence, and obtain medical updates, including, where possible, an initial account from the victim.



Ideally, an officer should travel to hospital with the victim to provide evidence of continuity and to coordinate initial investigative actions at the hospital. If this is not possible, an officer should attend the hospital at the earliest opportunity.

Priorities at the hospital, if the victim is still alive:

- seize the victim's clothing and other possessions (including where relevant their mobile device)
- establish the identity of the victim
- obtain a pre-transfusion blood sample ([College of Policing \(2019\) Practice advice: The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#))
- obtain a medical opinion about the victim's condition
- obtain details of family, friends or associates who visit the victim, as they may be witnesses or sources of other information
- if the victim is conscious (subject to medical advice) establish what has happened, including details of any suspects (this might be admissible in a subsequent trial if the victim dies, unfit through physical or mental condition, or is unable to give evidence through fear). This is also known as a 'dying declaration'. See the [Criminal Justice Act \(2003\) section 116](#)

Priorities at the hospital, where the victim dies before arrival:

- treat the victim as a scene
- ask the medical staff to leave the victim's clothing on the body
- where medical treatment has been given to the victim or there have been attempts at resuscitation, request that all connecting tubes, needles, plasters and other medical items be left in place
- obtain an opinion from medical staff treating the victim as to the type of injuries and the cause of death, if known
- establish if the victim spoke to anyone before death and, having spoken to that person, record what was said.

Where officers attending the scene think the victim is dead, see [First actions at the scene of a sudden and unexpected death](#). If there is any doubt, apply first aid and call an ambulance

Paramedics can verify death. Officers should record the time that life was declared, or certified as extinct and the identity of the person making that determination.

[Preserve scenes](#)

Those involved in the initial response to a major incident should maximise the opportunities for evidence recovery by:

- identifying
- securing, and
- preserving that evidence.

See the [Managing Scenes](#) and [Forensics](#) sections of Investigation APP.

[Secure material](#)

Throughout an investigation and particularly in the early stages, identifying and securing material is a key priority. Witnesses are an important source of material and should be identified and an initial



account taken. Focused activity at the crime scene will help to secure material, and may help to identify other witnesses, as well as other scenes.

See the [Material](#) section of Investigation APP.

Identify victims

The identity of the victim(s) will help to generate actions that may lead to the early identification of the suspect(s).

If the victim is deceased, traumatised or incapacitated, witnesses, or those reporting the incident, may be able to help establish the victim's identity.

A physical description and the clothing worn by the victim should be recorded. A photograph from body worn video (BWV) will suffice.

Care should be taken to avoid forensic contamination when searching the victim's clothing for identification or mobile devices. Consult the crime scene manager for advice.

Where the identification of the victim is not a matter of urgency, priority should be given to preserving the scene.

Identify and arrest suspects

The identification and arrest of suspect(s) should always be a priority. This will help to manage the risk that the suspect may pose to themselves and others. It will also help to secure potential material before it is concealed, lost, damaged, altered or destroyed.

See the [Arrest strategy](#) section of Investigation APP.

The SIO and the initial response

Each force will have its own arrangements for calling SIOs, and out-of-hours cover arrangements, however, the SIO will usually be called following a situation report from the first response.

Depending on the nature of the incident, some activity may be initiated prior to the arrival of the SIO. On arrival, the SIO should obtain a briefing from the incident commander, review what has already been done and bring the investigation under their command.

In some cases, the SIOs will have access to the 999 call, scene imagery and initial witness accounts before attending the scene.

On bringing the incident under their command, the SIO should:

- ensure that any instructions for the preservation of the scene or other fast-track actions are clear and recorded
- consider authorising the deployment of additional or specialist resources where there is sufficient information to support this
- ensure there are clear lines of communication between the SIO and incident commander to discuss fast-track actions prior to the SIOs arrival on scene.



The SIO should consider where the best location will be to command the investigative response, particularly if there are multiple scenes. This will usually be the primary scene, but there may be occasions where another location will take priority (for example, to view CCTV or other images of the incident). In these cases, the SIO should ensure an experienced supervisor is deployed to the scene in the interim.

The initial response will generate a large amount of information, which the SIO is required to assimilate quickly. It is likely verbal actions will need to be issued during this period. Verbal actions are more likely to be misinterpreted than written ones, particularly in high-pressure environments. Make sure instructions are as clear as possible. To ensure an accurate record of the actions raised, SIOs should consider using a recording device or loggist. The record should include:

- information and material received by the SIO, its source and time of receipt
- any observations, decisions or comments which the SIO intends to later include in their policy file
- any actions issued by the SIO, including who they were issued to and the time.

Where it is likely the initial response will be lengthy or complex, the SIO should consider establishing a temporary command team to manage the various strands of work required to complete the initial response.

On taking command the SIOs should, as a priority:

- satisfy themselves that scene parameters are adequate and that measures taken to protect the scene are effective
- ensure a crime scene manager is deployed as soon as practicable
- assess and request the number and type of resources needed to complete the initial response, including key specialist posts
- instigate any [fast-track actions](#)
- identify all the staff who have been involved in the initial response, including those in the control room, and ensure they are debriefed before going off duty
- secure all records made by those involved in the initial response
- secure 999 or other telephone messages to the police about the incident
- initiate a Major Incident Room (MIR)
- ensure that the victim's family have been notified and allocate a family liaison officer (FLO)
- consider issuing a preliminary [press release](#)
- consider the status of individuals who have been identified by the initial response (eg, significant witness, vulnerable or intimidated witness, suspect).

Fast-track actions

Other fast track actions may include:

- identifying suspects
- witness search and assessment
- crime scene identification and assessment
- safeguarding actions
- scene forensics, including where appropriate post-mortems
- victim enquiries including possible motives
- intelligence opportunities
- CCTV opportunities
- passive data and digital media opportunities
- initial house to house (HTOH) enquiries
- media opportunities



- community impact assessment.

Witness accounts are likely to be the most effective fast track actions, followed by forensic evidence, CCTV and passive data opportunities. Even though they may not identify the offender, they will frequently help to put a suspect at the scene or in contact with the victim.

The golden hour

Effective early action can often lead to the recovery of material that enables the investigation to make rapid progress. See the [Golden hour](#) section of Investigation APP. This includes following up obvious lines of enquiry immediately.

Experienced SIOs talk about ‘creating slow time’ or ‘putting their foot on the ball’, to describe the need to bring some order to fast moving activities that others will have initiated during the initial response. If not brought under control, these activities run the risk of generating confusion or worse, the loss or contamination of material.

While not discouraging initiative, SIOs should quickly review fast-track actions already underway and satisfy themselves that they are appropriate and focused.

They should be cautious of fast-track actions based on uncorroborated verbal accounts from witnesses or other informants. Verbal accounts may often be more certain than later written statements, but while it is not always possible or desirable to wait for a statement before taking action, verbal information should be carefully verified.

SIOs should minimise the risks associated with fast-track actions by giving clear instructions - what action is required and the parameters for that action. They should periodically review that these instructions are being followed.

See [policy files](#)

1.4.3 Investigation phase

As the initial response is completed, SIOs will start to direct the investigation and take it forward under more controlled conditions. In many circumstances, this will see investigators pursue leads rather than simply respond to incoming information.

The key strategic considerations during the investigation phase are:

- managing material
- decision-making
- developing hypotheses
- developing a strategy
- implementing the strategy.

Managing information

The SIO should have an effective information management system in place to ensure that all the material gathered by the investigation is recorded, analysed and stored appropriately taking into account requirements under the Criminal Procedure and Investigation Act 1996 (CPIA). This will help the SIO to assimilate material about the incident and make effective decisions about how it can be used to progress the investigation.



Establishing an MIR and applying MIRSAP principles will help to achieve this.

Material

The SIO should make sure that everyone engaged on the enquiry is clear about what material is being sought and why.

Clearly identifying parameters will help understanding, for example:

- **every scene** – identifying the small defined area within which significant activity took place. This will help investigators identify who has been in the scene.
- **where a scene is located** – identifying the defined geographic location within which the scene is located. It may not be possible to place someone in the scene, but it may be possible to place them in the locality of the scene. This may not be required for every scene, but it is advisable for those where the presence of the suspect is evidentially significant.
- **times** – (also known as the **relevant time**). Identifying the times within which the offence is known to have taken place. For a homicide, this may be the last sighting of the victim, to the discovery of the body. Usually it will rely on the corroborated accounts of victim or witnesses. Choose wider rather than narrower time parameters.
- **suspects** – it's not always possible to set suspect parameters because the material supporting them is not available. In some cases, however, there may be witness testimony, CCTV images or other material that means the SIO can set suspect parameters. Parameters should be wide where material is scarce or based on a single witness statement. It can be helpful to use descriptive terms such as tall, short, old, young in press releases because these convey a general sense of the description but allow a degree of error on the part of witnesses. See the [Identification of suspects](#) section of Investigation APP
- **Trace/Investigate/Evaluate (TIE)** – These are the category of people within which the suspect may be found. See the [TIE strategy](#) section of Investigation APP and [Elimination Enquiries](#)

This list is illustrative. The same approach will be required for other investigative strategies.

Review of material

SIOs should set guidelines for the material they want to review personally. In small volume enquiries, the SIO should view all of the material gathered. In larger investigations, the SIO may want to prioritise what they review to avoid becoming overwhelmed. In these cases, the SIO should agree parameters with the MIR Office Manager about how the material will be summarised and prioritised.

Actions

Ideally, investigative activity should not take place until the material it is based on has been processed by the MIR, and an action raised and allocated. Inevitably, however investigators will discuss the case, and occasionally act on information before an action is raised. It is important to establish a culture of record keeping within the team so that all exchanges and any action taken is recorded. This will ensure that material can later be recorded accurately, and any action can be justified.

SIOs should ensure that the MIR is compliant with MIRSAP.

Research and analysis

Research and analysis can help the SIO to manage the investigation by:



- providing management information and analysis of material to support decision-making
- focusing and prioritising lines of enquiry
- testing investigative hypotheses
- identifying gaps, opportunities and/or contradictions in material
- analysing information to make cost effective resource decisions
- helping with the development of interview schedules
- providing an objective summary of the case
- assessing compliance with legislation and guidance.

Analysis processes are structured around Standard Analytical Products and the National Intelligence Model.

The results of any analysis may need to be displayed in a format that is easily understood by the investigative team and, if required, in court proceedings.

See the [Analysis](#) section of Intelligence management APP.

While SIOs may have specific requirements about the information in analytical products, they should be guided by the analysts as to the best format to present information.

Decision making

The SIO is responsible for decision making in a major crime investigation. This involves judging the reliability of material, deciding on its possible meaning and determining the action needed to progress the investigation. Although others will support this process, decision-making cannot be delegated.

See the [Investigative and evidential evaluation](#) section of Investigation APP.

SIOs should be able to articulate and document the rationale behind each decision. Decisions should continually be reviewed in line with principles identified in the [National Decision Model](#). See [Policy files](#).

The SIO may also need to consider the potential impact of parallel proceedings including statutory reviews, IOPC Investigations and civil litigation.

See also [Major crime reviews](#).

Factors that may help decision-making

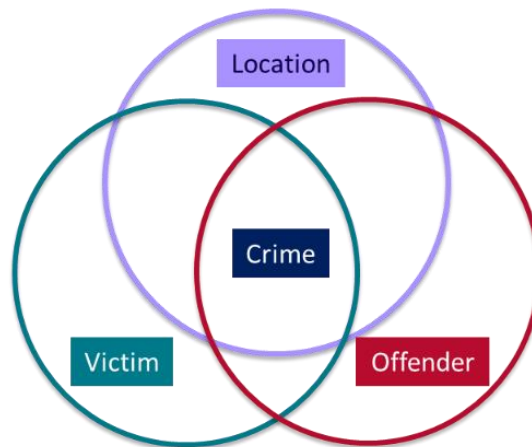
In any personal contact crime investigation (eg, a homicide, assault or similar), three elements exist:

- location
- offender
- victim

There may be more than one of each element, but each will represent an opportunity for the investigator. Where the elements converge the material available for the investigator will be the greatest. This is a useful technique during the early phases of an investigation where material is likely to be limited. In these conditions, these elements will help the SIO to draw inferences from the available material.



Three coincidental elements of crime



Location – this may include:

- the location of the offence
- the deposition site
- places where significant items are disposed of
- the victim's familiarity and routine within the location
- the times which the suspect and victim were at these locations
- the pre-offence movements of the victim
- the pre- and post-offence movements of the suspect
- any significant features about the location(s) involved.

Behavioural investigative advisers (BIAs) and geographic profilers can enhance understanding of the geographic aspects in a major crime investigation and generate inferences relevant to an unknown offender.

Victim - understanding the lifestyle and routine activities of a victim may help to establish why they were the victim. It may also help to identify the offender.

It is often the case that by finding out how a person lived, you will find out how they died. This approach has helped to solve previous homicides. In the majority of cases, there is often a prior association between the offender and the victim.

Factors to consider include:

- routine activity
- susceptibility to harm
- lifestyle
- communication methods, eg, devices and apps
- relationships
- associates
- familiarity with relevant scenes
- personality/demeanour
- physical characteristics
- precursor incidents/conflicts.

BIAs can support hypothesis generation about victimisation, contributing to profiling the unknown offender.



Offender - where the suspect is not known, it is usually possible to infer some characteristics of the offender from the material available in the early stages of an investigation. Offender profiling will assess:

- how the offender got to and from the scene,
- how they committed the crime
- what they did before and after the crime
- means, motive and opportunity.

Factors to consider include:

- number of offenders
- level of planning
- precautions employed
- forensic awareness
- sexual activity
- violence/control used
- weapon use
- weapons brought to or used from the scene
- items stolen/not stolen
- Possible motivation
- communication methods, eg, devices and apps.

When considering an unknown offender, the SIO should consider individuals where means, motive and opportunity are all present, prioritising those who stand to gain from the crime in some way.

Motive - the identification of 'why' is likely to be instrumental in determining 'who' committed the offence. Determining the motive is often complex and there may be more than one motive, for example:

- gain – theft and robbery, but consideration should be given to other ways in which offenders may gain (eg, inheritance or business advantages)
- jealousy
- revenge – an urge to inflict punishment for an actual or perceived wrongdoing, business rivalries, legal or criminal
- elimination – to escape a situation such as robbery, or eliminating a witness to protect the identity of an offender
- personal conviction – terrorists dedicated to a cause, the mentally ill acting under the influence of delusion
- sex – offences where the sexual element is the core factor
- thrill – killing for pleasure, power or control
- hatred – motivated through hostility or prejudice towards a personal or protected characteristic or activity.

Developing hypotheses

Where there are gaps in the material available to the investigation, hypothesis building can provide a tool to help the SIO to bridge the gap and identify where further material may be available.

The key points when building hypotheses are:

- having a thorough understanding of the relevance and reliability of the material gathered to date
- making sure the investigative and evidential evaluation has been applied to the material gathered to date



- making sure there is sufficient knowledge of the subject matter to interpret the material correctly
- defining a clear objective for the hypothesis
- developing hypotheses that reflect the known material
- consulting with colleagues and experts when formulating hypotheses
- making sure sufficient resources are available to develop and/or test the hypotheses
- making sure hypotheses-building is proportionate to the seriousness of the offence.

Developed objectively, hypotheses can provide a foundation for investigative decision making and planning; however, the SIO should be aware of the dangers of making assumptions or believing that assumptions made by others are fact. Where known facts are not available to develop hypotheses, this should be explicitly identified to avoid bias or unfounded assumptions.

Hypotheses should be kept under review, and regularly tested. BIAs can support hypothesis generation and prioritisation.

Support for or against each of the possible hypotheses can then be considered against psychological theory, relevant research findings and experiential knowledge that will further enhance the process.

See the [Investigative and evidential evaluation](#) section of Investigation APP.

Investigative strategy

Adopting an investigative mind-set, using investigative evaluation and developing hypotheses where necessary will help SIOs to understand the material that has been gathered. It will also define the additional material they need to make progress. The SIO should develop an investigative strategy to locate and gather this material. Any strategy will be based on what is known at any given time, therefore, it is important for the SIO to make sure all strategy documents are timed, dated and attributed, with appropriate version control.

The strategy will include some or all of the areas in part two of this document.

The SIO has overall responsibility for the investigative strategy. They will, however, need to seek specialist advice where appropriate and will delegate the task of delivering each element of the strategy. Where the strategy involves a specialist technique or procedure, the person identified to deliver it should have sufficient understanding to be able to carry out their responsibilities effectively. In all other cases, it is recommended the DSIO or an investigative supervisor oversees delivery.

Where a specialist practitioner has drafted a strategy on behalf of the SIO, the SIO should review, understand, approve or amend the strategy before adopting the final plan.

A team approach is particularly helpful when developing individual elements of the strategy. SIOs may wish to supplement their team with tactical advisers who can provide specialist advice for specific areas.

Although the principal aim of an investigative strategy is to locate and gather material, there are two other important aims:

- provide the victim and/or their family with an appropriate level of service to support them following a crime. See the [Victims Code](#) and the [Family liaison](#) section of Investigation APP.



- support the legitimate need for information about the investigation from partner agencies and the community. See [Working with other agencies and multi-agency bodies](#), and [Community engagement](#).

A statement of the objective that the SIO is trying to achieve should underpin each element of the strategy. If an SIO is not clear about their objectives, it is unlikely the investigation team can achieve it.

Avoid generalised or ambiguous statements such as, 'Carry out a full forensic examination of the scene' or 'Carry out house-to-house in the vicinity to obtain information about the offence'. In a major crime investigation, such instructions are meaningless and compel those carrying them out to interpret them as they see fit. This means the team is setting the strategy, not the SIO.

The whole team should be briefed on each element of the strategy, unless there are sensitivities that preclude this. The SIO should also provide a broad outline of the methodology for achieving the objectives and the resources they anticipate will be required. The team should be updated regularly on progress and developments. This will help the team to understand the direction of the enquiry and the rationale behind the SIO's policy and decision-making.

The manager for each element of the strategy should regularly review progress in light of the material coming into the investigation. They should notify the SIO of significant developments as they happen.

The SIO should formally review all elements of the strategy at regular intervals to make sure that they remain fit for purpose in the light of developments.

In the early stages of the investigation, reviews may be necessary every day because of the volume of material received. In long-running enquiries, however, reviews may be needed less frequently.

Managing the investigation is a dynamic activity. During the course of an investigation, new material will constantly force the SIO to review previous decisions. One piece of material can cause the SIO to review whether to pursue further, not to pursue or to instigate new actions. SIOs should never adopt an entrenched position about their strategy.

The investigative strategy and subsequent decisions making should be recorded in the SIO's [policy file](#).

Resources

An early objective assessment of the scale, gravity and complexity of the offence under investigation should be undertaken. This should be reviewed throughout the investigation as material gathered informs a mature assessment of the requirements for the police response.

Even those forces that maintain permanent teams to investigate homicide and major crimes are unlikely to have access to all of the resources that will be needed during an investigation. Other specialists may be drafted onto the team temporarily, for example, crime scene examiners, search advisers, press officers, forensic submissions officers, analysts, intelligence officers, FLOs and covert resources.

The SIO is also likely to make use of specialist resources from outside their force, for example, [NCA Major Crime investigative Support \(MCIS\)](#), pathologists, biologists and experts in other fields.

The SIO should have sufficient rank and experience to manage these resources in effectively.



In complex investigations line managers or a strategic Investigator (PIP4) should support the SIO by managing funding and resourcing issues.

Leadership and management roles

The SIO will generally implement their investigative strategy through key team managers. These include:

- Deputy senior investigating officer (DSIO)
- Office Manager
- Outside enquiry manager or [investigative supervisor](#) – responsible for the enquiry team. They should:
 - work closely with the action allocator
 - make sure that actions are allocated to the most appropriate member of the team
 - know the capabilities of each team member
 - monitor workloads
 - quality assure completed actions (quality assurance should not delay submission of work as this may delay the receipt of valuable material).
- [Crime scene manager](#)
- [House-to-house coordinator](#) – is responsible for the management of all [HtoH enquiries](#).
- Disclosure officer - ensures that the investigation complies with the requirements for the disclosure of unused material.
- Media lead - responsible for managing the media demand on the investigation and ensuring the SIO's communication strategy is delivered. They will provide advice on the message and appeal points as well as provide support for the SIO.
- Covert policing manager – an experienced individual, accredited and with appropriate expertise in managing covert operations. The overall circumstances will determine whether this is a full-time role or as an adviser to the SIO when required.
- Local policing commander - will lead on community reassurance and the eventual return to normality. They may have a key role in liaison with key community partners.
- Safeguarding Bronze commander – responsible for coordinating and managing safeguarding activity and providing advice or safeguarding strategy, legislation, multi-agency engagement and information sharing.

Other key roles may include a digital media co-ordinator, analyst, police search adviser (PoLSA) and family liaison co-ordinator (FLC). This is not an exhaustive list. The nature of the investigation will determine what particular roles will be required.

Briefings

Regular briefings are an effective way of establishing communication between the SIO and team members, helping to build team spirit and ensuring accumulated knowledge is shared.

Anyone involved in the investigation, and/or who can/ should contribute to the investigative effort should be invited.

Briefings will vary dependant on the stage and complexity of the investigation.

The SIO should plan each briefing, and SIOs should consider the following:



- **Scheduling** – make sure staff know when and where briefings are being held. Attendance should be compulsory and the time and location of the next one should be set before the end of each briefing.
- Establishing a **structured approach** – set objectives for each briefing and follow an agenda (eg, main lines of enquiry or investigative priorities).
- Creating the **right environment** – the SIO should strike an appropriate balance between a free flow of relevant information and a ‘talking shop’. It is important to encourage openness and honesty. It is a chance for staff to take ownership of the investigation and influence its direction whilst keeping up to date with developments. The SIO should listen to the views of the team and consider any ideas for inputs. There will be occasions when the SIO feels they should withhold information from the team - this should be kept to a minimum and only occur when necessary.
- **Duration** – make sure everyone has the chance to participate, question, make suggestions and report relevant facts
- **Briefing material** – SIOs should display copies of the key decisions and analytical charts in the briefing room. This material can be referred to during the briefing and staff should be encouraged to read it regularly.
- **Suitable physical environment** – Ideally conference or similar facilities should be used with data screens large enough for all attendees to see. In circumstances where the team or parts of the team are remote from the investigation, the use of technology and video conferencing should be considered.
- **Keep records** – briefing notes should be kept ensuring that all relevant material generated during the briefing is captured and enters the MIR. All briefings should be minuted and entered into the MIR for disclosure purposes.
- **Information security** - appropriate physical and information security should be instigated. A list of those present at each briefing should be maintained.

1.4.4 Case management phase

The case management issues in a major crime investigation are not likely to be significantly different from those in any investigation. The scale, however, is likely to be substantially greater because of the volume of material that has been gathered.

Sufficient resources should be allocated to the case management phase to ensure that all necessary work is carried out thoroughly and within the timescales imposed by the criminal justice system.

When a suspect is charged with an offence, the SIO should develop a case management strategy, including the following:

- completion of actions. It is likely that the suspect(s) will have been charged before all of the outstanding actions have been completed. These may include investigating mitigation put forward by the suspect, results of forensic or other tests, and other lines of enquiry. Elimination enquiries or potential other suspects will continue to be investigated during this phase.
- preparing a file of evidence
- preparing disclosure schedules
- liaison with the Crown Prosecution Service and prosecuting barrister
- [witness management](#)
- [victim and family liaison](#)
- post-trial [media strategy](#)
- risk management.



While some, or all, of the strands of the case management strategy can be delegated, it is the SIO's responsibility to finalise the investigation.

Court presentation

Presenting evidence in court can also be a significant challenge where there is a large volume of potentially complex evidence. The SIO should consider how this can be achieved to help jurors understanding, for example visual display technologies. Before deciding on a methodology, the SIO should liaise with the CPS and court administrators to make sure that any technology is acceptable and compatible.

Information management

At the conclusion of the trial, the SIO should determine what material is to be retained and what can be returned or otherwise disposed of in accordance with legal obligations, national, and local policy. See the [Management of police information](#) section of Information management APP.

The [CPIA Code of Practice](#) also requires retention of relevant material at least until the convicted person is released from custody.

Closing reports / Current situation reports

A closing report or current situation report should be submitted by the SIO at the conclusion of an investigation.

The report will summarise the key points of the investigation, and will provide a useful reference should the investigation need to be reopened or a retrospective review be undertaken.

As a minimum, a report should be prepared for all undetected cases of murder and stranger rape. A report should also be considered for other serious offences, such as attempted murder and serious sexual assaults.

The completed report should be kept with the case papers, recorded on HOLMES and be easily retrievable. Completed reports should be updated in light of significant investigative developments, and should be cross-referenced to the SIOs policy file, where appropriate.

Where the investigation is conducted using HOLMES, the Report should be prepared in a standard format. See [Appendix B, Closing/situation report template](#)

See also [Closing major investigations](#).

A structured debrief at the end of an investigation will help to identify good practice and innovation. Lessons learned can be shared through local, regional and national forums such as the NPCC Homicide Working Group and [PIP 3 SIO Knowledge Hub community](#).

Complex cases

In most major crime investigations, significant relevant material will be gathered at an early stage and will provide a clear focus for further enquiries. Such cases are usually detected relatively quickly, but a minority will be complex and will take time. These can be grouped as:

- low information investigations



- high information investigations
- [critical incidents](#)
- taking over existing investigations
- linked series investigations

Low information investigations

This is where there is very little material available to the investigation. This can occur at three points:

- **Offence Determination** – there is insufficient material to determine whether a crime has been committed. For example, cases such as missing from home, kidnap, no body scenarios, or where there are competing or ambiguous explanations for the cause of death.
- **Suspect Identification** – the circumstances of the incident are clear, but there is insufficient material to identify a credible suspect.
- **Evidence Gathering** – credible suspects are identified, but there is insufficient material to prove or disprove their involvement in the offence.

In these cases, the following may help:

- Make sure that all actions issued have been carried out effectively.
- Do not issue low-quality actions simply as a way of doing something – it is demoralising for the team and risks clogging up the information management systems with low-quality material.
- Consider requesting a review by an independent team to quality assure the investigative strategy and its implementation.
- Adopt a problem-solving approach considering why there is low information, for example:
 - was the crime planned to minimise forensic or witness opportunities?
 - is it likely the offender can control witnesses and inhibit them talking to the police?
 - are witnesses or others withholding material because of:
 - mistrust of the police?
 - mistrust of the Police for any reason but in particular due to social and cultural experiences
 - criminal justice sanction?
 - loyalty to the offender?
 - fear of the offender?
 - have errors led to material being missed?
 - has material that has been gathered been misinterpreted?
- Consider specialist [Investigative support](#).

In long-running, sensitive or complex investigations, particular attention should be paid to the welfare and morale of the investigation team. This is particularly important where there is a perception the investigation is not going well, and where the community and/or media are criticising the conduct of the investigation.

High information investigations

Some cases become complex due to the high volume of material that needs to be processed and absorbed by the SIO. This may be because of:

- the size of the incident (eg, a terrorist attack).
- the level of public interest (eg, the offence involves a child)
- a unique feature of the event itself, such as a crime committed at a large sporting event that is witnessed by people from all over the country.



Where it is expected that high levels of material will come into the MIR, consider establishing a dedicated call reception process within the MIR to assess incoming information.

Where it is anticipated that particular investigative strategies will result in high volumes of material, the SIO should consider setting parameters for gathering material in consultation with the CPS. Managing high volumes of data will also need to be considered at other points within the investigation, for example, reviewing material for disclosure and evidential use.

Taking over existing investigations

When an SIO manages an enquiry from the beginning, their understanding of the crime, the victim, their family, witnesses, suspects and the communities will develop as they gather material.

When another SIO takes over an investigation, or where an old investigation is reopened, a new SIO may initially find the investigation difficult because they lack this in-depth knowledge.

New SIOs should remain open-minded when reviewing existing material and avoid adopting biases from the previous SIO. In particular, they should ensure that they understand:

- how the offence was committed
- how the investigation was initiated
- what action was taken during the initial response stage and the material gathered
- the previous SIO's evaluation of that material and the investigative strategy that was developed from it
- the material gathered as a result of the investigative strategy
- the characteristics of the victim, witnesses, any suspects and communities relevant to the investigation
- any specific problems or issues that arose during the investigation to date.

This information will be obtained from briefings, the previous SIO and others working on the investigation, policy files and the information management system, for instance, the HOLMES account. In long-running investigations or high-volume cases, this will be a lengthy process. The SIO and the chief officer who allocated them to the case, should allow time for this process to ensure that any subsequent action is based on a thorough understanding of the material and the issues involved.

The new SIO should record their review, and, where appropriate, make specific reference to nominal status, for example, witnesses, elimination enquiries, suspects.

1.5 Linked series investigations

Linked series crimes are rare, but when they do occur, they pose specific challenges for the SIO. Any senior officer managing an SIO embarking responsible or a linked series investigation should understand the complexities of this type of investigation.

The NCA MCIS can provide assistance and advice, on managing a linked series, and also identify other SIOs with previous relevant experience.

Assessing the link

Any potential links to similar crimes should be carefully and thoroughly explored and assessed. Including the wrong case into a linked series investigation may skew the investigative strategy, reduce



the likelihood of identifying the offender, complicate disclosure and compromise the strength of the case in court.

Not including a genuinely linked offence could hinder the discovery of material and leave the public vulnerable to further offences.

If an SIO believes there are grounds to support a potential linked series, they should inform a chief officer so that an officer in overall command (OIOC) can be appointed. Where the series potentially involves multiple forces, chief officers will also need to negotiate funding arrangements should a link be established.

Assessing the links should be done in collaboration with all the relevant SIOs and, where one has been appointed, the OIOC. If an OIOC has been appointed, they will make the final decision to include a case, or not, into the linked investigation.

A link occurs when one or more similar facts indicate that the same offender has committed multiple offences. These facts will vary according to the series.

The SIOs/OIOC will need to clearly identify which facts are significant enough to be included in the assessment, and the criteria that will be applied to these facts to determine the likelihood of a link.

The criteria should be robust and applied consistently to all potentially linked cases.

Particular investigative techniques may be useful in identifying the relevant facts and criteria which should be applied. This may include:

- forensic
- analytical
- statistical
- behavioural

The [NCA MCIS](#) can provide specialist advice where a link between crimes is suspected. This may include:

- NCA MCIS behavioural investigative advisers (BIAs)
- Serious crime analysis section (SCAS)

The more material available, the more mature and evidence based the assessment of potential links will be.

A matrix of key facts and assessment criteria can be used continually to assess any new, potentially relevant cases.

Providing the chief officer with regular updates on the progress of the investigation can help to manage resources demands where they are seconded from other commands.

Types of link

The assessment of a link will result in one of three outcomes:

- Linked
- Not linked
- Deferred



Linked

Linking two or more cases implies a high degree of certainty about the connection. This certainty may come from forensic evidence which strongly supports a link, or a unique set of features in the way the crime has been committed that are so distinct as to make it almost certain that the offences are linked.

Not linked

The decision not to link cases should be made using the same criteria and the same degree of certainty as that used when linking offences. Categorising offences as not linked is **not** a default category because there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove a connection between them.

Deferred

The decision to defer is the most common outcome. This happens when there is not enough evidence to confirm whether the offences are linked or not with any degree of certainty.

When the decision to formally link two or more offences is deferred, the reasons should be recorded in the SIO's policy file. SIOs should, however, continue to collaborate, until there is sufficient evidence to confirm a link or not.

An action plan and review dates should be agreed for gathering further material required to support a decision.

The investigative strategy for each case should be developed as part of the overall investigation of the whole series. Each case should, however, be investigated in a way that it can be progressed as an individual case if necessary. This may be needed when considering the prosecution of the offender(s), either as an individual charge or as one of a number of charges.

Linked series – leadership roles

Where the linked offences are within the boundary of one force, these **may** be managed by one SIO and one MIR. This decision will depend on the scale of the enquiry, resources required by the investigation and the size of the force. The investigation will be managed day-to-day in much the same way as a non-linked case with a strategic investigator (PIP4) providing oversight and critical support.

The precise management structures required in an investigation where the decision on linking has been deferred will depend on the type of link, the location of the offences (intra or inter-force) and the demands on the SIOs involved.

The OIOC will retain overall responsibility for the linked investigations. The way an individual OIOC does this will vary according to the geographic placement of offences, the individuals involved and the nature of the investigation.

When a new offence is added to an established linked investigation, the OIOC will need to consider a review for the newly linked case. The review will identify the needs of the new case as a stand-alone investigation and ensure that these are not lost within the wider linked series.

While the OIOC has responsibility for the overall investigative strategy, this will be developed in consultation with the SIOs and key managers. Individual SIOs may be asked to lead on a particular



element(s) of the strategy on behalf of the OIOC. SIOs should provide regular detailed briefings on progress.

The SIOs should work to the overall strategy agreed with the OIOC. However, there may be room for autonomy, but the SIOs need to be clear when they need to follow the overall strategy precisely and when they have some flexibility.

A duty SIO system may be required to provide a first point of contact and to activate contingency plans in active linked series investigations. This will facilitate fast time actions in line with the overall strategy if:

- further offences are committed or linked
- a person is arrested
- a person comes into contact with the police for another offence, but who may be of significant interest to the investigation.

In some investigations the OIOC may nominate a lead MIR. The managing SIO is responsible for the completion of any additional tasks requested by the OIOC, for example, case preparation. They will also need to manage any seconded staff and the logistics where required.

Central research incident

Once linking criteria have been defined and the linked series established. The OIOC may establish a central research incident (CRI). This will support and help the investigation by:

- managing data, which may be common to more than one offence
- administering the investigation of possible matches between records across the linked series
- carrying out database comparisons between linked series.

The CRI does not manage specific strategies, enquiries or actions beyond those associated with these tasks.

Reviewing the linked series

The OIOC and SIOs should continually review the linked series. This may be scheduled for key points in the investigation, or certain trigger events to review evidence for or against linking. These events may include, for example, the discovery of forensic evidence, the identification or arrest of a suspect, or further offences being reported.

In addition, a formal process for the regular review of material should be established, as the relevance of material or offences may change as material is gathered and assessed.

Working with other teams

The SIOs for potentially linked cases should meet frequently, as soon as a potential link is identified. This will help to align enquiries to facilitate linking at a later stage.

Collaboration on media releases, interview strategies, family liaison, forensic analysis, covert opportunities and elimination enquiries can yield material useful to more than one enquiry and may help to establish whether the investigations are linked or not.



Inter-team communication may be particularly important at certain points in the investigation, such as the discovery of an additional crime scene, the identification and arrest of a suspect, or the identification of new key witnesses.

Inter-team communication may take place through:

- regular management meetings involving all SIOs, the OIOC and senior managers
- a forensic group to discuss forensic developments.
- events which bring together the wider team and specialists (eg, prosecutors, analysts and BIAs). These may have particular themes or prompted by specific events
- informal discussions between officers in equivalent roles.

Managing the media strategy

The media may have already linked offences before the police, and this can lead to intense pressure on SIOs to formally link investigations.

Regardless of the strength or confirmation of the link, a coherent media strategy should be developed as soon as the possibility of linked series arises. All press releases should be passed through one press officer to support consistency, and a single officer should be identified as the spokesperson for all linked offences.

When deciding the content of a media strategy, SIOs should be aware of the impact a statement or terminology may have about a potential link on subsequent legal proceedings.

Statements which imply the same offender is definitely responsible for all offences, may be used against the case in court if a suspect is only tried for one, or some of the offences.

The OIOC and SIO will also need to consider the impact that media releases may have on the offender. BIAs and forensic clinical psychologists will be able to offer advice in this area.

The indication of a linked series can have a significant impact on public and may create anxiety. The media strategy will also affect the family liaison strategy and community confidence. Briefings to key community groups can be effective if cases are linked in the media, but not formally. Local policing commanders can assist by engaging with relevant groups.

The family liaison strategy

Once a link has been made by the investigation team, or the media, there should be close collaboration between all the family liaison officers. Deployment of a family liaison coordinator (FLC) will be essential to coordinate multiple family liaison officers. Consistent and coherent key messages and any developments need to be communicated to all families at the same time. This is important if good relations are to be maintained between the families and the investigative team.

A single family liaison strategy, overseen by an FLC who will also act as an adviser to the OIOC and SIOs will help to manage this aspect of the investigation.

See the [Family liaison](#) section of Investigation APP

1.6 Policy files



The primary objective of a policy file, or decision log, is to record investigative direction, instruction, parameters and priorities for major crime investigations whilst complying with the requirements of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act (CPIA) 1996. The CPIA Code of Practice at paragraph 2 requires SIOs to record and retain records of information and other material in the investigation.

The policy file should accurately reflect the strategic and tactical decision making of the SIO.

It provides a transparent, accountable and auditable record of the decisions made during the course of an investigation and will be relied upon by investigators, and others when providing answers to victims or their families, in judicial proceedings, criminal, civil or disciplinary and internal scrutiny in the form of review or management oversight.

The disclosure requirements of the CPIA, in particular the disclosure of relevant material to the defence, has led to the decisions of SIOs and disclosure officers to come under significant scrutiny - in particular what amounts to a 'reasonable line of enquiry'.

The SIO is accountable for the decisions and actions they take and will be expected to provide a clear auditable rationale for the management of the investigation. It is recognised however, that operational decision-making may, on occasion, be based on incomplete or imprecise information, balancing competing objectives and limited resources while seeking to act reasonably and proportionately in the circumstances.

Historically SIOs have been directed to use only bound books with numbered pages to ensure the integrity of the document. Integrity remains a core issue, but this does not preclude advances in technology that supports the use of electronic policy files.

1.6.1 Principles

A number of major crime investigations are not run in a traditional major investigation room or using HOLMES. Instead, they use in-force crime or incident management systems. These systems vary from force to force.

The method of recording is a matter for forces. They can require SIOs to use bound books, direct input to HOLMES or other local or in-force IT solutions for crime or incident management. Where the system used reflects the integrity of the principles, a separate bound book policy file is not required.

To ensure consistency of approach and interoperability, forces should apply the following principles.

1. The integrity of the individual decisions and the overall document should be able to resist challenge. It should be able to prove when the document was made, by whom, and that no changes have been made to the content subsequently. This should include any attachments, maps, diagrams or other documents joined to the policy file.
2. If a bound book is used, it should have numbered pages. The binding should be sufficient to resist challenges to integrity/tampering. Loose leaf files and other methods of binding which can easily be interfered with should not be used. A traditional glued back binding with a stapled and tape bound spine is an accepted standard.
3. If using an electronic format, the record should follow the same structure and principles as in a bound book, and the system used should have appropriate security protocols to comply with the requirements of principle 1, ensuring entries cannot be amended once entered.



4. Decisions recorded in the policy file should refer to one investigation only.
5. The policy file should start with a record of the available information to set the context and provide a foundation for the decisions that follow. This will include why particular lines of enquiry are to be pursued and others not.
6. Each decision should be recorded separately and contain the decision, the reason, the identity of the decision maker, when it was made and when it was recorded. If the author is not the same person as the decision maker, the identity of the author should also be included. The record should follow the format set out in [Appendix C](#).
7. Each decision will be consecutively numbered so that it is clear whether earlier decisions have been made and to enable the reader to understand the timeline.
8. It is recommended that an index of decisions is maintained in all but the simplest cases to aide understanding and avoid repetition. A template is provided at [Appendix E](#).
9. Decisions should be made visible to all staff involved in the investigation in a timely manner, unless there are specific reasons to limit access. This should include attachments or supplementary material, such as strategy documents, maps or other images.
10. A policy file should be maintained for all major crime cases (see [Types and categories or crime](#)). Individual force policies will dictate other categories of investigations where the use of policy files is required, eg, critical incidents. A policy file can be completed in any case at the discretion of the principal decision maker or the incident commander.
11. At the conclusion of the enquiry, the policy file should be retained in a retrievable and accessible format and stored with the case papers.

1.6.2 Supporting advice and guidance

The decisions recorded in a policy file are a matter for the individual SIO dependant on the circumstances of the investigation prevalent at that time and subject to relevant national guidance and advice, eg:

- [Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#)
- [ACPO \(2021\) Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#)

Other managers in the investigation are likely to maintain decision logs to record their own decisions and directions, eg, crime scene managers, house to house coordinators and covert managers. These policy files should follow these same principles and format.

1.6.3 Covert policy files

To support effective disclosure under Public Interest Immunity (PII) a separate covert policy file should be used where decisions relating to covert policing tactics are recorded. This will include the use of intelligence collection plans and development activity where Article 6 (fair trial) and Article 8 (private & family life) of the European Convention on Human Rights (recognised by the Human Rights Act 1998) are engaged.



For further information on how sensitive material is used, and how to introduce it into the investigation, consult a covert manager who will provide advice and access to the relevant practice advice and guidance.

1.6.4 HOLMES

Where the investigation uses HOLMES, the SIOs policy file will be registered as an 'Other Document' and assigned as 'Document 1' in the database. If the policy file is input directly into HOLMES as part of a paperless system, care needs to be taken to ensure the contents are included within the disclosure assessment to comply with the provisions of the CPIA.

1.6.5 Recording

It is not possible to be prescriptive about what should be recorded in a policy file because each investigation is different and will identify issues unique to the investigation. There are, however, common themes and issues within most major crime investigations. These are set out in [Appendix D](#) to help SIOs develop their policy file.

Policy Files and the contents must be assessed by the Disclosure Officer as material that falls under the provisions of the CPIA.

1.7 Disclosure

1.7.1 General

The [Criminal Cases Review Commission](#) reported that failure to disclose material to the defence remains the biggest single cause of injustices.

The Attorney General published a [Review of the efficiency and effectiveness of disclosure in the criminal justice system](#) in 2018. SIO are encouraged to read the review, which concluded the problems with the disclosure process as:

- reasonable lines of enquiry not always followed in line with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act Code of Practice
- the duty and disclosure obligations are not being considered with sufficient attention from the outset of a criminal investigation
- investigators not always identifying material as relevant for inclusion in the disclosure schedules
- investigators and prosecutors not always applying the disclosure test correctly, which means that material that should be disclosed is not disclosed
- disclosing the right material too late.

See also [Attorney General's Guidelines on Disclosure for investigators, prosecutors and defence practitioners 2020](#)

The IOPC Learning the Lessons Bulletin, issue 17, August 2012 noted that in one case a number of suspects were charged with conspiracy to murder after the victim was shot dead. During the police enquiry, two inexperienced investigators jointly undertook the disclosure officer role. Both had been trained, but they lacked practical experience in the role and were performing the disclosure



function for the first time. They should have been overseen by more experienced officers, but they had their own roles and could not provide the support needed.

When the case went to court, the defendants entered not guilty pleas, the trial collapsed when it was revealed that there had been failings in disclosure on the part of the prosecution.

Subsequently the SIO was found culpable in a misconduct investigation for failing to ensure the disclosure process was carried out in accordance with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act and force policy. The SIO was issued with a formal written warning.

Disclosure should be at the centre of every investigation and a disclosure officer should be appointed at the outset. All officers and/or staff who are appointed to the role of disclosure officer should be appropriately trained, experienced and supervised. The role of disclosure officer, particularly in a major investigation is a specialism, not just an administrative function recording material and drawing up lists.

See also [ACPO \(2021\) Major Incident Standardised Administrative Procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#)

Investigators, disclosure officers and SIO's should apply a 'thinking approach' to disclosure, not just applying the strict interpretation of the disclosure rules, but applying a fair process where if any doubt exists about relevance, there is consultation with the prosecutor. The principle should be "if in doubt, disclose".

The 2018 [National Disclosure Improvement Plan](#) states '...it is essential that [disclosure] is dealt with competently and fairly...' and that the process '...is a fundamental and continuing part of all investigations.'

SIO's should make sure they are familiar with the relevant legislation and guidance covering disclosure.

See the [Disclosure](#) section of Prosecution and case management APP.

Disclosure in major crime cases consists of three stages:

- Pre-charge
- Post charge
- Post-trial (conviction).

The SIO will direct a criminal investigation and they:

- are responsible for ensuring processes are in place for recording and retaining information and other material in the investigation
- may delegate tasks, but they remain responsible for ensuring these have been carried out. In particular, it is an essential part of their duties to ensure that all material which may be relevant to an investigation is retained, and either made available to the disclosure officer or (in exceptional circumstances) revealed directly to the prosecutor
- are responsible for ensuring all reasonable lines of enquiry are pursued. For example, where material is held on a digital device or remote digital storage (cloud storage), or in other jurisdictions, SIO will have to decide what material it is reasonable to inquire into and in what manner. See also [APP on Extraction of data from digital devices](#).
- may ask the disclosure officer to notify a third party who may hold material relevant to the investigation about the investigation and to invite the third party to retain that material in



case they receive a request for disclosure. This should not be a merely speculative request; there should be reasonable grounds to believe there may be relevant material.

Where the officer in charge of the investigation or the disclosure officer are changed during the life of the investigation, this should be recorded in the SIO's policy file and in the HOLMES account, where appropriate. A formal handover to the new member of staff should also take place.

Under section 3 of the CPIA the prosecutor must disclose to the defence any prosecution material which might reasonably be considered capable of undermining the prosecution case or of assisting the case for the accused.

To do this the SIO will need to set out their strategy and parameters for reasonable lines of enquiry and clearly instruct the disclosure officer on their disclosure strategy. To meet the requirements of section 3 for the CPIA these strategies should be regularly reviewed as the enquiry progresses.

Disclosure officer

A disclosure officer should be appointed at the beginning of the investigation. They should be appropriately trained and experienced. See also [MIRSAP](#). The disclosure officer should have adequate supervision to support their decision-making throughout the investigation.

For large or complex investigations, the SIO should consider the appointment of a lead or co-ordinating disclosure officer supported by a number of disclosure officers. Particular strands of the investigation such as intelligence or communications data can be assigned to an individual disclosure officer leaving the lead to coordinate and oversee the assessment of the whole.

The disclosure officer should be included in all case progression or management meetings, so that they are aware of the likely issues in the case and any potential defences including remarks made in interview or at the time of arrest.

1.7.2 Pre-charge disclosure strategy

The SIO should create a disclosure strategy document, which sets out the disclosure issues in the case, the anticipated relevant unused material to be assessed and the approach to be taken for completing reasonable lines of enquiry.

Digital devices

The disclosure strategy should include disclosure for digital devices and cloud storage. The strategy should consider what items have entered the enquiry, the nature and extent of their examination and the rationale behind that action. This will include

- the analytical techniques to be applied
- any parameters to be applied to searches, such as
 - keywords or phrases
 - subject filters
 - time parameters
 - geographic location services
 - image files etc.

A decision not to examine a device, or to explore recovered data, should be recorded by the SIO in their disclosure strategy.



Victim and witness contact

SIO's should make sure a record is made of all contacts with victims and witnesses for disclosure purposes. See also [MOJ \(2020\) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#).

Pre-charge advice or charging decision

When the SIO and their team engage with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) for advice or a charging decision there is a requirement on them to notify the lawyer of any material which meets the disclosure test, ie, it may undermine the prosecution case or supports the suspects.

In complex cases, the lawyer is likely to want to consider all relevant unused material for the disclosure schedules pre-charge, and/or information required for a disclosure management document. See [CPS \(2018\) A guide to 'reasonable lines of enquiry' and communication evidence](#).

This will help prosecutors to determine whether there is any other material that might affect the sufficiency of the evidence. This is part of the 'thinking approach', considering the material more broadly. Lawyers should consider the potential impact of material that:

- is in the possession of the police and has been examined (ie, material on draft disclosure schedules)
- is in possession of the police but has not yet been examined (ie, seized but not yet examined, eg, a mobile phone)
- is not currently in police possession but may be obtained with further investigation (ie, third party material)
- may undermine the prosecution case or assist the defence (ie, differing descriptions provided by eyewitnesses).

See also [CPS \(2018\) The Code for Crown Prosecutors](#)

Reasonable lines of enquiry

The SIO will be required to provide an MG3 (insert) or reasonable lines of enquiry – MG3 section. This should be submitted with the charging advice file. The document will provide:

- the disclosure officer's understanding of the defence case
- the reasonable lines of enquiry that were conducted during the investigation
- a list of items of unused material have been identified as being capable of satisfying the test for disclosure.

The disclosure officer will usually complete the MG3 insert, the SIO is responsible for ensuring it contains all the relevant information to support the correct charging decision. The SIO will want to be sure their reasonable lines of enquiry are set out effectively.

It will not always be clear what the defence case is at this early stage, particularly if the suspect has made a no comment in interview. In these cases, the SIO will need to hypothesise about the likely issues, based on the circumstances of the offence, the background of the suspect(s) and the strength of the evidence.

A significant challenge will be digital media and third-party material. There is specific guidance to help the SIO decide [what material it is reasonable to inquire into, and in what manner](#).



See also: [CPS \(2018\) A guide to 'reasonable lines of enquiry' and communication evidence](#) and [CPS \(2018\) Disclosure - Guidance on Communication Evidence](#)

In [R v E \[2018\] EWCA 2426 \(crim\)](#) the Court of Appeal has provided guidance to investigators about reasonable lines of enquiry for mobile phone seizure and examination. The Court emphasised that seizing a mobile phone is not automatically a reasonable line of enquiry in every case. The CPS and DPP guidelines do not require that mobile phones should be examined in every case but '[the decision is fact specific in each and every case](#)'.

The case of [R v Carl Bater-James and Sultan Mohammed \[2020\] EWCA Crim 790](#) provided further clarity. The judge in this case set out four principles:

- Is it necessary to seek details of a witnesses digital communications? The linked question is, is it then necessary to disclose those digital communications to which the investigators have access?
- When it is necessary, how should the review of those communications be conducted?
- What reassurance can be provided to the complainant as to the scope of the review and the circumstances of any disclosure of any relevant material?
- What is the consequence if the complainant refuses to permit access to a potentially relevant device, either by 'download' or permitting viewing? Similarly, what is the consequence if the complainant deletes relevant material?

See also APP on [Extraction of material from digital devices](#)

During the investigation, the SIO will need to provide clear direction for the seizure and examination of digital devices, as well as other digital media such as CCTV imagery. It is important that the investigation team understand and follow the SIO's instructions and parameters for seizure and examination. This includes what is to be examined and what is to be specifically searched for (eg, descriptions, words or phrases) and any time parameters applied. These same instructions should be clearly set out in the MG3 (insert).

Disclosure Management Document

Using the MG3 (insert) or reasonable lines of enquiry – MG3 section, the prosecutor will prepare a Disclosure Management Document (DMD). This will set out the reasonable lines of enquiry that have been pursued to date, the disclosures officer's understanding of the defence case, and identify any material which undermines or supports the prosecution case. In addition the DMD will set out what electronic (digital) material or CCTV/multi-media evidence has been seized (eg, from suspects, victims or witnesses), the extent and nature of the examination of each, as well as any devices that have not been seized (eg, from the victim or suspect) and the rationale for this decision.

The DMD will be shared with the defence to encourage them to ask for any further specific examination of the material. If deemed reasonable, in agreement with CPS, the SIO will amend their lines of enquiry and direct the appropriate enquiry.

Under [paragraph 10.1 of the CPIA Code of Practice](#) and common law rules (See [R v DPP, ex parte LEE \[1999\] 2 Cr. APP R 304](#)), the prosecution has a duty to review and disclose unused material that would help the defence with the early preparation of their case. This includes:

- any previous convictions of the victim or key witness, if that could reasonably be expected to assist the accused when applying for bail



- any material which might enable the defence to make an early application to stay the proceedings as an abuse of process
- any material which would enable the accused to prepare their defence which may be significantly less effective if disclosure is delayed (eg, the names of any eye-witnesses whom the prosecution do not intend to use)
- information which would indicate an explanation by the accused for the offence or which casts doubt on a confession or witness reliability or which may otherwise satisfy the disclosure test.

In his [Review at pages 16 -17 the Attorney General](#) proposed that a 'Rebuttable presumption in favour of disclosure of certain types or categories of unused material' should be created through the CPIA Code of Practice. These might include:

- crime reports
- computer aided despatch records of emergency calls to the police
- existing investigators' notes
- any record of the complaint made by the complainant
- any previous account of a witness, including draft witness statements
- CCTV footage, or other imagery, of the crime in action
- previous convictions or cautions of witnesses
- basis of pleas of co-accused
- defence statements of the co-accused

1.7.3 Post-charge

Following the decision to charge, the SIO and their investigation team will identify the evidence file (used material) and schedules of unused material, listed on MG6 forms C, D and E.

- MG6C – Schedule of relevant non-sensitive unused material
- MG6D – Schedule of relevant sensitive material
- MG6E – Disclosure Officers Report including certification.

For further information, see the [CPS \(2018\) The National Disclosure Standards](#)

In major crime cases it is important that the SIO makes sure the schedules are completed fully and provide adequate descriptions of items, and that the description of the reasonable lines of enquiry are accurately and fully described. This will allow the prosecutor to understand the content and make decisions.

It is suggested that SIO's approve and sign all schedules.

See also the [CPS \(2018\) Disclosure Manual](#)

1.7.4 Sensitive material & public interest immunity

Some major crime cases will generate sensitive material that may prejudice the public interest if that material is revealed to the defence. Where any sensitive material exists within the investigation, advice should be sought from a covert manager at the earliest opportunity.

This material should be listed and described on the MG6D schedule with supporting rationale, and should be provided to the prosecutor separately and will not be disclosed to the defence.



[Paragraph 6.14 of the CPIA Code of Practice](#) provides a non-exhaustive list of examples illustrating what might be classed as sensitive material depending on the circumstances. This includes:

- material given in confidence
- material relating to the identity or activities of informants, undercover police officers, witnesses, or other persons supplying information to the police who may be in danger if their identities are revealed
- material revealing the location of any premises or other place used for police surveillance, or the identity of any person allowing a police officer to use them for surveillance
- material revealing, either directly or indirectly, techniques and methods relied upon by a police officer in the course of a criminal investigation, for example, covert surveillance techniques, or other methods of detecting crime
- material whose disclosure might facilitate the commission of other offences or hinder the prevention and detection of crime
- material upon the strength of which search warrants were obtained
- material containing details of persons taking part in identification parades.

In exceptional circumstances, where the existence of the material is so sensitive that it cannot be listed on the MG6D, it should be listed on a highly sensitive schedule and revealed to the prosecutor separately.

Where sensitive material is identified as meeting the disclosure test, and the prosecutor is satisfied that disclosure would create a real risk of serious prejudice to an important public interest, the options are:

- disclose the material in a way that does not compromise the public interest in issue (i.e. sanitise the material)
- obtain a court order to withhold the material (Public Interest Immunity or PII)
- abandon the case
- disclose the material because the overall public interest in pursuing the prosecution is greater than in abandoning it.

The House of Lords in [R v H and C \[2004\] UKHL 3](#) ruled that applications to the court for the withholding of sensitive material should be rare. They should only be made where:

- the prosecutor has identified material that fulfils the disclosure test, disclosure of which would create a real risk of serious prejudice to an important public interest, and the prosecutor believes that the public interest in withholding the material outweighs the public interest in disclosing it to the defence
- the above conditions are not fulfilled, but the police, other agencies or investigators, after consultation at a senior level, do not accept the prosecutor's assessment on this
- in exceptional circumstances, the prosecutor has pursued all relevant enquiries of the police and the accused and yet is still unable to determine whether sensitive material satisfies the disclosure test and seeks the guidance of the court.

See 15.3 of the [Criminal Procedure Rules 2020](#) for further information.

1.7.5 Post-Trial - conviction

The obligations and responsibilities of disclosure in criminal cases does not automatically end at the conclusion of the trial of the accused.

The [Attorney Generals Guidelines on Disclosure for investigators, prosecutors and defence practitioners 2020](#) at paragraph 138, states that: 'Where, at any stage after the conclusion of the



proceedings, material comes to light which might reasonably be considered capable of casting doubt upon the safety of the conviction, the prosecutor should disclose such material.'

The obligation on the police for post-trial disclosure was considered in [R \(Nunn\) \(Appellant\) v Chief Constable of Suffolk Constabulary and another \(Respondents\) \[2014\] UKSC 37](#). The Supreme Court ruled that post-conviction disclosure should occur in two ways:

- where material comes to light that casts doubt upon the safety of the conviction, unless there is a good reason not to, and
- if there exists a real prospect that further enquiry will reveal something that may affect the safety of the conviction.

In delivering the judgement, Lord Hughes said 'the police and prosecutors ought to exercise sensible judgment when representations are made on behalf of convicted persons. If there appears to be a real prospect that further enquiry will uncover something that may affect the safety of the conviction, then there should be co-operation in making it. It is in nobody's interests to resist all enquiry unless and until the Criminal Cases Review Commission directs it.'

See also the [CPS Legal Guidance: Disclosure of Material to Third Parties](#) (Post-Conviction Disclosure).

1.7.6 Parallel proceedings

On occasion, a major crime investigation, eg, the murder of one parent by another, will cross with legal proceedings around the care of surviving children. These are referred to as parallel proceedings.

The SIO may receive formal notification of Family Court proceedings, linked to a requirement for disclosure of information from the investigation. The notice is likely to include a timetable for delivery of the material and SIO's should be aware that such proceedings should be completed within 26 weeks from commencement.

The police and CPS are obliged to comply with a Court order. This may involve the revelation of investigative material to the Family Court and interested parties to the proceedings. This will often include the suspect(s) in a criminal investigation and in advance of the criminal disclosure process.

SIOs will need help to negotiate these proceedings and should refer to the guidance in a joint [2013 Protocol and Good Practice Model](#) – Disclosure of information in cases of alleged child abuse and linked criminal and care directions hearings

It is suggested that SIOs consult with CPS and the local authority legal service department at the earliest opportunity.

See also [Parallel proceedings](#)

1.8 Investigative support

1.8.1 Introduction

A wide range of expertise and specialist skills are available to support the SIO during an investigation. No one individual will be an expert in every aspect of an investigation, and it is part of the SIOs role to draw together, manage and maintain a team of experienced investigators and specialist advisers.



It is the SIOs responsibility to actively seek such support and, depending on the type of advice required, and opinion being offered, to evaluate the advice in the context of the investigation.

Sources of advice include:

1.8.2 NCA – Investigations Command

This command includes a number of teams who can provide, or provide access to specialist advice, including:

- [Major Crime Investigative Support \(MCIS\)](#)
- [Serious Crime Analysis Section \(SCAS\)](#)
- [UK Missing Persons Unit \(UKMPU\)](#).

Major Crime Investigative Support

MCIS provides front line policing with information, advice and support in relation to major crime and vulnerable and intimidated witnesses as a free of charge service. The unit comprises of a mixture of NCA staff and police officers and provides a single point of contact for police forces and law enforcement agencies.

Guidance documents are available to support the use of expert witness/advisers, including costings. In addition, MCIS can identify SIOs who have dealt with similar offences so that peer support can be accessed, if required.

MCIS can be contacted by telephone on 0345 000 5463 or email: mcis@nca.pnn.police.uk (pnn users) or mcis@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk (all other users).

1.8.3 Uniformed policing – specialist operations

The [Uniformed policing specialist operations team](#) at the College of Policing works in conjunction with the NPCC Armed Policing Portfolio lead. The College team can provide advice in relation to Post Incident Procedures (PIP) implemented following the discharge of a firearm by police.

1.8.4 UK Disaster Victim Identification Unit (UKDVI)

[UKDVI](#) co-ordinates the national police service capability to respond to mass fatality incidents in the UK. They will also support overseas incidents, which may affect or include UK Citizens, when requested by HM Government UKDVI.

UKDVI provides an on-call service and can be contacted via the NPoCC.

See also the [Disaster victim identification](#) section of Civil emergencies APP

1.8.5 Operation Hydrant

[Operation Hydrant](#) is a national policing project coordinating the national policing response to non-recent child sexual abuse within an institution or involving a person of public prominence. The team also collates national statistics in relation to all suspects and victims of child sexual abuse within the Operation Hydrant criteria.



For further information see the [Operation Hydrant Knowledge Hub Community](#).

1.9 Working with other agencies and multi-agency bodies

While the police will conduct a criminal investigation, other agencies will have different objectives and responsibilities, in particular they may look at prevention of incidents and wider public safety issues.

Agencies such as the Air, Rail and Marine Accident Investigation Branches are investigative bodies who will, on occasion, have primacy wholly or partly for an incident.

The [Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007](#) means that SIOs may find themselves working in partnership with other agencies more frequently. This includes, for example, workplace deaths where they will work with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

At the start of an investigation, it may not be clear what has happened and who should take primacy. This means there should be a coordinated approach between agencies, with clear lines of communication supporting an effective investigation.

1.9.1 Agencies and working parameters

Health and Safety Executive – work related deaths

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) is a national independent body for workplace deaths, safety and illness. It acts in the public interest to prevent these incidents. It is a prosecuting authority and investigates employers for breaches of health and safety legislation.

If it is suspected the death or serious injury was caused, in whole or in part, because of acts or omissions amounting to [corporate manslaughter](#) or [gross negligence manslaughter](#) the police will lead the investigation, working with the HSE, the local authority or other agencies where appropriate.

If evidence is subsequently discovered that determines the death or serious injury was caused by a breach of health and safety legislation, then primacy for the investigation should, by agreement, be passed to the HSE. The SIO should record this decision in their policy file.

This position should be kept under review as new information becomes available, and an HSE inspector may determine that the investigation should revert to the police. The decision may also be taken by the HSE's solicitors via the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The police should then decide whether to assume primacy for the investigation. The decision and reasons for this should also be recorded in the SIOs policy file.

There may be occasions where, as a result of the coroner's inquest, judicial review or other legal proceedings, further consideration of the evidence and surrounding facts is needed. Where this happens, the police, HSE, and CPS should work together to agree the way forward. There may also be a need for further investigation to support such a decision.

Deciding whether a death is work related.

The following examples will help to illustrate what may be a workplace death or serious injury. These deaths were not initially identified as workplace deaths.



- A child was killed when the bouncy castle they were using blew away in high winds. An entry fee was been charged for the child to use the bouncy castle.
- A jogger trod on an overhead power cable that had become detached from its pylon. The supplier had not switched off the current.

The following may help SIOs to decide whether the death is a workplace death or serious injury:

- was work being carried out at the time and place of the incident?
- was the deceased/victim an employee or self-employed person who was at work at the time of the incident?
- was the deceased/victim a member of the public who was injured as a result of work activity?
- if the incident was at domestic or similar premises, had maintenance or refurbishment work been undertaken recently, for example, gas or electrical installations?

Some workplace deaths or serious injuries will not be identified as such, at the time the incident was reported.

Initial actions

In most cases, the first person at the scene will be a police officer, but where this is not the case, the first responding agency will be expected to take appropriate action where they have the powers to do so.

See [Instigation and Initial response](#)

A police officer of supervisory rank should attend the scene and any other relevant place as soon as practicable to assess the situation. The supervisor should review actions taken to date and assume responsibility for the investigation. See also [The SIO and the Initial response](#).

During the early stages it may be unclear what has happened, and several hypotheses may be under consideration, and could include, for example:

- homicide
- breach of health and safety legislation
- mechanical failure
- tragic accident
- medical incident.

Where other investigating or prosecuting authorities attend before the police, they should make sure the police have been called, and preserve the scene until the police arrive.

In some cases, the HSE need to ensure public safety will initially take priority over the police criminal investigation, and the SIO should take this into account during the initial stages.

Other agencies are experts in their field and will have valuable experience and input to the police investigation.

Effective handover of investigations between agencies when primacy changes will ensure that those assuming primacy can:

- complete their investigation effectively, and
- comply with their legal duties relating to [disclosure](#).

For further information see:



- [HSE \(2016\) Work-related deaths: A protocol for liaison](#)
- [HSE \(2015\) Work-related deaths protocol: Practical guide](#)

Prison, probation, detention and immigration centres

A death in a prison, probation or immigration centre should be treated as a potential homicide until the facts have been established. Article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998 places a positive duty on the police to investigate any death where it appears an agent of the state may be responsible. This includes a death in custody, whether due to suicide or homicide. See [Edwards v UK 46477/99 \[2002\] ECHR 303](#).

Note: this may include: children's homes (including secure children's homes) and other settings with residential provision for children; custodial settings where a child is held, including police custody, young offender institutions and secure training centres; and all settings where detention of a child takes place, including under the Mental Health Act 1983 or the Mental Capacity Act 2005. See also [HM Government \(2018\) Working together to safeguard children](#).

Deaths in prison or other custody settings are likely to require an [Article 2 Inquest](#) where there are grounds to believe the state may have failed in its Article 2 duty of care for the individual. This requires an effective and independent investigation to be undertaken. See also [Inquests](#).

Deaths on police premises

Where the death occurs on police premises that were being used temporarily by the prison service or a private contractor to accommodate people in prison custody, an SIO should investigate the circumstances the death. Police premises includes clinical facilities, court cells, police cells, any vehicle used by the prison or private contractor to transport prisoners, immigration detention accommodation and secure training centres.

Police professional standards, the [Independent Office for Police Conduct](#) (IOPC) and the [Prison and Probation Ombudsman](#) (PPO) should be notified as soon as practicable. The IOPC may take primacy for the investigation, where the person has had direct or indirect contact with the police at, or shortly before, they were seriously injured or died. This will only apply where the contact may have caused or contributed to the death or injury.

The SIO should hold a joint strategy meeting with the PPO investigator to agree how the respective investigations will proceed. The intention will be to develop a strategy for parallel but co-ordinated investigations, and to set up a single point of contact between the police investigation and the PPO.

See also [ACPO/PPO \(2014\) Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Prison and Probation Ombudsman](#).

Air, Marine and Rail Accident Investigation

Incidents involving air, marine or rail travel which result in fatalities are relatively rare, but where they do occur, they are likely to be high profile critical incidents.

The police investigation will run jointly with the relevant accident investigation branch and in some cases the HSE. The accident investigation branches include:

- [Air Accident Investigation Branch](#) (AAIB)
- [Marine Accident Investigation Branch](#) (MAIB)



- [Rail Accident Investigation Branch \(RAIB\)](#)

In the aftermath of an air, marine or rail incident the police will seek to establish the cause of the incident, identify victims and others involved. This will potentially involve parallel Investigative activity, reporting to the Coroner and to the Crown Prosecution Service. Police investigations are likely to be protracted as they look beyond the incident itself to establish any background causation and consider whether criminal proceedings may be appropriate.

Potential offences may include [corporate manslaughter](#) or [gross negligent manslaughter](#).

The objective of the relevant accident investigation branch will be to establish what happened and why to improve safety and prevent further incidents. If the incident was caused by a design or manufacturing failure, this could potentially mean other aircraft, vessels or trains of the same design present an ongoing danger to crew and the public.

The knowledge and expertise of the relevant accident investigations branch, including technical knowledge, will help in establishing the cause of an incident.

On occasion, the relevant accident investigation branch will take primacy for the investigation supported by the police, who will preserve scenes and work with victims or their families in partnership with the lead agency. In some cases, this may create differing priorities.

In the [Shoreham air crash investigation](#) in 2015 the AAIB acting within their powers, seized exhibits and took witness statements but were unable to share this information with the police for the criminal investigation or the coronial process.

SIOs will need to understand the different pressures of each investigation, and work closely with their opposite number to mitigate any conflict. Where possible this should include agreeing:

- collection, sharing and use of evidence
- contact with the injured and bereaved and next of kin
- public statements and media coverage
- employment of third parties (experts etc.).

See the [Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Accident Investigation Branches and the National Police Chiefs' Council](#).

In cases involving a fatality, the police will usually inform the next of kin. The SIO should also consider deploying [family liaison officers](#) (FLOs) in response to a mass fatality disaster to assist with the identification of the deceased and injured. In these cases, a Family Liaison Coordinator should also be deployed to coordinate this response.

See also the [Code of Practice for Victims of crime](#) and [Family Liaison](#).

Air Accident Investigation Branch

The AAIB is responsible for investigating incidents involving civil aircraft accidents and serious incidents within the United Kingdom.

The Chief Inspector of Air Accidents reports directly to the Secretary of State for Transport on safety investigation matters. The AAIB is independent of the aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA).



For further information, see the [AAIB website](#) and the guidance [Aircraft Accidents - Guidance for the Police, Emergency Services and Airfield Operators](#).

Marine Accident Investigation Branch

The MAIB investigates marine accidents involving UK vessels worldwide and all vessels in UK territorial waters.

The Chief Inspector of Marine Accidents reports directly to the Secretary of State for Transport on safety investigation matters. The MAIB is independent of the marine regulator, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA).

For further information, see the [MAIB website](#)

Rail Accident Investigation Branch

The RAIB investigates rail accidents to improve railway safety and inform the industry and the public. RAIB works with the Department for Transport.

The Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents reports directly to the Secretary of State for Transport on safety investigation matters. The RAIB is independent of the rail regulator and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

For further information, see the [RAIB website](#)

NHS and Care Quality Commission

More often, the police are being called to investigate death or serious injury in a health care setting, such as hospitals or care homes.

A relevant NHS trust will contact the police to report patient safety incidents that include incidents with evidence or suspicion of one or more of the following characteristics:

- the actions leading to the harm were intended
- the harm was intended
- gross negligence and or/recklessness in a serious safety incident.

[The Care Quality Commission](#), as the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England, may have information that will assist an SIO investigating this type of incident. The Care Quality Commission gathers information through inspections, contacts with the registered providers or through statutory notifications. Statutory notifications are events such as deaths or serious injury to a person using services that the registered provider is required by law to submit to the Care Quality Commission.

For further information, see [NPCC \(2015\) SIO Guide – Investigating Deaths and Serious Harm in Healthcare Settings](#)

Medicine and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency

This agency ([MHRA](#)) is an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care and regulates medicines and medical devices for human use in the UK.



The MHRA is also the prosecuting authority in this area. Its main aim is the protection and promotion of public health and it delivers this by making sure medicines and medical devices meet appropriate standards of quality and safety. The MHRA is able to provide investigating officers with expert advice and help.

The MHRA should be contacted as soon as practicable where there is suspicion that a medicine or medical device has been involved in an unexpected death. They can help SIO's with expert advice and guidance, and they may be able to take direct action to protect public health.

Where there is suspicion that a medicine or device is faulty or counterfeit, the MHRA has powers to conduct a criminal investigation and prosecute offenders.

Ministry of Defence

When a death occurs on land or premises which are owned, occupied or under the control of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Head of that MOD establishment should notify the local police force immediately. This includes land, premises or vessels owned, occupied or under the control of the Secretary of State for Defence.

Primacy for the investigation of all deaths rests with the chief officer of the local police force. This is retained throughout the investigation and includes responsibility for the preparation and presentation of case papers for:

- the coroner
- the CPS
- any civil or criminal courts where the circumstances warrant it.

The police force conducting the investigation will liaise with the HSE under the terms of the existing national protocol, should the circumstances of the death warrant their involvement.

The SIO appointed to investigate the death should have complete unrestricted access to all the material that is relevant to the enquiry.

The Head of the MoD establishment is responsible for ensuring that the scene of any death is secured and preserved. Beyond taking steps to ensure the safety of other personnel, the scene should remain undisturbed. They are also responsible for ensuring that any equipment, artefacts, records or documents that may be relevant to the investigation are preserved in situ.

In all cases the SIO should consider and, if deemed appropriate, use available MoD expertise to assist the investigation. This may include MoD police and/or service police who may be able to provide specialist knowledge, advice or technical support. The SIO may also use additional sources of expertise such as those that can be provided by the HSE.

For further information see [ACPO \(2009\) Protocol for the investigation of deaths on land or premises owned, occupied or under the control of the Ministry of Defence.](#)

Crown Prosecution Service Special Crime and Counter Terrorism Division

The Specialist Crime and Counter Terrorism Division (SCCTD) of the Crown Prosecution Service deals with high-profile, often complex and sensitive cases. It has three teams:

- Special crime
- Counter terrorism



- Appeals and review.

For more information see [Special crime and counter terrorism division](#).

SCCTD lawyers have particular expertise in medical and corporate manslaughter prosecutions. They can provide early investigative advice in these cases. They can also assist SIO's with planning a case strategy and with the selection of experts, including preparation of terms of reference.

The SCCTD Team can be contacted via the [CPS website](#)

Road death agencies

All road deaths should be treated as an unlawful killing until the contrary is proved and all fatal or potentially fatal collisions should be investigated.

A road death may be a homicide because, for example, the way the vehicle or carriageway was maintained or the way a commercial company was being run. This means the SIO needs to consider [corporate manslaughter](#) or [gross negligence manslaughter](#) when investigating a road death.

A forensic post-mortem may be necessary to establish if the victim died because of the road traffic collision or not.

This type of investigation is likely to involve a range of specialists including:

- Forensic collision investigators
- Vehicle examiners
- [Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency](#) to assist where large commercial goods and passenger carrying vehicles are involved.
- [Highways England](#) or the local authority highways departments to assist with road closures.
- [Health and Safety Executive \(HSE\)](#) if the investigation involves potentially dangerous or negligent working practices.

See also the [Investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions](#) section of Roads policing APP.

Police related road deaths

An SIO may find themselves investigating a road death that has involved a colleague. This may be the death of a police officer or a member of the public killed because of police activity, for example, responding to an emergency call or a police pursuit.

Such incidents are likely to be subject to public scrutiny. The initial management and preservation of the scene and any recording data will be vital to demonstrate the integrity of the investigation. Consideration should be given to bringing in an independent collision investigation team from another force or area.

Under the Police Reform Act 2002, all police related road deaths and serious injuries will be referred to the [Independent Office for Police Conduct \(IOPC\)](#), they are also likely to be treated as a critical incident.

Other agencies



SIO should have an awareness of a range of other agencies and organisations who may be able to support and investigation, including (note this list is not exhaustive):

Action Against Medical Accidents (AVMA) - An independent charity which promotes better patient safety and justice for people who have been affected by a medical accident www.avma.org.uk.

General Dental Council - Protects the public by regulating dental professionals in the UK www.gdc-uk.org.

General Optical Council - Statutory body that regulates the optical profession (dispensing opticians and optometrists) www.optical.org.

Health and Care Professions Council - Regulates arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists/podiatrists, clinical scientists, dieticians, occupational therapists, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, prosthetists & orthoptists, radiographers, speech and language therapists www.hpc-uk.org.

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman - Undertakes independent investigations into complaints about the National Health Service www.ombudsman.org.uk.

Nursing and Midwifery Council - Set up by Parliament to ensure nurses, midwives and health visitors provide high standards of care to their patients and clients www.nmc-uk.org.

Royal Pharmaceutical Society - The regulatory and professional body for pharmacists in England, Scotland and Wales. Its primary objective is to lead, regulate and develop the pharmacy profession www.rpsgb.org.uk

1.10 Coroners and Inquests

1.10.1 The Coroner

SIOs should build an effective working relationship with coroners and their officers at the earliest opportunity when a suspicious death investigation occurs.

This will start with obtaining the coroner's permission to move a body from a scene to the mortuary and engaging a Home Office pathologist to undertake a forensic post-mortem examination. Local arrangements with the coroner will usually facilitate this.

see also:

- [Pathology](#)
- [College of Policing \(2019\) The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#)
- [Chief Coroner's Guidance, Advice and Law sheets](#)
- [Chief Coroners guide to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009](#)

The SIO should regularly communicate the progress of the enquiry to the coroner. Ultimately, issues such as opening the inquest, a second or defence post-mortem, release of the body for burial or cremation, and the full inquest will need to be considered.

The roles and responsibilities of the police; the Crown Prosecution Service and HM Coroners where there is a suspicion that a serious criminal offence has occurred caused a death. This excludes health and safety or regulatory offence.



For further information, see CPS, NPCC, Chief Coroner, The Coroners Society (2016) [Agreement between the Crown Prosecution Service, the National Police Chiefs' Council, the Chief Coroner and the Coroners Society of England and Wales](#).

Coroners have a duty to investigate all deaths where there is reasonable cause to suspect:

- a person has died a violent or unnatural death
- the death was sudden, and the cause is unknown
- the deceased has died (from any cause) while in lawful custody or detention
- the death is suspected to be due to industrial disease.

The role of the coroner and the purpose of an inquest is to determine:

- the identity of the deceased
- when and where death occurred
- the cause of death
- the circumstances in which death occurred
- the particulars required to register death.

An inquest is not a trial, but a limited enquiry into the facts surrounding death. The inquest will not apportion blame, nor should a coroner comment on the criminal or civil liability of any named person (section 2 of the Coroners & Justice Act 2009).

The inquest should be held within six months of the date on which the Coroner is made aware of the death or as soon as is reasonably practicable. Inquests are public hearings and can be held with or without a jury. SIO's should be aware that an Inquest in the case of a murder or suspicious death investigation is likely to attract media attention and can present an opportunity for the police to appeal for information.

Coroners have absolute authority over issues relating to the deceased's body in the area for which they have jurisdiction. Their officers will receive the reports and make enquiries on the coroner's behalf.

The [Ministry of Justice \(2020\) Guidance for registered medical practitioners on the Notification of Deaths Regulations](#), expands the list of circumstances in which a medical practitioner should notify the senior coroner of a person's death. This may lead to increase demand on police to investigate deaths.

1.10.2 Inquests

An inquest will be opened to record the death and to identify the deceased. In cases where a criminal investigation is underway the inquest will, in most cases, be opened and adjourned until the criminal proceedings are concluded. The coroner may decide to resume an inquest following a criminal trial but is under no obligation to do so. The SIO should expect to report the progress of the investigation at the hearing.

Investigators should remember that the media and members of the victim's family are likely to be present during the inquest. Care must be taken when making comments that might be detrimental to the progress of the investigation or to the trial of any suspected offender.

Where a person has been charged and the defence have had an opportunity to carry out a second post-mortem examination (if appropriate), the coroner can, at this hearing, release the body to enable



funeral arrangements to be made. In cases where no one has been charged, the matter is likely to be adjourned pending the outcome of enquiries.

In cases where there has been a death in custody or where the State or 'its agents' have potentially failed to protect the deceased against human risk the Coroner will hold an [Article 2 or enhanced Inquest](#).

In complex cases Coroners may hold pre-inquest reviews or hearings to assist preparation. Although no statutory authority exists for such hearings, they are usually similar to an inquest.

There is no definitive list of conclusions a coroner may make, but they commonly include:

- natural causes
- accident or misadventure
- suicide
- unlawful killing
- open verdict (where there is insufficient evidence for any other verdict)
- narrative conclusion (which sets out the facts in more detail).

In the event of an unlawful killing verdict, the SIO should ensure the Crown Prosecution Service is notified as soon as possible who will consider if there is any new evidence or information to bring charges against an individual or organisation.

1.10.3 Post-mortem examinations

The purpose of the post-mortem examination is to establish the identity of the body, the cause of death, the extent and nature of the victim's injuries and the presence of any natural disease, to collect evidence and to make a factual record of the findings relevant to the circumstances of the death. Furthermore, the forensic pathologist may offer an opinion about what may have happened, when and how death might have occurred.

For further information see [Chief Coroner's Guidance \(2019\) No 31, Death referrals and medical examinations, paragraph 37](#) and [College of Policing \(2019\) The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#). See also [Pathology strategy](#)

Only the Coroner has the lawful authority to request a PM. The decision (including whether or not to order a second or defence PM) is a judicial decision and may be subject to judicial review in the High Court. See also [the Coroner](#)

The consent of the next of kin is not required for a PM, nor can they attend personally. They can, however, be represented by a medical practitioner if they have notified the Coroner in advance. SIOs will need to ensure that the bereaved family is notified about the PM sensitively and in advance of it taking place.

Investigators should always refer to the deceased sensitively. Although legally the body is the 'property' of the Coroner it is also someone's loved one. See [The Right Reverend James Jones KBE \(2017\) The patronising disposition of unaccountable power: A report to ensure the pain and suffering of the Hillsborough families is not repeated](#).

PMs conducted in suspected homicide cases will be carried out by a forensic pathologist. The pathologist will be listed on the Home Office Register and is known as a Home Office Registered



Forensic Pathologist (see [Coroners \(Investigations\) Regulations 2013 reg.12](#)), or more commonly as a forensic pathologist.

There is no legal definition of what a PM includes, but it will usually include an external examination of the body, toxicology tests, tests on organ and tissue samples from the body, computed tomography (CT) or magnetic resonance imagery (MRI) scanning and an internal invasive examination of the body.

Some PMs will need specialist expertise and may involve several specialists, for example paediatric or neo-natal specialists or neuropathologists.

A full forensic standard examination should be ordered in any death where a crime is reasonably suspected. See [Forensic Science Regulator's \(2018\) Code of Practice and Performance Standards](#). This Code applies all pathologists, and includes:

- road traffic collisions where it is clear before the PM is undertaken that someone may be charged with a homicide related offence
- deaths which have been deemed suspicious by the police
- cases where it is clear before the PM is undertaken that the Health & Safety Executive may be bringing a prosecution
- non-natural deaths in custody especially where the deceased was sharing a cell
- drugs or abuse administered by another
- assisted suicide
- elder abuse
- neglect of children.

Some families may request that a non-invasive PM, such as PM imaging is carried out. This may be requested by certain faith groups, (eg, members of the Jewish and Islamic faiths). This alternative may not be available in every jurisdiction and may not be appropriate in all cases.

In the case of [R \(Rotsztein\) v H M Senior Coroner for Inner North London \[2015\] EWHC 2764](#) the judgement specifically excluded cases:

“....in which the deceased died a violent or unnatural death, or died whilst in custody or otherwise in state detention.”

The judgement went on to say:

“....a forensic autopsy in a homicide case will either always, or almost always, be required and the need for it will either always, or almost always, override any religious objection.”

Second Post Mortems

In some cases of potential homicide, the necessity for a second or defence post-mortem may arise. This is more likely to be an issue where the cause or mechanics of the death are at the core of the case, or where more than one suspect is involved in the events, or the suspect(s) has not yet been arrested or not yet identified.

The [Chief Coroner's Guidance \(2019\) No. 32, Post-mortem examinations including second post-mortem examinations](#) clarifies the position for second post-mortems. It reverses the presumption in favour of a second PM in suspected homicide cases. The coroner needs to be satisfied and receive a clear explanation of why the findings from the first pathologist cannot be reviewed by the second pathologist. To support this the primary evidence gathered as part of the forensic PM (that is, evidence of fact including samples, swabs, x-rays, scans, photographs, hair, blood and other body fluids analyses) can be disclosed to the defendant's pathologist.



Where the coroner refuses the request for a second PM the Chief Coroner's guidance suggests a five working day period before the body is released, to allow time for an appeal.

Second PMs are likely to be requested where the cause of death is in dispute, for example, in cases of restraint, child abuse or where there are multiple suspects.

In fatal road traffic collisions, the medical cause of death may not be in issue. Rather it may be the manner of the suspect driving that caused the death. In such cases, the Chief Coroner may consider that a forensic or further PM is not necessary, however, where the SIO has concerns about medical cause of death, they can ask the Coroner to authorise a forensic PM.

The SIO may receive requests from local officials or community leaders to release the deceased's body early to facilitate religious or cultural requirements for an early burial or cremation. Where possible, this should be facilitated. However, the SIO should make sure the investigation and any potential prosecution are not compromised.

Where a suspect has not been identified, and the cause of death has not been clearly established, the SIO may need to consider, with the pathologist and the Coroner, whether a second PM is necessary to support the investigation.

See also [College of Policing \(2019\) The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#)

1.10.4 Release of the body, burial, and cremation orders

The Coroner will usually only release the body after the police and any defence lawyers have confirmed that they have no objection. Only the coroner can issue a burial or cremation order.

The SIO should not get involved in cases where there is disagreement within a family over funeral arrangements. In *Burrows v HM Coroner for Preston* [2008] EWHC 1387 (QB) the order of priority established by Rule 22 of the [Non-Contentious Probate Rules 1987](#) was confirmed, that is:

- the surviving husband or wife
- the children of the deceased and the issue of any deceased child who died before the deceased
- the father and mother of the deceased
- brothers and sisters of the whole blood and the issue of any deceased brother or sister of the whole blood who died before the deceased
- brothers and sisters of the half blood and the issue of any deceased brother or sister of the half-blood who died before the deceased
- grandparents
- uncles and aunts of the whole blood and the issue of any deceased uncle or aunt of the whole blood who died before the deceased
- uncles and aunts of the half blood and the issue of any deceased uncle or aunt of the half-blood who died before the deceased.

See also [College of Policing \(2019\) The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#)

1.10.5 Progress of the Inquest



The coroner will be notified by the court when a person has been charged with causing the death of the deceased, the inquest will be adjourned pending the outcome of the criminal trial. The coroner will, however, register the death, so that a death certificate can be issued.

If the defendant is convicted, the coroner would not normally resume the inquest. The crown court proceedings take the place of the inquest in this situation.

Where there is an acquittal, the inquest is will be resumed. An inquest will always be held if there is no trial. The coroner's officer will prepare a file of evidence that will rely heavily on the material gathered during the investigation.

1.10.6 Preparing a report for the Inquest

The SIO is responsible for preparing a full report for the coroner in advance of the inquest. The report should detail the full extent of the investigation and the facts that have been determined, as well as other matters of relevance. The report should include:

- the history of the deceased
- circumstances of death
- evidential aspects
- lines of enquiry
- people interviewed
- forensic aspects
- persons charged and continuing enquiries.

In undetected cases, it is important that the coroner, the victim's family and the public are satisfied that the police have undertaken all possible efforts to detect the homicide. It is considered good practice to include, for example, the number of hours spent on the enquiry, the number of actions raised, and the number of people interviewed.

The SIO's report also needs to explain with underpinning rationale why a death is non-suspicious after investigation.

The SIOs report and any supporting material, including intelligence, may be shared with interested parties to the inquest. It is important that any concerns about disclosure of the report or its content, are raised with the coroner at the earliest opportunity.

1.10.7 Full inquest hearings

SIOs may be required to attend the inquest to provide an overview of the police investigation, including the facts that have been established and the investigative policy adopted.

In cases where police action may be criticised, consideration should be given to providing legal representation to the chief officer and individual officers, as appropriate.

1.10.8 Exhumation

The exhumation or lawful recovery of human remains from a burial site during a criminal investigation is not something that is required very often.



When this does occur seek specific guidance is available from the NCA [MCIS](#). See also, [Investigative support](#).

To exhume a body lawfully, a licence is required from the [Ministry of Justice](#). Where the body is interred in consecrated ground, that is church ground, not merely ground blessed by a member of the clergy during a funeral service, a Bishop's faculty will also be required under Part IV, Rule 13 (9) of the [Faculty Jurisdiction Rules 2000](#).

In addition, a coroner in England and Wales may issue a warrant under [Schedule 5, Section 6 of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009](#) for a body to be exhumed for the purpose of criminal investigation.

It is not uncommon for a body to be buried in multiple (eg, family) graves with other bodies interred above or below. In these cases, it will be necessary to apply for relevant licence(s) for all other bodies impacted by the exhumation.

Other considerations when carrying out an exhumation will include:

- ethnicity and religion of the deceased
- the family
- wider community
- timing (exhumations are commonly undertaken in the early morning)
- media strategy
- scene protection strategy
- finance and resources
- forensic planning
- health & safety
- risk assessments
- transit, mortuary processes and re-internment.

Consider multi-disciplinary operational planning including key stakeholders, eg, HM Coroner, funeral directors, graveyard staff, environmental health, forensic pathologist, other forensic scientists, and crime scene investigators.

1.10.9 Organ donation

Following a death, the question of organ transplantation may arise. Many hospitals employ donation teams to assist the identification of suitable donors. Even following a suspected homicide, there should be a presumption in favour of transplant provided the coroner is satisfied the donation will not prejudice the investigation of an unlawful killing.

The SIO will need to consider the implications of supporting an organ transplant on their investigation; but donations in principle are not incompatible with a criminal investigation or prosecution.

The coroner will usually consult the forensic pathologist, to establish whether their PM, or any second PM will be compromised by the removal of the organs. The SIO will usually be involved in this consultation.

Where a suspect has been charged or is in custody, the organ donation should **not** take place until suspects' legal representative has been consulted.



The SIO should take a lead role in gathering opinions and assessing the implications for the investigation working with family liaison officers and where appropriate the Crown Prosecution Service.

Organ donations must also comply with [section 39 of the Human Tissue Act 2004](#).

For further advice see:

- [Organ and tissue donation opportunities during police investigations](#) (The Journal of Homicide and Major Incident Investigations Volume 6 Issue 1 – Spring 2010)
- [Chief Coroner's Guidance \(2017\) No. 26, Organ Donation](#).

Retention of material

The Human Tissue Act 2004 (HTA) imposes several requirements on the police and pathologist when investigating a death. Human tissue samples may only be taken to identify the deceased and determine the cause of death. These samples are taken for and under the authority of the coroner.

Samples may also be taken under section 19 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. These samples, while not governed by section 39 of the HTA should be managed in the same way.

At the conclusion of an investigation, the SIO will need to decide what to do with HTA material. If the death was determined as non-suspicious the SIO should apply the HTA provisions and comply, as far as practicable, with the deceased family's wishes for disposal of the samples.

If the investigation results in a suspect being charged, or the case is unresolved, the SIO in consultation with their forensic management team, the CPS and coroner should consider whether the material is still relevant to the investigation. If it is, it must be retained under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 and the Code of Practice, which states: '...where the accused is convicted, all material which may be relevant must be retained at least until the person convicted is released from custody.'

All samples of human tissue must be recorded, and the list retained with the case papers. A copy should also be provided to the coroner and the victim's family. The family's views on the return or disposal of human tissue samples should also be recorded and complied with at the earliest opportunity. All retained human tissue should be reviewed for relevance at key stages during the investigation. Where it is no longer deemed to be relevant it should be returned or disposed of in accordance with the family's wishes.

See also [College of Policing \(2019\): The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#)

1.11 Safeguarding

1.11.1 Introduction

Safeguarding should be a primary concern in all investigations and a 'golden thread' for SIOs. Effective investigative approaches are intrinsic to safeguarding.

Risk and harm can come from unexpected places, often depending of the type of offending, or on other factors, such as within the family. 'Protective factors' can make safeguarding plans more likely to succeed. This may include, for example, involving partners and families in delivering elements of



the safeguarding plan outside organisational boundaries. Early agreement of an information sharing agreement (ISA) will be crucial to the investigation.

See also: [Defining safeguarding and vulnerability](#)

1.11.2 Leadership

As well as leading the investigation, the SIO will also be required to provide oversight to the safeguarding bronze who will have delegated responsibility for effective delivery of the safeguarding strategy. The SIO should create an environment to support an effective multi-agency response, and the consideration and management of the impact from any [parallel proceedings](#). Invariably these have the capacity to be complex.

See also [Timmins, N \(2015\) The practice of leadership; being comfortable with chaos. London: The Kings Fund.](#)

Major crime investigators will be working alongside those operating within local and national safeguarding systems, in particular when safeguarding reviews and associated activities have been commissioned. Although these processes may be managed and led by other organisations, there should be considered engagement with such organisations and safeguarding processes.

Even the most experienced SIO should appoint a safeguarding bronze commander to provide tactical advice and guidance and to support and develop the safeguarding strategies.

The SIO will retain ownership and responsibility for the investigation, including all aspects of safeguarding.

SIOs may need to consider tactical issues, such as how safeguarding should take primacy in operational decision making, for example, whether to allow children access to an address where there is a potential risk of harm. Similarly, when giving a distressing message to someone, the SIO will need to plan for the impact this may have on them, for example, suicide risk or ideation. In other cases, it may be appropriate to consider covert strategies around parents, who are suspected of harming their child, including contingency plans should they come into contact with another child.

SIOs should be ready to work across organisational boundaries, through networks that bring together services around the needs of communities and individuals.

1.11.3 Tactical Advice

A safeguarding bronze commander with knowledge, understanding and experience of public protection can provide advice on:

- Local safeguarding systems and those of partners and other forces. Forces will often use different terminology for their specialist teams and have different governance structures.
- Share information with partners about individuals in the investigation (see Information sharing).
- Ensure organisational involvement with safeguarding requirements, such as, Initial Child Protection Conferences (ICPC), Review Case Conferences (RCC), and Complex Strategy Meetings (CSM). The level of risk in the case, or in some cases, the clearance level required to view relevant confidential or sensitive material, may influence the rank, seniority and vetting levels of attendees.
- Attend and advise gold group meetings about safeguarding matters, subject to the approval of the gold commander.



- Understand the thresholds for service, in line with:
 - [Section 17 \(child at risk of harm\) Children Act 1989](#)
 - [Section 47 \(child at risk of significant harm\) Children Act 1989](#)
 - [Section 42 \(adult at risk of harm\) Care Act 2014](#)

SIOs may have gaps in their knowledge and understanding of public protection, they should consider a peer or mentoring arrangement with an SIO with experience, knowledge and understanding of safeguarding.

Everyone is susceptible to bias, so it is important to adopt a reflective approach and critically examine any personal, interpersonal or institutional biases, which may affect decision-making.

See for example, the [Independent inquiry into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham](#).

Familiarise yourself with:

- local safeguarding arrangements for children's partnerships
- safeguarding adults' boards
- community safety partnerships
- multi-agency public protection arrangements.

The investigation will compliment these forums and will provide opportunities to build understanding and broker ways forward. In particular, it will help monitor the progress of statutory safeguarding reviews, as well provide an understanding of how they will be published.

SIOs and investigation teams should build an understanding of how and why a range of offences are committed, for example, honour-based abuse, criminal and sexual exploitation, serious youth violence and county lines. This will help develop victim and witness strategies that meet the needs of victims, in what are often complex and dangerous situations.

For further information, see APP on [Major Investigation and public protection](#).

SIOs should think and act reflectively when considering safeguarding and vulnerability in any given situation. During an investigation, people may be categorised in a number of ways including as victims, witnesses, suspects, third parties, and even sub-sets within these terms. People can move between one or more of these categories during an investigation. They may be vulnerable to harm at different times and in different ways. The inter-relationships between different contexts can lead to people encountering multiple and changing risks.

During an investigation, safeguarding and protection from harm should be key considerations, irrespective of an individual's role in the investigation. Investigative and safeguarding strategies should take into account the interconnected and overlapping nature of that person's current situation and their past experiences. This will include considering their protected characteristics and social categorisations, eg, class, poverty, educational attainment, experience of historical trauma as a child and/or adult, and cross-generational trauma that may lead to particular discrimination or disadvantage.

The [IICSA \(2021\) Victims and Survivors Forum Consultation on Protected Characteristics: Summary Report](#), highlighted that an individual's ability to interact with agencies, including the police service, may be influenced by the way professionals have responded to them, or people with similar characteristics in the past. This may have been through lack of cultural understanding and sensitivity, or prejudicial assumptions.



This can affect safeguarding in a number of ways, including creating a barrier to the disclosure of abuse and potentially creating missed opportunities to protect others from harm in the future.

It is important to link harm to circumstances, rather than the characteristics of the person experiencing the harm. Labelling groups of people as inherently vulnerable can be disempowering. Everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and oppression and it is important to safeguard individuals without marginalising them.

1.11.4 Developing a safeguarding strategy

SIOs are responsible, alongside partner agencies, to ensure the immediate and continuing safeguarding of all individuals identified in the investigation. This includes suspects and their families, and the wider community.

The safeguarding strategy should include a framework to initiate safeguarding processes and information sharing with partner agencies. Any individual identified during the investigation should be assessed to determine whether they are at risk of harm or pose an immediate or ongoing risk to others.

The SIO's strategy should be based upon current understanding of offending behaviour, and effective responses, for example, the inclination of a child abuser to commit offences against children is unlikely to change unless managed by an appropriate intervention. Safeguarding is still a priority even where the criminality is historical.

When developing the strategy consider:

- Reviewing objectives and progress against priorities at regular intervals and when circumstances change/new information comes to light that may influence the safety of any person. This would include, but is not limited to, suspects, victims and witnesses.
- What safeguarding risks/harm could and are arising based upon the nature of the investigation.
- Unforeseen risk might arise during the investigation linked to any person, whatever their category, and may be outside the context of the investigation type. (For example, during HtoH enquiries staff become aware of child protection or domestic abuse concerns within that household)

Outcome may include:

- an investigative team that is motivated and equipped to identify safeguarding issues for anyone they encounter during the investigation
- staff who know how to respond and refer identified risks for assessment, prioritisation and response
- removing, reducing, avoiding and in some cases accepting the risk of harm to victims, witnesses and suspects

See also [College of Policing \(forthcoming\) Recognising and responding to vulnerability related risks guidelines](#)

SIOs should establish a pathway to escalate issues if there are disagreements between police and other professionals.



An over-arching safeguarding strategy is recommended for large and/or complex investigations. The aims and objectives of the strategy should align with the aims and objectives of the investigation. A bronze commander for safeguarding will help to strengthen objectivity in decision making when balancing the needs of the investigation against safeguarding requirements.

To deliver effective safeguarding SIOs should create an environment where the voice of the victim is heard. This is more than just seeking their views. This is involving them in what happens, and being able to reflect their point of view, ie, 'what a day in their life' is like. Their involvement should continue throughout the investigation and receive information in a way they can understand, demonstrating that their "voice" has influenced the decisions.

The investigation of homicide and other major crime may include ongoing risk of harm, such as threats to life and/or the wellbeing of victims, witnesses and suspects. It may also include the risk that a suspect will continue to offend and target further victims. Some investigations may include, for example, child sexual exploitation, modern slavery or county lines.

The SIO will also need to consider what partnership action, including covert or overt, disruptive, preventative and investigative action can be used to prevent further offending and/or the risk of further harm. Where historical or non-recent offending has taken place, often in an institutional setting, [Operation Hydrant](#) can provide additional support.

1.11.5 Partnership working

The police are one of many partners who share responsibility for safeguarding. SIOs are encouraged to establish a Memorandum of understanding to manage responsibilities and priorities between multiple agencies. For example, the investigation may include central or peripheral issues, such as modern slavery or county lines, which will influence which partners the SIO should engage with, for example, Immigration Services, UK Border Agency or the Gangmaster Licensing Authority.

The right partners will vary from case to case. SIOs should be alert to competing priorities among partner agencies, which may impact on key aspects on the investigation, such as, disclosure, pro-active activity or external communication. It is vital that SIOs recognise and understand these conflicts as early as possible.

Senior representatives, with decision making powers, of the relevant partner agencies should be included in the gold or gold sub-group to support cooperation and access to services

1.11.6 Suspect and offender safeguarding

When nominating a suspect, they should also be 'flagged' on PND to help the flow of information and intelligence to the investigation. This will support both the investigation and safeguarding activity.

Once a suspect is aware they are under investigation, a risk assessment should be undertaken. This should consider the suspect's safety and wellbeing, including any suicide risk. The [College of Policing \(2019\) Operational advice, Managing the risk of suicide for persons under investigation for online child sexual abuse and exploitation](#) provides a framework for considering suspect self-harm risks, not limited to the topics of child sexual abuse and IIOC. This risk assessment should be recorded and reviewed at key points during the investigation, in particular when circumstances change, including the release of the suspect on bail or under investigation.

See also the [Mental health: Suicide and bereavement response](#) section of Mental Health APP



In the event that a suspect becomes aware of the investigation, prior to any planned arrest or interview, it may be necessary to undertake an early visit to inform the suspect of what is likely to happen (eg, an interview under caution) and assess any potential risk. This process can be scripted and recorded on body-worn video to record any unsolicited comments. Careful consideration should be given to securing other types of material and whether the visit should be combined with execution of a search warrant.

A Community Impact Assessment (CIA) may also be required, in particular where the suspect may be assessed as at risk from the wider community. This activity will usually be led by local policing in consultation with the SIO.

See also the [Child Abuse: Critical incidents and community impact assessments](#) section of Major investigation and public protection APP.

1.11.7 Information sharing

Partnership working and information sharing underpins effective safeguarding activity. A safeguarding bronze will have access to a network of contacts, relationships and relevant experience to undertake information sharing in accordance with local and national policy and protocols.

See also the [Information management: Information sharing](#) section of Information management APP.

HOLMES is often used to manage information in large and complex investigations, but it does not link to other police or partnership networks. Intelligence should therefore, also be shared through other systems to support safeguarding and intelligence actions outside of the investigation.

SIOs will encounter different approaches to information sharing within the adult safeguarding system, to that of children safeguarding. SIOs should regularly review and challenge decisions or advice if there is disagreement, using local escalation processes to challenge where appropriate.

See also:

[HM Government \(2018\) Information Sharing: Advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers](#)

[National Data Guardian \(2020\) The Eight Caldicott Principles](#)

1.11.8 Assessment of risk, prioritisation and decision-making

An assessment of risk should start at the beginning of an investigation and reviewed on a regular basis. The general principles of risk assessment (remove, avoid, reduce, accept) should be used.

See also APP on [Risk](#)

The process should take into account the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\)](#) and the [National Decision-Making Model \(NDM\)](#). The process and outcomes should be recorded in the SIO Policy Log.

Safeguarding risk assessment models

For more specific assessment of risk, relative to individual victims or witnesses, the most appropriate risk assessment tool will be dictated by the circumstances. Risk assessment models may vary between



forces. The Safeguarding bronze commander will be able to advise on the most appropriate models and approaches for the circumstances.

See also APP on [Major Investigation and public protection](#)

1.11.9 Safeguarding tactical options

The tactical options and choice of partners will vary according to the circumstances of each investigation, suspect profile and environmental (community) issues. Strategies should include a framework to support coordination and review of disruption activity and an exit strategy to prevent duplication, conflict or missed opportunities. It should be borne in mind other linked offending might continue after an investigation has concluded. This additional risk should be considered and actioned within wider policing systems. The risk should be clearly 'handed over' for further action to a lead officer.

For more information see, [Home Office\(2019\) CSE Disruption Toolkit](#) and [College of policing \(nd\) OCG Disruption Toolkit](#)

Some safeguarding tactics might be most obvious, for example, markers on addresses, PAYG mobiles and crime prevention alarms. In some cases, however, a more significant responses may be appropriate, for example, working with partners to consider options such as relocation. A safeguarding bronze commander can advise on other investigative and/or safeguarding responses, which may support the needs of those at risk. The list of options is not exhaustive, but may include:

- Technical
- Proactive and covert responses
- Deprivation of Liberty
- Bail
- Civil orders
- Disclosure Schemes
- National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

1.11.10 Other considerations

Parallel proceedings

Statutory safeguarding reviews typically take place at the same time as a criminal investigation.

See [Reviews](#)

Partner agencies may be undertaking their own investigations including:

- Health, Children's and Adults Social Care Serious Incident investigations, these may involve Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission
- Local Authority Designated Officers deal with matters notified to them where a person who works with children has behaved in a way that indicates they are unsuitable to work with children.
- Referrals to the disclosure and barring service (DBS) to consider circumstances where an individual who is employed or is a volunteer may have harmed a child or adult at risk of harm or put them at risk



Counselling and therapy

Counselling and therapy can be vital to help people deal with their experiences and do not as a matter of course conflict with the criminal justice process.

For further information see: [CPS guidance regarding therapy 2020](#) and advice from the [British Psychological Society](#)

Civil litigation

Specialist child abuse lawyers may be working with victims directly prior to, or during, any involvement with the police, regarding civil compensation. Lawyers' are likely to request material from the investigation team, SIOs should consider this as part of their disclosure strategy, seeking advice from force solicitors and CPS at an early stage. Strict time limits apply and no one should discourage victims from pursuing this course.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority

Victims may claim compensation via the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA). See also the [Compensation](#) section of Prosecution and Case management APP.

1.11.11 Defining vulnerability and safeguarding

Safeguarding is a term used to describe measures to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of all members of society. This allows individuals, particularly children, young people and adults at risk of harm to live free from abuse, harm and neglect.

The Human Rights Act 1998 describes the rights of individuals to be protected from harm, and the responsibilities of statutory agencies to act to protect those rights. Legislation and guidance sets out specific safeguarding requirements in relation to:

- Children and young people under the age of 18 years
 - [The Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)
 - [HM Government \(2018\) Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.](#)
- Adults aged 18 and over with care and support needs (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs), is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.
 - [The Care Act 2014](#)
 - [Dept of Health \(2014\) Care and Support Statutory Guidance: Issued under the Care Act 2014](#)

Many people at risk of, or suffering harm, will fall outside of these definitions, in particular but not limited to [domestic abuse](#), [honour based abuse](#) and criminal exploitation.

The [College of Policing Vulnerability infographic](#) identifies that a person may be vulnerable because of their situation or circumstances, which may make it difficult for them to take care or protect themselves or others from harm or exploitation.



(This document is available to [authorised users](#) who are logged onto the College Learn.)

Contextual safeguarding

This recognises the different relationships that young people develop in their neighbourhoods, schools and online, some of which may feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers may have little influence around these relationships, with a young person's experience of extra-familial relationships, undermining the parent-child relationships.

Safeguarding plans should be underpinned by multi agency engagement with individuals and sectors who have influence over or within extra-familial contexts, and recognise that assessment and intervention of these relationships or experiences are a critical part of safeguarding. This approach can offer opportunities to safeguard victims effectively without removing them from everything and everyone familiar to them.

For further information, see [NSPCC learning](#) and [Contextual safeguarding](#)

Transition

This is a term often applied to those moving from one part of the safeguarding system to another, for example, from children's services to adult services in a planned way. It will apply to young people who have been in the care of local authorities and those with special educational needs and disabilities in particular. Sometimes these individuals may be moving out of the safeguarding system altogether. Transition points can offer opportunities to the investigation but may present additional risks if there are service gaps or continuity of care and support are lost.

For further information, see:

[Dept of Education \(2018\) Extending Personal Adviser support to all care leavers to age 25; Statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

[Dept of Education \(2017\) Send: 19-to-25-year-olds' entitlement of EHC plans](#)

Defining harm

When defining harm, SIOs should always consider the circumstances of the individual case, and not be constrained by a subjective view of abuse and neglect. The harm may take place in institutional settings, as well as in the individual's own home. It can include:

- physical
- sexual
- psychological
- exploitation
- financial or material
- neglect and acts of omission
- discrimination
- institutional, eg, schools, secure estate, hospitals and care homes
- organisational.

Section 31 of the Children Act 1989 defines the following:

Harm:

'ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development of the child, including, for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another'



Development:

‘physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development’

Ill-treatment:

‘includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical’

Significant harm is not clearly defined by the Act and it merely states:

‘the child’s health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child’

HM Government (2015) Working Together to Safeguard Children (archived) defined significant harm as:

‘...including, but not limited to, cases where the child has sustained, as a result of abuse or neglect, any or all the following: a potential life-threatening injury; serious and / or likely long-term impairment of physical or mental health, or physical intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development’.

While [Working Together 2018](#) does not include this definition decisions are largely based upon professional judgement including reference to the 2015 description

1.12 Cross-jurisdictional investigations

1.12.1 Introduction

Cross-jurisdictional investigations can take place where:

- a British citizen dies abroad
- a homicide or other major crime in the UK needs enquiries to be made in another jurisdiction.

Overseas enquiries are often complex and protracted. For further advice, see:

- the [International](#) section of Investigation APP
- [International crime coordination centre](#)

1.12.2 Death of a UK citizen abroad

Where a UK citizen dies abroad in suspicious or violent circumstances, the appropriate authorities in that country will investigate the case. A UK police force may become involved where:

- The deceased’s body is returned to England or Wales and the local coroner requests police assistance for the purposes of an inquest, or identification of the deceased is an issue and there is a request for forensic samples to be obtained, for example, dental records, DNA analysis and fingerprints.
- The overseas police service or relevant authority specifically request for enquiries to be conducted in the UK. For example, where the overseas authority contacts police via Interpol or Europol, or an overseas authority makes a request for direct investigative assistance in the country where the death occurred.



- Homicide or conspiracy cases which happen abroad and where the suspect is a British national. Section 9 of the Offences Against the Persons Act 1861 deals with the murder or manslaughter of a British national abroad; there are certain circumstances where the suspect can be prosecuted in England or Wales, however these cases are rare and are particularly challenging with many legal issues to overcome.

For further information, see [Murder, Manslaughter and Infanticide of British Nationals Abroad Memorandum of Understanding between the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and National Police Chiefs' Council and The Chief Coroner of England and Wales](#), 2020.

SIOs should agree with their head of crime what their role will be as soon as possible.

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) Consular Directorate Murder and Manslaughter Team (MMT) performs an oversight role when informed of a case where a British citizen has died abroad because of murder, manslaughter, or infanticide. The MMT do not have an investigative remit and cannot interfere in an investigation. They have experience in procedures, such as repatriation and supporting families. A serving police officer is embedded in the Consular Directorate as a law enforcement adviser.

For further information, see also the [International Crime Coordination Centre](#)

Supporting the family

Police may sometimes be asked by a family to help them establish how a family member died abroad, or to establish the whereabouts of a family member who has gone missing abroad. This can happen where the family are unhappy with the investigation abroad, or where contact has been lost suddenly with a family member.

Note: this tactic may also be used by a family trying to locate a family member who has moved away to avoid threat, harm or risk in the family home, for example, so called honour-based abuse.

The FCDO's Consular Directorate can provide support to families and will signpost to the most appropriate way for the family to express their concerns. They may request a family liaison officer to support consular staff.

The role of the SIO is to work with the FCDO MMT to support the family. For more information, see [Murder, Manslaughter and Infanticide of British Nationals Abroad Memorandum of Understanding between the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and National Police Chiefs' Council and The Chief Coroner of England and Wales](#), 2020, and [APP on Family Liaison](#).

1.12.3 Assisting with enquiries at the request of a Coroner

There is no provision for a coroner to hold any form of inquiry into a death of a person who has died overseas and whose body is not returned to England or Wales. Where a body is returned to England or Wales, a coroner is required to hold an inquest into the death if:

- the deceased died a violent or unnatural death
- death was sudden and the cause is unknown
- the deceased died (from any cause) while in lawful custody or detention
- death is suspected to be due to industrial disease



The coroner for the area where the body will be buried or cremated, will have jurisdiction in most cases because this is where the relatives of the deceased are likely to live.

Where a number of people have died in the same event (for example, members of the armed forces or victims of a mass disaster), it may be more appropriate to hold one inquest in the area where the bodies are repatriated. The FCDO's Consular Directorate serves as a gateway for the coroner to make enquiries into deaths abroad. There is usually no reason to involve the police in this process but they may be asked to act as coroner's officers or to provide investigative services.

Police officers who are seeking material from abroad in these circumstances will be working under the direction of a Coroner and should agree an investigative strategy with them.

1.12.4 Conducting homicide enquiries through the FCDO

UK police officers have limited power to conduct investigations abroad. Investigative activity in another country can only take place with the cooperation of the country concerned.

The FCDO's Consular Officers abroad are a mixture of British and Foreign (locally employed) staff. The number of staff reflects the size of the mission and can be very few. They can register an interest or provide contextual information to UK Police on the locality and local issues. They may be able to facilitate contact or signpost UK Police to relevant contacts. The first point of contact, however, should be with the relevant Consular Assistance Team. This may be the Murder Manslaughter Team or one of the Country Casework Teams covering the region but based in London.

Police to police liaison should always be through Interpol Channels (via NCA National Central Bureau and the UK Force's International Liaison Officer). NCA NCB will assess the content of the request and are best placed to identify any risk in the information UK Police wish to pass to foreign police and, (in some cases), compliance with the [Fulford principles](#).

The NPCC [International Crime Coordination Centre](#) has links to the foreign law enforcement community in London, (for example, embedded in diplomatic missions across London) as well as experts in extradition, fugitives, and other aspects on international criminality tools.

The [Murder, Manslaughter and Infanticide of British Nationals Abroad Memorandum of Understanding between the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and National Police Chiefs' Council and The Chief Coroner of England and Wales](#), 2020, will support decision making, in particular:

- which force is best placed to obtain evidence and appoint an SIO to do so. Where this isn't clear cut the case should be negotiated at NPCC level
- early consultation between the SIO and the FCDO to agree what action to take.
- appointing a FLO where there is an investigative benefit
- meeting the family, with the FLO to explain the legal and investigative processes and provide a realistic appraisal of the likely outcome
- not offering to travel abroad, without the consent from their head of crime

The FCDO will provide consular support abroad if families choose to travel, following consultation with them.



1.12.5 Homicides abroad where the suspect is a British citizen

The UK police do not have the power to conduct an investigation overseas. They can, however, take action to secure evidence in the UK where the suspect is a British citizen who has returned to the UK. For example, a suspect returns to the UK prior to the conclusion of the investigation.

In homicide cases, see section 9 and 10 of the [Offences against the person Act 1861](#) (OAPA). The OAPA also allows a UK citizen to be prosecuted in the UK for murder or manslaughter committed abroad. In practice, this is unlikely to happen because the suspect will usually be extradited to the country where the offence took place. It is often easier to have a trial there because it is where most of the witnesses are likely to reside.

Where a UK prosecution is contemplated, early advice should be sought from the CPS. Contact the CPS Murder Manslaughter Team or Country Casework Team.

Early notification will also help the CPS to prepare for anything that might be raised by the relevant authority if the foreign country. The NCA International desk may also be able to offer support.

1.12.6 Homicides in the UK requiring enquiries to be made abroad

Such enquiries may involve seizing property, examining records, or taking statements.

Initial requests for assistances will usually be conducted through the [UK National Central Bureau for Interpol](#). This will help to identify the country and authority with the appropriate jurisdiction and confirm straightforward information or intelligence, such as where witnesses live and work, or where property or records may be found.

Following preliminary enquires legal authority will be required to obtain the material in an evidential format, either by the police in that country or by UK police going abroad. The precise nature of that authority will depend on:

- the country concerned
- the nature and circumstances of the offence
- the nature of the material that is sought
- the activity that is required to obtain the material.

This is usually achieved through [mutual legal assistance](#).



Part 2 - Operations and tactics

- 2.1 Crime Scene Management
- 2.2 Forensic strategy
- 2.3 Pathology strategy
- 2.4 Search strategy
- 2.5 Digital strategy
- 2.6 House-to-house strategy
- 2.7 Victim and witness management strategy
- 2.8 Family liaison strategy
- 2.9 Communication strategy
- 2.10 Community engagement strategy
- 2.11 Elimination enquiries
- 2.12 Suspect management strategy
- 2.13 Covert strategy
- 2.14 Reconstructions



2.1 Crime Scene Management

2.1.1 Introduction

It will only be possible to gather traditional or digital forensic evidence if scenes are identified and recognised for their potential investigative value. Crime scene management can have a substantial impact on the success and direction of a major crime investigation.

In many investigations, there will be more than one scene. These will include locations or items linked to victim(s), witnesses or suspect(s), which form part of the known or potential sequence of events.

See also:

- [Forensic strategy](#)
- [College of Policing \(2019\) Practice advice: The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#)
- [Search Strategy](#)
- [Digital strategy](#)

The SIO should think as broadly as possible about what or where scene might be. A scene can point towards or away from a suspect, for example, forensic analysis of a scene can prove or disprove that someone was or was not present at a location, or that an event did or did not happen at a specific place. This can be particularly relevant when evaluating alibis.

Scenes may include, but are not limited to:

- places
 - used to plan the crime
 - where encounters between the victim and offender took place
 - where the offender attacked the victim
 - where the offender detained the victim
 - where the offender killed the victim
 - used to clean or discard material used in or obtained during the offence
- vehicles or other forms of conveyance
 - used to transport the victim
 - used by suspects
- body deposition site
- weapons (including live and spent ammunition)
- weapon deposition sites
- access and egress routes to and from a scene(s)
- witnesses
- victims
- the victim's home addresses, workplaces and vehicles
- suspects
- the suspects' home addresses, workplaces and vehicles.

Each separate scene should be given a unique identifier, see [scene identification](#).

2.1.2 Accreditation

The SIO should recognise that all forensic activity, either at the crime scene, or elsewhere, is carried out using validated techniques, accredited under either ISO17020 for scene activities, or ISO17025 for laboratories (which includes the fingerprint bureau). Where techniques or processes are carried out which are outside the forensic department's accreditation, this should be disclosed, and reference should be made to their non-accredited status in statements. The SIO should discuss appropriate



courses of action with the CSC or CSM and take into account the resulting risk to the investigation when considering activities outside the scope of accreditation.

2.1.3 Developing a crime scene strategy

Resources

SIOs should identify and request the resource requirement needed to manage each scene, this will include:

- Scene security and contamination log.
 - Think about giving delegated command of this function, particularly where there are multiple scenes. This will include scene security, contamination (physical and digital), resourcing, rotas, briefing and oversight.
- Crime scene examination.
 - A crime scene coordinator (CSC) will manage examination of multiple scenes supported by a crime scene manager for each scene and will provide advice to the SIO about other required experts, such as specialist forensic scientists.
- Pathologist.
 - Where possible, for suspected homicides, the Home Office forensic pathologist should attend the deceased at the scene, allowing the SIO to discuss the case with them before the deceased is removed from the scene. Where the pathologist is delayed, or is not attending, the Coroner's officer should be kept informed and a record made of anything that changes the appearance or presentation of the deceased.
- Police Search Adviser (POLSA).
 - Police search advisers manage and coordinate all searches, including, searches of premises and open ground (where appropriate in collaboration with the CSC or CSM).
- Digital Media Investigators (DMI)
 - Early engagement of a DMI will help to identify and advise on digital evidence opportunities and reduce the risk of digital evidence being lost.
- Digital imaging staff.
 - They will advise on the best way to capture images of the scene; this may include photographs, video, 360° imaging, scaled plans, drone footage or a combination of all.
- Exhibit officers.
 - Staff undertaking this role should be competent to receive and record exhibits and store them appropriately ([NPCC \(2021\) Practice advice on Major incident room standardised administrative procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#)).

Review of initial action

The SIO should, where possible, attend the scene(s) as soon as practicable. Even where this is not possible, the SIO should review the initial actions in consultation with the crime scene manager and/or coordinator. Where the SIO cannot initially attend the scene, use images of the scene, for example, body worn video (BWV) footage, photographs and/or plans to review actions.

The risk of contamination between scenes is high where officers may have been in contact with scenes, victim, and suspect. Strict monitoring procedures should be put in place as soon as possible to prevent or minimise contamination, and to identify where it may already have happened.



Officers or staff at the scene (other than CSIs) should be discouraged from taking images/recordings of the scene, unless it is incidental to their role and BWV will record their actions. This will include, for example, preserving life, arresting suspects, managing key witnesses, or ensuring there are no risks within the scene. As soon as possible, the scene should be secured, and a scene log commenced. See [Instigation and initial response](#).

Scene identification

Each scene should be identified, documented and numbered. For example:

- Scene 1: The victim
- Scene 2: 3 Acacia Avenue. Where deceased was discovered.
- Scene 3: 5 Acacia Avenue. Deceased home address.
- Scene 4: Alley between 3 and 5 Acacia Avenue, where knife found.
- Scene 5: The suspect

The number and type of scenes can be extensive and may be complex, for example, where a scene has been used over a long period of time, this may include a trafficking 'hub', or safe houses. By recording scenes in this way, it helps to ensure all scenes are properly evaluated. As new scenes are identified, they should be added to the list. It is important that everyone working on the investigation uses the same identifiers for each scene as defined by the SIO.

In consultation with crime scene coordinator/manager, the SIO should review all actions and decisions taken in relation to each scene. In particular, for each scene consider the:

- parameters
- security
- action taken to preserve material
- adequacy of the resources deployed
- record keeping arrangements.

SIOs should give clear instruction and document any alterations to earlier decisions.

Preservation

In all major, complex, or multiple scene cases, the SIO should appoint a CSC and/or a CSM to manage the forensic examination of the scene(s). The CSC may deploy multiple CSMs under their direction depending on the complexity and number of scenes. The examination of crime scenes is regulated by ISO 17020 and the [Forensic Regulator's Codes of practice and conduct](#).

At the start of any crime scene investigation, the CSC or CSM will start a contamination log, which will set out each CSI's deployment, what they have done, when, where and with whom. This will help to prevent and manage any contamination issues.

The priorities for managing contamination apply equally to digital crime scenes and material as it does to traditional forensic evidence. See [Digital strategy](#).

Contamination

Managing contamination is a priority for any homicide or major crime investigation. The initial action to preserve life and identify risks within a scene will take priority over the preservation of the scene.

Where possible, first responders should:



- minimise disruption to the scene, but this must not impact on their ability to save life. For example, they should avoid obvious paths or routes into the scene or premises or record their actions on BWV and notify the CSM.
- not move around the scene with the sole objective of recording the whole premises. If they have to move around the scene for another purpose, eg, to preserve life or identify risks, they should record this on BWV and notify the CSM of their movements.

The overall aim of scene preservation is to make sure that any material at the scene:

- remains in an unaltered state until it can be gathered, and
- retains its integrity during its discovery, recovery and retention into the evidence chain.

A scene and exhibits may also be at risk from factors including damage or disturbance caused by:

- exposure to the elements
- animal disturbance
- material being moved from its original position (eg, by first responders)
- unauthorised entry into the scene
- microbiological activity causing decay to material
- items being taken into or from the scene
- digital material being overwritten or deleted, such as router connection data
- transferring exhibits from the scene and when transferring for examination.

If not identified and managed, contamination can distort findings and prolong subsequent efforts to identify offenders. The SIO should make sure that scene(s) are properly secured, and an effective scene log is in place to record everyone who enters and leaves the scene. This should be added to any other relevant intelligence, and provided to the scientists for elimination and interpretation purposes.

See also: [Forensic Science Regulator \(2020\) The control and avoidance of contamination in crime scene examinations involving DNA evidence recovery, FSR-G-206](#) and [Home Office/NPCC \(2017\) DNA Good Practice Manual](#) (This document is available to [authorised users](#) who are logged on to College Learn).

Health and Safety

The SIO should always consider the health and safety of all staff engaged on an investigation, in particular ensuring they are protected from any potential hazards before starting a search or a scene examination. A risk assessment should be completed by the relevant CSM where appropriate. Force health and safety officers can advise on the health and safety issues relevant to particular crime scenes or other environments.

Welfare and wellbeing

During a homicide or major crime investigation staff can often be deployed into difficult environments, often open to the elements, with limited access to toilets facilities or refreshments.

In some cases, the deployment may include distressing scenes which may require additional support or counselling.

The SIO will need to ensure appropriate line management support is put in place as staff may be deployed away from their usual line management and supervision for the duration of the investigation. This may include delegating day-to-day line management and welfare responsibility to a dedicated person



or department, eg, operations planning. It may also include provision of specialist support and encouraging staff to self-identify if they feel the incident has any negative impact on their wellbeing.

Parameters

A scene's parameters should be clearly identified before the crime scene examination starts.

Initial parameters should be as wide as possible, and only reduced where there are overriding practical considerations or further assessment indicates otherwise. If the scene is set too small, there is a risk that valuable evidence being lost.

The scene parameters should be clearly communicated to all those involved in the preservation and examination of the scene(s) and recorded in the SIO's policy file.

Some scenes will be on private property, some in public areas. There will also be scenes where ownership is unclear. In many cases, the owner of the property will consent to a police search and forensic examination, or the occupier has asked the police to attend and the police will therefore be on the premises lawfully.

SIO should always consider what legal powers are available to [enter, retain and search premises](#). This will avoid unnecessary interruptions or legal challenge particularly where a potential suspect is identified during the examination of a scene.

In *DPP v Morrison* [2003] QBD, as reported in the Daily Telegraph, 17th April 2003 and the Times, 21st April 2003, the court held that the police were entitled to assume consent to place a cordon around a crime scene in order to preserve evidence, given the importance of the forensic evidence in a serious crime investigation. While the earlier cases of *Rice v Connolly* 1966 [1966] 2 QB 414 and *Ghani v Jones* CA [1970] 1 QB 693 held that the police are entitled to take reasonable steps to prevent and detect crime and bring offenders to justice, which is understood to include securing crime scenes for examination.

Where there is any doubt about the power to hold and examine a crime scene, the SIO should ask for advice from their force legal department.

See also the [Search powers, and obtaining and executing search warrants](#), and [Community impact assessments](#).

Cordons and scene logs

To ensure that the forensic and physical security of the scene is maintained in an auditable way, every scene should have an effective cordon with a crime scene log, at every scene.

The SIO may consider delegating management and oversight of cordons and logs to a bronze commander in consultation with the CSM. This person will be responsible for resources and rotas, briefing and de-briefing and ensuring the crime scene logs are completed appropriately.

Authority to enter a scene can only be granted by either the SIO or a CSM, but officers should not await the arrival of the SIO before securing a scene, implementing a cordon or starting a crime scene log. Only one log should be kept for each scene. The log will ensure that:

- there is no unauthorised entry to the scene(s)



- the integrity of potential physical evidence is secured
- intelligence opportunities are maximised
- contamination issues are managed

The log should record the details of the person opening the log, the time it was started, the exact location and a description of the scene parameters. Where the log is handed over to another loggist, the time, reason and name of the person taking over should be documented. The log will record the:

- name of any person entering or leaving the scene
- date and time of such entry or departure
- reason for entry

When the scene is released, the log should be exhibited by the last loggist and handed to the exhibits officer.

2.1.4 Crime scene examination objectives

Before a scene is examined, the SIO should, in consultation with the CSC or CSM, set objectives for the examination.

The objectives and prioritisation of tasks will depend on the SIOs working hypothesis of what may have happened. It is likely that there will be multiple hypothesis based on the known facts, intelligence or inferences.

While forensic resources should focus on the most likely scenario, the objectives should be able to accommodate other potential hypothesis. The hypothesis and forensic objectives should be reviewed regularly against emerging information from the scene and other sources. Hypothesis and objectives should be adjusted as appropriate.

Investigative primacy should be clearly established with other investigative agencies prior to a scene examination, for example the Fire and Rescue service. This will clarify who is directing the enquiry and therefore who is responsible for decision-making.

See also [HSE \(no date\) Work Related Deaths: A protocol for liaison](#) and [Working with other agencies and multi-agency bodies](#).

2.1.5 Recording the scene

Recording a crime scene is an important function and the benefits will include:

- demonstrating the integrity of evidence gathered from the scene
- providing linking evidence between scenes
- supporting interpretation of the scene
- facilitating re-interpretation of the scene if fresh information becomes available
- supporting briefings given by the SIO
- supporting information provided to the media
- presenting evidence at court.

The appropriate method to record a scene will depend on the circumstances of the case.

When deciding on the method, the SIO should consider the:

- complexity of the scene
- sustainability of the scene in terms of



- its potential to deteriorate
- the time available for scene retention

The methods available include:

- a written record and sketches
- scaled scene plans
- standard photography
- video photography
- 360-degree photography
- aerial/drone photography
- virtual reconstruction
- 3D laser scans.

2.1.6 Examination

The examination will aim to gather material that will identify:

- the victim(s) or offender(s)
- other people at the scene, who may be witnesses
- the mechanism of the incident and potential weapon(s)
- the movements of victim(s), offender(s) or witnesses, prior to, during and post incident.
- the time and timescales of the incident
- the motive(s) or background information of relevance
- any digital equipment or data which may be of use to the investigation.

A team approach using the expertise and experience of team members makes it possible to develop innovative solutions to investigative problems, maximising evidential recovery.

The SIO should discuss and agree with the CSM and CSC an examination strategy covering the scale, scope and methodology of the examination of scenes. Time should be taken to agree the strategy, unless a delay would result in the destruction or loss of evidence. This discussion should also consider whether and which specialists should be consulted before starting the examination.

The [NCA MCIS](#) team can provide assistance to identify forensic specialists for any aspect of the scene examination.

The examination strategy should include the:

- objectives of the examination
- [resources](#) needed to implement the strategy
- method used to [record the scene](#).

The CSM and CSC are responsible for delivering the strategy, and therefore the SIO should ensure they are aware of any new information about the circumstances of the crime.

Regular briefings and open lines of communication between the CSM/CSC and the SIO will help to manage expectations. The nature of the investigation will largely determine the frequency briefings. Each briefing should conclude with a concise summary of actions and priorities for future activity.

2.1.7 Search



In some cases a search will be necessary to identify and/or search a scene or potential scene. The SIO should, in consultation with a police search adviser (PoLSA) set clear objectives for any search.

The sequencing scene examination, digital examination and searches, should be agreed between the SIO, POLSA, CSM/CSC and a DMI, taking into account the potential impact on availability of evidence, its identification, preservation and recovery. See [Search strategy](#) and [Forensic strategy](#).

2.1.8 Recovery

Staff recovering forensic evidence and managing exhibits should be appropriately trained to package material while maintaining the forensic integrity. This may require a forensic specialist to be deployed solely for the purpose of recovery.

Some exhibits may require specific consideration to be recovered, packaged and stored to reduce the risk of damage to the item or its potential forensic or digital value. This may be due to the items position, size, condition, and ease of extraction or other hazards. Any decisions taken should be recorded with the supporting rationale.

The completion of exhibit labels and continuity are essential to prevent issues arising later. All exhibits should either be handed to the exhibits officer or the exhibits officer be made aware of their whereabouts and how they are stored.

Review

A scene should not be released until the SIO, taking into account the advice of specialists, eg, CSM/CSC, POLSA, DMI, is satisfied that all the available material has been gathered. This may include conducting a 'walk through' of the scene prior to release (the SIO may choose to delegate this task in some cases).

In some circumstances, as the case develops the SIO may want to retain the scene for later review, further potential examination or other activity. This may include allowing the defence an opportunity to review the scene where an offender has been identified. The decision to retain a scene should be proportionate to issues that are likely to arise between prosecution and defence. It should also consider the type of scene, who owns or controls it and what legal authority or consent there is to retain it or allow entry.

2.1.9 Releasing the scene

Prior to releasing a scene, the SIO should arrange for an individual who is familiar with the scene (for example, the owner or occupier), but who is not suspected of involvement in the offence, to view the scene with a member of the investigation team. This is to consider whether there is any change in the usual appearance of the premises and its contents, which may identify additional lines of enquiry.

Before the scene is released the SIO should discuss with, and agree with the owner (where applicable) and the environmental health department of the local authority, whether it is necessary or appropriate to clean the premises or any part of them, for example to remove blood stains. SIOs should give particular consideration to the impact on victims and/or bereaved families.

The SIO should also consider to whom the scene should be released to. The SIO should not be drawn into a debate about who has the most 'right' to own the scene. If there is any dispute, the SIO should consult their force legal department for advice.



2.2 Forensic strategy

2.2.1 Introduction

The partnership between the SIO and the Crime Scene Manager (CSM) and Coordinator (CSC) is crucial to the successful development of a methodical forensic strategy.

Investigators should be familiar with [Locard's principle of exchange](#), which states that every contact leaves a trace. This is the foundation for the strategies: forensics, [pathology](#) and [Crime scene management](#). The evolution of digital evidence and intelligence at crime scenes is also underpinned by this principle.

The following sections will also inform development of a forensic strategy:

- [Digital strategy](#)
- [Search strategy](#)
- [Elimination enquiries](#)

The collection and examination of forensic evidence is a powerful source of evidence for securing convictions and should not be overlooked or dismissed as trivial. In most cases, the aim of the forensic strategy will be **to identify, recover, record and interpret** material.

This will help to:

- clarify the circumstances, what, when, where and how the incident happened and potentially who was involved
- evaluate TIEs
- implicate offenders
- develop forensic intelligence
- prioritise lines of enquiry
- provide interview material
- clarify a sequence of events
- prioritise laboratory submissions
- corroborate accounts
- link scenes across separate offences

It is important that SIOs think about the potential of forensic science in its widest sense and not from a purely evidential perspective.

The constantly evolving forensic landscape across multiple disciplines will be a challenge for SIO's. Specialist knowledge and advice is, however, available from, for example, Crime Scene Managers (CSMs), Crime Scene Coordinators (CSCs) and NCA specialist advisers. It is the SIO's responsibility, through the forensic strategy to draw this specialist knowledge together to further the investigation.

2.2.2 Developing the forensic strategy

Developing a forensic strategy will begin when the SIO arrives at the scene of an incident. A walk through of the scene with the CSM, who will implement the strategy on behalf of the SIO, will help this process. The strategy will help the CSM to target examination according to SIO's priorities. The strategy should be reviewed regularly to ensure it reflects developments in the investigation as they occur.



Through the forensic strategy, the SIO in consultation with the CSM, CSC and/or the Forensic Management Team (FMT), should be able to, establish:

- the location and nature of all crime scenes, including suspects, witnesses and victims
- what material can be recovered from each scene.

The SIO will need to consider the following questions:

Modus Operandi	• Is there more than one offender? • What has the offender done? • What has the offender touched? • What has the offender brought to the scene? • What has the offender taken from the scene? • How was the offence committed? • How was entry gained to the premises? • Has the victim been to the scene prior to the incident? • Is the location the scene of the crime, or a deposition site?
Victim incapacitation	• Was the victim bound, if so, how? • What methods/weapons were used to control the victim?
Sexual evidence	• Is there any evidence to suggest the offence was sexually motivated?
Forensic awareness	• What evidence is there to suggest the offender was forensically aware? • Has the offender attempted to destroy evidence? • Did the offender wear gloves?
Offender injuries	• Has there been a struggle? • How would the victims have defended themselves? • Was the offender injured? • What physical evidence may have been left by the offender?
Missing items	• What, if anything, has been taken from the scene? (eg, theft for gain, trophy items)
Blood distribution	• What weapon was used? • Degree of force? • Movement at/through the scene? • Injury to the offender? • Escape routes?
Linking evidence	• What evidence is there to link the: ○ offender to the scene? ○ victim to the scene? ○ offender to other scenes? ○ offender to other offenders? ○ offender to the victim?

A clear set of objectives will be required for each sample or exhibit recovered. This will help to prioritise how each sample or exhibit is examined according to the needs of the investigation. Prioritisation is important, as there may be a number of potential examinations possible on an exhibit, and one action might reduce/remove the opportunity for others. For example, if all fingerprints samples are used for fingerprint analysis, valuable DNA evidence may be lost, and vice versa. The CSM and [Forensic Management Team \(FMT\)](#) can support effective decision-making.



The development of the forensic strategy should also include:

- a scene examination plan
- formulation of a FMT
- monitoring of forensic actions
- exhibit reviews to support interview strategies and lines of enquiry

The strategy should also consider how it will be implemented. In particular, it should identify who will be responsible for its delivery, for example, the CSM. See [Implementing the Forensic Strategy](#).

The FMT will consider strategic forensic issues, for example, resourcing and contamination. The strategy will identify who should be included, and frequency of meetings.

At an operational level, the SIO should meet regularly with the CSM/CSM, their teams, and forensic advisers to discuss scene and analytical actions. These meetings will ensure that the forensic strategy aligns with current investigative knowledge and priorities and any issues are notified to the SIO.

2.2.3 Implementing the strategy

Resources

SIOs should, through the FMT ensure they have access to sufficient resources, proportionate to the circumstances of the case. This may include:

- CSM
- CSC
- Crime scene investigators (CSIs)
- Exhibits officer (EO)
- Relevant national advisers

For further information see [Investigative Support](#) and [Crime Scene Management](#).

2.2.4 Managing the forensic strategy

Day-to-day management of the strategy will normally be carried out by the CSM. In complex cases it may be necessary to appoint another manager to this role.

Whoever manages the strategy should take responsibility from the start of the investigation, to the end, and across the whole range of forensic issues. They should be fully briefed on the investigation and priorities and have good forensic awareness. They should be appointed before any significant scene examinations are conducted.

Forensic submissions

The manager will also have a key role in helping to identify lines of enquiry and supporting prioritisation of forensic submissions. They will work with the SIO or DSIO to identify investigative needs and, with the FMT to generate forensic solutions.

This will include identifying opportunities to link offences, and to provide other forces with intelligence or evidence. Forensic material should be submitted for evidential or intelligence purposes, even where an offender is known or has made admissions.



SIOs should ensure there is a clear line of communication between the investigation (CSM/CSC) and the forensic service provider. The attendance of a forensic scientist at the scene may help them to clarify the sequence of events and maximise the recovery of physical trace evidence. The forensic scientist in consultation with the CSM/CSC can help to prioritise items for sequential examination at an early stage in the investigation saving time and costs. It will also help interpretation of results and anticipate possible lines of defence.

Note: Forensic submissions will need to take into account limits on a suspect's time on bail. For example, the Policing and Crime Act 2017 requires a Magistrates' authority to extend bail beyond three months.

See also [Suspect Management](#).

Forensic results

The SIO, with the FMT and the interview adviser, should consider all forensic results in the context of their evidential value and relationship to the needs of the investigation. Forensic results have the potential to influence significant lines of enquiry and the prioritisation of further submissions. The SIO should make sure they understand the significance of the results in the context of other information and crime scene examination.

Note: The significance of the forensic material may change over the course of the investigation. The results of any tests or observations should be regularly reviewed in the light of the emerging information, as this may become critical at a later stage of the enquiry.

Regular forensic reviews should be carried out by the SIO in discussion with the FMT.

Given the volume of physical evidence normally recovered during the course of a major crime investigation, for example a homicide investigation, the continuity of evidence and associated disclosure need to be carefully managed.

The SIO should ensure that the Disclosure Officer works in close association with the Exhibits Officer, CSIs, CSMs, CSC and staff from the forensic service provider to ensure that disclosure obligations are met.

2.2.5 Forensic management team

The purpose of a FMT is to provide focus to an investigation so that its physical evidence requirements are constantly reviewed and met. The FMT provides a forum for providing advice to the SIO, ensuring that they have a comprehensive knowledge of the forensic scientific support available to them.

The FMT is likely to include:

- SIO
- DSIO
- Scientific Support Manager
- NCA MCIS National SIO adviser and specialist advisers
- Crime Scene Coordinator (for complex or multiple scenes)
- Crime Scene Manager
- Exhibits Officer
- Person identified to manage the delivery of the forensic strategy.



In cases where scene interpretation is more complex it is good practice to include:

- Forensic specialists, eg, a fingerprint expert
- Home Office Registered Forensic Pathologist (HORFP)
- Other experts as required.

The objectives of the FMT are:

- management of scientific support resources
- provision of scene management, coordination and operational advice
- strategic management of scientific support services to meet investigative needs.

The FMT is responsible for reviewing the physical material recovered from scenes and prioritising the submission of exhibits. This process should be constantly reviewed as the investigation develops.

2.3 Pathology strategy

Detailed guidance on the pathology strategy is contained in [College of Policing \(2019\) Practice advice: The medical investigation of suspected homicide](#). SIOs should refer to this document when considering their strategy.

See also:

- [Chief Coroner's Guidance \(2019\) No. 32, Post-mortem examinations including second post-mortem examinations](#)
- [Coroners and Inquests: Second PMs](#)

2.4 Search strategy

2.4.1 Introduction

Major crime investigations, particularly homicides are likely to involve some level of search. Searching combines the application of systems, processes and equipment to locate and identify material relevant to an investigation. It is essential that this function is carried out effectively and is effectively linked to other parts of the investigation. Searches can:

- identify a crime scenes
- uncover material that could:
 - identify suspects or witnesses
 - link suspects and/or victims to locations and objects significant to the investigation
 - prove or disprove an hypotheses
- help to discount the presence of material at a location.

While the extent of the search in any investigation depends on the circumstances, the following should be considered as a minimum in all cases:

- the scene (after crime scene examination and prior to the release of the scene) see [Crime scene management](#)
- the area surrounding a scene
- access routes into and exit routes from a scene (for example, disposal sites, drains and roofs)
- digital and [passive data sources](#) (eg, CCTV)
- the victim's home, work, educational or social settings. Cycles, public transport and vehicle
- suspect's home, workplace and vehicle.



Other search locations will depend on the SIO's interpretation of the available material and the overall strategy of the investigation. In some cases, scenario-based searching may be necessary.

For further information see the following sections of APP:

- [Search](#) (this document is available to authorised users who are logged on to the [College Managed learning Environment \(MLE\)](#)).
- [Search powers, and obtaining and executing search warrants](#)
- [Missing persons](#)

See also:

- [Investigative support](#)
- [Crime scene management](#)
- [Forensic strategy](#)
- [Digital strategy](#)

Every search should be managed professionally, according to a clearly defined strategy. This should be recorded, and clearly communicated to those responsible for carrying out the search.

The SIO should develop their search strategy in consultation with the CSM and a [police search adviser](#) (PoSA). It should include the following:

- objectives
- legal powers for search
- priorities
- types of evidence sought
- within and between scenes
- geographical
- parameters
- level of interrogation
- community impact
- family/victim impact
- media management
- allocation of responsibilities
- exit strategy

The strategy should be implemented through a tactical plan provided by a PoSA and agreed by the SIO. This should include:

- resource requirements
- search techniques and equipment
- actions on a find
- briefing/debriefing of search teams
- risk assessment
- health, safety and welfare considerations
- parameters

2.4.2 Developing a search strategy

A search strategy is part of the overall investigative strategy and should be coordinated with it. It should be regularly reviewed and revised in the light of emerging material.

In cases where a search is likely to be complex or large, SIOs should ask a PoSA for support and advice on search techniques and technical resources or specialists that may be required. Where numerous



searches may be necessary, more than one PolSA will be required. In these cases, a Search Coordinator (PolSC) should provide oversight and support the SIO, often as part of the investigation management team.

The PolSA will manage police search teams, providing the SIO with a record of what has been searched and how. They may also be able to provide the SIO with an estimation of the probability that an item(s) sought is still within the area to be searched, helping the SIOs decision making.

The PolSA should liaise closely with the exhibits officer and CSM so that each item is recovered forensically and managed appropriately, and so that its forensic potential can be maximised.

Where large numbers of people are required for open area searches, the PolSA will provide coordination and direction. This will help to:

- retain public confidence
- maintain control of the search process
- maximise evidential potential

Risk assessment

Every search should be subject to a risk assessment, which takes into account the following:

- preservation of life
- protecting the public
- the immediate pursuit of a suspect
- the likelihood of destruction, damage or disposal of material caused by the weather or outside interference
- the likelihood that recovering material will lead to a rapid arrest of a suspect
- health, safety and welfare of staff undertaking the search

PolSAs are trained to undertake such assessments.

Health, safety and welfare

When conducting a search, the health, safety and welfare of staff involved in the search process, should be a priority.

Additional factors that should be considered as part of the risk assessment include:

- environmental hazards (for example water, exposure to extremes of weather, noxious substances, confined spaces, heights, railways)
- protective equipment to search personnel
- provision of refreshments and facilities, where appropriate
- risks associated with the deployment of untrained search personnel

Legal powers

SIOs must make sure they consider and use the most appropriate legislation when securing and searching crime scenes and seizing items.

See the [Search powers, and obtaining and executing search warrants](#) section of Investigation APP.

Consider also common law powers associated with public spaces, for example, *Rice v Connolly* [1966] QB P414, *Ghani v Jones* [1970] 1QB 693 & *DPP v Morrison* QBD 4.4.03 (The Times 21.4.03).



Many searches will be carried out with the owner or occupier's consent and SIOs do not usually face objections. However, it is important to explain why it is necessary to carry out the search and consider what action needs to be taken should consent be withdrawn.

Where the owner or occupier has called the police for assistance, and as a result, a search of the property is required, the owner or occupier will have given implied consent. The SIO should, however, still consider a warrant under section 8 PACE where the search is for evidence related to an indictable offence, provided there are reasonable grounds to believe:

- there is material on the premises which is likely to be of substantial value to the investigation
- the material is likely to be relevant evidence
- the material is not subject to legal privilege, excluded material or special procedure material, and
- entry to the premises will not be granted unless a warrant is produced, or the purpose of the search may be frustrated unless immediate entry can be secured.

Search objectives

SIOs should clearly identify the purpose of the search, where possible identifying the specific material sought. Those carrying out the search should be fully briefed on the circumstances of the incident, together with relevant details of the SIO investigation strategy. This information will help the search team to identify material relevant to the enquiry.

SIOs should be clear about the search objectives before commissioning the search. Examples include locating and/or identifying:

- scenes (including secondary scenes such as residences, workplaces and vehicles)
- victims
- witnesses
- suspects
- access and exit routes (including material to identify these, for example, footmarks and tyre marks)
- physical evidence (including forensic opportunities)
- intelligence
- weapons
- stolen property
- property abandoned by the offender or victim
- hiding places
- storage sites
- digital and lifestyle information (including mobile devices, telephones, computers, diaries, financial information, membership cards and association literature)

A decision to search or not to search any location should be clearly recorded with supporting rationale.

2.4.3 Search priorities within and between scenes

Priorities within scenes

SIOs need to establish the priority for searching a scene, this will usually be linked to priorities for the overall investigation strategy and the SIO's assessment of the risk.



There may be conflict between forensic examination and the physical search. This is because a physical search may damage the forensic potential of the scene. Therefore, if the objective is the forensic potential, the forensic examination will usually take priority.

A physical search may take primacy in cases, for example, where the risk assessment identifies preservation of life or the apprehension of an offender as a priority.

The physical search may also take priority where the objective of the search is to locate a specific scene or object. In this case the SIO might set a 'search to contact' objective, ie, locate the item and halt, then allowing a forensic examination.

Where a physical search takes priority, contamination risks should be minimised and advice sought from CSMs or CSCs.

Priorities between scenes

Where there is more than one scene, SIOs will usually have to decide the order in which the scenes should be searched. The SIO's decision should consider the following:

- protecting the public
- vulnerability of each scene and the risk of evidence being lost, destroyed or damaged
- value and/or likelihood of recovering relevant material at the different locations
- number and size of the scenes
- resource requirements and support required
- risk assessment
- risk of contamination between scenes

2.4.4 Search parameters

SIOs should identify the parameters for any search. The decision to conduct a search should be based on intelligence or information, and should not be speculative

For example, in a homicide case it would be realistic to expect that relevant evidence will be found near the victim's body (if located). Therefore, setting geographical parameters around the deposition site, entry and exit routes, and working outwards is accepted practice.

2.4.5 Implementing a search strategy

Resources

The objectives, parameters and agreed methodology will dictate the resources need to carry out the search effectively. In some cases, the search can be managed by the enquiry team, but in others the SIO will need to consider whether additional resources are required.

For major crime investigation, a PoLSA will usually manage and task resources. They will also identify whether additional police staff or specialist resources are required. Resource requirements, including any specialists should be included on any warrant application. Specialist resources may include:

- specialist police resources (for example, drugs, explosives or cadaver search dogs, underwater search teams)



- technical specialists (for example digital media investigators or computer experts)
- [Her Majesty's Coastguard \(HMCG\) technical search and rescue teams](#)
- Royal Air Force (air and sea rescue)
- [Mountain rescue teams](#)
- [Army explosive ordnance disposal and search](#) (bomb disposal)
- [Lowland search and rescue](#)
- [National Search and Rescue Dogs Association](#) (NSARDA)
- [British Cave Rescue Council](#) (BCRC)

The PoLSA may also need to manage and task volunteer members of the public.

SIOs need to consider their duty of care towards any individual engaged in the search process on behalf of the police.

2.4.6 Search methods

The primary objective of a search and the location and/or subject of a search will usually dictate the method of search to be used.

The following types of search may be considered:

Initial visual check

The purpose of an initial visual check (IVC) is to provide a quick overview of the area and locate any obvious material of relevance. It is used at the beginning of a search when resources may be limited or when it is essential to find material quickly for the investigation. The use of this technique does not remove the need for a later more detailed search where necessary. An initial search will frequently form part of an initial investigative fast track actions and should be of sufficient thoroughness to identify and preserve material in plain sight.

Non-specialist search

This search will be carried out by staff who may not have undertaken specialist search training (un-licensed), or they have received standard search (level 1) training.

Specialist search

The majority of searches fall within this category. A specialist search will be used where the SIO needs high degree of confidence in the process. These searches will be conducted by:

- [Licensed search officers](#) – Level 2
- Specialist search officers – Level 3

For further information see [College of Policing \(2019\) Search APP](#) (this document is available to authorised users who are logged on to the [College Learn](#)).

2.4.7 Briefing search teams



Search teams should be briefed about current investigative hypotheses and priorities. Where supporting intelligence exists, this should be included in the briefing with as much detail as possible so that the most appropriate search technique can be used to maximise success.

SIOs should ensure that search teams know what to do when relevant material is found. This should include:

- what to seize
- what not to seize
- who undertakes the seizure
- what should be examined in situ
- recording finds and seizure

2.4.8 Media management

In cases attracting significant media or social media interest, and as part of the wider media strategy, it may be important to explain why a particular location is **not** being searched, or why a scene is being retained for an extended period with little obvious activity.

A perceived lack of police activity in an area the community or media believe is relevant, may undermine community and public confidence.

2.5 Digital strategy

2.5.1 Introduction

Technology will have a significant influence on the material available during an investigation. Digital material can be set within the context of the 'Digital Crime Scene' and 'Digital Forensics'. These aspects should be considered in the same way as more traditional crime scene investigation and forensic examination.

Digital data, imaging, storage and transmission media can provide a wide range of investigative opportunities, particularly given the increase in information growth and data storage.

The digital strategy should include active sources, for example, mobile devices, and passive sources, eg, CCTV, digital data and image gathering and storage sources. It should also include the internet of things, for example digitally enhanced devices, such as smart speakers and home appliances.

The SIO should not concentrate on the technology itself – but on the potential that the technology could provide, and the action required to realise that potential. A problem solving approach should drive a digital strategy, not simply the availability of data.

SIOs should consult subject matter experts for specialist advice. Digital opportunities should be triaged, taking into account proportionality and the resource, storage, analysis and disclosure demands that potentially high volumes or complex digital data and images will require.

It is important for an SIO to consider what they know, what they do not know, and importantly what they don't know, they don't know – within the context of technology, processes and covert opportunities.



For further information, see also the following sections of APP Investigation (Passive data generators):

- [ANPR](#)
- [Digital images](#)
- [Computer-based electronic evidence](#)
- [CCTV](#)

See also:

- [ACPO \(2012\) Good Practice Guide for Digital Evidence](#)
- APP on [Extraction of material from digital devices](#)

2.5.2 Developing the digital strategy

What is technically possible?

A subject matter expert, for example a Digital Media Investigator (DMI) and/or digital forensic practitioner can provide advice and support on what is possible, particularly given the ongoing and rapid evolution of devices and the type of forensic tools available.

The SIO should consider the sources of digital data available and use a problem-solving approach:

- What is the problem I am trying to solve?
- What opportunities can the available digital sources provide?

Ask questions of the DMI and forensic practitioner, probe and test what can or cannot be done with a data source – set out what the investigative strategy and priorities are.

The SIO should appoint a dedicated lead to manage the digital strategy throughout the investigation.

At the initial response, SIOs should consider what fast track digital opportunities are present and what recovery opportunities or challenges they may present. Importantly what early recovery opportunities are there?

If devices are seized at the crime scene, they should be handled forensically and in accordance with the [Principles for digital evidence](#). Specifically, this should include photographs/diagrams of equipment locations and actions taken. Particular care needs to be taken with systems that are powered on (running). This is because there is the potential to make unwanted changes to the material or, in the case of volatile data, loss of material.

See also [cloud data](#) for more detail about technical and jurisdictional considerations of digital data.

What is readily available?

Ideally, all devices relevant to the investigation would be downloaded and the information presented to the SIO in an accessible format within a few hours. However, this is not realistic and the SIO should consider the time, priority and proportionality that a particular enquiry or action will take.

The SIO should consider whether and what information they need and by when? These factors will have different impacts on the investigation, and accessibility of material to progress lines of enquiry. An initial triage/review of the digital material will provide a better understanding of what the digital data can provide.



Fast track actions could lead to early establishment of facts but may not be evidential. Longer-term objectives might satisfy evidential requirements but may not be available quickly.

A level one mobile phone extraction could provide a quick result but will not include all the data that could be retrieved, if retrieval necessary and proportionate. A Level two extraction is more likely to provide all available data, including deleted items, but will take longer to achieve.

Speak to a DMI or digital forensic practitioner for more information.

Covert tactics

For potential covert tactics and methodology, including the recovery of digital material, SIOs should expert advice from covert managers or advisors.

2.5.3 Principles for digital evidence

The [ACPO \(2012\) Good practice guide for digital evidence](#), sets out four key principles for gathering and examining digital evidence.

ACPO Principles	
PRINCIPLE ONE	No action taken by law enforcement agencies, persons employed within those agencies or their agents should change data which may subsequently be relied upon in court.
PRINCIPLE TWO	In circumstances where a person finds it necessary to access original data, that person must be competent to do so and be able to give evidence explaining the relevance and the implications of their actions.
PRINCIPLE THREE	An audit trail or other record of all processes applied to digital evidence should be created and preserved. An independent third party should be able to examine those processes and achieve the same result.
PRINCIPLE FOUR	The person in charge of the investigation has overall responsibility for ensuring that the law and these principles are adhered to.

Proportionality

The 2012 principles should be supported by a proportionate approach to the examination of digital data. SIOs should make judgements about the focus and scope of an investigation; consider other available intelligence, information and investigative resources.

See also [ICO \(2020\) Mobile phone data extraction by police forces in England and Wales Investigation report](#)

The SIO should be certain when directing activity that the seizure and examination of any digital device is proportionate, strictly necessary and lawful to pursue the reasonable and relevant line of enquiry.



Digital devices are likely to contain a lot of personal data. This data is likely to be highly sensitive, including photographs, private communications, locations, places frequented. Personal data should be handled in accordance with [data protection principles](#).

Before seizing a personal digital device, SIOs should consider whether the information sought can be obtained using less intrusive means.

See also APP on [Extraction of material from digital devices](#)

Consent

Where possible the least intrusive method should be used to obtain the data needed to achieve the reasonable and relevant line of enquiry.

Where it is necessary and proportionate to obtain data from a personal digital device, positive consent should be sought to extract the data, but the device owner has the right to refuse.

See also APP on [Extraction of material from digital devices](#)

Prioritisation

It is not possible to provide specific guidance on what and how collection of digital data should be prioritised. SIOs should consider the NDM and Fast Track Actions (FTA) when considering prioritisation.

If an investigation considered seizing twenty mobile phones and five tablets, the SIO should consider which of those devices are likely to establish relevant facts. Which devices are most likely to contain evidence, which may need to be preserved.

When considering this, the SIO should consider the volume of data that is likely to be recovered.

The resources available to an investigation are likely to be limited, and in the digital space, this recovered data will need to be processed, managed and reviewed. Prioritisation will allow that task to be planned, allocated and managed, considering the availability of resource.

Positive engagement with the CPS to agree priorities and search parameters will support decision making.

2.5.4 The digital crime scene

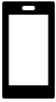
SIOs should consider the digital crime scene - what is available, how is it relevant to the investigation and how could it help?

Whilst some sources may not immediately jump out, like a blood splatter pattern, it is worth taking time to consider the opportunities. A problem-solving approach is key to making effective use of the digital crime scene.

Examples of items that could be in a digital crime scene:

	ITEM	CONSIDERATIONS
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	Land line telephones	• Usually “plugged in” somewhere in the house • May contain contact information or address books • Could tell you who the last caller was, or last number dialled • May have recording functions and hold answerphone messages
	Routers	• Usually “plugged in” to a phone socket but could use a mobile signal and therefore be ‘standalone’ • Usually has flash memory and will only retain information when powered. Turn it off, lose the data. • Consider home routers within the vicinity of your scene(s) as some routers have public access and may offer details of persons who subscribe to the service outside of owner and their family.
	Computers / Towers	• The drives in computer towers can now be extremely large meaning they may contain near infinite levels of data.
	Laptops	• Such as computer towers, technology advancements mean they can now hold vast quantities of data.
	Monitors	• Traditional “towers” can be housed inside monitors to form an “all-in-one” computer. The monitor may actually be the computer. • Monitors can contain ports, for things like memory cards and USB drives – these items may still be attached.
	Phones	• See “Mobile Phone” section below. • Can come in a range of sizes, including very small ones that can be secreted.
	Tablets	• Cross over from Laptop to Phone – can contain a vast range of information
	Printers	• What was the last thing printed and is it still there? • Is it an “all-in-one” with a scanner, is something left on the scanner? • Printers can contain ports, for things like memory cards and USB drives – these items may still be attached.
	Cloud	• Virtual data, where information is held on a server somewhere in the world. • Consider legality and what can be accessed/seen from the scene.
	Other Wi-Fi sources	• What else is present that is generating a Wi-Fi signal? Speak to a DMI for specialist advice.
	Servers	• Device(s) used for managing network resources. • People can have servers in their homes and, as a result, they may contain large volumes of information.



	Storage Devices	- Covers a multitude of formats e.g.: Hard Drives, CDs, DVDs, Flash media, USB drives, memory cards, SIM Cards. - Some media cards can be extremely small, with a capacity to hold large volumes of data. Small media cards are easily hidden (behind picture frames etc.)
	Cameras	Retrieval of images.
	Webcams	Do not usually record information but may be “live” and connected to somewhere (which could be relevant) when the physical scene is secured.
	USB Devices	USB storage devices are covered above, but also consider what else could be plugged into a USB drive – on a computer – and therefore potentially hold information.
	Bluetooth Devices	What is there, within the scene that has a Bluetooth connection? Speak to a DMI for specialist advice.
	CCTV	- CCTV comes in all shapes and sizes. - Think about doorbells, which record who comes to a premises, internal cameras (used to monitor pets, premises). - Some technology/CCTV is now very small and very affordable. - Footage from these may be streamed and stored to a device (e.g. a smartphone)
	Smart Watch	- Smartwatches can contain a lot of information and usually link to a person’s phone. - Advancements have made some smartwatches independent of phones – operating with their own sim cards.
	Internet of Things (IoT)	- More physical ‘things’ in our homes contain sensors and systems that connect to networks (usually WiFi). - Smart speakers, like Amazon Echo, are well known, but this can now include fridges, heating systems and lighting.
	Vehicle Telematics	- Some modern vehicles now come with preinstalled technology, which monitors and tracks a number of pieces of information. - Vehicle data can include routes, events, locations and connected media.

2.5.5 Digital forensics

Digital forensics is moving into the regulatory framework set out by the Forensic Science Regulator including ISO 17025, with Digital Forensic Units needing to achieve accreditation and apply quality standards to examination of digital material.

All material (including digital) should be recovered and preserved to the extent that a third party is able to repeat the same process and arrive at the same result as that presented at a court.



The SIO should be aware of the frameworks in place in their force, and what the implications may be for their policy decisions.

2.5.6 Passive data generators

These systems can provide material that will help an SIO to understand the circumstances of the case, for example:

- locating, gathering and viewing images generated within particular locations, to identify people, vehicles and other relevant lines of enquiry
- Using police and commercial ANPR to help identify vehicle movements (if relevant)
- analysing the victim's telephony activity may identify contacts and activity, which could be relevant to the investigation.

See also [Passive data generators](#)

Setting parameters

The objective of parameters is to limit the volume of material, which will need to be reviewed and analysed. Unfocused enquiries are likely to generate a large quantity of data. Setting parameters as tightly as possible will make the process more manageable.

Parameters may be based on the last known movements of the victim, any associates and potential suspects.

Wider parameters at the beginning of an investigation provides the opportunity to identify other witnesses.

Parameters for viewing can be set based on significance to the investigation and on a location-by-location basis. Often this will start with the location the offence occurred, for example, where the body was found.

In relation to telephone activity, it is likely the only significant time that is known, with any degree of certainty, is the time the body was discovered, or the offence was reported. The search for telephone activity is likely to begin from that point and work outwards. As more information becomes available, it will be possible to focus the search more precisely.

The priority will be to locate the passive data generators and secure the material before it is deleted from the systems involved.

For further information, see the [Passive data generators](#) section of Investigation APP.

2.5.7 Cloud data

Digital evidence can help to progress an investigation, may be used as evidence in criminal proceedings.

Not all data will be easily accessible by downloading material directly from a digital device. Some material may be held virtually on a remote server or 'cloud'.



Cloud servers may be in the UK, but they may be held in another jurisdiction.

Legislation has not kept pace with technological changes, and, in the case of cloud data, this is quite important. Some cloud data can be accessed legally, through a physical device, without specific authority. However, some cloud data cannot, and access may require RIPA or Property Interference authorisations.

If cloud data is pertinent to the investigation then the SIO should seek specialist advice about its retrieval, through either digital specialists or the relevant Covert Authorities Bureau (CAB).

2.6 House-to-house strategy

2.6.1 Introduction

House-to-house (HtoH) enquiries can identify suspects by establishing who lives or works in a particular location and obtaining an account of their movements during relevant times. They can also be used to canvass for witnesses in areas relevant to the crime.

HtoH enquiries are mostly in residential areas but can be used in any area where people are associated with premises, for example, business parks, shopping centres or industrial estates.

Where HtoH enquiries are used in a major crime investigation, it can be resource intensive. It may be required over a large geographic area, generating large volumes of material that should be accurately recorded and analysed.

If not carried out properly, HtoH enquiries may miss someone living or working in the location, and their potential as a suspect or witness cannot be assessed.

This section should be read in conjunction with the [House-to-house enquiries](#) section of Investigation APP

2.6.2 Developing the strategy

The SIO will need to ensure the HtoH strategy has clear objectives and parameters, that these are recorded, and clearly communicated to the HtoH coordinator and their team.

The SIO should:

- stress which forms are required to be completed fully, ie, the questionnaire, house occupancy forms and personal descriptor forms
- consider house to house used in previous crimes in the area, and how this can inform the current strategy
- attend the area and walk the route. Don't rely on satellite or street view imagery, such as Google street view.
- consider hidden communities, such as beds in sheds, multi-occupancy addresses. Include relevant questions in your questionnaires.
- consider how open source and social media can support the appeal for information



- consider what information is being looked for and use interview advisers to support developing and shaping the appeal and questions. Avoid generic questions, for example ‘did you see anything suspicious?’
- regularly review the HtoH strategy, questionnaire, house occupancy form and personal descriptive form to avoid asking out of date questions or missing potential suspects
- consider using posters and letter drops, they provide a quick way to cover a wider area, using the questionnaire for follow up. Posters can use quick reference (QR) codes to link directly to the investigation.
- consider how the media strategy is linked to the HtoH strategy, they should complement each other.
- consider CCTV opportunities during HtoH, and how officers should deal with opportunities
- consider that the suspect could be in the designated area; what should officers do, and what management is in place to manage this eventuality.

2.6.3 Setting objectives

The main objectives for carrying out HtoH enquiries are to:

- [identify suspects and witnesses](#)
- recover evidence
- gather information and intelligence
- [provide reassurance](#)

Where the objective is to identify suspects, this can be combined with identifying witnesses. The search for witnesses is likely to be viewed as routine and so is less likely to alert suspects that the police believe they live in the area.

SIOs should ensure that any reassurance or crime prevention information given to the public during HtoH enquiries is consistent with their media strategy, and that enquiry officers are fully briefed on what information can or cannot be shared with the public.

2.6.4 Implementation

SIOs should appoint an HtoH coordinator to be responsible for delivering the HtoH strategy.

2.6.5 Location parameters

Setting adequate and relevant parameters for the proposed HTOH location(s) is critical to achieving the objectives set.

In homicide and major crime investigations PoSAs, BIAs and geographic profilers can help SIOs to set appropriate location parameters. They may also be able to identify locations where suspects are likely to live.

Analysis of records such as the electoral roll, force command and control systems and key holder records may help with the reconnaissance of the area.

See also [NCA MCIS](#) and [Search](#).



2.6.6 Intelligence-led mass screening for DNA or fingerprints

Mass-screening is a complex and rarely used. If it is being considered, SIOs should seek advice from [NCA MCIS](#).

Prior to mass screening, HtoH enquiries will need establish the identities of those living in the area, and those who may have left the area since to offence. This will help to prioritise who should be swabbed and fingerprinted. A geographic profiler and/or a BIA will be able to help identify the location the offender is most likely to be located. This will ensure that HtoH location parameters can be focused to a clearly defined area.

If the mass screen is based on geographic parameters, rather than intelligence-led, swabbing or fingerprinting can be carried out at the same time as HtoH enquiries. Effective HtoH enquiries will identify all persons who should be swabbed

See also

- [NPCC \(2021\) Guidance on Major Incident Room Standard Administrative Procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#)
- APP on [House-to-house enquiries](#)

2.6.7 Setting subject parameters

HtoH enquiries should include questions about the availability of material, for examples, CCTV, video/digital doorbells and dash cams fitted to vehicles at or near the scene.

2.6.8 Timing of house to house enquiries

SIOs need to consider when the best time to carry out targeted HtoH enquiries would be. If they are looking for specific information, it may be preferable to delay HtoH enquiries until they have enough material to formulate the questions properly. [Bespoke questionnaires](#) should be used in these cases. An analyst and interview adviser can be used to develop these. This will ensure the information is collected in a consistent way, which will facilitate later analysis.

2.7 Victim and witness management strategy

Investigators should recognise the individual needs and concerns of victims and witnesses, treating each with dignity and respect. This will have a positive impact on how witnesses work with the investigation and the criminal justice process.

Working with victims and witness is covered in APP and supporting material. Therefore, this section signposts existing material rather than repeating it here.

The SIO should provide clear leadership to direct how witnesses:

- will be identified
- will be contacted and what information can be provided to them
- evidence will be prioritised
- evidence will be obtained



- victim care, in particular those who have witnessed traumatic events (including police officers and staff)

They should also establish how the investigation will maintain contact with victims and witnesses throughout the investigation, trial or other case disposal.

The SIO will need develop a witness strategy to deliver these elements, setting clear objectives reflecting the circumstances of the case.

See also:

- [Ministry of Justice \(2020\) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#)
- [Ministry of Justice \(2011\) Achieving Best Evidence in Criminal Proceedings: Guidance on interviewing victims and witnesses, and guidance on using special measures](#)
- [Safeguarding](#)

APP:

- [Working with victims and witnesses](#)
- [Victim and witness care](#)
- [Investigative interviewing](#)
- [Investigative development](#)
- [Operation Hydrant SIO advice](#)

2.7.1 Interview advisers

In complex cases, or where there are a large number of potential witnesses, early appointment of an interview adviser will support the SIO to develop an interview strategy. An interview adviser can help to (this is not an exhaustive list):

- formulate and manage an ethical interview strategy within the SIO's objectives
- assess witnesses as vulnerable or intimidated and identify those that meet the SIO's significant witness criteria
- identify and liaise with intermediaries, interpreters and other experts as appropriate
- advise on potential tactics for reluctant or hostile witnesses
- review material obtained
- determine what facilities and equipment will be needed to conduct interviews
- co-ordinate and monitor multiple interviews
- undertake post-interview analysis and quality assurance of interviews
- consider post-interview witness strategy to manage witness care and contact
- develop and manage a witness engagement strategy for investigations in which initial contact is instigated by the police

2.7.2 Further advice

The [NCA MCIS](#) can provide additional support including:

- National vulnerable witness adviser
- National Interview adviser
- Behavioural Investigative Advisers
- Witness intermediary team



See also:

- [House to house enquiries](#)
- [Family liaison](#)

2.8 Family liaison strategy

2.8.1 Introduction

The relationship with a traumatised victim or bereaved family should be an integral part of an investigation. The victim or their family should be partners in an investigation; this is central to success.

Family liaison is one of the most demanding roles within an investigation, often because of the relationship that needs to be developed with the victim or their family at what is likely to be one of the most difficult times of their lives.

Families should be treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and according to their needs. This should be reflected at all levels of the police service with appropriate consideration for any police action that may affect a family.

The significant resource represented by family liaison can be used across a broad spectrum of policing but is a key investigative function in the following:

- murder and manslaughter
- fatal road traffic incidents
- rail fatalities
- mass disaster incidents
- critical incidents where family liaison might enhance the effectiveness of the police response.

See also:

- APP on [Family liaison](#) and supporting [practice advice notes](#)
- [Ministry of Justice \(2020\) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales](#)
- [College of Policing \(2015\) Family liaison briefing note: Deployment of family liaison officers in child sexual exploitation or abuse cases](#) (this link is available to authorised users who are [logged on](#) to the College Managed Learning Environment (MLE))

The National family liaison adviser can also provide operational support to SIOs in relation to family liaison matters. See [Major Crime Investigative Support](#)

2.8.2 Developing the family liaison strategy

When developing and implementing a family liaison strategy, the SIO should consider the needs of the family, and also those of the family liaison officer (FLO) and the investigation.

A FLO will be appointed in all homicide investigations. Their presence will also provide a critical role in cases where the offence may increase community tension, for example, where a hate crime is suspected. See also [APP on Hate Crime Operational Guidance](#).

The initial priority for the investigation will be to establish communication with the family as soon as practicable, and to provide them with any information they need, taking into account the needs of the



investigation. The primary purpose of the FLO is as an investigator to help the SIO to achieve their investigative aims and objectives.

The SIO may request that a Family liaison coordinator (FLC) or Family liaison adviser (FLA) to oversee the deployments and provide advice to the SIO.

The FLO strategy should set out:

- key objectives for the deployment
- Role of the FLC/A
- safeguarding
- number of FLOs deployed and to whom
- supporting the FLO and FLO welfare
- communication strategy and record keeping
- identification of family structure (as known)
- agreed initial actions
- risk assessment
- links to other strategies, for example, witness strategy
- information which will be provided to the family
- victimology considerations
- any mobile devices/CCTV/body worn footage
- any requests made by the family, which have not been acceded to, and the reason for this
- complaints made by the family and the SIO's action to progress and resolve these
- involvement of the Homicide Support and other support services
- use of interviewers
- media
- involvement of lay advisers
- withdrawal strategy for the FLO(s)
- organ or tissue donation requests
- Human Tissue Act considerations

Other considerations may include:

- gold group
- multi agency working
- parallel investigations
- suspects within the family
- deployments to suspect's family
- bereaved family meetings with CPS or right to review considerations

2.8.3 The aims and objectives of a FLO strategy

The aims and objectives of a family liaison strategy should be specific. They will form the basis of the FLO tasking. A key objective will be to set the withdrawal strategy first. This can only be achieved once the rest of the objectives have been met.

Aims will include:

- securing the trust and confidence of the family, enhancing their contribution to the investigation and bringing positive benefits to the investigation
- gathering material from the family in a manner which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity



- working with the family to support their right to receive as much relevant information about the investigation in a proportionate way which respects the family's right to privacy and family life (subject to the needs of the investigation)
- providing the family with information about support agencies and making referrals in accordance with the family's wishes and GDPR

SIO's will also usually need their FLO's to obtain full family background and victimology, for example, movements and habits of the victim. This can sometimes create a challenge in balancing the needs and integrity of the investigation and providing the family with relevant information.

Objectives may also include:

- gathering evidence and information from the family in a way which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity
- provide information to the family, subject to the needs of the investigation, and in a way that respects their human rights and dignity
- ensure that the family are provided with information about support that is available, and where appropriate that referrals are made to the relevant support services in accordance with the consent of the family and General Data Protection Regulation 2018
- explain the coronial and victim identification procedures, and criminal justice processes to families
- Explain the police communication and media strategy, and assist the family in managing the potential impact that the media may have on them and the investigation
- Ensure health and wellbeing of the family liaison officers
- Conclude or withdraw family liaison deployments

Note: The FLO should not be used in a covert operation involving the family.

2.8.4 Implementing the strategy

While the FLC/FLA may offer tactical or strategic advice, and support the SIO to develop the strategy, the SIO will always make the final decision about what tasks the FLO should undertake. The SIO should be clear about their objectives for each deployment.

The strategy should be reviewed and updated at regular intervals during the investigation. This will ensure the objectives remain relevant and can be updated to reflect changes in circumstance or new objectives.

2.8.5 SIO meetings with the family

The SIO should meet the family as soon as practicable taking into account the family's wishes. This introductory meeting should be a priority during the initial stage of the investigation. It will establish personal links with the family and ensure that, where appropriate, their needs are being met.

The location for the meeting should be agreed with the family, and if, for any reason the meeting is delayed, this should be recorded, with reasons, in the policy file. The FLO should accompany the SIO, except in exceptional circumstances.

SIO's may want to consider providing a letter during this initial meeting. The family are likely to be in a state of shock at this time and may not recall all that was said during the meeting. The letter gives



the opportunity, in addition to expressing condolence, to provide a written summary of key points the meeting will have covered, in particular the role of the FLO, and the SIO's contact details. It can also be used to encourage the family to raise any issues or concerns that may arise about the investigation, or the FLO deployment.

It is important that the family understand the purpose of a FLO, ie, that they are primarily an investigator, particularly where there may be a suspect in the family.

Where appropriate, an interpreter should be available for the meeting and any letters or documents should be provided in a language that the family are comfortable with.

The SIO should offer to visit the family at regular intervals, with consideration given to significant events or anniversaries, for example:

- To provide information about the post-mortem results including the nature and extent of the injuries sustained
- On the arrest or release of suspects under investigation
- When a suspect is charged
- on release of the body and the funeral
- on release of a defendant on bail
- during committal proceedings
- following conviction or acquittal
- at coroner's court hearings
- during an appeal
- on referral to the Criminal Cases Review Commission
- during a tariff review
- during renewed media attention
- withdrawal of the FLO

By maintaining regular contact with the family, the SIO will be able to assess the relationship with the family and can address any concerns or needs the family may have by actively encouraging them to comment on any FLO or investigative issues.

2.8.6 Working with families

The term 'family' includes partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians and others who have had a direct and close relationship with the victim.

It may also include 'chosen' family members reflecting the victim's culture and lifestyle. Family members can provide crucial lifestyle information.

The SIO should take account of the dynamics of a family's structure so that an appropriate level of support is offered.

2.8.7 Managing risk

The SIO should ensure that every FLO deployment is subject to an appropriate risk assessment, although this may be done in consultation with the FLO or FLC/FLA. SIOs have a duty of care to FLOs, and others likely to be affected by the FLO deployment.



The assessment should be done prior to the FLO being deployed and consider all the work activities the FLO will do during a deployment. The risk assessment should be subject to regular review.

2.8.8 Selection and appointment

The SIO in conjunction with the FLC/FLA should be directly involved in the selection of the FLO(s). The SIO and FLC/FLA should consider a FLO who reflects the cultural or lifestyle background of the victim and/or the family members.

When selecting a FLO consider:

- the victim and family's cultural and ethnic background
- the officer's personal life (which may impact on their availability or ability to perform the role)
- the officer's experience and training
- recent work demands on the officer
- the family needs
- any impact assessment
- scale and nature of the incident
- whether there may be a suspect in the family

For further information, see the [Family Liaison](#) section of Investigation APP

2.8.9 Deployment

FLO's are normally deployed in pairs, particularly during the early stages of an investigation where there will be periods of high activity and information flow. It allows officers to step away from the family briefly to relay urgent information to the SIO, without breaking continuity with family.

See APP on [Family Liaison](#) and Practice Advice - [Evidence gathering, victimology and information sharing/working with the family](#)

2.8.10 Supervision

The SIO has a duty of care and obligation to support and regularly monitor the health and welfare of deployed FLOs. A FLO will be continually exposed to the emotions and needs of the bereaved, SIOs should be particularly aware of the risk of this causing undue stress levels. SIO's should make themselves available to regularly engage with deployed FLO's providing clear and open lines of communication and the opportunity to resolve any problems.

The FLO will maintain a log for the duration of their deployment. Logs should be completed in a timely manner, and supervised on a regular basis.

2.8.11 Intelligence

As part of their role the FLO can generate information and intelligence about the victim and their lifestyle which will support analysts and other experts who assist an investigation. Consideration



should be given to tasking the FLO to complete Personal Descriptive Forms for all family members, friends and associates who attend the family home.

The FLO log is for recording when and where meetings with the family take place, who was present, the information disclosed to the family, family concerns and the date and time of the next meeting.

The log should **not** be used to transfer additional information and intelligence. The SIO should clearly set out how they want additional information and intelligence submitted to the major incident room.

The FLO should attend all team briefings to ensure they are aware of case developments. This will help them to identify significant information from the family that may otherwise seem routine or unimportant. The FLO should also update the team during briefings, providing, for example, a victim profile and information about family dynamics. This will help when conducting other enquiries.

2.8.12 Victim lifestyle enquiries

The FLO will usually be tasked to develop a victimology about the victim and their lifestyle. Such enquiries should not be restricted to the victim. Many investigations will benefit from similar enquiries for suspects, witnesses or other individuals associated with the investigation.

The victimology should be started during the initial stages of the enquiry, often as officers are establishing basic facts, for example, why a body was left in a particular place. The information provided through such enquiries and the strategy used for gathering it, should be regularly reviewed as the investigation develops.

The purpose of such enquiries should be clearly defined. Where a reasonable body of material has been generated, the aim of lifestyle enquiries may be to establish a link between the suspect, victim and crime scenes. Alternatively, lifestyle enquiries can generate new lines of enquiry, where other lines of enquiry have been exhausted.

The crime being investigated will determine the level of detail required for the victimology (for example, in a domestic homicide where the suspect is arrested at the scene, lifestyle enquiries may be restricted to establishing a history of violence, using police records and interviews with neighbours. In cases where there is limited material, beyond the initial scene and victim, more detailed enquiries and subject analysis may be required). In the latter example, subject intelligence may be the only line of enquiry open to the investigation and so may warrant a more in-depth examination of all aspects of the victim's life.

2.8.13 Support for families

Families should be given sufficient support for their needs or be referred to specialist services and be provided with investigative updates.

The [Ministry of Justice \(2020\) Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) states that bereaved families or close relative who have been bereaved as a result of a murder or manslaughter have a right to have a family liaison officer assigned where the SIO considers this appropriate. They also have the right to be referred to the National Homicide Service and any other relevant specialist support.



2.8.14 Withdrawal strategy

SIOs will need to decide when it is appropriate for a FLO to withdraw from a family, usually when the strategy objectives have been met. They should also decide when and how this will be implemented. The FLO may need support to withdraw from the family effectively.

The FLO should have discussed their withdrawal from the family, with the family on many occasions and therefore their withdrawal should not come as a surprise.

Where, for example, an emotional attachment has developed between the family and the FLO, the FLC/FLA should work with the FLO and the SIO to support the withdrawal strategy. The relationship with the family may be undermined if the deployment goes on too long, or the withdrawal strategy is not appropriately planned from the outset.

Many agencies can provide support to a family at a time of crisis. Early engagement and referrals will support the FLO deployment; avoiding putting the FLO in a role, they are either unfamiliar with or not trained for. In cases of murder or manslaughter the family should be referred to the Homicide Service (Victim Support) as outlined within the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime 2020.

2.9 Communication strategy

2.9.1 Introduction

There are two main elements to managing communication in major crime cases, external and internal communications. Both aspects require investment by the SIO to maximise investigative opportunities. SIO's will also often use communication routes to engage with the public to:

- establish crucial evidence
- discover new witnesses
- receive important information
- eliminate individuals from the investigation
- identify suspects
- support effective consequence management.

SIO's should work closely with force communication advisers, to make effective use of all communication opportunities. The increasing use of digital and social media, alongside traditional media outlets such as television, radio and newsprint will increase audience reach and will often have a greater impact than one route alone. Easier access to technology and the significant use of mobile internet means that a 24/7 online presence is part of everyday life.

Making best use of these communication routes will involve specialist internal or external communication advisers, particularly for methodologies and advice on diversity and community issues. Inappropriately worded information can have a negative impact on public confidence, and perceptions about the police and the investigation.

When developing a communications strategy also consider:

- [Victims and witness management](#)
- [Family liaison](#)
- [Suspect management](#)
- [Community engagement](#)
- [Reconstructions.](#)



See also the [Communication](#) and [Media relations](#) sections of Engagement and communication APP, and [College of Policing \(2014\) Code of Ethics](#).

2.9.2 Media strategy

Major crime investigations, in particular homicides or suspicious deaths, are likely to attract media interest, the level of which will be influenced by the circumstances of the offence. High profile cases, for example stranger offences are likely to attract national and, in some cases, international interest. These cases will place particular demands on the SIO in particular where the:

- offender(s) is still at large
- victim is vulnerable
- the offence involves extreme violence and/or sexual gratification
- offence is believed to be part of a series.

See also: [Types and categories of crime](#) and [APP on Media relations](#)

In high profile cases, engaging with the media will often be led by a [Gold commander](#) and or a [Strategic Investigator](#) (PIP4). The objective of a major crime investigation is to ensure there is effective governance over the content and timing of media releases and that the police maintain ownership and control of media issues.

Throughout the development and implementation of a communications strategy, SIO's should clearly set out:

- what information they want to release (work with the interview adviser, media or psychology advisers in shaping the questions to appeal to the target audience. Avoid bland, corporate language.
- what information they are looking for (for example, the purpose and objectives of an appeal)
- how they want to receive information (for example, via a dedicated and resourced communications contact, [Major Incident Public Portal](#) (MIPP), a combination or other means).

The strategy should be developed in collaboration with the force corporate communications officer, who should ensure there is attendance at sites where there is likely to be a high level of media interest. An early decision should be taken by the SIO with their line management about who will present to the media. In many cases this will be the SIO but in high profile cases there is benefit in appointing a separate media spokesperson ('talking head'). This may be a PIP 4 or a local police commander. This will allow the SIO to focus on the investigation.

The SIO should set out the media strategy at the first briefing with the investigative team. This should include directions that no member of the team should speak to the media about the case and everyone should avoid posting comments about any aspect of the investigation on social media. All police contact with the media should be strictly controlled by the SIO or Gold commander.

The SIO should not underestimate how quickly interest and information concerning a case can grow. The media strategy should consider this and provide appropriate resourcing plans to monitor, assess and respond, particularly to online content. A proactive media strategy should also consider, where appropriate, reducing the impact of disinformation and controlling information, which may adversely impact on the progress of the investigation and/or the prosecution case.

The SIO should consider maximising existing the use of internal and external communication channels including force websites, Vlogs, Blogs and social media accounts. Speak to the force media and



communications team for advice on targeting and maximising media communication opportunities appropriate to the audience.

Many appeals will now include requests for video or images captured by mobile phones, vehicle dash-camera footage or smart doorbells. The MIPP will provides a simple method for members of the public to send upload information, reports, images and video footage directly to the investigation team using HOLMES. See also [MIRSAP](#), [MIPP](#).

2.9.3 Developing an external media strategy

An external media strategy should seek to:

- establish the circumstances of the incident and help to generate material into the investigation
- control police interaction with the media
- maintain public confidence in the police
- Reduce the public fear of crime
- generate confidence within the investigative team
- maximise the publicity opportunities in the search for information.

See also, [Internal communications strategy](#)

Depending on the circumstances of the case and the progress of the investigation, a media strategy is likely to include some or all of the following:

- identifying offender(s)
- locating offender(s), where their identity is known
- warning the public of any danger posed by the offender
- identifying victim(s)
- identifying and locating people with material that could be useful to the investigation, notably
 - witnesses
 - lifestyle information about the victim
 - information about the area
 - information about a particular crime type.

2.9.4 Implementing a media strategy

Initial Statements

During the early stages of an incident, the police communications may be restricted to a holding or initial statement. The initial police response to an incident will usually alert the public and the media to the incident and there is value in focusing public attention and reducing community concerns through an early media release. Until the investigation can establish facts this will generally be limited to confirming information, such as:

- The police are dealing with an incident that is being treated as suspicious.
- The location of the incident.
- The medical position of any injured victims or arrangements that are being made for a post-mortem examination.
- That an investigation room has been set up, the contact details and the availability of the MIPP when used.
- An appeal for witnesses and information.



A variety of tools can help the SIO manage the media response across multiple social media, with monitoring facilities to review content relevant to the investigation. The force intelligence bureau and the corporate communications department will be able to provide specific local advice on the best tools to use.

Specific consideration should be given to how the media strategy links into the victim and where relevant the family liaison strategy. In many cases the victim will have a social media footprint, and this will need to be considered at the earliest opportunity with sensitivity.

The use of pre-recorded video messages broadcast across media and social media platforms may help to reassure the public and send important messages concerning the case.

Press Conferences

After an initial holding statement, the media will expect more information about the crime and the investigation, as soon as possible.

A press conference and/or interviews with the SIO or senior representative will usually help to manage expectations, provided these can be arranged within a reasonable time. This approach will allow the police to choose the venue and timing.

Press conferences involving victims, or their relatives, should usually only be held where:

- their presence is likely to help an appeal for information
- their involvement may relieve media pressure
- the family want to participate to help the enquiry
- they are not suspected of involvement in the offence.

Generally, SIO's should consider withholding key details of the offence, for example modus operandi (MO). This will help to prevent further offences and provide corroborative material allowing statements made by a suspect to be evaluated against what could only have been known by the offender.

Disclosure

SIO's should always consider disclosure. All media releases including video or audio recordings of press conferences should be retained. Many SIO's will develop a press cuttings file through the force corporate communications team.

Media Releases

The SIO usually has discretion about when and what information to release. It will generally be unwise to divulge all the facts associated with a case at once. In consultation with the force corporate communications officer, it is useful to agree a staged release of information to maintain and manage media interest. The need for regular media briefings is a fundamental requirement in any investigation.

The SIO should adopt a proactive and positive approach throughout the investigation. This is important where a vulnerable member of society is involved and/or where the offence is suspected of being part of a series. The SIO is to be particularly proactive where the following elements are present:

- hate or hostility against a victim.



- there is potential for further offences.

See also the [Hate Crime](#) section of Major investigation and public protection APP

Victim's identity

The name of a surviving victim will not ordinarily be released, unless they have given their consent. Victims of sexual offences are given lifetime anonymity. In homicide cases the coroner will give authority to release the identity of the deceased. They will generally allow the police to provide a provisional identification to focus attention on the correct individual.

In some cases, there may be an evidential advantage for releasing the victim's details. The SIO may decide to do this where:

- there is no doubt about the identity of the victim
- the victim's immediate family and friends have already been informed.

Before releasing information, the SIO should, where possible inform the victim and, where appropriate their family, of developments and the purpose of a release. A FLO should be used where a victim is entitled to enhanced entitlements. Where possible, the victim's family should approve the release of photographs of the victim. Working with the FLO, the SIO should consider advising the family to lockdown social media privacy settings to avoid unnecessary intrusion, material being extracted and/or the risk of trolling.

Media Appeals

Media appeals should inform, appeal and reassure.

Timing is often a key consideration for a media appeal, some appeals in routine cases may be less successful at weekends where less coverage may occur. The availability of the internet and social media platforms, however, provides a wide spectrum of opportunity and can be targeted to particular communities or areas.

Appeals can be targeted towards the population most likely to have been in the relevant area(s) because of employment, leisure or residency. Wherever possible, the appeal should be accompanied by specific facts, rather than a general plea for information. This will avoid giving the impression that there is no obvious indication of the offender's identity. Providing details such as a description of the offender will make the story more informative and attract public interest. The more thought that goes into the appeal the greater the likelihood of success. Key aspects of the case should be include, for example:

- the risk to the victim
- the seriousness and nature of the case
- relevant features of scenes
- sightings or movements of the suspect
- the likelihood that offender will reoffend.

Where a description of the offender is available (including E-FITS or artists' impressions), or where there is CCTV footage of the incident, the SIO should consider the advantages (and disadvantages) of releasing this material to the media. SIO's must take account of the [PACE Code D](#) where images or descriptions of the suspect are released with a view to inviting officers, staff or the public to attempt to recognise the suspect(s).



When the SIO is confident that the identity of the offender has been established, but their whereabouts is unknown, they should strike a balance between:

- reassuring the public that the police are doing everything they can to apprehend the offender, and
- providing advice about the danger presented by the offender still being at large.

This advice should include any sensible steps that members of the public can take to remain safe and prevent further offences occurring.

Where appeals are planned, particularly for high-profile cases, and a substantial public response is anticipated, suitable staffing arrangements should be put in place to adequately staff telephones, social media and the MIPP. Some forces have found the call-taking facility on HOLMES (Casualty or Information Bureau) useful in these circumstances as staff are already trained to handle high volumes of calls. For more information on high volume call handling SIOs should consult their local HOLMES Manager.

Appeals can include the [CrimeStoppers](#) telephone number, particularly where people are only likely to provide information anonymously. The SIO should contact CrimeStoppers in advance of the appeal so that staff are briefed appropriately.

Suspect identification

The police will not name a suspect before they are charged, save in exceptional circumstances, where there is a policing purpose to do so, for example, a threat to life, or to mitigate potential danger to the public, this information can be released. The SIO should always consult their force corporate communications officer, the force solicitor and the CPS prior to doing so, particularly where identification may be an issue.

See also the [Naming a suspect](#) section of [Media relations](#) APP.

Where a photograph or video image of the suspect is not available or has not been released, the SIO should provide as much information about the suspect as possible to avoid mis-identification and the possibility that an innocent member of the public may be wrongly identified as the suspect. Failure to do so may result in a serious complaint against the police and litigation.

Under schedule 1, section 4 of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 criminal proceedings start at the point of arrest without a warrant. Therefore, the police must notify the media of any arrest so that future court proceedings are not jeopardised.

Witnesses and the media

A key priority for SIOs is to identify and gather material from witnesses before it is potentially influenced by media sources.

In appropriate circumstances, the SIO may want to allow media representatives to report from, or photograph principal scenes from a public place. This may help to reduce the risk of the media trying to obtain information members of the public by other means.

Where there is a risk these images may be distressing, the scene should be covered. It is not, however, for the police to determine what should be published.



An SIO should consider writing to witnesses explaining that they may jeopardise future criminal proceedings if they discuss their evidence with a journalist, whether on promise of payment or not.

Where activities such as ‘chequebook’ journalism are identified, a chief officer should be notified, who may consider legal action or a complaint to the [Independent Press Standards Organisation](#) (for the printed media) or [Ofcom](#) (for sound and vision media).

Media rewards

On occasion, the media or other organisations will consider issuing a reward for information. There is no requirement for the police to promote a reward offer. It may, however, benefit the investigation if the SIO is involved in discussions, so opportunities and threats can be considered.

For further information, contact the force media and communications team, force legal and [NCA MCIS](#) for tactical advice and peer support.

2.9.5 Internal communication strategy

Developing an internal communications strategy

The main purpose of an internal communication strategy is to establish a two-way flow of information between the MIR and other police personnel, particularly local officers and staff who may live, work or visit the area of the incident. This may also include staff from other forces, agencies or organisations, for example, neighbouring forces, the National Crime Agency, British Transport Police, local authority partners and Military police personnel.

As a minimum requirement, internal colleagues should know the:

- name of the SIO
- location, telephone number and relevant e-mail address for the investigation team
- details of the offence, including the victim, scene, MO and any descriptions of suspects and relevant vehicles.

These details will need updating as the investigation progresses.

The strategy should clearly identify what information the investigation is looking for, for example:

- the identity of the suspect
- identification of vehicles
- details of potential precursor offences
- information about the victim
- relevant intelligence (for example, people known to frequent the locality).

Implementing an internal communications strategy

The audience (local, force-wide or national policing) will influence how an internal communication strategy will be implemented. Communication methods might include:

- briefing sheets
- computerised briefings on force and partners intranet systems
- email
- local intelligence bulletins
- video briefings to be played, for example, on parade or training days
- blogs
- posters.



Communication methods should be reviewed regularly and feedback invited from the target audience, where practical and appropriate.

It is particularly important to target internal communications at those officers or staff who:

- work in the locality of the scene
- were on duty at the time the incident is believed to have taken place or when it was discovered.

An officer from the investigation team should brief these officers and staff either during a parade or at specially arranged briefing sessions. They should also be provided with updates throughout the investigation.

Officers and staff, including those deployed to preserve or control scenes, may have access to social media accounts. Clear direction needs to be given about what information, if any, that can be shared by them through personal or organisation social media routes.

The same officers and staff are likely to receive information from members of the public. It is important that they know what to do with this information, who to contact and how information should be passed to the investigation team, in particular any urgent information.

SIOs should not create long lists of potential suspects based only on an individual officer's hunch. When an officer nominates a potential suspect, they should also provide specific reasons for doing so, for example:

- there is a similar description
- there has been a sighting in the locality
- the suspect is known to use a similar MO to the incident
- the suspect has committed crime in the locality
- the suspect is a covert human intelligence source (CHIS) nominee.

Unless the intelligence is of sufficient quality to justify fast-track actions, for example, to recover forensic evidence, nominated suspects will normally require extensive research and evaluation to support a mature assessment and prioritisation for action.

2.10 Community engagement strategy

2.10.1 Introduction

A major crime and the disruption a subsequent investigation can have, will have a significant [impact on a community](#). The SIO should include community engagement in their overall strategy to mitigate the impact, provide information, reassure and maintain the confidence in the police response.

A positive strategy should:

- monitor tension and confidence
- maintain the confidence of the victim, their family and the community in the police response and investigation
- reduce the fear of crime within affected communities

A [community impact assessment \(CIA\)](#) is the first step in doing this. The scope of the assessment and level of involvement will vary from case to case.



In the majority of investigations, community consultation will be confined to family members or specific sections of the community. In larger or more complex cases, this may extend to the wider local community or, where a crime has had a national impact, a national campaign may be appropriate.

Communities may be represented by an [Independent Advisory Group \(IAG\)](#) or through Gold Group meetings. The method of engagement will vary from force to force; however it is important to remember that effective community engagement can help to respond to family and community concerns and can local information and intelligence gathering.

How to engage with a community will vary depending on their preferred communication method. Local force Community Cohesion Team will be able to assist.

Information about the crime can be disseminated to a community very quickly through both social media and online news channels. SIO's should consider this as an opportunity as well as a potential threat and ensure early engagement with the community is made to minimise the risk of adverse impact and a loss of confidence in the Police.

For further information, see the [Engagement](#) section of APP Engagement and communication and also [Victim and witness management](#), [Family liaison](#), and [Managing communication](#).

2.10.2 Community impact assessment

A local policing commander with knowledge of the community should carry out the CIA. They will be better placed to assess the likely impact that a major crime will have on the local community and affected groups. It is important to know who is being engaged and how they represent their community perspectives. See also the [Whom should the police engage with](#) section of APP Engagement and communication.

The local policing commander will retain overall responsibility for the CIA and response. In incidents where a gold commander has been appointed, the Gold Group will take responsibility for the CIA.

The SIO should work closely with local policing; making sure the most up-to-date information is used about the crime, the investigation, and the police response, for the CIA. There may be occasions where the local policing commander and the SIO have conflicting priorities. In these cases advice should be sought from a chief officer.

Corporate communications can provide support in monitoring online/media tensions and help develop relevant monitoring strategies.

In the more serious cases, community tension can develop quickly online, and it is important that misinformation and positive messaging is put in place to manage these tensions. Where a case has the potential to provoke a hostile public response, the media can help to defuse potentially inflammatory situations early.

See [Managing communication](#)

Reviewing a CIA



The CIA is an ongoing process. The officer conducting the CIA should establish a review timetable. The frequency of reviews will depend on the circumstances of the case, but for critical incidents will usually coincide with the timetable of gold groups or partnership meetings. The need to review and monitor the CIA will be particularly acute during the initial stages of the enquiry as material is gathered. Significant events, for example, an arrest, may also trigger an ad hoc review.

2.10.3 Community briefings

The local community, and groups impacted by structural inequality and others at risk of harm often represent the best chance of solving a case. They can provide knowledge of the event itself, precursors to the offence, the victim or the offender(s). It is not uncommon following a CIA, to increase the visible policing presence in the area of the offence. These officer and police staff should receive a briefing on what they may say to locals and what information the SIO is looking for from within the community. They should also report and record any community intelligence.

2.10.4 Equality impact assessment

CIAs should be subject to an equality impact assessment to maintain quality, transparency and inclusion. If it is not possible to conduct an impact assessment, the reasons for the delay should be entered into the Policy File.

For further information see also the [confidence cycle](#) section of APP Engagement and communication, [College of Policing \(2013\) The effects of problem-oriented policing on crime and disorder](#) and [College of Policing Neighbourhood Policing Guidelines](#)

Content

A CIA should include:

- the consultation process
- information on which the assessment is based
- an assessment of relevant legislation
- the identification of specific risks
- policing options
- an implementation and review plan.

The scope of consultation will vary according to the characteristics of the incident and local communities, and prior relations between the police and the community.

Consultation may include consultation with:

- IAGs
- partner agencies
- gold groups (for critical incidents)
- community groups
- community officers
- police staff associations
- local community
- statutory bodies
- National Community Tensions Team.



The assessment will identify risks, and options to address identified concerns, these may include:

- holding community meetings to keep local people up to date with the investigation
- deploying high-visibility patrols to provide reassurance
- establishing an intelligence cell in areas vulnerable to further offences
- monitoring hate crime and community tension indicators to provide early warning of potential disorder
- appointing a dedicated community engagement officer.

The implementation of an agreed response plan is the responsibility of the local policing commander in consultation with the SIO. In particular they should agree how the:

- investigation can be progressed while minimising community tension
- local policing can help the investigation.

See ACPO (2011) National Community Tension Team: Community Assessment Guidance [Restricted]

2.10.5 Independent advisory groups

The role of an Independent Advisory Group (IAG) in a major crime investigation is to review the investigative strategy and advise the SIO on relevant groups who might be disproportionately affected impacted, or affected by the crime and any police action.

For further information, see the following sections of APP:

Critical Incident Management - [Independent advisory groups and community cohesion groups](#)

Engagement and communication - [Independent advisory groups](#)

Also: [ACPO \(2011\) Independent Advisory Groups: Advice and Guidance on the Role, Function and Governance of IAGs](#)

2.11 Elimination enquiries

2.11.1 Introduction

The objective of most criminal investigations is to establish if an offence has been committed and, if so by whom. In many cases a suspect will be evident from the earliest stages, but when that is not the case or where doubt exists about a suspect, an elimination strategy will be required to help identify a suspect.

This will often involve a 'trace, investigate, evaluate' (TIE) strategy. Previously known as trace, interview, eliminate. The process itself however has not changed.

See also:

- The [TIE](#) section of Investigation APP
- [NPCC \(2015\) The national policing homicide working group: Journal of homicide and major incident investigation, Volume 10, Issue 2, November 2015. T.I.E Practice: Terminology, Tactics and Training.](#)
- [NPCC \(2021\) Guidance on major incident room standardised administrative procedures \(MIRSAP\)](#)



A TIE strategy will help investigators to identify individuals and groups who are likely to include the offender. The people in groups will be subject to investigation to eliminate those who cannot be the offender, and to identify those who potentially could.

Further investigative effort can then focus on those who have not been eliminated, with the overall intention of identifying the suspect. This is systematic methodology to prove or disprove a person's involvement in the offence.

A TIE strategy does not need to be complicated, but it is important to prepare and apply a consistent approach to avoid eliminating an individual prematurely. Investigators who are not familiar with this technique should seek advice from experienced colleagues or the [NCA MCIS](#).

Specialist support

Early advice and guidance will help the SIO to plan a TIE strategy. This may include using:

- an interview adviser for planning and preparing the interview strategy for TIE nominals
- an experienced SIO with previous experience of TIE in major crime
- NCA MCIS SIO National advisers and behavioural investigative adviser

2.11.2 Category parameters

A TIE category should be constructed around a group of people who share a common characteristic, which may also include the offender. The common characteristic will depend on the circumstances of the crime. Characteristics may include:

- individuals with access to or in the vicinity of the scene at the time of the offence
- individuals who are related to or associated with the victim
- the last person to see the victim alive
- the person finding the body
- people with a perceived motive
- people with a perception of malice towards the victim
- descriptive details
- recorded M.O. similarities
- geographical or locus specific parameters
- people with access to certain types of vehicle.

This is not an exhaustive list and the more that is known about the circumstances of the crime, the greater the chance of constructing accurate TIE categories.

Digital evidence has provided a new dimension to TIE enquiries, but the presence of a digital device at the crime scene needs to be supported by evidence connecting the device to the suspect, at the time of the offence.

2.11.3 TIE nominal

It is important to make a distinction between a 'suspect' and a TIE 'nominal', ie, an individual in a group of people who potentially may be the offender, but for whom there is currently insufficient



evidence for reasonable grounds to suspect them. As opposed to a suspect, who is also entitled to the legal protection under the [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#).

The use of TIE as an investigative tactic was tested in *R v Shillibier* [2006] EWCA Crim 793 and held to be a lawful approach, provided it was only applied to people who are not regarded as a suspect when they are interviewed. The test is simple; are there reasonable grounds to suspect the individual committed the offence? If not, then the use of TIE is a legitimate and lawful tactic.

Although a person is a TIE and therefore, not a suspect, they could still be the offender. The outcome of a TIE enquiry will help the SIO to make decisions that may result in further enquiries, the elimination of the individual, or raise that individual to suspect status.

Another commonly used term is 'person of interest' (POI). This usually refers to a person about whom; further enquiries are required before a decision about their status can be made. They may be a key witness or have come into the enquiry in one of the number of ways. A POI is not a suspect.

To avoid confusion, the term POI should not be used during TIE enquiries. Incorrect categorisation of a nominal within an investigation, may lead to a legal challenge and the exclusion of evidence.

Descriptors can describe a hierarchy of individuals from nominal to offender. Everyone in the investigation will also be a nominal.

These may be:

- nominal
- witness
- significant witness
- person of interest
- TIE nominal
- suspect
- offender

Elimination strategy

An effective elimination strategy will comprise three elements.

How will an individual be eliminated?

To successfully eliminate an individual from an investigation, they need to be compared against something that positively identifies the offender.

This may be, for example:

- a forensic sample from the crime scene
- a physical description of the perpetrator

Sometimes such definitive evidence will not be available, and it will be necessary to prove or disprove an individual's involvement through other investigative activity such as an alibi.

If it is known that only one person has committed a crime, when that individual is successfully identified, then by definition, others in the TIE group could potentially be eliminated. There is, however, a risk of prematurely eliminating other potential suspects and great care is required to avoid errors. Where there is any doubt about the potential suspect, TIE enquires should be completed as far as possible on all people included in a TIE category.



Identifying individuals or TIE categories which may include the offender

A TIE group could include people who:

- have an apparent motive
- had contact with the victim in the period before the offence
- have a history of perceived hostility towards the victim (not necessarily criminal)
- were at or near the scene at the time the offence was believed to have happened
- match the description of the offender
- have a history of committing similar crimes in the area

Note: this is not an exhaustive list.

A further category is SIO's nominations. This includes individuals who have come to the attention of the SIO and who do not feature in any of the defined groups, but whom the SIO has intuition or gut feeling about.

Where the SIO decides to include an SIO's nomination they should record their rationale carefully and reflect on why the individual does not fit into any of the identified categories. If it is because the categories are too narrow, the SIO should reconsider the category parameters. In all situations, the circumstances of the case will be key to decision making.

When developing the TIE strategy, particularly the TIE categories the SIO should seek advice from one or more of the following.

- PIP 4 Strategic investigator or another experienced senior investigator
- specialist support from [NCA MCIS](#), including National [SIO advisers and behavioural investigative advisers](#)

It is essential to take advice where the TIE category is likely to be large. In these cases, the SIO will need to prioritise, subgroups of the category, focusing on those most likely to be the offender.

Weighting or filters may assist this process, for example:

- persons known to be linked to the victim or the scene, for example through social or digital media
- proximity to the scene
- gender (where the gender of the offender is unknown, investigators can prioritise the gender most likely to have committed the crime)
- age (where the age of the suspect is not known, investigators may wish to prioritise those in an age bracket for known offenders for that category of crime)
- date of last arrest or conviction of MO suspects

2.11.4 TIE methodology

The final aspect is the methodology the SIO wants investigators to use when undertaking TIE enquiries. This is likely to include, as a minimum, an account of the individual's movements during the time period the offence occurred. This should include their knowledge of and contact with the victim and the scene. It may also include collecting any relevant digital and/or forensic evidence.



Trace

When tracing a TIE nominal, it is important to verify that the right person has been traced. Verification of identity should be applied consistently using, for example, photo identification (driving licence or passport for example). In some cases, a TIE nominal may put forward a substitute to avoid detection or give false biometric data.

Investigate

The SIO's expectations for investigating TIE nominals should be clearly set out. The SIO will need to determine the relevant parameters to guide enquiries, for example, the timeframe when the offence is believed to have been committed. This will help investigators to focus their enquiries, including witness accounts, CCTV collection and viewing, financial and digital opportunities to prove or disprove a nominal's account.

SIOs should appoint a nominated person to oversee the TIE process. This will help to ensure compliance, consistency and quality assurance for the process. This should be a supervisor and ideally have previous experience of TIE enquiries.

The investigate phase will depend largely on the circumstances of the case under investigation, but generally will require a TIE nominal to provide some, or all of the following:

- a detailed account of their movements during the relevant time
- a detailed account of their knowledge of the victim and/or the scene
- a detailed account of any contact they may have had with the victim
- a full-face photograph of the individual to support confirmation of their identity
- a full-length photograph of the subject to help with CCTV comparison
- a detailed description of the individual, including visible distinguishing marks, scars or tattoos (a personal descriptive form (PDF) will support consistent recording)
- collection of biometric samples, for example, finger and palm prints, DNA swab, hair
- collection of relevant footwear and clothing
- telecoms/digital data, this may vary from collecting telephone numbers used or accessed during the relevant timeframe, to voluntary examination of relevant digital devices (see also [Digital strategy](#))
- details of vehicles owned, used or accessed by the subject
- a voluntary search or forensic examination of the individual's premises or vehicles.

Bespoke covert tactics can be considered in appropriate cases. Speak to the covert manager for early advice.

Information should be collated in a consistent and agreed format. As a minimum, this should include a signed witness statement. The purpose of TIE enquiries is to examine an individual's involvement in the offence and to prove or disprove their account. This means an investigation, not simply an interview.

Sometimes a nominal will become anxious or nervous when asked to account for their movements; they may be evasive or panic and try to fabricate a false account as an alibi. This behaviour is important to note and may raise a nominal's position in the enquiry. The SIO should listen to the views of their team and any concerns they may have about individual nominals.



Evaluate

The SIO's TIE strategy should clearly set out what is expected from the TIE process and the outcome product. This will usually comprise a standardised report and/or a presentation to the SIO by the investigators conducting the TIE enquiry.

For each nominal the SIO will need to know:

- why the individual was considered as a TIE nominal
- their background, convictions and intelligence
- their movements during the relevant time frame, whether this has been verified and how
- association with the victim and/or the scene including recent contact
- details of their alibi, whether this has been verified and how
- their behaviour before and after the incident
- the result of any forensic comparisons
- whether they have an identified motive, or whether they will benefit in some way from the crime
- any inconsistencies in their account either before or after the offence
- whether they had the means to commit the offence
- an assessment of the subject by the investigator who conducted the TIE enquiry

Using the national decision model and elimination criteria the SIO will need to decide whether sufficient enquiries have been completed to determine whether an individual should be eliminated from the TIE process, or whether further enquiries are required, including re-assessing their status. In particular have the enquiries provided the SIO with reasonable grounds to suspect the individual of the offence?

2.11.5 Elimination criteria

A person should only be eliminated from a TIE category if the SIO is sure they did not commit the crime. That does not exclude the person, however, from being included in other TIE categories. The SIO should make sure that the investigation team understand what the elimination criteria are, and that only SIO should decide whether TIE enquiries for an individual are complete.

From the beginning of the investigation the SIO will consider what elimination factors they have or may be able to secure. They will need to re-assess these throughout the enquiry to ensure the same factors are applied to all nominal taking account of any new information as it becomes available.

The following elimination criteria should be considered in order of priority:

1. Forensic

Material such as DNA or fingerprint evidence identifying the offender at the scene. Elimination will depend on the level of certainty that the samples were left by the offender at the time of the offence, and that no other person is involved.

2. Description

Where there is a description of the offender, the SIO may be able to apply discrete descriptive parameters to enable individuals who are outside those parameters to be eliminated. Investigators should be wary of eliminating individuals using limited, vague or ambiguous descriptions.



Characteristics might include sex, age or physical descriptors. A margin of error should be included to cater for estimates of age, height or build. Also consider the reliability of the witness, or the angle, distance or light at the location of the CCTV camera. Consider ADVOKATE.

For example, if the offender is known to have a visible scar on their face then unless the TIE has that scar the SIO can consider them eliminated, provided there is certainty the description itself is accurate and reliable. Verification is essential.

3. Alibi provided by an independent source

Some TIE's can be eliminated based on a verified alibi account that will place them somewhere other than the scene when the offence happened (if this is known with any certainty). The wider the time parameters for the offence, the harder it will be to establish a subjects movements to the extent necessary.

When assessing an alibi, the SIO will need to consider the credibility of the person or source verifying the alibi. An unimpeachable source may be clear CCTV imagery supported by verified identification documents, or, for example, a simultaneous telephone call or financial transaction.

Alibis should be assessed in order of reliability. Highest in reliability is an unimpeachable source, for example, CCTV, an independent witness or better a number of independent witnesses.

4. Alibi provided by an associate or relative

A close associate or relative may have a better chance of accurately recognising a TIE nominal and verifying their alibi, but they may also be more inclined to support a false alibi, because, for example, misplaced loyalty, coercion or dishonesty.

5. Alibi provided by a spouse or other partner

This is the least reliable level of alibi for the reasons stated above. Care should always be taken when assessing an alibi where it is only a relative, spouse or partner who is providing verification, always look for alternative verification options.

6. Not eliminated

In some cases, it will not be possible to eliminate an individual because they have no verifiable alibi. These individuals should remain un-eliminated and further work will be required.

Where there are a large number of un-eliminated TIE nominals, the investigation may need to consider additional lines of enquiry, to gather more material. This may help to narrow TIE parameters.

In some cases, it may only be possible to eliminate some nominals by identifying the offender.

2.11.6 Suspect unidentified

In some cases, the offender's forensic trace evidence, recovered from the victim or scene, cannot be matched to any known nominal in the enquiry, and it does not provide a match when searching the national DNA database (NDNAD).



In these cases, the SIO will need to consider alternative lines of enquiry to positively identify the suspect.

2.11.7 International DNA database searches

International comparisons may need a targeted approach. Information from witnesses may suggest the offender could be a foreign national. Before searching for outstanding DNA profiles or fingerprints consider the available information, including physical descriptions and language descriptors provided by witnesses and CCTV.

For further information see the [International](#) section of Investigations APP and consider contacting the [International Crime Coordination Centre \(ICCC\)](#).

2.11.8 Familial DNA searching and Intelligence-led DNA Screening

A familial DNA search involves testing crime scene DNA samples against the NDNAD to potentially identify a close relative of the suspect, thereby helping to identify the suspect.

Intelligence led DNA screening involves taking DNA samples or fingerprints from a selected part of the population and submitting those samples to a force's forensic provider. The purpose is to match a sample found at the scene of a crime to a member of the population.

This type of enquiry can be time consuming and expensive, both in terms of resource commitments and forensic costs.

The SIO should carefully consider proportionality, the risks, costs, and the likelihood of success. This type of screening should only be considered where routine investigative techniques have not been successful, and no other lines of enquiry are available.

There are three key issues which should be considered before undertaking this type of enquiry:

- the quality of the DNA profile or fingerprint recovered
- the probability of the DNA or fingerprint belonging to the offender
- the probability of the offender being in the population sampled

The NCA National SIO advisers and behavioural investigative advisers can provide valuable advice to support the SIO's decision making.

See also the [Working with suspects](#) section of Investigation APP

2.12 Suspect management strategy

2.12.1 Introduction

A suspect is defined in Code G of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE) as, inter alia, anyone 'whom the officer has reasonable grounds to suspect of being guilty of an offence which [they have] reasonable grounds for suspecting has been committed'.



PACE, Code G, goes onto say 'there must be reasonable, objective grounds for the suspicion, based on known facts or information which are relevant to the likelihood the offence has been committed and the person liable for arrest committed it'.

A suspect and a TIE are not the same. See [Elimination enquiries](#).

The SIO should have a good understanding of the law. The provisions of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (the Act) and the associated Codes of Practice are essential knowledge for all investigators.

This section should be read in conjunction with the [Working with suspects](#) and [Investigative interviewing](#) sections of Investigation APP.

The identification of a suspect provides the SIO with multiple opportunities to progress an investigation. They should prove or disprove the suspect's involvement, or the extent of their involvement.

2.12.2 Planning

The SIO should be actively involved in the planning for the management of the suspect by providing clear direction and parameters in all areas relating to the suspect strategy.

The SIO should make time to effectively plan and prepare for the management of a suspect(s). There may be very little time between identifying the suspect and their arrest, therefore planning should start as soon as possible, and not left until the arrest is about to happen.

When considering plans around the suspect, the SIO should consider:

- identification
- risk of harm, safeguarding
- arrest
- search
- interview

The SIO will also need to consider what forensic or digital opportunities will be available. See also [Forensic strategy](#), [Search strategy](#) and [Disclosure](#).

2.12.3 Significant statements or silences

When a suspect is being arrested for a serious crime there is an expectation that they would say something in response. What the suspect may or may not say, may be influenced by what they are told, or not told. The SIO should make sure the arresting officer is briefed about what information they can give to the suspect to maximise any opportunity.

If the allegation is explained to them in sufficient detail at the point of arrest, and they do not respond, their silence is equally admissible and potentially of evidential value. Any significant statement or silence must be recorded in an evidential format.

There is a difference between what the suspect must be told when they are arrested and what could be provided to elicit a response.



2.12.4 Custody management

In serious or complex cases, particularly where there is more than one suspect in custody, it is good practice for the SIO to appoint someone to manage the custody process. This will include:

- making sure interviews are conducted expeditiously
- monitoring interviews to highlight immediate investigative opportunities
- provide information to custody staff to facilitate reviews
- prepare for applications for continued detention where necessary.

2.12.5 Interviews

It is advisable to use a specialist interview adviser to manage the interview strategy, working with the SIO and interviewers to plan the interview(s) including pre interview briefings and selecting interviewers.

Urgent interviews

Urgent interviews can be conducted either prior to arrival at the police station (PACE, Code C, Para 11.1) or at the police station (Code C, Para 6.6). Both can be conducted prior to the suspect receiving any requested legal advice.

Urgent interviews must be conducted under caution, questioning must cease once the relevant risk has been averted or the necessary questions have been put to the suspect in order to attempt to avert that risk.

If conducted prior to arrival at the police station the suspect should be transported to a police station immediately at the conclusion of the urgent interview, unless there is a legitimate reason for delay (for example, their presence is required during a lawful search of premises).

The interview and the grounds for interview must all be recorded. Urgent interviews can be conducted with vulnerable suspects (Code C, Para 11.18).

2.12.6 Decision to release under investigation (RUI) or bail

Some cases will need further investigation before the Crown Prosecution Service can make a charging decision. The SIO should consider as part of their suspect planning the risks and issues if the suspect is released under investigation or bail prior to charge. This should include a risk assessment of risk to the community and to the suspect and how this can be managed.

See [Covert policing tactics](#) and [Assessment of risk, prioritisation and decision making](#)

2.12.7 Suspect ‘manhunts’

Where a suspect is identified by the investigation, but it is not possible to locate them to make an arrest, a proactive investigator should be appointed to conduct the manhunt.



Care should be taken to make sure lines of enquiries or investigative opportunities are not duplicated or missed between the manhunt and main investigation team. All material generated by the manhunt must be included in the main investigation and assessed for disclosure.

The [NCA MCIS](#) can provide advice and support.

2.13 Covert strategy

The use of covert tactics should be considered as early as possible during any investigation, not as an afterthought when all other options have failed.

Covert policing tactics can achieve a number of objectives during a major crime investigation. They can provide the SIO with opportunities to secure evidence or intelligence that point both towards and away from a suspect and may help to identify new lines of enquiry. There are wide varieties of tactics that can be used to achieve the SIO's objectives. These include:

- human and technical surveillance
- interception of telecommunications and post
- tasking covert human intelligence sources
- undercover officers' deployment

SIO's, even where they have experience in covert policing, should seek early advice from their local covert policing unit. A tactical covert adviser can provide practical advice on the most appropriate option to achieve the SIO's objectives and support the SIO to develop a covert strategy. A covert authorities bureau and/or force authorising officers are also a good source of advice about relevant legislation and its application.

Example

When planning an arrest during a major crime investigation, the SIO should consider what may happen if or when a suspect is released from custody. Do they pose an increased risk because material and witness accounts may have been disclosed during interview? Is there potential for the suspect to visit a location where material may be recovered, ie, a deposition site or where a weapon was thrown away?

2.13.1 Deployment

An effective deployment of covert tactics needs time for planning and preparation based on an overarching strategy. The later the decision is made, to consider their use, the less viable some options may become, for example the availability of a specialist resources, such as surveillance operatives.

For an effective deployment, SIO's will need to consider:

- objectives
- authorities
- management
- disclosure

What is achievable will depend on the objectives that need to be met and the operational and legislative boundaries, which apply.



Key legislation includes:

- Primary
 - [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
 - [Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000](#)
 - [Investigatory Powers Act 2016](#)
- Secondary
 - [RIPA Codes](#)

Investigatory Powers Commission's Office, [Office of Surveillance Commissioners \(OSC\) \(2021\) Procedures and Guidance](#)

See also APP on [Covert Policing](#) and ACPO/NPIA (2008) Lawful and effective use of covert tactics (LEUCT). SIOs can request access to a copy from their local covert policing unit.

2.13.2 Operational security

From the start of an investigation, the SIO should consider and establish some operational principles for managing risk as part of their cover strategy. This includes a 'need to know' principle to ensure that only relevant staff are briefed on the use of covert tactics.

The SIO should take advice from Operational Security (OPSY) accredited personnel to inform their strategy, which should be cognisant of [sections 123 and 124 of Investigatory Powers Act 2016](#) (unlawful disclosure of covert tactics)

Information leaks to the media about an investigation, particularly about the use of covert tactics, can be damaging to the success of an investigation and the effectiveness of the covert tactic deployed. Internal leaks can have a similar impact.

The SIO should ensure there is an effective firewall or sterile corridor between the investigation team and any covert activity.

2.13.3 Disclosure

All activity relating to the planning and deployment of covert techniques should be recorded in a separate, distinct sensitive policy file and should be treated as sensitive material for the purposes of disclosure.

2.14 Reconstructions

2.14.1 Introduction

Reconstructing of the movements of significant individuals, or a sequence of events, during an investigation should not be limited to a part of a media strategy.

There are a number of ways in which a reconstruction can contribute to an investigation, including:

- identify individuals



- trace witnesses
- develop evidence by refreshing the memory of potential witnesses to generate new information
- test hypotheses
- validate witness testimony
- develop new lines of enquiry and identify evidential gaps
- validate timelines
- generate public interest and raise awareness
- present evidence
- identify further forensic opportunities.

Reconstructions are an investigative technique that can be used to support various different strategies, but they are not strategies in themselves. See also:

- [Forensic strategy](#)
- [Pathology](#)
- [Victims and witnesses](#)
- [Family liaison](#)
- [Managing communication](#)

2.14.2 Objectives

The SIO should set clear objectives before commissioning a reconstruction. This will determine the method to be used and the resources needed. The objectives should also take into account what the reconstruction may be used for when it enters the evidence chain, eg, as part of the prosecution case. For example, having a member of the enquiry team standing at a junction at a particular time of day, may be an effective method of validating a witness's claim to have seen something or person, from that location. In other cases it may be necessary to commission a detailed plan setting out lines of sight.

2.14.3 Types of reconstruction

There are four basic types of reconstruction:

- Physical
- Forensic
- Virtual
- Documentary

Physical reconstructions

The parameters of a physical reconstruction will vary according to the objectives set.

A reconstruction may be confined to a relatively short section of activity to establish a key event, or confirm an account, for example, a member of the enquiry team walking a route claimed to have been taken by a victim or witness to establish how long they took to cover the distance.

Alternatively, it may be necessary to create a much larger reconstruction. For example, reconstructing the last known movements of a homicide victim, using a look-a-like to play the part of the victim. This might be part of a wider appeal and necessary to generate publicity and 'jog' people's memories.



Physical reconstructions can generate large amounts of information from the public. It is therefore important to plan carefully, putting in additional resource if needed, to avoid swamping the enquiry team.

Force casualty bureau/call handling managers can support SIOs to deal with anticipated call volumes. The [Major Incident Public Portal \(MIPP\)](#) can also provide the SIO with a simple method to allow the public the opportunity to send information, reports, images and video footage directly to the police investigation team.

For further information, see the [Casualty Bureau](#) section of Civil Emergencies APP and [Communications Management, Media Appeals](#).

Forensic reconstructions

As with physical reconstructions, the extent of a forensic reconstruction will vary according to the objectives set by the SIO, in consultation with the CSM/CSC and other specialist advice. The scope of the reconstruction might range, for example, from the time taken for bodily fluids to dry, to testing a hypothesis by building a partial reconstruction of a crime scene to determine how quickly a fire is likely to have spread.

Virtual reconstructions

Advances in digital technology means that virtual reconstructions are now possible using computerised animation. They can be used, for example, to:

- test hypotheses about likely chains of events, as described by witnesses
- test forensic hypotheses, where appropriate
- help the SIO and enquiry team understand the context of events established during the investigation (potentially giving rise to new lines of enquiry)
- brief the CPS and prosecuting counsel
- present evidence in court, bringing scenes to life using clear, unambiguous graphics
- portray a sequence of events to partners and community forums.

Additionally, they can be used to show the position of items within the scene, for example:

- bodies
- fingerprints
- footprints
- blood distribution
- other objects and debris

This can be a useful technique for making an accurate record of the scene before, during and after an event. Using this method early in an investigation provides a useful aide memoire. Where this is not practicable, computer graphics can be used to draw items onto scene plans.

Documentary reconstructions

The most common method for illustrating scenes now, is usually digital reconstruction; hand drawn scene plans are, however, still useful. They can be created quickly and cheaply and can be used to plan or complement physical or virtual reconstructions.



Part 3 - Major Crime Reviews

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Review types
- 3.3 Major investigation reviews
- 3.4 Statutory safeguarding reviews



3.1 Introduction

SIOs may be required to undertake a major investigation review, usually instigated from within policing by chief officers and heads of crime, and/or a statutory safeguarding review commissioned by, and sometimes with, partners from other statutory agencies.

A review is a formal, independent examination of a subject, conducted with integrity and objectivity with a view to instituting change if necessary. The review report is thorough and gives critical analysis to allow dissemination of effective practice and organisational learning.

3.2 Review types

Major investigation reviews include:

- NPCC 28-day homicide reviews
- Other major crime reviews (eg, rape)
- Cold case (non-recent) reviews
- Thematic or other reviews
- Justice After Acquittal reviews
- Critical incident reviews

Statutory safeguarding reviews include:

- Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement Serious Case Reviews

They are defined in separate pieces of legislation typically with slightly different commissioning and reporting requirements and differences between the devolved nations of the United Kingdom.

While the review function covers all types of review and the reviewer will use many of the same skills during a review, there are two distinct types:

- Reviews into police investigations, operations, ways of working (Major investigation reviews).
- Reviews into police contact with the public prior to an incident occurring (Safeguarding reviews).

Both types will impact on an SIO's investigation, but in different ways.

3.3 Major investigation reviews

3.3.1 Objectives

The primary objective of any review is to evaluate the conduct of the enquiry to ensure it helps the SIO to detect the crime. It should:

- conform to nationally recognised standards
- be thorough
- be conducted with integrity and objectivity
- not overlook any investigative opportunities



- Identify and share investigative and organisational good practice.

The review should be undertaken in a timely manner, providing support to the SIO, and organisational reassurance that no reasonable opportunity has been missed. It should identify recommendations and forward any fast track recommendations to the SIO for immediate action. The review may also identify learning which should be shared locally, regionally or nationally with appropriate partners to maximise the benefit in the relevant area of business.

Major crime reviews should be conducted for:

- all undetected homicides
- all cases of homicide resulting in acquittal

They may also be considered for:

- any undetected serious or major crime
- critical incidents
- any other investigation at the discretion of a chief officer.

In many cases it may often be more effective to conduct a thematic review into certain aspects of an investigation, rather than a full review. This may lead to quicker identification of investigative recommendations.

The SIO should note that all review reports are subject to consideration of disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA).

Commissioning a formal review does not take away the obligation of day-to-day senior management supervision.

Governance

A chief officer will commission a major crime review. The chief officer will also be responsible for identifying a suitably experienced review officer, appropriate to the review to be conducted, and an appropriately sized and experienced review team.

Oversight and audit of the review, the report, recommendations, actions and learning should be undertaken by the strategic crime meeting (specific to force).

Terms of Reference

The chief officer commissioning the review should provide written terms of reference. Ideally, these should be drawn up in consultation with the SIO, their line manager or head of department and the reviewing officer.

Reviews which cover the whole investigation, including an audit of the HOLMES account or other database are time consuming and lengthy. This approach should only be used in exceptional cases.

Methodology

A review will usually start with an in-depth presentation of the facts by the SIO and their management team. The SIO should be notified of any early objective comments and any immediate proposals for consideration and action. The final review report should include these immediate proposals and any



further conclusions and recommendations, grouped as either organisational or investigative recommendation.

It is often useful for the reviewing officer to visit the crime scene early in the review process.

The review team should be given unfettered access to all investigative material. Where possible, however, they should be based away from the operational incident room. This separation will avoid potential obstruction of the operational investigation.

The review methodology should be structured around the main lines of enquiry (MLOE) identified by the SIO and any other contributory factors such as:

- resourcing
- media strategy
- family liaison
- briefings
- policy decisions
- safeguarding around victims
- safeguarding around suspects
- partnership collaboration

Note: The primary objective of a review is to help the investigation team detect the crime. Operational matters should, therefore, take priority over administrative issues.

The SIO should be updated regularly of anything affecting the primary objective or anything requiring immediate attention. Regular meetings should be set up between the SIO and the review officer for effective communication.

Review Outcomes

The SIO should be given the opportunity to check the review officer's report for factual accuracy. Any observations or comments from the SIO should be sent with the report to the chief officer.

Case specific investigative recommendations should be considered by the SIO and actioned. If the SIO does not intend to action a recommendation, they should provide a comprehensive rationale why it will not be progressed.

The findings of a review, particularly any recommendations, lessons learned and identified good practice, should be formally considered by the chief officer and any oversight group. Where appropriate, a timetable for implementation should be set out.

For investigations run on HOLMES, the review report should be registered as an 'Other Document' and individual recommendations raised as 'Actions' to track the results. In investigations where HOLMES has not been used, other methods of recording and tracking outcomes should be used.

The SIO should acknowledge the review and the outcomes, in the SIOs policy file.

Many forces formally consider the report using a local review panel. This usually comprises of a chief officer chair, head of crime, local policing commander, the SIO, scientific support manager and other members the chair feels would provide a constructive contribution to the process. The reviewing officer should present the findings of the review for discussion.



Reviews should be dynamic. They should be used to help the SIO identify additional lines of enquiry, and also to increase the effectiveness of major crime investigations. At the end of the process, lessons learned, and good practice should be circulated within the force and where appropriate, regionally and nationally through the NPCC Homicide Working Group or the College of Policing. Where applicable, relevant force policies and working practices should be updated in light of review findings.

3.3.2 Live investigative reviews

An undetected major crime investigation, particularly homicide, will be subject to independent review at specific intervals.

Initial Review

An initial review should be undertaken **72 hours** after the start of the investigation, and ideally no later than seven days. This may be a peer review, where an individual or group of experienced SIOs conduct the review. It will provide an independent assessment; checking investigative opportunities have been recognised and pursued. It will also

- quality assure decision making
- give investigative direction and control
- assess the adequacy of resources and prioritisation.

A record should be made of the outcome.

Progress review

A formal progress review should be undertaken **between 21 and 42 days** into the investigation depending on the individual circumstances. This is often referred to as a 28-day review. This will normally be a more detailed scrutiny of the investigation and is intended to support the SIO and provide organisational reassurance that no investigative opportunities have been overlooked.

A progress review should be led by an experienced, PIP3 SIO who has also completed review officer training. The review team may include staff from specific specialisms, such as, forensics, digital investigations and advanced interviewing.

The progress review will make recommendations for any future review requirements. This will depend on the individual circumstances of the case.

Thematic review

Due to the volume of information and data gathered by some major investigations, it is often not an efficient use of time and resources to conduct a full progress review. By the time the review is complete, the investigation may have moved on. In many cases it is more effective to conduct a thematic review of defined areas or themes within the investigation.

These may include:

- forensics
- Trace, Investigate, Evaluate (TIE)
- safeguarding



This is still a formal, independent and focused examination, which can take place at any stage during an investigation. The review should have specific terms of reference and the reviewing officer should have the appropriate skills and experience to deliver the outcome.

Safeguarding as a theme may include: the victim and their family; threat to life issues; or the suspect and family. This may be particularly important in investigations into Child sexual exploitation to abuse where an offender may still be within the community.

A review into how the investigation team are managing wider safeguarding issues in partnership with other agencies may also provide reassurance to senior leaders and partners.

Post Charge Review

This is an independent assessment of the case to ensure nothing has been missed that could advance the investigation. The methodology and extent of the scrutiny will depend on the circumstances and should be subject of case specific terms of reference.

Unresolved 'cold case' reviews

Where an unresolved major crime case is approved for closure it will become a 'cold case'. Cold case reviews are dictated either by new information coming to light, or the review cycle set out by chief officers. The review team and methodology will be determined on a case by case basis and in accordance with the needs of the investigation.

3.3.3 Post judicial reviews

Detected case de-brief

A debrief in these cases is recognised as good practice. It aims to identify:

- critical success factors
- creative or innovative techniques
- good practice used during the investigation
- barriers to a successful outcome
- lessons learned.
-

A detected case debrief should be undertaken as soon as practicable following the conclusion of the criminal proceedings, and while events are still fresh. This allows participants to reflect on what went well or not so well. It should involve all phases of the investigation.

The process will generally be a structured de-brief involving of all the key personnel involved in the investigation and prosecution from outset to the conclusion. Consideration should be given to including CPS, Victim Support and any other agency involved. The output will be a structured report. The debrief can be led by the SIO or a suitably qualified review officer.

Justice After Acquittal reviews

In all murder cases involving an acquittal, the National Standards of Support (NSS) agreed between Justice After Acquittal (JAA), the police and CPS will be followed.

The purpose of the National Standards of Support is to ensure that:



- the police and CPS comply with the agreed processes set out below and that there is openness and transparency in all communications with the family and/or their representative;
- the family and/or their representative is/are given every opportunity to discuss any issues they may have throughout the process; and
- JAA are involved in the process if this is what the family chooses

Victim's families should be kept informed throughout. It is important that the family are given the opportunity to put forward their views and to raise any additional issues.

The National Standards of Support only applies to homicide cases but there may be benefit in conducting similar reviews in other major crime cases that result in an acquittal.

Lessons emerging from reviews and de-briefs should be shared through local force, regional and national forums.

For further information, see the [CPS \(nd\) Justice After Acquittal; National Standards of Support](#)

3.4 Statutory safeguarding reviews

These reviews are carried out by, and between, statutory safeguarding partners from agencies such as Police, Health, Local Authorities, Probation, and may involve third sector and charitable organisations, non-governmental organisations as well as private individuals commissioned to take part.

Statutory safeguarding reviews typically take place at the same time as a criminal investigation. The balance between informing these reviews with meaningful content as early as possible and avoiding any potential risk to the proper conduct of the criminal investigation requires careful consideration to meet the needs of both.

These reviews consider what has happened leading up to the event. SIOs should take particular care when considering whether to disclose sensitive or confidential information to the review. Disclosure may undermine aspects of the investigation and bad character evidence.

Objectives

The purpose of a statutory safeguarding review is to learn lessons. This will drive service improvement at a national and local level, delivering policies and procedures to improve multi-agency co-ordination, identifying, preventing and responding to harm and abuse. It will also provide a better understanding of the nature of neglect, harm and abuse.

Reviews should consider the way in which professionals and organisations worked together to safeguard adults, children, young people and families and highlight good practice.

Governance

SIOs should familiarise yourself with the local arrangements for strategic safeguarding partnerships across their policing area. They need to recognise how such arrangements might operate cross police force boundaries. In these circumstances, SIOs also familiarise themselves on governance arrangements, where and how these link with local partnerships, and who discharges those responsibilities. This will help to understand the important intersections between criminal investigations and statutory safeguarding reviews.



SIOs should ensure there are formal communication routes between the investigative team and those responsible for statutory safeguarding reviews so that meaningful dialogue can take place and improve the opportunity to achieve the objectives of both the investigation and the statutory safeguarding review.

Any strategy should include how any disagreements, disputes and escalation will be managed.

In England these partnerships are usually:

- Community Safety Partnerships
- Safeguarding Adult Boards
- Local Child Safeguarding Partnerships
- Multi Agency Public Protection arrangements.

It is common within one police area to have a number of these partnerships with different ways of operating. The devolved nations have separate arrangements.

Terms of reference

These should be agreed between the agency with the legal obligation to commission a review, their partners and any appointed reviewer or author. It is recommended that the SIO or a representative makes contact with the statutory safeguarding reviews commissioners at an early stage, to comment on and reasonably influence the framing of the terms of reference. This will also help to identify any likely points of risk or opportunity for the criminal investigation and the statutory safeguarding review.

Methodology

Statutory safeguarding reviews should go beyond focusing on the conduct of individuals, apply an inquisitive approach, often referred to as 'professional curiosity' and concentrate on whether the practice, procedure, policy or legislation was sufficient in the circumstances. The purpose is to review whether the 'system' operates in the best interests of those impacted and considers whether adjustments in policy or procedure could have secured a better outcome for those involved.

Some statutory safeguarding review requirements have short time scales, for example, in England the rapid review requirement of a child safeguarding case is 15 days.

Each type of review will have its own statutory requirements. When considering sharing information with and between partner agencies it is important to consider a wide range of issues, but in particular how sensitive information may be dealt with, and interviews with organisations' staff and family members.

It is the SIO's responsibility to understand what is required for a statutory safeguarding review and to form relationships with relevant people in the governance structure, to facilitate a meaningful and productive relationship.

Statutory safeguarding reviews are likely to include:

Desktop research, collecting data and literature relevant to the police involvement, for example:

- relevant policies and procedures
- relevant partnership / multi-agency policies and protocols
- professional standards and good practice guidance
- national and local research and evidence-based practice



- individual case management activity and decisions
- a case chronology
- notification of any parallel investigations into disciplinary matters and complaints which are internal matters, including IOPC investigations
- any report counter-signed by a senior accountable manager

An Individual Management Review (IMR) will include field work or first-hand information gathering, including:

- material gathered as part of the desk top research
- interviewing staff
- analysing information
- making recommendations
- any IMR counter-signed by a senior accountable manager

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riminal proceedings take time and may not be resolved before a safeguarding review is commissioned, usually within six months. A safeguarding review should be completed as soon as reasonably practicable, and by the due date.

Where there is a difference of opinion between the SIO and those leading the safeguarding review, these should be resolved through constructive dialogue.

Any reports generated by a statutory safeguarding review will be subject to consideration for disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA).

For further information see:

- Crown Prosecution Service (2019) - [Child and Vulnerable Adult Case Reviews](#)
- Crown Prosecution Service, National Police Chiefs Council and Local Safeguarding Children's Partnerships (2020) [Protocol for Liaison and Information Exchange when criminal proceedings coincide with Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews in England](#)

Review findings

Recommendations should clearly set out what is required of relevant agencies, collectively and individually, focused on driving improvement. They will clearly state the lessons learned and identify good practice. Review findings are highly likely to be published within local areas and potentially beyond.

3.4.1 Other considerations

Family Law Proceedings

The Family Court and Family Division deal with legal disputes concerning children.

The most likely cases are those where local authorities intervene in a family to protect children from harm, sometimes referred to as 'public family law'. These cases can result in the children being taken into care, adopted or placed with extended family.

The Family Court also considers orders designed to protect people against domestic abuse, eg, non-molestation orders, or an occupation order preventing someone from living in or returning to the



family home. More complex family cases, and those involving specific issues, such as, international child abduction or forced marriage, may be heard in the Family Division of the High Court.

Where an investigation involves children, eg, following a domestic homicide, Family Court proceedings are likely to take place before a criminal trial. This may require sharing evidence gathered during the investigation and will require careful consideration to strike a balance between the disclosing material to achieve the best outcome for the child, but still maintaining the best chance of a fair trial. Reviewing material and the timetable for sharing will normally require early consultation with the Local Authority legal department and the CPS.

Child death review process

In England, following the death of a child, regardless of the cause, child death review partners will instigate a systematic review of the death to learn what happened and why, with the aim of preventing future child deaths.

Enquiries should keep an appropriate balance between forensic and medical requirements and supporting the family at a difficult time.

For further information, see [HM Government \(2018\) Child Death Review Statutory and operational Guidance \(England\)](#)

The Independent Office for Police Conduct

Incidents involving the death or serious injury and mandatory referrals may lead to a parallel investigation or local disciplinary action being taken.

For further information, see [IOPC \(2020\) Statutory guidance on the police complaints system](#)

3.4.2 Statutory safeguarding reviews by definition

National and Local Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews

At national level, responsibility for learning lessons from serious child safeguarding incidents sits with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (the National Panel). At local level, with safeguarding partners, ie, the Chief Officer of Police, the Clinical Commissioning Group and the Local Authority for the area.

Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority is required notify the National Panel within five working days being aware of the incident if the child dies or is seriously harmed.

Where a looked after child has died, whether due to abuse or neglect is known or suspected, or not, the local authority should also report the event to the safeguarding partners in their area (and in other areas if appropriate) within five working days. Those safeguarding partners then decide whether the case meets the criteria for a local review.

For further information see:

- [HM Government \(2018\) Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children](#)



- [Children and Social Work Act 2017](#)
- [Dept. for Education \(2019\) Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Practice Guidance 2019](#)

Safeguarding Adult Reviews (England)

Safeguarding Adults Boards (SAB) are required to instigate a review of cases which involve an adult who has care and support needs, and has died, and the SAB knows or suspects that the death resulted from abuse or neglect, or the adult is still alive and the SAB knows or suspects that the adult has experienced serious abuse or neglect.

For further detail see:

- [Dept of Health \(2014\) Care and Support Statutory Guidance](#)
- [Care Act 2014](#)

Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement (MAPPA) Reviews (England)

The MAPPA Strategic Management Board (SMB) is required to commission a MAPPA serious case review if a MAPPA subject reoffends and was being managed at level 2 or 3 when the offence was committed, or at any time in the 28 days prior to the offence and the offence is murder, attempted murder, manslaughter, rape, or attempted rape.

MAPPA SMBs may also commission a discretionary review depending on the circumstances of the case, and whether there has been a significant breach of the MAPPA guidance.

A review may be commissioned where:

- A level 1 offender is charged with murder, manslaughter, rape or an attempt to commit murder or rape.
- An offender being managed at any level is charged with a serious offence listed in the MAPPA guidance
- It would be in the public interest to undertake a review, eg, following an offence which results in serious physical or psychological harm to a child or vulnerable adult, but which is not an offence listed.

For further information, see the [Ministry of Justice \(2012\) MAPPA Guidance](#)

Domestic Homicide Reviews (England)

The relevant community safety partnership (CSP) has responsibility for instigating a domestic homicide review where a professional or agency has referred a case. The CSP should believe that there are important lessons to be learned for inter-agency working

A case will involve the death of a person aged 16 years or over, which has, or appears to have resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related, or with whom they were or had been in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves.

For further information see:

- [Home office \(2016\) Multi- Agency Statutory Guidance for the Conduct of Domestic Homicide Reviews](#)
- [Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004](#)



Appendices

[Appendix A: Aide memoires and example templates](#)

[Appendix B: Closing report / Situation Report](#)

[Appendix C: Policy file template](#)

[Appendix D: Policy file aide memoire](#)

[Appendix E: Policy file, index template](#)



Appendix A: Aide memoires and example templates

PIP 4 Terms of Reference - Operation Template

Date:
VERSION:
AUTHOR:

Background

Detective Superintendent xxxx commissioned a review into the original investigation relating to the murder of 5 year old xxxx in November 1990. Xxxx's naked body was found lying in a wooded area, adjacent to a housing estate, in Sandford where he lived with his mother and two siblings. The cause of death was strangulation.

His mother, xxxx, was charged with the child's murder but was acquitted at court. His mother has maintained her innocence since the trial.

This review has examined, comprehensively, all material and lines of enquiry conducted during the original investigation. The objective of the review was to identify new lines of enquiry, potential missed opportunities and consider new investigative and forensic techniques which are recorded within the review findings.

Following the review recommendations it was decided by the Head of the Major Crime Unit that a re-investigation of this unsolved child homicide would commence supported by the following rationale:

- Review recommendations – identified new lines of enquiry.
- Advances in homicide investigation techniques and dedicated Major Crime Unit.
- Forensic and specialist advances.
- Changes in legislation.
- New opportunities to discover the truth surrounding the death of xxxx.

This decision has been further ratified by DCC xxxx following the review recommendations and a personal briefing.

PIP4 Context

PIP4's are used as part of the strategic management of complex investigations, e.g. Cat A/A+ murders/significant kidnaps/abductions/complex or other investigations where they may add value. They are experienced and accredited (PIP3 and PIP4) SIO's that are able to provide strategic investigative advice in support of the SIO and Gold Commander strategies.



Operation Template is clearly an investigation of such magnitude, this is an historical unsolved Category A child homicide that occurred over 20 years ago and has since attracted significant public interest both locally, nationally and will also have impacted on partner agencies involved with the bereaved family at the time of the incident.

This re-investigation is likely to attract wider peripheral issues due to the nature of the original crime, investigative complexities, media interest, local and national scrutiny, cultural force challenges from serving/retired officers and potential reputational risks to Westshire Constabulary, the Major Crime Unit and other partner agencies.

Therefore the role of PIP4 is to act as a conduit between the Gold (broad strategic aims) and support for the SIO to achieve their investigative aims. The following terms of reference have been agreed between the PIP4 and the PIP3 SIO.

Strategic command and leadership:

Det Supt xxxx will be the PIP4 for Operation Template as part of the Gold Group. He will act as the strategic conduit between the Gold Group/other senior commanders/SIO contributing where appropriate to the regular investigative updates provided by the SIO to the group as appropriate and responding to peripheral issues that potentially impact on the wider investigation.

The PIP4 is not the SIO. For Operation Template this is DCI xxxx (PIP3 accredited and experienced) who will manage the day to day investigation supported by DI xxxx as his deputy. However the PIP4 will act as a critical friend in a supportive, advisory and mentoring capacity to assist the SIO achieve the wider strategic investigative aims. This will allow the SIO to concentrate on the investigation with the support of the PIP4.

The PIP4 is not the Gold Commander. For Operation Template, this is ACC xxxx on behalf of Westshire Constabulary. However the PIP4 will act as a strategic investigative advisor in support of the Gold Commander to represent the interests of the SIO and also the wider peripheral issues in support of the Gold Strategy.

The PIP4 will communicate with the SIO regularly and will provide a continuous review of the wider investigation in response to changing circumstances and strategic issues as they unfold. This may include a formal review of all or part of these investigations if the SIO, PIP4 or Gold feels it is appropriate for whatever reason.

Resource management

This investigation will be resourced via a bespoke investigation team within the Westshire MCU who have been carefully selected for their expertise, experience and having no previous involvement in the original Op Template investigation. All core roles have been identified from within the Major Crime Unit.

All requests for additional resources will be managed by internal discussion with the SIO and local senior officers in the first instance and escalated to PIP4/Gold if/as necessary.



Other specialist resources that are required will be sought in the normal manner by the SIO via existing resourcing processes.

There are no significant resource issues for this operation.

Public confidence and consequence management

The PIP4 will work closely with the Gold Group and SIO to ensure the investigative aims work in harmony with the wider organisational reputation and public confidence issues.

The PIP4 will ensure appropriate measures are put in place around the investigation and will support information flow with any partnership requests as and when Gold group required.

The PIP4 will ensure appropriate victim/welfare/witness and public consideration issues are put in place throughout the investigation and will ensure any wider organisational learning is shared internally and with key partners.

The PIP4 will identify any potential professional standards issues or wider considerations to Gold as the investigation develops.

Stakeholder and partnership engagement

There are a number of key partnerships relevant to this investigation, the PIP4 will support the Gold strategic aims and will work beside the SIO to ensure where appropriate there are joint working practices/proactive communication and shared understanding around threat, risk, harm and opportunity as a consequence of any investigative activity or not:

1. Westshire Constabulary Gold group
2. Sandford Local Policing Command
3. Westshire Constabulary Public Protection Unit
4. Westshire Constabulary Corporate Communications Team
5. Sandford Unitary Authority – Children Services/Local Safeguarding Board
6. Police Federation, Unison and NARPO
7. National Crime Agency
8. Crown Prosecution Service – Complex case work
9. Other forces areas/partner agencies as enquiries develop

Management of information and communication

The PIP4 will support, as appropriate, the SIO's role in providing relevant and comprehensive updates for the Gold Group in addition to tactical updates, they will also respond to fast time events in support of the SIO, where key strategic partners will need to be updated or any immediate or future police activity is likely to impact on key stakeholders or wider organisational reputation.



The PIP4 and SIO will communicate regularly, responding to any questions/issues and allowing the SIO to focus their efforts on the investigation.

The PIP4 will support the SIO with the wider media management and will act as the 'talking head' in this investigation. The content of all media releases will be agreed with the SIO in the first instance. In the absence of the PIP4, media updates will be undertaken by the SIO supported by the Westshire Constabulary Corporate Communications Team.

The PIP4 will support the SIO and Gold with cross border/cross law enforcement investigative/operational matters if/and when required.

The PIP4 will support the SIO in the strategic management of case work for this investigation and any wider considerations with the CPS beyond normal business.



PIP4 Reflect and Review Grid

<u>Strategic command & leadership</u> Primacy of the investigation is ours - DCI xxxx will lead as SIO with DSIO –xxxx 2 incidents are linked - Review of cases being undertaken by PCH re: Internal process and employment considerations. Partners xxxx leading. Critical Incident - Not at this time due to the early stages and close management. This will need to remain in review. Gold Group - to be escalated to ACC xxxx for briefing and recommendation of Gold Group overview. DCS xxxx already briefed.	<u>Strategic partnerships</u> SOVA have been made aware of the initial case through the SIR process from PCH. To be considered as a part of the Gold Group. HM Coroner is aware and working closely with PCH and SIO. Wider knowledge has not yet been required but for review by Gold - Local Authority / PCC. This will need to be managed around operational security considerations. Expert – xxxx commissioned for first case and now to be extended to second. CPS - Serious Prosecutions Team - xxxx advising.	<u>Resource management</u> Managed locally within Major Crime Unit Impact upon local policing is not envisaged - this will need to be kept in review in event of any Media / community interest as the investigation develops.
<u>Information management</u> Communication Strategy - Initial strategy needs to be set and comms lead identified. Manage public confidence and reputational issues Talking Head - This will be through the PIP4 but kept in review as the investigation develops. Supt xxxx (Divisional Commander) aware. Family engagement – XXXX family are aware and informed. FLOs deployed and will alternate lead roles with XXXX family. HOLMES - recorded and being managed on minimal indexing at this time.	<u>Public confidence</u> At this time the knowledge of the investigation is tight and as such there is minimal impact. Upon any further deaths being identified there is a risk of comparison to Dr Shipman which may bring about both family, community and media interest and scrutiny. Planning needs to be in place for this eventuality. Reputation management - family and local community Rumour control - community rumours could impact on the reputation of the Hospital and be directed at the Investigation.	



Debriefs and lessons learned template

LEARNING OUTCOME REVIEW

Op name:

Date:

Author:

<u>RECOMMENDATION</u> <i>Brief & SMART</i>	<u>CONTEXT LEADING TO RECOMMENDATION</u> <i>What led to the recommendation</i>	<u>ACTION TAKEN OR REQUIRED</u>	<u>ALLOCATED TO AND REVIEW DATE</u> <i>Who is or should be dealing with this action?</i>	<u>FINAL RESULT AND OUTCOMES</u> <i>(such as change of policy, training introduced)</i>



Appendix B: Closing report / Situation Report

Major Crime Unit Closing Report Undetected/ Complex / High Profile Investigation

Operation Name:	Offence:		No. of Fatalities:
Date of Offence:	Date of Charge:	Category:	Area:
Victim:	Male/Female:	Ethnicity:	
Venue:			
Suspect(s) Name / Description:			
Crime Reference Number:	Holmes	URN:	
SIO:	Team:	Date Investigation Commenced:	

Introduction

- Brief résumé of sequence of events leading to the commission of the offence, including eyewitness accounts and comprehensive MO.

Scenes

- Full description of each scene, including exact locations.
- Time and date of the discovery of the body.
- Details of persons discovering the body.
- Details of Forensic/Fingerprint material recovered, including results.
- Details of searches conducted – items discovered, methods used.
- Details of expert witnesses attending scene and findings.
- Crime Scene Assessment.

The Victim

- Full name, date of birth.
- Family history, associates.
- Details of life style, full background.
- Last known movements.
- Post mortem findings.
- Cause of death/injuries.
- Details of forensic samples taken and results.



The Investigation

- Details of main lines of investigations – summary of outcomes.
- Forensic evidence/material available.
- Communications strategy, including appeal posters, press cuttings.
- Informants and rewards.
- Intelligence assessment.
- Details of HtoH enquiries, leaflet drops, etc.
- Offender Profiling.
- Details of expert witnesses (ie, Odontologist).
- Reconstruction

Suspects

- Full details of any suspects.
- Eliminating/Implication criteria.
- Forensic links.
- Descriptions.
- Identification issues.
- Connection with scenes.
- Details of offender profiles – methodology.

General

- Summary of main witness evidence, including relationships with scenes, victim, etc.
- Assessment of witnesses.
- Summary of main evidence.
- Possible links of other offences.

Forensic Opportunities

- Include any evaluation by Forensic Service Provider

HOLMES Report

- Include number of outstanding actions; number of outstanding messages, exhibits status returned/retained etc. Ensure

PIP 4

- PIP4 documentation if deployed

Exhibits

- Review and archive status
- Include details of the post investigation review and plans for disposal, destruction, retention and return - ensure relevant reference numbers are included

Conclusions and recommendations:

- to include reasons for closure

Best Practice/Learning Points

Crime Prevention

- to include opportunities to have prevented this crime

Any Other Useful Information

SIO:

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date:



Investigative Review Team Observations:

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date:

Major Crime Unit Detective Superintendent Observations:

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date

Detective Chief Superintendent observations

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date:

Chief Officer Closure Decision:

☐	Yes
☐	No

Rationale:

- Name:
- Signature:
- Date:

Unsolved

- Next Cold Case Review Date:

SOCPA 2005 Considerations

- Name
- Signature
- Date



Appendix C: Policy file template

OFFICIAL SENSITIVE WHEN COMPLETED			
Policy file			
Disclose only on the authority of the SIO			
Victim/Operation Name:		Policy Decision Number	
DECISION TITLE			
DECISION:			
DATE AND TIME OF DECISION:			
REASON:			
Officer Making Entry		Sign/Print	
		Date & Time	
Officer Making Decision (if different)		Supervisor Review	
Sign/Print		Sign/Print	
		Date & Time	
OFFICIAL SENSITIVE WHEN COMPLETED			



Notes for completion:

- I. Unless there are specific grounds for not doing so, the contents of this policy file or decision log should be made available to all officers and staff engaged on the investigation.
- II. Decisions recorded in the policy file should refer to one investigation only.
- III. Generally, one decision per entry is preferable.
- IV. Documentation such as an 'Other Document' eg, analytical charts or maps which have informed a decision, should be referenced in the policy file, a copy included with the relevant entry and retained together.
- V. The person making the decision must time, date and sign each entry.
- VI. If the decision is recorded by anyone other than the decision maker this should be made clear in the entry and include the identity of the person logging the decision.
- VII. It is advisable to maintain an index of decisions made – see the template at Appendix D.
- VIII. This policy File and the contents must be assessed by the Disclosure Officer as material that falls under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 and the associated Codes of Practice.



Appendix D: Policy file aide memoire

Note: This is **not** an exhaustive list only illustrative of key areas to consider depending on the nature and circumstances of the investigation.

The Policy File or decision log should reflect the five stages of an investigation:

- **Instigation & initial response.**
 - Enquiry Management.
 - Investigative Strategies.
 - Administration including Disclosure Strategy.
 - Sensitive Issues.
- **Instigation & Initial Response:**
 - discovery of incident, intelligence leading to mounting operation
 - aims & Objective of investigation (operational goals)
 - fast Track Actions
 - identification of victim, key witnesses
 - immediate investigative response & debrief of initial responders
 - scene identification, establishing control & management.
 -
- **Enquiry management:**
 - key appointments including Senior Investigator, Officer in the Case, Disclosure, Exhibits
 - HOLMES or other IT system to be used
 - parameters for house to house, CCTV, passive data, etc
 - relevant time.
 - use of personal descriptive forms
 - forensic management team.
 -
- **Investigative Strategies:**
 - disclosure
 - witnesses – identification, assessment & management
 - safeguarding
 - family liaison
 - forensic – scenes, submissions, advisers
 - search
 - release of body & scenes
 - house to house enquiries
 - CCTV collection & viewing
 - digital media strategy
 - telecom data particularly victim, location of incident & suspects
 - identification – suspect, unidentified persons
 - intelligence
 - financial
 - suspect - arrest, search & interview
 - elimination including trace, investigate, evaluate (TIE)
 - communication – internal & external including media
 - victim & community liaison including community impact assessment
 - main or priority lines of enquiry
 - Suspects on bail or released under investigation (RUI) contingencies.



- **Administration:**
 - location of major incident room, if used
 - analyst – objectives
 - independent advisory group (IAG)
 - staffing
 - financial management
 - PACE - management of detention time & warrant of further detention
 - review
 - Crown Prosecution Service liaison.
- **Sensitive Issues [recommend use of separate policy file]:**
 - specialist advice
 - covert tactics including type, objectives, subjects
 - disruption
 - risk of harm – assessment & management
 - Human rights considerations.
 -



Appendix E: Policy file, index template

Initial Response, Investigation set up Fast track actions	
Forensic Strategy	
Pathology	
Main Lines of Enquiry	
Intelligence	
Witnesses	
Safeguarding	
Suspects	
Trace Investigate Evaluate (TIE)	
Search	
Arrest	
Interview	
Identification	
Disclosure	
Communication External incl. Media Community Impact Ass (CIA)	
Communication Internal incl. Briefings	
Family Liaison	
House to house	
Passive Data & CCTV	
Finance and administration	
Relevant Time(s)	
Staffing incl. key roles	

