



BTP CRITICAL INCIDENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE (SOP)

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE			
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OWNER		ACC Protective Services	
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Critical Incident Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This procedure effects and is subject to the conditions of [Policy/086/07](#).
- 1.2 This procedure applies to England, Wales and Scotland.
- 1.3 This procedure applies to all employees.
- 1.4 Any enquiries in relation to this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) should be directed to the Detective Chief Inspector FHQ (DCI) or Detective Superintendent (Det Supt) FHQ Protective Services.
- 1.5 This SOP is compliant with and supports ACPO/NPIA Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management 2007.

2.0 KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Key Terms and Definitions

- 2.1.1 The term **Critical Incident** is now in widespread use throughout the Police Service. This SOP explains the definition of a Critical Incident and provides guidance on identifying appropriate police responses to such incidents.
- 2.1.2 The nationally recognised and ACPO adopted definition of a Critical Incident is:-
“Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community”



- 2.1.3 **Effectiveness:** this is a measure of the professionalism, competence and integrity evident in the police response to an incident.
- 2.1.4 **Significant impact:** 'significant' should be interpreted as being particular to each incident but critically relates to the 'impact' on the individual, family or community.
- 2.1.5 **Confidence:** this is a reference to long-term confidence in policing - of victims, families and communities.
- 2.1.6 This definition is deliberately broad in order to ensure that potential Critical Incidents (both internal and external) are not overlooked. It is essential that such incidents are identified as early as possible so that an effective police response can be implemented. A Critical Incident may pose a significant life-safety threat, disrupt essential community routines or vital services; or require unusual amounts of public safety resources to manage. Such incidents may divert resources from routine operations and require activation of specialised resources. A Critical Incident demands a high degree of supervision and may require Command level co-ordination and direction, for example:-



Examples
A vulnerable missing person whose disappearance coincides with a nationally high profile case.
A racist/homophobic incident, at a time or location where community relations are already strained.
A police incident such as an unexplained death where adverse criticism of the force can be expected.
A death after police contact.
A series of linked incidents against the same victim or group such as minor crime or Anti social behaviour.
Failure of BTP's Intelligence system.

- 2.1.7 Any incident can become critical. Understanding the impact of Critical Incidents is crucial to our response and all officers and staff have a role to play in ensuring such incidents are identified and appropriately addressed at the earliest opportunity. Large scale Critical Incidents may have their origins in an initial incident within the capability of a single BTP Area.
- 2.1.8 Critical Incidents can start off as everyday policing incidents and are not limited to major incidents. The key is to identify incidents where public confidence and trust could be impacted upon if British Transport Police do not respond in a timely and effective manner.
- 2.1.9 A Critical Incident may attract significant public and media interest. Media interest in itself could cause an everyday incident to become critical. Early management of the incident, an understanding of the impact and an appropriate media strategy are therefore essential.



2.1.10 Identifying an incident as being critical does not mean that anyone has failed. It is a positive statement showing British Transport Police is tuned in to community sensitivities and keen to respond appropriately.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

2.2.1 Any police officer or staff may be the first recipient of information relating to a Critical Incident. In all cases basic principles apply and early advice should be sought from a supervisor if the recipient of the information assesses if it may be or is likely to become a Critical Incident.

2.2.2 Any officer of the rank of Inspector or above or Head of Department can declare an incident as critical.

2.2.3 Officers and staff dealing with an incident must ask themselves:

- What am I dealing with?
- What might it develop into?
- What impact might this incident have?
- Whom should I tell if I think this may escalate into a Critical Incident?

2.2.4 Where an incident is identified as being or having the potential to be a Critical Incident, it is essential that this is communicated immediately to the Area Duty Officer and in their absence the Force Control Room Duty Officer.

2.2.5 The timely deployment of appropriate resources to an incident can improve the chances of early resolution and reduce the need for remedial action later. The response to an individual Critical Incident should be as unique as the incident itself.

2.2.6 By using the mnemonic SAFER, Critical Incident commanders will be able to quickly identify the action that is required to ensure and safeguard success in what could



potentially be a complex and dynamic environment.

- **Scenes of Crime** – well-defined and well-managed
- **Actions** – fast-track and intelligence-led, to arrest offender(s)
- **Family** – supported and supportive of investigation
- **Evidence** – comprehensive and relentless search for witnesses and evidence
- **Records** – Accurate and contemporaneous, clearly stating decisions and rationale.

2.2.7 Area Intelligence Bureau (AIB) managers amongst other BTP departments also have an important role in identifying developing Critical Incidents. By monitoring community intelligence and/or patterns of activity it is possible to identify police activity which may develop into a Critical Incident. This is particularly true in relation intelligence suggesting that public confidence in the police has been eroded due to the handling of a specific incident or ongoing police initiative. These matters should be escalated to the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the earliest opportunity.

2.2.8 Assistant Chief Constable Protective Services

2.2.8.1 The 'Force Champion' for Critical Incidents will be the ACC Protective Services

2.2.9 Detective Chief Superintendent (Head of Protective Services) or Head of Department

2.2.9.1 The Detective Chief Superintendent is accountable for ensuring that review and audit processes are in place to monitor compliance with this SOP for policing matters. Individual Heads of Department are responsible for making their own arrangements.

2.2.10 Area Commanders

2.2.10.1 Area Commanders are accountable for compliance with this SOP.



2.3 Procedures within their Police Area

- 2.3.1 The effective implementation of this policy will be dependent on having a robust system of Duty Inspectors and Senior on call Officers in place, in the case of the out of London Areas
- 2.3.2 It is the responsibility of Area Commanders to ensure they have appropriate levels of staffing and supervision on duty and for the ACC Protective Services to maintain appropriate senior CID on call cover.
- 2.3.3 Force Control Room (FCR) takes an overview of daily incidents and has specific functions in relation to the management of unexplained deaths. The Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) is responsible for producing the Daily Management Briefing, which will seek to highlight all Critical Incidents for the previous 24-hour period.
- 2.3.4 Areas must have arrangements in place to ensure the effective handover of all relevant information between Area Duty Officers. SMT will review this information on a daily basis and ensure Critical Incidents are being identified and dealt with appropriately. See paragraph 3.3.5.

2.4 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

- 2.4.1 All employees have a responsibility to ensure that no unlawful discrimination occurs on the grounds of age, colour, disability, ethnic origin, family commitments, gender, gender dysphoria, marital status – marriage or civil partnership, nationality, national origins, political beliefs, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, trade union activity or any other unacceptable grounds when operating this SOP.



3.0 PROCEDURES

3.1 Identification of Critical Incidents and Notification

3.1.1 There are six identifiable phases to any Critical Incident. The timing and duration of these could be extremely rapid but may also be in slow time and last over several months.

3.2 Phase 1: Pre-Recognition

3.2.1 This is where an incident is unfolding but no one has recognised its potential to develop into a Critical Incident. Our response will be improved if this period is minimised and early recognition achieved. Heightened awareness of staff at all levels and the confidence to inform a supervisor are essential.

3.2.2 Supervisors should always consider gaining a local independent perspective from partner agencies, local forces, stakeholders and community representatives. This will require interaction with, and assessments from AIB or the FIB depending on the context of the incident.

3.3 Phase 2: Recognition and Early Response

3.3.1 Once recognised as a possible Critical Incident, the Area Duty Officer will as soon as practicable take charge and where appropriate attend the scene. The Area Duty Inspector will undertake an initial assessment of the incident to determine whether or not it is critical. In all cases the Force Control Room (FCR) Duty Officer should be informed and updated regarding any BTP resource implications.

3.3.2 The Area Duty Officer will notify the On Call Chief Inspector Cadre. The on duty Chief Inspector has the option to contact the on call Superintendent, Senior on call for the Area or Head of Department where applicable and necessary. Consideration should also be given, where appropriate, to notifying the FHQ On call Senior Investigating Officer or their equivalent.



- 3.3.3 All Incidents should be identified clearly on a Command and Control Log or incident number.
- 3.3.4 Depending on the circumstances and the time of day the Area Duty Officer, FCR Duty Officer or the FCRB Duty Officer assumes command and is responsible for recording all policy decisions until a senior officer takes command. In all cases, supervisors must make clear records of their decision making in responding to a Critical Incident. Supervisors must record options considered, decisions made and their rationale at the earliest opportunity.
- 3.3.5 Advice should be sought from the on duty Chief Inspector Cadre in the first instance, who can provide an impartial opinion and a level of quality assurance on decisions made. The Area Duty Inspector, FCR Duty Officer or the FCRB Duty Officer should be prepared to brief a senior officer and explain the following for policing matters:

A Details of the incident and intelligence (including any grading of information).
B Details of any offences involved.
C Why the matter is being considered critical.
D Actions taken and considered.
E Identification of scenes (people/locations/victims).
F Victim, family or community tensions or complexities.
G Media issues/interest/actions taken.
H Implications for and engagement with partner agencies.



3.4 Phase 3: Initial Incident Management

- 3.4.1 The Duty ACC should be informed once the Chief Inspector Cadre or an officer of Superintendent rank, Senior on call for the Area or Head of Department has confirmed the status of the incident as critical. The Duty ACC should then be briefed as outlined above on items A to H. Clear and unambiguous command roles should be determined in all cases. Specific roles in managing the Critical Incident will be determined through discussions between the Duty ACC, Chief Inspector Cadre, On Call Superintendent rank, Senior On Call for Area or Head of Department and recorded on the command and control log as soon as possible. Where necessary, consideration must be given, to establish a Gold Group to manage the incident at an appropriate level. It will be the decision of the Duty ACC to determine whether a gold group needs to be established. Once an incident is declared critical it will be the decision of an ACPO officer or an equivalent to determine that the incident is no longer critical. If an incident is declared critical but is later deemed not critical, before an ACC is advised it can be downgraded by either the Cadre Chief Inspector, On Call Superintendent, Senior On Call for an Area, or Head of Department. It will be for Gold to determine the size and composition of each group depending on the incident under investigation.
- 3.4.2 The decision whether or not to establish Gold Group should be recorded on the Command and Control log and include both the rationale behind the decision and the person making the decision. The individual now in overall command of the incident should also be clearly identified and recorded.
- 3.4.3 All policy decisions should be recorded in an appropriate policy book or where this is not possible in some form of recordable or retrievable record. Best practice, particularly for fast moving scenarios, would be to appoint a loggist to record all policy decisions and rationale. Consideration should also be given to appointing a briefing officer to engage with any new staff being deployed to the incident. Commanders should



consider succession planning for incident command where the scenario has potential to run for a long period of time.

3.4.4 The use of intelligence is important in informing the strategies applied in the management of a Critical Incident and the Duty Superintendent should consider the establishment of an intelligence cell and determine its size and composition.

3.4.5 Details of any Critical Incident should be forwarded for the attention of the AIB or FIB where it is a national incident or one affecting more than one BTP Area to ensure community tension and potential for disorder are identified at the earliest opportunity. The early completion of a Community Impact Assessment must be undertaken where it is considered necessary. See Appendix A and B for further advice and guidance.

3.5 Phase 4: Tactical Response to Incidents

3.5.1 Areas will remain the focus for operational activity, supported by force resources as appropriate. The size and nature of the Critical Incident will dictate the tactical response and determine whether it can be managed at a local level or require additional Force resources and opening of Gold Command.

3.5.2 Any officer dealing with any incident should always consider the need to undertake a dynamic risk assessment. Practical thinking is generally all that is required when managing such incidents. Officers should consider the likelihood and consequences of decisions made and record how such risks can be mitigated.

3.6 Phase 5: Post Incident Management

3.6.1 This is the stage where operational activity directly linked to the incident itself may be reduced but where increased emphasis will be placed in taking the necessary proactive steps to restore public confidence.

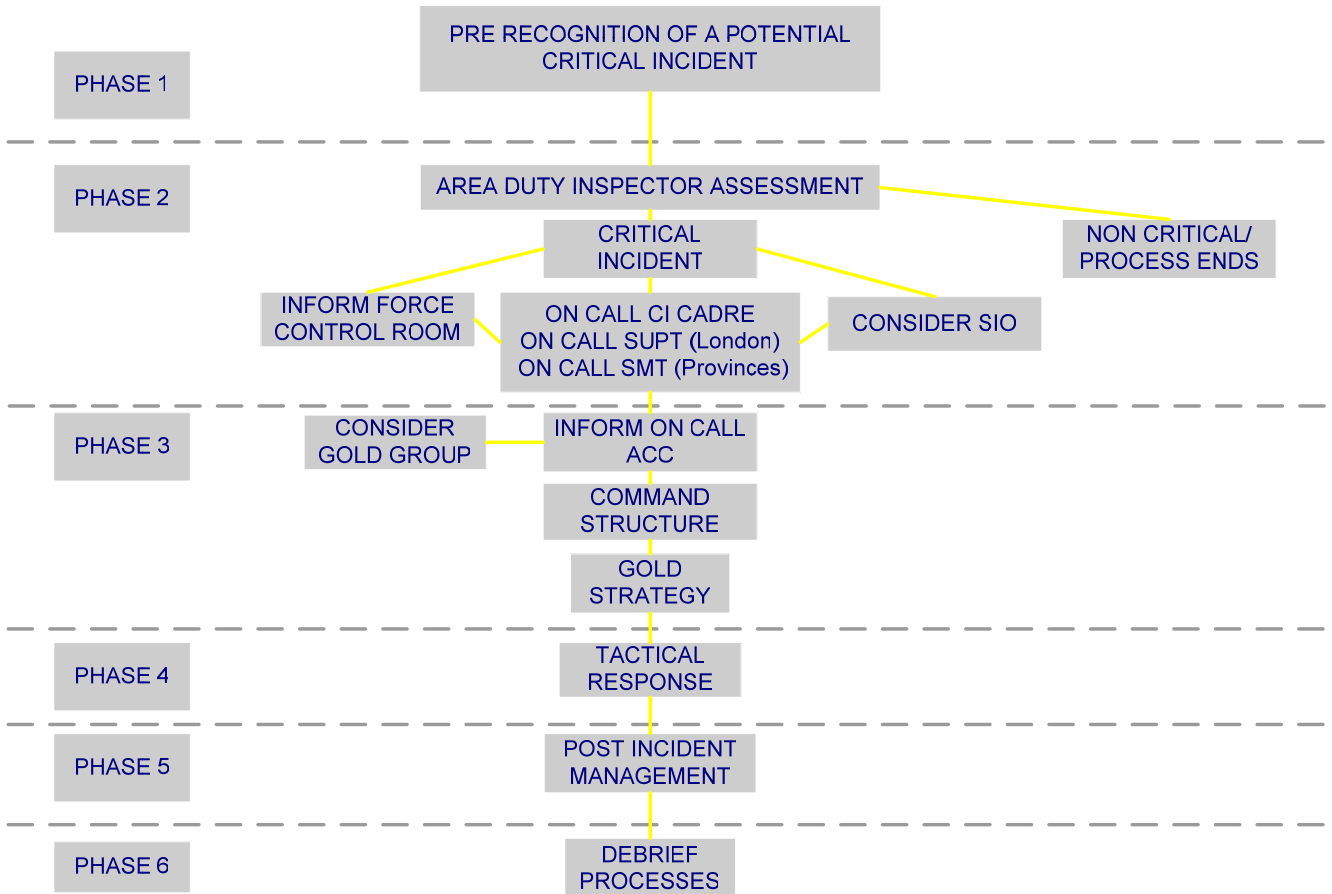


3.7 Phase 6: Debrief and Organisational Learning

- 3.7.1 Improving the competence of our organisation means that we must learn from experience.
- 3.7.2 Debriefing is as essential as briefing and allows results and other information to flow back into the organisation enhancing future practice. The officer in charge of the incident should ensure that a hot de-brief takes place to capture immediate learning. A subsequent more formal debrief must take place where necessary. Please see the Debriefing SOP 191/09 for further details paragraph 4 onwards which describes the occasions and types of debrief that are necessary and persons involved.
- 3.7.3 Consideration should be given to involving partner agencies, neighbouring police forces, stakeholders and community representatives as part of this debrief. For further guidance concerning Multi Agency Debriefs see paragraph 7 of the Debriefing SOP.
- 3.7.4 Learning from the debrief process should be fed back to the Area SMT members and the force contingency planning officer who will be responsible for identifying local and force issues. Local issues will be dealt with on Area and debrief material retained on Area. Force-wide issues will be forwarded to the DCI FHQ or Det Supt Protective Services to ensure any organisational issues are addressed.
- 3.7.5 Further guidance concerning debriefing Potential Traumatic Events (PTE) can be obtained from Area and FHQ Wellbeing Departments who have a list of Traumatic Evaluation Assessment Management practitioners (TEAM).



3.8 Critical Incident Phases





3.8 Specialist Advice

3.8.1 National Policing Improvement Agency

The NPIA Operations Centre's Crime desk maintains a database containing the details of NPIA Doctrine, NPIA Specialist Training, and Expert Advisors available to support officers handling Critical Incidents. This service is available in the first instance via the Opsline, or if out of hours, contact details will be provided for the On Call Crime Support Officer.

Operational advice and support on crime and uniform policing matters is available by contacting Opsline at soc@npia.pnn.police.uk or via 0870 241 5641.

3.8.2 BTP has a range of internal specialist advice sources including the national Independent Advisory Network (I.A.N) who can sometimes offer advice when managing such incidents. Other groups include the Diversity Unit and Neighbourhood Partnership Unit who can also provide specialist advice.

4 MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

4.1 Assistant Chief Constable Protective Services is the 'Force Champion' for Critical Incidents.

4.2 The Detective Chief Superintendent (Head of Protective Services) or Head of Department is accountable for ensuring that review and audit processes are in place to monitor compliance with these Standard Operating Procedures.

4.3 Area Commanders are accountable for compliance with this SOP within their Police Area.

4.4 To ensure close monitoring of Critical Incidents and compliance with this SOP a Gold Group will be set up within 24 hours of a confirmed Critical Incident where the Duty



ACC has established the need for such a Group. An officer of ACPO rank, or the relevant Area Commander, will convene the Gold Group.

- 4.5 Protective Services Department will arrange where necessary to debrief any Critical Incident and record any lessons learnt.

5 APPENDICES

- 5.1 See below.

[Appendix A – Guidance on Community Impact Assessment](#)

[Appendix B – Additional Community Impact Assessment](#)

[Appendix C – List of sources for reading material linked to Critical Incidents](#)

[Appendix D – Critical Incident Aide Memoir](#)