



DEBRIEFING FOR FATALITIES, CRITICAL INCIDENTS, PLANNED/MAJOR EVENTS, MAJOR INCIDENTS AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY INVOCATIONS.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE			
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CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	3
2.	KNOWLEDGE	3
	2.1 Terms and Definitions	3
	2.2 Background Information	5
3.	GOVERNANCE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES	5
	3.1 Governance	5
	3.2 General Principles	5
4.	LEVELS OF DEBRIEF	5
	4.2 Level 1: – Hot Debrief	5
	4.3 Level 2: – Standard Debrief	6
	4.4 Level 3: – Structured Debrief	6
	4.5 Level 4: – NPIA Debrief	7
5.	DEBRIEF RESPONSIBILITIES AND ESCALATION PROCESS	7
6	DEBRIEFS WITH ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS	8
	6.1 Independent Police Complaints Commission Investigation	8
	6.2 Court Allegations	8
	6.3 Recording Decisions	9
	6.4 Disclosure	9
7.	MULTI-AGENCY OR MAJOR INCIDENT DEBRIEFS	9
8.	MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE	10
9.	TRAINING IMPLICATIONS	11
10.	REFERENCE DOCUMENTS	11
11.	APPENDICES	11
	Appendix A - Flow Chart	
	Appendix B - Level 3 - Structured Debrief Process	
	Appendix C - Debrief Questionnaire	
	Appendix D - Debrief Report Template	



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) enforces and is subject to the conditions of policy ([Policy/191/09](#)).
- 1.2 This SOP applies to England, Wales and Scotland.
- 1.3 This SOP applies to all Police Officers, Special Constables, Police Staff, Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) and Community Volunteers.
- 1.4 This SOP covers the debriefing of fatalities, critical incidents, planned/major events, major incidents and business continuity invocations.
- 1.5 The Incident/Event Commander, Gold Commander or Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) will determine the need to hold any debrief at the earliest opportunity. The rationale not to hold, or to hold debriefs and the specific type of debrief to be undertaken, will be recorded in their pocket note book, Gold Strategy, policy log and/or Command and Control (C&C) message as appropriate. [Paragraph 1.6 \(below\)](#) provides examples of where debriefs under this SOP would not be required.
- 1.6 This SOP does not cover the following types of debriefing:
 - A debrief that deals with the psychological aspects of an incident is the responsibility of the Wellbeing Unit within the Human Resources (HR) Department (contactable via the HR Business Centre on 0121 634 5626).
 - The 'day to day' debriefing that a supervisor may use at the end of a shift.

2 KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Terms and Definitions:

- 2.1.1 **Fatalities** - Fatalities occurring on the railways will be categorised as Non-Suspicious, Unexplained, Suspicious and Workplace deaths. Please see the [Dealing with Fatal Incidents SOP](#) for full details.



2.1.2 The majority of non-suspicious deaths will be dealt with at Level 1: Hot Debrief. If there are any complicating circumstances, or a Critical Incident is declared or the death is Unexplained or Suspicious, then the de-brief must be at Levels 2, 3 or 4 with the Incident Commander, Gold Commandeer or SIO determining the level of debrief to be used in accordance with this SOP.

2.1.3 Critical Incident definition (Home Office Guidance)

This 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. In addition, internal incidents may also be critical incidents. (For more information see [Critical Incidents SOP \(SOP/213/10\)](#)).

2.1.4 Planned/Major Event definition (Event Planning and Coordination Unit)

- **Planned Event** - any event involving the planned deployment of resources with an operational order.
- **Major Event** - any event involving the planned deployment of resources from more than one Area and any event planned by FHQ Operations. In both cases an operational order will be used. This would include New Year's Eve, major Wembley events and Notting Hill Carnival.

2.1.5 Major Incident definition (ACPO (2009) Guidance on Emergency Procedures)

A Major Incident is any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, and generally includes the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people.

2.1.6 Business Continuity definition (UK Government, 'Preparing for Emergencies')

The ability to maintain operations and services in the face of a disruptive event. For more information see [Business Continuity Management Policy \(Policy/192/09\)](#).

2.2 Background Information

National Policing Improvement Agency - This SOP complies with the current National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) training methodology and is aligned to the NPIA National Debriefing model.

3 GOVERNANCE AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES

3.1 Governance

The management of debriefs will sit with the person who is responsible for the incident or event. In most circumstances this will be the Gold Commander of the incident, or the SIO dependant upon the circumstances. Where the incident is likely to have a significant impact on the BTP, the Gold Commander or SIO will ensure that a debrief is held, and they will direct what type of debrief will take place ([Section 4](#)).

3.2 General Principles

The purpose of debriefing is to identify good practice and areas for improvement', by reporting on the event and making recommendations. An effective debriefing process should ensure that organisational lessons are learnt. Debrief participants must be honest in their feedback, without making it specific to an individual.

3.3 For events which occur over a number of days, where there is more than one Gold Commander, the Senior Officer or Area Commander of the Area where the incident occurs will assume responsibility for the debriefing process as outlined in this SOP.

4 LEVELS OF DEBRIEF

4.1 The following four **Levels** of debrief may be used:-

4.2 **Level 1: Hot Debrief** – Carried out by line supervision immediately after any incident or event to obtain immediate feedback from officers and staff participating in the incident/event. A clear record of any action points and their resolution must be kept by the officer leading the hot debrief in their pocket note book. Any action points which



need to be escalated should be forwarded, in writing, to the appropriate line manager as soon as reasonably practicable.

4.3 Level 2: Standard Debrief - There will be some incidents or events that are better served by a small scale debrief, or where the process for a structured debrief may not be appropriate to the circumstances. Examples may include an incident that involved a small number of people, or a Critical Incident that linked to a Professional Standards Department (PSD) investigation. The Gold Commander, SIO or other person with responsibility for the event should ensure the debrief process is carried out and a debrief report is sent to the appropriate Area Commander or Heads of Department in accordance with the guidance on the flow chart ([at Appendix A](#)).

4.3.1 The Area Commander or Head of Department will ensure that a process of recording receipt of such debriefs is maintained, with the results of any actions taken as a result of receipt of the debrief reports.

4.3.2 The Area Commander or Head of Department will ensure that Strategic Command Team (SCT) Portfolio leads are made aware of any debrief reports that require an action to be escalated to SCT level.

4.4 Level 3: Structured Debrief

For preplanned major events a structured debrief process will be used as part of the initial Gold strategy. For dynamic major events, a structured debrief process will commence in the early stages of the incident, so that those personnel deployed to the incident in the initial phases can provide information for later phases of the response. This option is most likely to be utilised for major events, major incidents and business continuity invocations. [Appendix B](#) details the process to be used for Structured Debriefs.



4.5 Level 4 NPIA Debrief - Criteria

A level 4 NPIA debrief should be conducted in such circumstances where the event is:

- of National significance and/or,
- has forcewide impact across BTP and/or,
- has unique operational features.

4.5.1 Subject to operational commitments, the NPIA will be requested by a member of SCT to debrief an incident and produce a report with recommendations for BTP.

4.5.2 Requests for a NPIA debrief can be made through the NPIA, on the 'restricted' area of the website. <https://polka.pnn.police.uk/>

5 DEBRIEF RESPONSIBILITIES AND ESCALATION PROCESS

5.1 The Incident/Event Commander, Gold Commander or SIO dealing with an incident or event will, as part of their managerial responsibilities:

- Decide if a debrief is required. The flow chart at [Appendix A](#) provides guidance for making this decision.
- If a debrief is not required, make a record of the rationale for this decision in their pocket note book or policy log, and/or the C&C message as appropriate.
- If a debrief is required, decide the level of debrief to be undertaken and, if appropriate, who will conduct the debrief. For a Level 1 debrief the rationale for this decision will be recorded with the debrief record in their pocket note book. For Level 2, 3 and 4 debriefs the rationale for this decision will be recorded in their policy log, and/or the C&C message as appropriate.

5.2 For Level 3 debriefs, the Gold Commander or SIO will appoint a Lead Debrief Officer (LDO) to run the debrief as outlined in [Appendix B](#). Upon receipt of the debrief report from the LDO, the Gold Commander or SIO will be responsible for ensuring that it is reviewed and forwarded to the relevant SCT portfolio lead, where appropriate.



- 5.3 For a Level 4 debrief, the Gold Commander or SIO will ensure that early contact is made with the NPIA in order to make the necessary debrief arrangements.
- 5.4 Where debrief reports contain actions that are forcewide, across a number of Areas/FHQ Departments or capture organisational learning, then the debrief must be escalated to the relevant SCT portfolio holder for review, action or promulgation across BTP.
- 5.5 The SCT portfolio holder will initiate actions from the debrief report, implement policy changes and share good practice. The SCT portfolio holder should promulgate the policy changes and good practice to SCT and Force Management Team (FMT). The Force Meetings Manager (FMM) and the minute taker for SCT will maintain progress records of the actions through the minute taking process.
- 5.6 A flow chart outlining the SOP process is shown at [Appendix A](#).

6 DEBRIEFS WITH ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Independent Police Complaints Commission Investigation

It may be inappropriate to hold an immediate debrief where there is an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) investigation. After the outcome of the IPCC investigation SCT, in consultation with the Gold Commander or SIO and FHQ Professional Standards Department (PSD), will consider what debrief process, if any, is necessary.

6.2 Court allegations

Where there are court allegations against Police, the Gold Commander or SIO will take advice from the PSD regarding the holding of a debrief.



6.3 Recording decisions

There may be other reasons, in certain cases, where it is not appropriate to hold an immediate structured debrief or the debrief may need to be held at a later stage. The Gold Commander or SIO must record, in their decision log, when the decision not to hold, or to delay holding a debrief has been taken, outlining their rationale. For debriefs that may impinge on criminal investigations, investigations by the IPCC or PSD, the Gold Commander must consult with the SIO, recording the reason for the delay in an auditable document, and review that decision until the debrief is held.

6.4 Disclosure

Debrief documentation should comply with disclosure rules. All documentation is disclosable unless the information contained within the report is the subject of legal exceptions. Where applicable the SIO may require the Disclosure Officer (DO) to deal with any debrief documents by way of indexing and retain them in case of subsequent criminal proceedings or some other form of legal or judicial enquiry. All documentation should be stored as outlined in document retention guidance. Where a conviction has occurred prior to a debrief the LDO must liaise with the DO (and the SIO) as any debrief may impinge on the case and/or judicial process.

7 MULTI-AGENCY OR MAJOR INCIDENT DEBRIEFS

- 7.1 National guidance on multi-agency debriefs is contained in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Guidance on Emergency Procedures 2009 ([see www.acpo.police.uk](http://www.acpo.police.uk)). It states that following the conclusion of an emergency or major incident a report should be produced detailing experience gained by those organisations involved. The lead agency at a major incident has responsibility for any debrief. The purpose of debriefing is to identify good practice and areas for improvement. This will benefit the wider policing community, emergency services or any other organisation(s). The objective of any such debrief would be to identify areas for improvement in procedures equipment and systems. The presumption is that the



written report should be published for everyone's benefit, and that the debrief is not a forum for criticising the performance of others.

- 7.2 The guidance states that the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) will determine how the multi-agency report will be compiled and circulated. Issues identified that affect more than one agency should be brought to a forum to discuss multi-agency issues including the response and recovery stage and identify areas for development. An action plan should be compiled and agreed by all agencies. It is likely that the relevant Local Resilience Forum (LRF) will manage the process.
- 7.3 An internal BTP debrief process must be completed prior to a multi-agency debrief. This will ensure that BTP can raise any relevant issues in the multi-agency forum. The Gold Commander or SIO will give guidance as to whom should attend any multi-agency debrief. Where there has not been a BTP debrief (as per the exceptions in [section 9](#)) the Gold Commander or SIO will give guidance on attendance at this event.
- 7.4 It is likely that BTP would only host a multi-agency debrief for a major incident such as a train collision. The arrangements for this will be broadly in line with structured debriefing arrangements (as outlined in [section 6](#)). Any recommendations that come out of a multi-agency debrief may sit with the LRF, or other appropriate body dependant upon the incident.

8 MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE

- 8.1 SCT portfolio holders will ensure that debriefs are held within their areas of responsibility, and that the debrief recommendations are dealt with in a timely fashion. The Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) (Operations) will monitor debriefs through SCT and FMT minutes to ensure that the 'lessons learnt' message is being received by the appropriate members of the BTP. The ACC Operations may ask the Strategic Development Department (SDD) to perform an audit around the debrief process.



8.2 The storage of data will comply with the relevant legislation. Where possible information will be stored electronically.

9 TRAINING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The details of staff trained as LDOs will be recorded on Training Administration Scheme (TAS). Each Area Commander and Head of Department will ensure that there are sufficient numbers of staff trained under the national model of debriefing to assist with the debriefing process outlined in this SOP.

9.2 The Learning and Development Department will manage the provision of training for LDOs.

10 REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

10.1 National

- [ACPO Guidance on Emergency Procedures 2009.](#)

10.2 BTP

- [BTP Major Incident Manual 2006.](#)
- [Dealing with Fatal Incidents SOP.](#)
- [Critical Incident SOP.](#)
- [Employee Care Policy Statement.](#)
- [Record Retention Policy – undergoing development](#)

11 APPENDICES

- [Appendix A](#) [Flow Chart](#)
- [Appendix B](#) [Level 3 Structured Debrief Process](#)
- [Appendix C](#) [Debrief questionnaire](#)
- [Appendix D](#) [Debrief report template](#)