



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE

Staffordshire Police Family Liaison Officer Policy/Procedure 2023

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Executive Summary

This policy and associate's procedure guidance details the selection, management and the deployment of Family Liaison Officers (FLO) and Family Liaison Advisers and (FLA) and role of Family Liaison Coordinator (FLC)

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1. Key Points

The primary purpose of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is that of an investigator. Their role is to gather evidence and information from the family to contribute to the investigation and preserves its integrity.

A FLO is required to analyse the needs, concerns and expectations of the family in order to identify all the relevant and realistic action that should be taken in the context of their human rights and the police professional obligations.

A FLO must be directed by a Senior Investigative Officer (SIO), in simple terms FLO plus SIO.

The SIO has ownership of the strategy. The FLO should work to the aims and objectives set by the SIO. FLOs are always an overt investigator. FLOs must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them.

The role of the FLO should follow the following principles:

- Provision of honest and, as far as possible, accurate information at all times and at every stage
- Respect for the deceased and the bereaved
- A sympathetic and caring approach throughout
- The avoidance of mistaken identification.

All FLO should know the 12 rights detailed in the Victims code

[Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales \(Victim's Code\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/code-of-practice-for-victims-of-crime-in-england-and-wales)

A wealth of reference material is provided by the College of Police / APP * authorised professional practice). A link is as follows:

[APP \(authorised professional practice\) | College of Policing](#)

- Staffordshire Police internal Internet home page also provided a FLO Library which is available as follows:

[Investigation Guide – Intranet \(staffordshire.police.uk\)](#)

2. Aim of policy

The aim of this policy is to ensure:

Staffordshire Police has a consistent approach to the deployment of a FLO.

A system of governance is in place to ensure the deployment adheres to national and local policy.

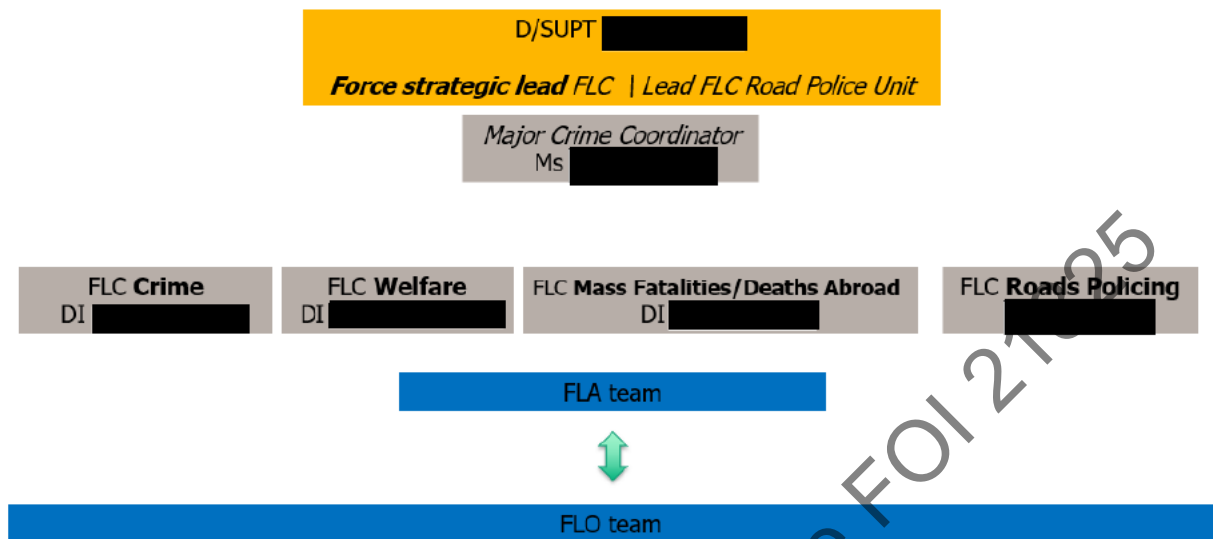
Proper and accurate records are maintained to enable full accountability of every FLO deployment.

Staffordshire Police governance is in line with National guidance.

Those provisions are shown in the link(s) below and can be accessed via the home page of the APP website

[Working with victims and witnesses | College of Policing](#)

3. Staffordshire Police Management Structure



4. Roles

There are six main roles that have been identified for the effective performance of a Family Liaison Strategy.

1. SIO

The SIO is responsible and accountable for all aspects of the investigation. This includes setting the family liaison strategy, the selection and deployment of FLOs, and supporting and supervising the FLOs.

PIP 2 qualified minimum rank Inspector (or been accepted onto the development programme with a view to accreditation) The qualifications of the SIO may vary depending on the complex nature of the investigation. It is likely a FLO may be deployed by departments outside of MOCD (Major Organised Crime Department) on these occasions a suitably experienced PIP2 detective inspector would be deemed suitable to act as SIO, in the context of FLO deployment.

Examples may include: A murder investigation led by MOCD would support a PIP3 SIO (or been accepted onto the development programme with a view to accreditation). An unexplained death under investigation where a forensic post mortem is required led by C.I.D would support a PIP 2 Qualified detective inspector.

2. Senior identification Manager (SIM) – In cases of mass fatality

The SIM is responsible for overseeing the recovery and identification process. They will work closely with the coroner to prepare evidence for the Identification Commission and the SIO.

3. Family Liaison Co-ordinator / Strategic / Tactical

A senior leader should take strategic leadership for family liaison. They should ensure an efficient and effective family liaison response, including the deployment of FLOs to bereaved families. This should be at Superintendent level.

The co-ordinator will be responsible for development and review of strategy/policy, the maintenance of a register of Family Liaison Officers, provision of support for SIO's, Divisional Family Liaison Co-ordinators, Family Liaison Advisors and Family Liaison Officers and other administrative functions.

Strategic – Superintendent

The Superintendent is responsible for the forces response to family liaison including sign off on force policy, operational delivery, governance and oversight. The Superintendent is the forces link into the National NPCC Panel, chair of the Regional FLO Meeting and chair of the force Family Liaison Operations meeting.

Tactical – Detective Inspector or above – This is broken down to Crime, Welfare and Deaths abroad and RPU.

4. **Major Incident Co-Ordinator** - will support FLC (see role profile)

5. Family Liaison Advisor

The FLA manages the deployments of FLOs and is responsible for providing or arranging support, guidance and development opportunities for those involved in family liaison. The FLA will be responsible for deploying FLOs and will report to an SIO, FLC or lead FLA. Applicants for the role of FLA must hold the rank of detective sergeant or, where appropriate, an CIU/ Road Policing sergeant. Although desirable, experience as a trained FLO isn't essential.

Tasking of the FLO will be undertaken by the FLA on behalf of the SIO. The initial strategy can be prepared by the FLA on behalf of the SIO; it must be read, understood and signed by all staff deployed to the family.

6. Family Liaison Officer FLO

The primary purpose of a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is that of an investigator. Their role is to gather evidence and information from the family to contribute to the investigation and preserves its integrity.

Family liaison deployment is one of the most important aspects of an investigation. Family members should be engaged in a professional and compassionate way, with respect for their beliefs and customs, subject to the requirements of the investigation. Those performing family liaison roles should act with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity.

The role of the Family Liaison Officer involves the day to day management of the partnership with the family in the investigation and close liaison with the SIO to ensure that families are treated appropriately, professionally and with respect to their needs. It may involve working in a variety of situations in very demanding and stressful conditions over sustained periods of time.

5. Aim of family liaison

The key aims are:

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

investigation (this can positively impact the wider issues of community trust and confidence, as well as bringing positive benefits to the investigation)

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

To work with the family in order to comply with their Rights to receive all relevant information connected with the enquiry, subject to the needs of the investigation, in a way that is proportionate to their fundamental right to respect for their privacy and family life
To ensure that the family are given information about support agencies and that appropriate referrals are made to:

- the Homicide Service.
- victim and witness support.
- the NHS and social services.
- credible support charities, in accordance with the family's consent and wishes.

6. When to deploy a FLO

FLO's can be deployed into a broad spectrum of investigations. Initial deployment is determined by a police investigation and not because a crime has been definitively determined.

- Murder/manslaughter
- Fatal RTC
- Mass Fatality incidents
- Or Critical incidents (DECLARED) or unexpected deaths under investigation where family liaison might enhance the quality of support the family receive.

The college of policy has also published a document outlining what is determined to be an unexpected death - under investigation.

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.

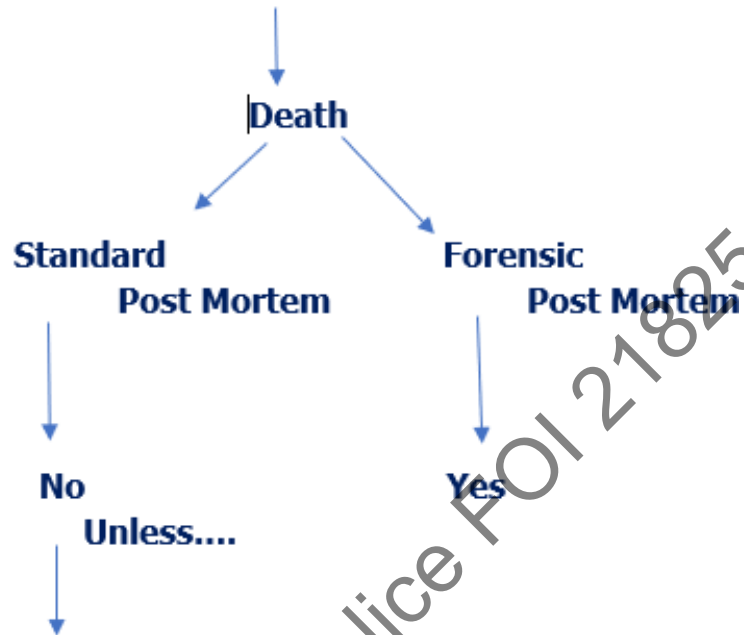
The deployment of a family liaison officer (FLO) is determined by a police investigation, not because a crime has been definitively determined.

A FLO MUST be deployed where a Forensic Post mortem has taken place. If a decision has been taken not to deploy a strong rationale needs to be written by the SIO in consultation with an FLC to explain why outlining who will be capturing the families wishes and documenting the HTA requirements.

The Code of practice for Victims of Crime in England in Wales (Victims Code) states:

If you are a bereaved close relative, **you have the Right** to have a Family Liaison Officer assigned to you by the police, **where the SIO considers this to be appropriate** (this will happen in most cases). Your Family Liaison Officer will normally act as the single point of contact between you and service providers.

When should I deploy a Family Liaison Officer?



Suspicion has been raised during Standard PM

7. How to deploy a FLO

The FLO should be selected by the appointed FLA who will be able to consider the existing deployment status of the existing FLO's cohort and welfare ensuring the most suitable person for the investigation is appointed. An FLA should be contacted in all cases if a FLO is required.

The SIO within the investigating department have responsibility for selecting and deploying a FLO/ FLA.

A FLO/ FLA will be sourced, where possible, from within the originating investigating team or command. The command structure to be followed, for example CID will look to secure FLO from City Command then County Command. CPET would look to support from Specialist Crime Command.

SIO can view the FLO CADRE on Staffordshire Police Home Page/ Investigative guides / FLO.

When demand dictates deployment of FLO's from other departments, this must be agreed by management and is a two-way process.

In the absence of any suitably skilled staff the SIO can request FLO support from other command areas, this request can be made via major crime coordinator. If no FLO is available this can be escalated to respective departmental lead.

Department leads have a responsibility to ensure their department support and provide staff to the FLO Cadre to ensure there is capability force wide.

In the event of a mass casualty event a SIM / SIO will require FLO support. This request will go via FLC and corporate resources. A mass casualty event will be both a critical incident and major

incident. FLO deployment will be mandated as per GOLD/ Strategic coordination group/ SIM or SIO.

FLO are NOT to use their own personal telephone numbers to communicate with family.

FLO's must be deployed at the earliest possible moment after a risk assessment has been conducted.

8. Essential qualifications.

Crime:

Accredited PIP2 investigator (or been accepted onto the development programme with a view to accreditation).

Experience in conducting PIP level 2 serious and complex crime investigations Attend a College of Policing licenced Family Liaison Officer Course, provided by a qualified police trainer, College of Policing Associate Trainer or equivalent.

Roads Policing:

Accredited PIP 1 investigator

Experience in conducting PIP level 1 investigations. Attend a College of Policing licenced Family Liaison Officer Course provide by a qualified police trainer, College of Policing Associate Trainer or equivalent.

Ante-Mortem:

Accredited PIP 1 investigator, experienced in conducting PIP level 1 investigations or accredited PIP2 investigator

Attend a College of Policing licenced Family Liaison Officer Course, provided by a qualified police trainer, College of Policing Associate Trainer or equivalent.

9. Selecting the FLO

Even though a person has been trained and accredited as a FLO, circumstances may dictate that their deployment to a particular family is inappropriate. It is the FLO's responsibility to inform the SIO or FLA of any factors they are aware of that are making their deployment or continued deployment in the role inappropriate.

Such factors may include: -

- A recent bereavement of a close relative/partner or other major life trauma experienced by the FLO
- Current workload
- How many times the FLO has been deployed recently
- Availability
- Whether the FLO has undertaken their occupational/welfare referrals
- Change in their personal circumstances
- View expressed by the family
- Conflicts within the family Where the victim's family has specific cultural or diversity needs then consideration should always be given to seeking independent advice to assist with effective communication. An officer or police staff member with specialist skills may be required and should the SIO feel it appropriate to deploy such a person to work alongside the FLO, they should ensure that any risk assessment is updated accordingly, including details of any upskilling that person has been provided with and how any risks will be mitigated.

All future FLO candidates, and those who are currently performing the role, are screened to make sure

they are suitable for this important function. This can be a proportionate and measured process.

Potential applicants should first discuss the role with their line manager. They must show a thorough understanding of its requirements and the above factors discussed. The candidate's application must be authorised by Detective Inspector on a 65T.

10. Eligibility

Police officers must be accredited PIP 2 investigators under the Initial Crime Investigators Development Programme (or having passed the NIE and have been accepted onto the PIP 2 Pathway)

11. FLA accessibility

It is recommended that a FLA is deployed to support the FLO and SIO. The FLA manages the deployments of FLOs within their department and is responsible for providing or arranging support, guidance and development opportunities for those involved in family. The FLA will assist the SIO in agreeing the strategy and will be reviewing the FLO logs.

It is accepted that resources may impact on operational decisions, one such decision may be the decision of SIO to not deploy an FLA. This decision must be rationalised and recorded by the SIO. The decision maker may take account of the complex nature of the deployments, the risks associated both to the welfare of the FLO and the service to the family, the available staff and efforts made to achieve best practice. It will never be acceptable to deploy a FLO without an SIO. Please note that in some situations a suitable qualified and experienced FLO may act as FLA

12. Duel deployment

It is recommended that FLOs should be deployed in pairs, particularly in the early stages of the investigation when the need for information is at its highest and the most demand is placed on both the family and the FLO. One of the FLOs can be identified as the Lead FLO with the family while the other can become the Deputy FLO but they must both remain fully up to-date on the progress of the liaison.

While it is not necessary for both FLOs to be present every time the family is visited, both should attend where corroboration might be needed (e.g. when gathering lifestyle information) or where the risk assessment suggests that having two officers present on each occasion might be advisable. Once all of the initial objectives are achieved the deployment can be reviewed and decisions made as to the continuance of the FLOs. The deployment of FLOs in pairs has benefits for both the family and the investigation, such as when the lead FLO is unavailable for reasons such as sickness, leave, operational or court commitments.

It is accepted that resources may impact on operational decisions, one such decision may be the decision of SIO to not duel deploy. This decision must be rationalised and recorded by the SIO.

The decision maker may take account of the complex nature of the deployments, the risks associated both to the welfare of the FLO and the service to the family, the available staff and efforts made to achieve best practice. If risks are identified SIO is record what consideration has been taken to manage the risk.

13. Evidence gathering and victimology.

The level of lifestyle enquiries will determine the level of detail required from families and victimology is an opportunity to gather lifestyle information from the onset of the investigation to ensure that none are missed. Understanding the lifestyle and routines of a victim may help to gather evidence and one of the aims will be to establish a link between the suspect/s, other victims and any crime scene.

It will also help to generate investigative opportunities where other lines of enquiries have been exhausted and establish the reason for their death. There are occasions when family members have witnessed the event or are significant witnesses. In these cases, there will be a need, from the outset, to exercise extreme care in the information that is shared with them. At no point should investigative updates be given to the family that would compromise them as witnesses or compromise the investigation.

Regarding victimology should be addressed with the SIO/FLC/FLA and/or Interview Advisor

14. Strategy

NPCC provide six guidance strategies, it may be that all six are required. This will be a decision for SIO.

The SIO has ownership of the strategy. The FLO should work to the aims and objectives set by the SIO. The following should be considered to allow for the accurate recording of decisions made for family liaison deployments.

15. Initial Strategy

In the aftermath of any homicide, one of the highest priority actions is to gather **victimology or lifestyle information about the victim**. The advantage of lifestyle information in the early stages of an investigation is that it can open up lines of enquiry that might not have otherwise been immediately apparent. All victimology has the potential to provide the investigation with a number of lines of enquiry but it is important to prioritise the crucial elements early in the investigation.

Initial Strategy. At an early stage in the investigation an "Initial Family Liaison Strategy" should be prepared. This initial strategy will outline the tasks for the first deployment and should concentrate on the primary objectives and urgent priorities such as victimology or lifestyle information about the victim.

Tasking of the FLO will be undertaken by the FLA on behalf of the SIO. The initial strategy can be prepared by the FLA on behalf of the SIO; it must be read, understood and signed by all staff deployed to the family.

Each FLO Strategy will be bespoke depending on the needs of the investigation and the family/friends of deceased. The reality of policing requires prompt action, it may be impractical for a SIO

and FLA to formulate a full written FLO strategy immediately and as such an initial strategy may assist.

16. Initial Family Liaison priorities

- Whether person(s) are in custody
- Whether the offender is known and is wanted in connection to the offence, particularly if there are likely to be any media appeals
- Whether person(s) unknown are responsible
- What information is already in the public domain, including what is being reported (e.g. in the media)
- Explain to the family the impact on media and social media in relation to the police/criminal justice and the police's legal obligations
- Providing the family with information regarding support services and establishing their consent (or refusal) for appropriate referrals

17. Considerations/ tasks for initial strategy

- Establishing the person(s) to speak to within the family (see family section)
- Explaining the role of the FLO to the family
- Explaining the role of the SIO/IO within the investigation
- Explaining the role of the Coroner – particularly if there is a need for urgent identification of the victim
- Building a relationship of trust and confidence and manage the family's expectations
- Identify any cultural considerations that need to be considered and record any Protected characteristics ([see below](#))
- Risk assess the deployment and implement appropriate mitigation measures (see separate risk assessment document)
- FLO to update the FLA and SIO with an initial assessment of any family concerns
- What is already known about the family i.e. whether they have witnessed the incident, and how this may impact on any information that is shared. Whether there are estrangement or other known considerations i.e. the house is a crime scene
- What witness categorization are the family members? (vulnerable, intimidated, significant)
- Is there a suspect in the family and has their status being recorded?
- Recording all family contact within the FLO log
- Is there a dual deployment? (if not, outline in risk assessment)
- Engagement with the FLOs line manager to discuss and manage deployment
- Research previous or current deployments the FLO has undertaken which may affect deployment
- Whether the FLO is a suitable person to be deployed

Protected characteristics

The Equality Act 2010 identifies protected characteristics as:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race

- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Potential protected characteristics should be considered during any FLO deployment and appropriately recorded on the FLO Logs. Protected characteristics may be a contributory factor in a death and so relevant to the investigation.

18. Briefing the FLO

In the initial stages of the investigation the SIO and FLO should recognise that the family will need information as soon as possible. A family's request for information about how their family member has died must be recognised and managed sensitively.

FLOs should be briefed upon appointment and prior to meeting the family and they should be informed what information can, and what should, be given to the family. The initial briefing from the SIO or FLA should include the following points:

- Risk assessment and any risk management plan (please see NPCC Risk assessment strategy)
- Initial objectives including fast-track actions for the deployment
- Witness categorisation (vulnerable, intimidated, significant) and how this impact on the FLO
- Reporting chain (SIO/Deputy SIO, FLA)
- Maintaining strict adherence to recording family contact within the FLO log;
- Resources available to the FLO (e.g. mobile telephones, vehicles, support information packs such as Information for the Bereaved or Brake pack)
- Standards of professional behaviour

The FLO must plan to meet the family as soon as possible, as first contact with the family is vital when laying the foundations for a successful relationship.

In all cases upon deployment the FLO must:

- Familiarise themselves with any available information and intelligence which could impact on the liaison role, e.g., impact assessment document, community tension indicators, previous police involvement with the victim and/or family members. The SIO should be informed of any community tensions from scene vigils, funerals, wake etc.
- Establish the extent and nature of the family's contact with the police since the time of the incident/death
- Establish what information has been passed to the family, to whom and by whom
- Establish what information concerning the incident is already in the public domain
- Have the relevant information to hand, for example Information for the Bereaved or the Brake pack
- Review and update the risk assessment following initial contact with the family
- Inform the SIO of any fundraising being undertaken in the event of any social media impact that could affect the family.
- Have the relevant information to hand on to the family, for example information about the Homicide Service, or the Brake pack in incidents of road death.

19. Main FLO Strategy

A further, more comprehensive strategy can be completed as soon as the facts and family dynamics are known, this will include a much richer understanding of 'victimology' information.

The main strategy must record long terms goals that should remain current throughout the lifetime of any police investigation. NPCC have provided a generic form to assist this SIO. This can be found on Staffordshire Police investigative Hub website. The form should be a guide only as each deployment should be bespoke.

The strategy should also give an overview of the current position of the investigation and family dynamics, the level of involvement, set specific objectives and tasks and establish the parameters of the role.

Full objectives can be set after a review of the Initial Strategy has been undertaken. The objectives may need to be fulfilled within a set timeframe and should constantly be reviewed and updated at regular intervals during the investigation. This will ensure that the objectives are achieved and that any further objectives are reflected in the updated document. If the objectives are not met then the aims will also remain unfulfilled.

The following objectives can be set for Family Liaison, and the tasking of FLOs should allow for the completion of these objectives:

- Gather evidence and information from the family in a manner 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 the need for 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 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 the media may have on them and the investigation
- Ensure health and wellbeing of the family liaison officers
- Conclude or withdraw family liaison deployments

All family liaison strategies should be approved by the SIO, FLC/FLA and FLO and submitted into the Major Incident Room (MIR) for inclusion onto HOLMES or in cases that are not being placed onto HOLMES, submitted with the case papers, or police electronic case systems such as NICHE.

Once these objectives have been achieved in full, family liaison deployments may conclude and a withdrawal strategy implemented

20. Working and Communicating with the Family

The designated FLO should meet the family as soon as practicable. The FLO's are at the centre of the communication between the police and the family. They are investigators on behalf of the investigation and any updates to the family should go via them.

It is beneficial that the SIO meets the family at an early stage of the investigation. This meeting will ensure

that their needs are being met.

The location for meeting will be arranged and agreed with the family. In certain circumstances the family may wish for their legal representative to be present at any meeting.

Family members will not be given an expectation of confidentiality as the nature of the police officer's role precludes this from being possible.

The FLO should visit the family at regular intervals. Some of these visits may be particularly appropriate at times of significant events or anniversaries for example:

Media appeal

Release of suspects for further enquiries or without charge

Funeral

Release of defendant on bail

Committal

Conviction/acquittal

Coroners' Court hearings

Appeal

Referral to Criminal Cases Review Commission Renewed

media attention

Cold case reviews

Document any requests made by the family, which will be forwarded for the consideration of the SIO, and to gather any complaints or requests from the family.

Provide the family with as full and up-to-date information as possible about the crime and its investigation, ensuring the investigation is not compromised by the injudicious disclosure of information

FLO should act as a conduit between the family and the SIO/investigation team.

FLO should compile a family tree and gather all relevant intelligence emanating from the family.

FLO to provide details of the SIO to the family and arrange any visits to the family

FLO to identify any safeguarding or other critical issues (and ensure this is cascaded to the SIO). Should a family or individual express concern for their personal safety or have been subject to threats or intimidation, they may request police protection or assistance. In all such cases the FLO must act quickly and effectively, informing the SIO without delay.

21. Identifying the Family

The term "family" will include partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians and others who have had a direct and close relationship with the victim. The SIO, Family Liaison Co-ordinator and Family Liaison Advisor will always consider the possible dynamics of a family's structure to ensure that an appropriate level of support is offered.

Consideration is to be given to the importance of 'significant friends' when considering next of kin especially in deaths involving Protected characteristics.

In identifying and prior to meeting the family, the SIO will establish as much information concerning the family as possible. This will include determining any possible cultural or lifestyle considerations, religious beliefs or possible communication requirements in terms of language or disability. Any information and intelligence will be gathered to ascertain if anything is known

about the victim or the family which may have bearing on the conduct of the investigation and the development of the Family Liaison Strategy.

22. Family and Police partnership.

The conduct of the first contact with the family is vital in laying the foundations for a successful partnership. At no time will a family be deliberately misled; contact will be honest and as far as possible open.

Officers will remember that family members are also victims. It is of paramount importance that families are treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and with consideration given to their needs. Officers will never make assumptions as to the particular needs and expectations of a family but will respond to those that are communicated by them.

Family Liaison Officers will be aware that some of their actions and those of the police generally may be misunderstood and, in some cases, perceived as being patronising by the family. Family Liaison Officers will minimise these possibilities by ensuring that actions and decisions are explained fully and considerately, ensuring that adequate time is taken to do so.

One of the primary concerns of family members will be the need for information. The trauma of bereavement can be compounded by the frustration of not knowing the surrounding facts. The victim's family will be provided with the timely sharing of all possible information so far as the integrity of the investigation permits. The Family Liaison Officer will have direct communication with the SIO in connection with their role and issues concerning the family.

The Family Liaison Officer will take part in regular briefings and debriefings with the SIO and investigation team. Any information released to the family will first be authorised by the SIO.

Depending on the size of the family, Family Liaison Officers may find themselves dealing with an individual or whole family. In each case, a family will vary in structure and size and the degree of involvement during an investigation cannot be forecast. Many family members (including members of the extended family) may wish to become actively involved during an investigation. This, however, may not always be possible or practicable, especially where large groups of people are involved. Consideration will be given to the closest relatives and/or partners providing a source of regular contact, should they feel able to do so.

Although this is a matter for the family to decide, they may require some guidance. Regardless of who is selected to carry out this role they may provide valuable assistance and when necessary, organise meetings to relay information to the remaining family and relatives. This may prove beneficial for all concerned and may avoid any unnecessary conflict or confusion arising. In addition to this, the Family Liaison Officer should help the family to identify someone, either from the family or outside the family (i.e. a family friend), to represent them to the media.

23. Communication with the Family

The SIO should meet the family as soon as practicable.

This introductory meeting must be a main priority during the initial stage of the investigation. It is essential for the SIO to make this contact, thereby establishing personal links with the family and ensuring that their needs are being met. The crucial importance of this meeting cannot be over emphasised.

The location for the meeting will be arranged and agreed with the family. In certain circumstances the family may wish for their legal representative to be present at any meeting. If there is a delay in the SIO meeting the family the delay and reasons for it will be recorded in the Policy File.

Family members will not be given an expectation of confidentiality as the nature of the police officer's role precludes this from being possible. Where appropriate the SIO should visit the family at regular intervals if possible in company of the Family Liaison Officer.

In some cases, language barriers may exist and communication may require the services of a suitably qualified interpreter. Where such a need arises, great care will be taken that all information is clearly relayed and understanding sought. Furthermore, caution will be exercised when interpreters are engaged in the investigative process to ensure that gender, personal background or belief is not conflicting with the family.

24. Assessing the police – family liaison relationship

The quality of the communication with the family is graded by the FLO on a numerical scale from one to three on an ongoing basis as follows: -

1. The police/family relationship is stable with no ongoing or anticipated problems
2. The police/family relationship is giving, or is anticipated to give, cause for concern
3. The police/family relationship is consistently unstable or non-existent and may require the involvement of an intermediary and/or crisis intervention

It is important to note that the grading relates to the quality of the communication between the FLO and the family; it is not a risk assessment. The grading should be recorded by the FLO in the FLO log. The SIO should take such action as may be necessary if the quality of the communication between the FLO and the family deteriorates.

Although the grading is not a risk assessment, it is important to note that it may indicate a change within the FLO deployment. Some extra considerations or support may be necessary in order to mitigate those changes.

Witness status (in family)

It is important for any interviews with designated vulnerable/intimidated/significant witnesses of family members be conducted as soon as possible in order to both protect the integrity of the investigation and allow them to be furnished with timely updates.

Where family members have been designated as vulnerable, intimidated, or significant witnesses, the reasons for this should be explained to the family, outlining why full information cannot be given to them at that time. A balanced and reasoned rationale which protects both them as victims/witnesses and the investigation should be carefully and sensitively explained to the family.

FLOs should also ensure that they comply with the obligations under The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in obtaining evidence from families.

FLOs routinely take statements to establish identification and antecedent information.

Significant witness who is a member of the family

A FLO should only be tasked to conduct an interview with a significant witness (including those also designated as vulnerable or intimidated witnesses) who is a member of the family, after careful consideration of the following factors:

- Whether or not the FLO has the skills or level of training to conduct such an interview
- Whether the FLO's position with the family is likely to be compromised by interviewing, particularly if they are hostile or reluctant
- Any decision to task a FLO to conduct a significant witness interview (including an interview with a vulnerable or intimidated witness), the rationale for it and the decision made after he or she has been debriefed should be recorded in the SIO's policy file.
- Where a FLO is tasked to conduct a significant witness interview, it is important that they are allowed sufficient time to plan and prepare for the interview as well as conduct any structured summaries, proof read any product obtained and prepare any evidence. Further consideration should be given to their ongoing deployment in the role should any issues be identified at the conclusion of the interview.

25. Suspect within the Family

In situations where there may be a suspect in the family group, a comprehensive risk assessment must be carried out prior to deploying a FLO.

FLOs are overt investigators and must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them. Care must be taken to ensure that the FLO does not stray into the area of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS). The information provided to the family should always be open and honest; however, this may need to be carefully balanced against not disclosing investigative information that may hinder the investigation.

It is the responsibility of the SIO to set any parameters on what cannot be shared with a family. When a member of the family has been arrested, interviewed and given bail or remanded in custody it makes it very difficult to provide updates, particularly if they are a direct family member.

It is entirely possible that further interviews will need to be conducted or statements taken from family members during an investigation. This will need to be carefully managed throughout the investigation.

In cases where it is suspected that a child has been murdered by a family member there is potential for the interviews to be used in Family Court as well as any criminal case.

The following issues should also be taken into consideration

- Investigative and/or evidential impact of deployment - discussions with the interview advisor and SIO should occur on every occasion due to any PACE implications.
- How any intelligence that arises from the FLOs contact with the family is to be managed
- In view of the potential for intelligence and evidence gathering, the need for the FLO to be clear concerning his or her interaction with the family in respect of the requirements of any relevant legislation.
- The importance of fully documenting all contact and interactions with the family
- The consideration of deployment of a new FLO if/when a suspect is arrested.

26. Identification Process

Code D 3.11 of PACE states that no officer involved with the investigation of the case against the suspect may take part in these procedures. This includes warning witnesses to attend an identification procedure and conveying witnesses to an identification parade.

The Family Liaison Officer should not warn or accompany any family member to an identification parade as this may jeopardise the conduct of the parade.

The Family Liaison Officer will also take time to explain the identification process to the family and the reasons why, as an investigator, they cannot take part in any part of the process.

27. Defendant's Family

In appropriate cases, SIOs should consider deploying a Family Liaison Officer with a defendant's family or asking another appropriate person to represent the family in order to act as a conduit of communication between the family and the investigation team. Such a consideration may be particularly important where the victim and the suspect come from the same family.

The family of a defendant might be considered to be victims and great care should be taken in the deployment of a Family Liaison Officer as described above. Consideration should be given to early consultation with the Crown Prosecution Service prior to such a facility being offered to the defendant's family. Whether accepted or not, the decision and reasons for it will be recorded in the SIO's Policy File.

28. Organ Donation

The need for a Home Office post-mortem examination will not always prevent organ and tissue donation

There are occasions where a victim is fatally injured and life is being supported by medical intervention. In these situations, the family or specialist nurse (Donation & Transplantation team) may wish to discuss organ donation. The specialist nurse will discuss the options and seek their feeling.

The Coroner must be consulted as no organs or tissues may be removed without the coroner's consent. Consequently, if a donor/family have given consent, but the coroner objects, there can be no donation.

If donation is contemplated, it is best practice for the coroner and SIO to discuss the coroner's thoughts on donation. SIO's can often provide more information about the mechanism of injury and inform the coroner's decision as to whether an objection should be raised. If there is any doubt, it might help to arrange a three-way conversation between the coroner, SIO and Home Office pathologist.

The SIO may request a FLO to work with the family to discuss these options and explain the process.

29. Coronial procedures

A FLO will be expected to Explain Coronial procedures including:

- Assisting with identification.

- Liaise with the Coroner and SIO particularly in relation to the Human Tissue Act (HTA) Staffordshire forms are call FPM forms. (Forensic Post mortem)
- Assist in the identification of the deceased, including completing HTA forms at the direction of the Coroner and SIO Seize any exhibits or DNA reference samples as directed by the SIO (provided that this does not compromise the FLO deployment, this may be pertinent to identification)
- Seize any exhibits or DNA reference samples as directed by the SIO (provided that this does not compromise the FLO deployment, this may be pertinent to identification)
- Explain Coronial Inquest procedures
- Explain the need for a post mortem and the reasons for a potential second post mortem
- Provide immediate, appropriate information to the family concerning the death of the victim and explain to the family what happens in relation to the body, e.g. the post- mortem(s) and Coroners' processes. The family should be informed of their right to have a representative present at the post-mortem. The family should be also informed around obligations of the HTA
- Agree working relationship with Coroners officer at earliest opportunity.

30. Visiting, Identification and Release of the Body

It will be recognised that the formal identification procedure and visiting of the body are separate processes. The identification process is the statutory responsibility of the Coroner.

The Family Liaison Officer should complete a Report of Sudden Death form (Form 12) or a bespoke report, for the attention of the Coroner's Officer. It is essential that the Family Liaison Officer regularly liaises with the Coroner's Officer, relating to any issues concerning the visiting of the body, body release and retention of body parts.

Family Liaison Officers will only pass on information about these processes after appropriate consultation with the Coroner's Officer and SIO.

In the situation where identification is challenging due to trauma to deceased, further advise will be required from SIO who is likely to consult with coroner. Identification can be done by:

- Fingerprints – if available, these are highly reliable, but as most people's fingerprints are not on record they can be of limited value;
- Odontology – or dental examination. Teeth provide one of the most reliable forms of identification as they are highly durable and most people have dental records;
- DNA profiling – direct comparisons can be made from a victim and a profile taken from their home, for example from a hair brush. Indirect comparisons can also be made using the parents' DNA;
- Physical indications – tattoos, scars or surgical implants which may be unique to the victim.

There are occasions where visual identification of the person who has died is not possible but nevertheless the family wish to visit their loved one at the mortuary. There are also times when the family wish to see CCTV or body worn camera evidence. This is really important for the family and as far as possible they should be afforded the opportunity for this to happen. It is not for the police to make decisions on behalf of the family but to give them information that enables them to make informed choices.

NPCC provide a guide strategy on visiting/ viewing and SIO is advised to complete necessary risk assessments and helpful advice provided by NPCC.

Any traumatic viewing should be carefully considered and strategy documented.

31. Disclosure of Information to the Family

It may not be possible to disclose all information to a family, especially where the suspect(s) is not immediately traced or is potentially within the family group. In extreme cases if certain information is disclosed, it could jeopardise the police investigation and/or subsequent prosecution.

This is particularly relevant when suspects have been arrested and charged and subjudice rules are in effect. Family members are very often key witnesses and there is a need from the outset to exercise extreme care in the information that is shared with them. At any later trial there is a danger that allegations could be made that the information shared by the Family Liaison Officer contaminated the family members' evidence.

In all such cases it is important that the Family Liaison Officer makes a record of information exchanged.

The Family Liaison Officer should explain fully the possible effects of information disclosure to the family particularly the transition that occurs following the charge of suspect(s) (subjudice rule).

32. Independent Advisory Groups

In cases where police family liaison has been ineffective, strained or has broken down or in circumstances where the SIO feels it would be beneficial to the investigation, the use of Independent Advisory Groups should be considered. Involvement of an Independent Advisory Group could assist to facilitate communication with the family and re-establish effective dialogue. [Community engagement and tension | College of Policing](#)

33. Working with Representatives of the Family

When there is no direct dialogue with the family, there is generally a representative acting on their behalf, often solicitors. The wishes of the family will always be respected in this regard. The family may find it more comfortable and less traumatising to communicate through a representative. Solicitors may have legitimate concerns that their client families are frightened of or upset by the police or about the progress of the investigation. The SIO will make every effort to allay those concerns.

The SIO should be guarded against telephone discussions and will ensure that a digital or letter to provide a formal record of communication subsequently supports any telephone call with a representative. The presence of the representative will not deter the SIO from striving for timely and effective communication with the family, from offering the continued support of the police and from continuing to progress the investigation.

Whilst difficulties in family liaison involving representatives can sometimes be frustrating, SIOs will maintain a positive and professional approach. It is important to recognise the reality of trust deficits between some families and the police and to pursue every avenue to foster good

relationships. It is imperative that SIOs guard against allowing the lack of direct contact with families to cloud their perceptions and focus on providing them with support and sustaining an effective investigation.

34. Indirect Communication/ break down in relationship

Cases may arise when, from the outset, or at an early stage in the investigation direct dialogue with the family and the police cannot be established or breaks down. SIOs will look to families to be part of an effective investigation, it is much harder to support, protect and work with a family at arm's length. Anything short of direct dialogue with the family has the potential to impair intelligence flow, hence weaken the investigation and further undermine confidence.

The onus is therefore on the SIO to take all possible steps to overcome any barriers or difficulties. If these cannot be overcome directly or constructive progress made towards this goal the SIO will look to other members of the police service who may be able to assist, e.g. officers responsible for community liaison or neighbourhood officers.

35. Recording of Sensitive Information

During the course of an investigation it is entirely possible that the family will take the FLO into their confidence and disclose sensitive information either about the enquiry or about the family that they want to keep confidential. At no point should the FLO promise or mislead the family that they will protect this information.

There will never be an "off the record conversation", this should be made clear at the initial meeting with family

The FLO should immediately contact the SIO to discuss how this information should be recorded. Whether this is done via an Officer's Report marked Sensitive or recorded in the FLO log, it is important that the SIO is the decision maker in this process and must always ensure the safety of others within the investigation.

36. Supporting Agencies

The Code of practice for Victims of Crime in England in Wales (Victims Code) mandates the following:

If your case involves an allegation of murder or manslaughter, you also have the Right to be referred to the National Homicide Service and any other relevant specialist support service. This offer will normally be made through your Family Liaison Officer. This now includes support for Eyewitnesses of homicide where the homicide occurs anywhere in England and Wales.

- The Code of practice for Victims of Crime in England in Wales (Victims Code) provides 12 rights. These include:
- To be referred to services that support victims and have services and support tailored to your needs.
- You have the Right to be referred to services that support victims, which includes the Right to contact them directly, and to have your needs assessed so services and support can be tailored to meet your needs. If eligible, you have the Right to be offered a referral to specialist support services and to be told about additional support available at court, for example special measures.

- To be provided with information about compensation
- Where eligible, you have the Right to be told about how to claim compensation for any loss, damage or injury caused as a result of crime.

There are a number of agencies and networks that can provide assistance at both national and local level. The nature of the support that families require varies considerably, depending on their individual needs and they will be fully involved in the decision-making process.

There are many organisations and agencies that might be able to assist people who have been bereaved.

The FLO must Ensure that family members are given information about support agencies and that referrals are made to Homicide Service/the National Road Victim Service by Brake/Victim Support and other organisations in accordance with the family's wishes and General Data Protection Regulation 2018 compliance. This includes:

- Refer the family to support agencies
- Refer to the Homicide Service in relation to murder/manslaughter as per national protocols
- Facilitate access to medical services for the family (e.g. family members suffering the effects of trauma)
- Liaise with any statutory or voluntary organisation as directed by the SIO
- Post-conviction contacts with the National Probation Service
- Liaise with CPS in relation to the Bereaved Family Scheme
- Liaise with Social Services, Education, Health
- Liaise with any appointed legal representative by the family
- Liaise with Coronial Support Service
- Liaise with Court/Witness service

Police officers are not in a position to provide full practical support and guidance when working with victims' families. The Family Liaison Officer may find that the family requires support and assistance with a variety of issues, e.g. trauma of the bereavement, funeral arrangements, financial or legal advice, health or social services (including referral to a General Practitioner), in accordance with their needs.

There is a library of support agencies on Staffordshire Police Home intranet/ Investigative guides.
[Investigation Guide – Intranet \(staffordshire.police.uk\)](#)

37. Record Keeping

Record keeping is essential to the role of family liaison and any FLO who is deployed must commence a FLO log in which to document contact with family, next of kin, representatives of the family and other parties connected to the family. The log should be maintained by the FLO but supervised at regular intervals by the SIO and FLA, submitted into the Major Incident Room and registered on HOLMES. FLO Logs within MIR will be recorded digitally. Where HOLMES is not in use, FLO logs must be included in the manual processes set up in the relevant department and it should also be supervised by the SIO and FLA.

Care needs to be given on what platform FLO Logs are recorded because systems such as NICHE can be viewed by wider teams or departments.

The purpose of recording contact with a family in the FLO log is to comply with the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act (CPIA) 1996. It is important to retain any other means of recording contact with the family, such as notebooks, for evidential integrity and disclosure purposes. The FLO log also enables the SIO to manage family liaison effectively. It ensures that there is an accurate, accountable and transparent record for any future review process. The integrity of this record is essential and the paper log book should be maintained in a securely bound document with numbered pages. The SIO must ensure that FLO logs are regularly supervised to enable the effective management and conduct of the deployment.

The log should contain the following information:

- Details of all non-sensitive strategic and tactical decisions agreed with the SIO affecting the family liaison strategy
- Date and time of all contacts made including the times of any meetings
- Method of contact, e.g. telephone and venue where applicable, e.g. at home address
- The purpose of contact and any information exchanged
- Details of any complaint made by the family and action taken to appraise the SIO
- Details of any request made by the family
- Details of who initiated the contact, e.g. police, family, others
- Details of non-family members present at meetings (care and discretion should be employed in establishing these details if they are not volunteered or already known)
- All attempts to contact the family or their representatives without success
- All attempts to contact the family which were refused or declined and any reasons given.

38. Media

Media interest in major inquiries is inevitably high. The SIO will have to balance the need to exploit any investigative advantage from family exposure to the media with the need to protect the family from unwarranted media intrusion.

The Family Liaison Officer will not issue any statements to the media unless specifically requested to do so by the SIO and in liaison with the appointed Press Officer.

The SIO will actively discourage the family from issuing statements to the media that are independent of the investigation and could impact on the investigative process. To achieve this, it is important for the family to be involved in a partnership approach with the SIO, together with the Force Press Office and Family Liaison Officer, to develop and agree a media strategy. This is particularly important when media appeals involve publishing a photograph or video and specific information regarding the victim or family.

In some cases, however, the family may wish to deal with the media directly. The SIO will actively pursue, where possible, the development and agreement of a family media strategy. Where it is not possible to pursue such a strategy the SIO will advise the family of the possible outcomes of independent media contact and devise a contingency plan to minimise the possibility of an adverse impact on the investigation.

Whether the family deal with the media through the police or directly, they will be reminded that any material arising from such contact, including video recordings, photographs or written accounts, remain the property of the media and that it could be used again at a later date without

reference to the family's wishes.

Wherever possible the material referred to in the previous paragraph will be copied for disclosure purposes (in accordance with Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act 1996).

At times of significant events such as post charge, release on police or court bail or conviction/acquittal, the SIO will revisit and review the media strategy in conjunction with the Force Press Office and family. This is particularly important upon charge of suspects when the family may need to be reminded of the jeopardy concerning subjudice and issues of a fair trial.

If the SIO identifies that media attention not generated by the police, concerning the victim, incident and/or investigation is likely to be published or transmitted, he or she is responsible for ensuring that this fact is communicated to the family.

It is likely that the media will want a photograph of the victim. The Family Liaison Officer will consult with the family and with their agreement, obtain an approved (if possible) recent photograph from the family for potential publication. Photographs may be given to representatives of the media following consultation with the SIO and appointed Press Officer on condition that they do not approach the family directly.

39. Media harassment / intrusion

IPSO - independent press standards Organisation. The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) is the **independent regulator for the newspaper and magazine industry in the UK**. They hold newspapers and magazines to account for their actions, protect individual rights, uphold high standards of journalism and help to maintain freedom of expression for the press.

If concerns have been raised re inappropriate press behaviours FLO is raise concerns with FLA/ SIO who may review IPSO guidance to check if reporters are going against the editor's code.

40. Parallel investigations / agencies

A homicide investigation is likely to involve several internal and external partners. FLOs, in consultation with SIO, must ensure bereaved families are updated on relevant parallel proceedings.

FLOs must obtain the families consent before providing the Local Authority with their details.

FLO must be aware that any pathology report is the owned by the coroner and authority must be sought before sharing.

Any information sharing between other agencies must be conducted with the relevant legal power of duty.

Statutory safeguarding reviews include:

- Domestic Homicide Reviews
- Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews
- Safeguarding Adult Reviews
- Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangement Serious Case Reviews

The above 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.

Other partners may include:

- AAIB
- Air Accident Investigation branch.
- MAIB - marine accident investigation branch
- RIAB rail investigation accident branch
- HSE
- Health and safety executive
- Care and Quality Commission
- Child bereavement UK.

41. IOPC – Independent Office or Police Conduct

IOPC may be involved in investigations where a FLO has been deployed, examples may include police contact death or serious injury or a critical incident where allegation have been made about police conducts.

The IOPC may be the lead investigator, clear direction on FLO actions and role will need to be agreed with SIO and IOPC lead investigator.

42. Suicide

A FLO should only be appointed in cases where the force has taken the decision to appoint a SIO (SIO). A FLO should not be appointed without an SIO being in place. A FLO is an investigator.

Any officer can signpost to the following agencies for support:

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (SOBS)

Helpline: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Facing the Future (Joint work with Samaritans and Cruse Bereavement Care)

Tel: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

43. Cross Border (Regional and National) Deployment

There are likely to be occasions where cross border co-operation will be necessary when deploying a FLO. For example, a homicide occurs within one force but the victim's family are located in another force.

The location of the intended deployment in relation to the force boundary must be considered. There will be occasions when it is more appropriate to seek support from the force where the family reside to deploy a FLO on our behalf.

The FLO, in consultation with the SIO, must consider the best method of successful liaison with

the family. If it is decided to deploy a Staffordshire Police FLO into another force area then the Senior Management Team must be informed of the intended deployment.

Department leads and FLC's must be consulted when deploying FLO's away from their normal place of duty.

Welfare of the deployed FLO will remain the responsibility of the SIO, FLA and Force FLC. If Staffordshire FLO are to be deployed by another force for deployment the same principles detailed in this Policy must be followed, notably:

- Nominated other force SIO
- FLO provided briefing and strategy documents
- Risk assessment conducted including Staffordshire knowledge hub / intelligence assessment.
- Line manager and force FLC made aware

44. Foreign Nationals and deaths abroad.

Staffordshire Police will inform the relevant Embassy/Consulate/High Commission as soon as it is known the deceased is a foreign national. This supports the Vienna convention. Staffordshire Police must inform the relevant Embassy/Consulate/High Commission prior to engaging with the deceased's family.

Securing evidence from abroad must be via formal channels and not breach national sovereignty. CPS will advise re ILOR etc.

45. Deaths Abroad

The decision whether or not to deploy a FLO rests with the Chief Officer of the appropriate Police Force.

A key part of this decision process is whether there is an investigative role for the FLO.

A SIO must be appointed if Staffordshire Police deploy a FLO.

Staffordshire Police Policy will mirror guidance provided by College of Police, see attached link: [12 Practice Advice FLO deaths abroad 2021.pdf \(college.police.uk\)](#)

46. Supporting and supervising the Family Liaison Officer

The SIO has a duty of care and an obligation to support and constantly monitor the health and welfare of Family Liaison Officers. They should in particular be aware of the dangers of undue stress levels that can be experienced by Family Liaison Officers who are exposed to the raw emotions and needs of the bereaved. They must not be left feeling abandoned or isolated.

In discharging this obligation, the SIO should consider the following:

- The roles and lines of responsibility for the management of Family Liaison Officers should be clearly set out and recorded within the policy file.
- There must be direct communication between the SIO and Family Liaison Officer in connection with their role and issues concerning the family.
- The Family Liaison Officers are an integral part of the investigation team and should be

present at and take part in all regular team briefings and debriefings.

In addition to the above it will be the responsibility of the SIO in conjunction with the locally appointed Family Liaison Advisor to constantly monitor the welfare of any deployed Family Liaison Officer. Interventions and immediate action should be taken as soon as any welfare issues are identified and where appropriate referrals made to the Force Welfare Officer.

The SIO should continuously review the deployment of a Family Liaison Officer and take into consideration the following:

- the suitability of the officer for retention in the role
- whether additional Family Liaison Officers should be deployed
- the needs of the family
- any changes in family or Family Liaison Officer circumstances
- any changes in the investigation

The SIO has the responsibility for ensuring that the Family Liaison Officer is not deployed any longer than is necessary to meet the immediate needs of the family and the investigation. When such needs have been met, an exit strategy should be developed and implemented. Part of this strategy will be to provide appropriate communication channels and contact point(s) to meet future needs of the family.

47. Welfare support

All operational Family Liaison Officers will attend two mandatory debriefing sessions a year with the Force Welfare Officer. Where appropriate other referrals may also be made at the personal instigation of a Family Liaison Officer or as a result of management intervention.

Any concerns about a FLO deployment need to be flagged up to the FLC Welfare Lead who will then make the necessary referral/contact with Occupation Health to assess the situation.

A record of all meetings with the Force Welfare Officer will be maintained. The record will contain the date of the meeting, the reason for the meeting, and details of any agreed actions. This record will be available to the Family Liaison Co-ordinator or SIO on request. Any other information kept by the Welfare Officer in support of the agreed actions will remain confidential unless the Family Liaison Officer gives approval.

Welfare Officers are bound by a Code of Ethics that requires confidentiality to be maintained unless the person is a danger to themselves or others.

It may be necessary, following negotiation and agreement with the Family Liaison Officer for information to be disclosed to the SIO where it is considered that continued deployment may compromise an investigation, the organisation or adversely affect the welfare of the Family Liaison Officer.

Where a Family Liaison Officer fails to comply with instructions given by the Welfare Officer or fails to attend appointments made by them without good reason consideration will be given to preclude the Family Liaison Officer from performing the role on future occasions.

The Family Liaison Co-ordinator will maintain a central register for Family Liaison Officers that will include details of all Family Liaison Officer deployments and meetings with Welfare. The Family

Liaison Co-ordinator will monitor and review this process in conjunction with Welfare and Divisional Family Liaison Co-ordinators to ensure compliance by Family Liaison Officers.

The Force Welfare Officer will be part of the Family Liaison strategic group that will meet on a quarterly basis.

48. Risk Assessments and Health and Safety Considerations

Family liaison risk assessments are a careful and systematic examination of the work activities of those undertaking family liaison duties. The responsibility for ensuring that risk assessments are conducted rests with the SIO in conjunction with the nominated Family Liaison Advisor who have a duty of care in respect of officers performing a liaison role.

Staffordshire Police has a statutory obligation for the Health and Safety of its staff and will ensure that:

- Family Liaison Officers are volunteers with operational experience who have knowledge of the potential risks associated with modern policing.
- There exists within the force an appropriate selection procedure that is designed to evaluate the suitability of each officer for the role, this is based on qualifications and line manager support.
- Officers selected receive the recommended training prior to deployment in order to enhance knowledge and awareness regarded as essential for Family Liaison Officers.
- Whilst performing the role, officers have access to support and counselling and have clear lines of communication with the Family Liaison Co-ordinator, Family Liaison Advisor, and SIO receiving regular briefings and debriefings.
- The SIO in conjunction with the Family Liaison Advisor is able to monitor the work of the Family Liaison Officer ensuring that tasks set fall within the overall aim and objectives of the liaison and that the role is performed within the parameters of clear and concise written guidelines.
- A risk assessment is undertaken prior to the deployment of a Family Liaison Officer and continuously reviewed in accordance with these recommendations.
- In addition, there is a requirement to record in writing the significant findings of the risk assessment and to review the assessment when there is a reason to suspect that it is no longer valid.
- If a FLO is to be removed from a deployment then an updated risk assessment will be completed by the FLA with a review from the FLC Welfare Lead attached.

NPCC provide generic risk assessment strategies that will support SIO and FLA.

Additional risk assessments will be made when the existing risk assessment is considered to be no longer valid. A risk assessment will be considered invalid when the circumstances of the liaison change in respect of:

- People
- Action/Activity;
- Location; or Environment

People

Full details about the address of the occupant with whom liaison has been identified might not be available until the liaison progresses and any potential increase in risk as new details come to light

will be considered. Such details would include fresh information about a known family member as well as information concerning previously unknown "family" members.

These details will be obtained in a sensitive and professional manner whilst compiling the family tree. This ensures no family member is overlooked and provides the SIO with a clear picture of the family structure.

Regardless of these family details, it is difficult to evaluate how people will react during the early stages of the grieving process and their reaction could depend on previous experiences or their view of the treatment they have received. This is true whether it is a victim or suspect's family. Bias and stereotyping should be avoided at all times. In addition to this, the potential for risk might increase in the event of others in the community adversely judging the family of a suspect.

Action/Activity

The objectives set, as part of the family liaison strategy will be reviewed continuously as the inquiry progresses and might require a variation in the tasks performed by Family Liaison Officers. As experienced investigators, these tasks will not necessarily cause them problems and could be well within their knowledge and skills, but any significant change in the family or other's perception of the role might increase the potential for risk.

Location

Prior to the deployment of Family Liaison Officers, the address may be the only known fact that can be evaluated for the purpose of the initial risk assessment. A thorough search of Niche will be conducted in a bid to establish as much information as possible about the premises and occupants. The risk assessment will also take account of any community tension that exists in that location and any changes in tension revealed during the course of the ongoing assessment that is recorded in the Family Liaison Officer's Log. (Disclosure booklet).

Any changes in location may have a bearing on the potential for risk or level of harm to the officers or others. In the event of such a change occurring, the SIO will examine the reason for the change and the need for liaison at that location.

Environment

It is essential that the address be viewed as a workplace where liaison by Family Liaison Officers is likely to be frequent or it is likely that they will spend a considerable amount of time within the premises. It is therefore crucial that the environment is not detrimental to their health.

Whilst any officer may record the identification of a potential risk, the SIO, Family Liaison Co-ordinator or Family Liaison Advisor or any other nominated staff member who has previously received appropriate training in assessing risks will complete the risk assessment. Reasons for the decisions taken will be recorded and signed by the SIO and the person making that decision.

49. Funeral Attendance

FLOs should not routinely attend funerals. This is a private moment for the family and there is no need to expose the FLOs to such raw grief unnecessarily.

Any possible attendance must be discussed with the FLC/FLA and obtaining express permission of the SIO.

If a police presence is required at the funeral due to numbers or potential disorder then a uniformed presence may be advised. The requisite risk assessment must be completed. This must be coordinated with the Local Neighbourhood Chief Inspector. This is not an appropriate task for a FLO.

50. Courts, Inquests and Public Inquiry

FLOs must adhere to the Bereaved Family Enhanced Service [Home - Victim Support](#)

It is likely that FLO attendance at court would complement the core role of the FLO however FLO attendance at court must have the express permission of the SIO/Lead Investigator.

FLOs must not make promises to families regarding attendance at court without first discussing with the SIO and FLC/FLA. A decision will be made case by case.

A decision for FLO Support in Inquests or Public Inquiries will be decided on a case by case basis.

It will be dependent on the nature of the inquest/public inquiry. There will be some inquiries where it would not be suitable to deploy FLOs.

If the FLO does support the family, the terms of reference or strategy as to what their role is would need to be case specific. It might be minimal or merely acting as a point of contact in the initial pre-inquest stages.

Public Inquiries cannot determine criminal or civil guilt – this a function reserved for the courts.

A FLOs primary role is as a detective within a criminal investigation. This is not a criminal investigation. Bereaved families should be signposted to appropriate advocate or support

51. Further Considerations for Critical Incidents

For incidents that have been declared as a critical incident by a force there may be additional considerations that FLC/FLAs as well as FLOs will need to be aware of. Any additional factors need to be placed into the Family Liaison Strategy and fully explained to the FLO. This may include additional work that the FLO would not normally consider or undertake. The command structure in such incidents may include:

Gold Command – The Gold Commander assumes and retains overall command for any operation or incident. They do not make tactical decisions but may want additional considerations for family liaison. These should be discussed with the SIO/Lead Investigator and FLC/FLA prior to inclusion in any strategy.

PIP 4 – it is important that FLOs and FLC/FLAs understand the role of a PIP 4

Clear terms of reference should be set for all parties to ensure management of all the communication between the family, SIO/Lead Investigator, FLO, FLC/FLA and PIP 4 in compliance with the rules of CPIA.

52. Emergency FLO Deployment – Mass Fatality

Deployment of FLOs to a critical incident / mass fatality must follow the latest version of the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) Plan. See separate Policy.

53. National Family Liaison Adviser

The National Family Liaison Adviser provides advice on all family liaison matters as well as assistance with complex investigations where there are suspects within the family or other sensitivities. The Adviser advises and assists UK Police Forces, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, ACPO UK DVI and Interpol.

[Major Crime Investigative Support - National Crime Agency](#)

54. Return of Property

At the conclusion of the police investigation and in accordance with the SIO's policy, the family should be spoken to in order to establish their wishes before any property is cleaned or returned to them. The FLO should liaise closely with the Exhibits Officer on all matters pertaining to exhibits. It is essential that the property is returned rather than collected as this may cause upset and trauma.

FLO must act with dignity when returning property and avoid returning loved one's items in evidence bags if this can be avoided. Tissue paper, boxes and bags are available on request to ensure property is package up and returned in a dignified manner.

The following should be discussed with the family prior to returning property to the family:

- What property is retained by the police (and under what authority i.e. PACE)
- The condition of property
- What property does the family wish to be returned
- How do they want the property returned, e.g. cleaned, in boxes
- The time scale for any return of property

All conversations should be recorded in the FLO log and the return of property should follow force policy.

Prior to the property being returned to the family it should be inspected by the FLO/Exhibits Officer to ensure that:

- Any police or court exhibit tags have been removed
- Any clothing has been cleaned and pressed when requested to do so
- Any jewellery or other personal effects have been cleaned and properly presented when requested

In relation to the cleaning of property prior to return, it is vital that the family are the decision makers in how this is done. At no point should the FLO or SIO make decisions on behalf of the family. A full explanation and, if possible (where appropriate), a photograph can be used to show the family the full extent of the damage or condition of the property to be returned. This will ensure that the family are suitably informed to make such decisions. Health and safety considerations must always be taken into account whenever property is searched and/or cleaned and this must be fully explained to the family in case this process damages the property.

Issues concerning wills and probate should be borne in mind prior to returning property to the family. The SIO and force legal teams should be consulted in any case where there is a possibility

that property may be subject to a dispute between family members.

55. Withdrawal Strategy for the FLO

FLOs must remain focused on their primary role as an investigator throughout the deployment. Where the FLO has developed a good relationship with the family, there is potential for the family to become over-reliant on the FLO and vice versa. The implications of this could have a long-term detrimental effect on both the family and the FLO. Effective supervision and monitoring of the workload of the FLO will help to minimise this.

Withdrawal strategies must be well timed, caring and considerate when implemented. A visit from the SIO and the FLO to explain the procedure from that point is likely to be appropriate and the FLO must not be left to do this alone.

The withdrawal strategy should consider support for the family once the FLO has withdrawn and in cases where the family are supported by other partner agencies, e.g. the Homicide Service, due consideration to notifying them of the withdrawal should be given.

It should be explained to the family that the objectives for police family liaison are now complete and there will be no further contact from the police Family Liaison Officers. The family should be provided with any contact details of support agencies who can offer further advice. If there are other agencies involved the family should be given the relevant contact details of the person who will provide information to them. If necessary the FLO can assist in a handover meeting with the family (with their consent).

Upon withdrawal, the FLO will inform the family that should they wish to contact the FLO it should be done via the usual channels of switchboard or, if the call is of an urgent or emergency nature, the family are to be directed to call 999 or 101.

In cases where it is necessary to maintain contact with a family over a long period of time, consideration should be given to how family liaison will continue. A single point of contact (SPOC) might be introduced to the family to act as a conduit for communication between them and the enquiry team. The SPOC can also be the contact for the family where they have particular concerns about the investigation, but any welfare issues must be passed on to a suitable support organisation for them to assist the family.

56. References and further reading.

This Policy compliments and is sourced from (on occasion quoted directly) from previous Staffordshire Police Policy, College of Police, NPCC and NPOCC guidance.

Further reading is advised to compliment this Policy. Links and copies of the below will be available of Staffordshire Police internet / investigation hub / FLO.

Major Crime Investigation Manual (MCIM 2021) [Major-Crime-Investigation-Manual-Nov-2021.pdf \(college.police.uk\)](#)

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales 2020 [The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime in England and Wales and supporting public information materials - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

College of Police guidance on Family Liaison [NPJA • Specialist Operational Support and Crime Analysis Units \(college.police.uk\)](#)

College of Police (2021) Charter for families bereaved through public tragedy [Charter for families bereaved through public tragedy \(college.police.uk\)](https://college.police.uk/charter-for-families-bereaved-through-public-tragedy)

Lord Justice Clarke's report following the Marchioness disaster in August 1989

The Kerslake Report 2018 [The Kerslake Report 2018 - JESIP Website](https://www.jesip.org.uk/the-kerslake-report-2018)

The Sir William Macpherson report 1999

An inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's response to lessons from the Stephen Port murders- HMICFRS [An inspection of the Metropolitan Police Service's response to lessons from the Stephen Port murders - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services \(justiceinspectorates.gov.uk\)](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/inspections/stephen-port-murders/)

NPCC Strategy guides

Staffordshire Police Human Tissue Procedure

Practice advice: dealing with sudden unexpected death [Dealing with sudden unexpected death \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612182/Dealing_with_sudden_unexpected_death.pdf)

Practice advice: The medical investigation of suspected homicide [Practice advice: The medical investigation of suspected homicide version 1.0 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/612182/Practice_advice_-_The_medical_investigation_of_suspected_homicide_version_1.0.pdf)

Authorised Professional Practice for Investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions

Authorised Professional Practice for Disaster Victim Identification

College of Policing role profiles for Family Liaison Coordinator, Adviser and Officer [Family Liaison Co-ordinator \(FLC\) - College of Policing](https://college.police.uk/family-liaison-co-ordinator-flc)

Staffordshire Police SUDIC Protocol

CPIA 1996 [Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/34/section/1)

NPoCC – National Role Profile FLO – 26.5.2021 (latest)