

## OFFICIAL

Published

| Event History

## Policy owned by Investigations Family Liaison Officers (FLO)

### 1. Policy Purpose and key drivers

This policy and associated procedure guidance details the selection, management and the deployment of Family Liaison Officers (FLO).

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

This policy has been checked against APP and Staffordshire Police has adopted the provisions of APP as its policy.

Those provisions are shown in the link(s) below and can be accessed via the home page of the APP website; [Authorised Professional Practice](#)

### **Policy Statements:**

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- [Authorised Professional Practice for Family Liaison](#)
- FLO Deployment Procedural Guidance
- Human Tissue Procedure
- Sudden Unexpected Death and the Medical Investigation National Guidance
- [Authorised Professional Practice for Homicide](#) (Murder Investigation Manual 2006)
- [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
- SUDIC Protocol / Child Death National Guidance
- CHIS policy

The primary role of a FLO is that of an investigator.

- There must be an investigative function to any deployment. **FLOs must not be deployed solely as a support role.**
- FLOs are always an **overt** investigator. FLOs must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them.

Care must be taken so that FLOs do not stray into the area of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS).

### **Roles**

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

***Senior Investigating Officer / Senior Identification Manager***

The role of the Senior Investigating Officer and Senior Identification Manager is primarily concerned with the building and development of a Family Liaison Strategy. In formulating this strategy the Senior Investigating Officer and Senior Identification Manager must aim to achieve a partnership approach with the family in the context of the investigation. The selection, deployment, support, and supervision of Family Liaison Officers is crucial to the role.

The Senior Identification Manager's role is primarily concerned with the management of a Major Disaster and a Senior Identification Manager will only be appointed on the very rare occasions that a Major Disaster occurs within Staffordshire. This guidance will refer to the Senior Investigating Officer roles and responsibilities throughout but will be relevant to that of a Senior Identification Manager.

***Family Liaison Co-ordinator***

A manager will be appointed to co-ordinate family liaison on behalf of the Force. 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 Senior Investigating Officer's, Divisional Family Liaison Co-ordinators, Family Liaison Advisors and Family Liaison Officers and other administrative functions.

This role will be carried out by the Detective Superintendent within the Major Investigation Department.

***Family Liaison Advisor***

The Family Liaison Advisor will provide support and advice to both the Senior Investigating Officer and Family Liaison Officers and will report directly to the Family Liaison Co-ordinator.

The role will be allocated to an officer of at least the rank of Sergeant. However as Family Liaison Officers develop their skills through experience and sufficient are trained to meet current Force needs the role of Advisor should be given to an officer with the relevant skills and experience and need not be rank specific.

***Family Liaison Officer***

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 Senior Investigating Officer 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.

**Management Structure**



Family Liaison can be used across a broad spectrum of investigations:

- Murder and manslaughter
- Fatal or Serious Injury Road Traffic Collision (RTC)
- Mass Fatality Incidents
- Critical incidents where family liaison might enhance the effectiveness of the police response
- Air, Rail and Maritime fatalities
- Any death where a Forensic Post Mortem (FPM) has taken place

A FLO must be deployed if suspicions have been raised during or after a standard post mortem and an investigation has commenced.

### **How to deploy an FLO**

- The Family Liaison Coordinator (FLC) / Family Liaison Adviser (FLA) within the investigating department have responsibility for selecting and deploying a FLO.
- The decision will be based upon criteria as outlined in [APP](#).
- A FLO will be sourced, where possible, from within the originating investigating team or department.
- In the absence of any suitably skilled staff the FLA must contact the FLAs for other areas within the same department.
- When demand dictates deployment of FLO's from other departments, this must be agreed by management and is a two way process.
- The FLC/FLA must give the FLO a thorough briefing including:
  - The requirements for the investigation
  - The needs of the family
  - Supervision and management structure of the deployment
- The correct forms needs to be completed as per appendix A, B, C and D.
- Following a briefing between the FLA and Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), the FLA / SIO will write the FLO deployment initial strategy and risk assessment. These documents must be approved by the SIO.

- The FLA will continually manage the deployment and review the risk and strategy until the withdrawal of the FLO.
- Once the deployment has ended the FLA must complete a Post Deployment Debrief with the FLO and submit to the Force FLC.
- Where possible, FLO's must always be deployed in pairs. If not initially, as soon as practicable and risk assessed in the SIO policy file.
- One FLO will take the lead role with the family while the other will remain fully up to date on the progress of the liaison.
- Deployment of FLO's in pairs has benefits for the family and the investigation:
  - Liaison function can continue at times when the lead FLO is unavailable
  - Providing greater support in respect of developing a strategy
  - Greater support for managing stress.
- Both FLO's must be trained to national standards (any variation to this criterion must be recorded in the policy file and accompanied by an appropriate risk assessment).
- It is essential that all FLO's will be provided with a mobile phone and vehicle to carry out the role.
- A full policy decision must be completed by the SIO for the reasons of non-issue of a phone as well as risk assessed.
- FLO's must be deployed at the earliest possible moment after a risk assessment has been conducted.
- It is essential that FLO's are primarily, if not exclusively, dedicated to the task.
  
- To perform their function effectively they must be an integral part of the enquiry team, and included in all briefings and de-briefings.
- FLOs are an overt resource.

### **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.

### **Suicide**

- A FLO should only be appointed in cases where the force has taken the decision to appoint a Senior Investigating Officer (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: [03001115065](tel:03001115065)  
[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)
  - Facing the Future (Joint work with Samaritans and Cruse Bereavement Care)  
Tel: 0208 939 9560  
[info@facingthefuturegroups.org](mailto:info@facingthefuturegroups.org)

### **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.
- Commanders 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, FLC and Force FLC.

### **Foreign Nationals**

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

### **Deaths Abroad**

- As per Authorised Professional Practice FLO Deployment in Deaths Abroad.
- The decision whether or not to deploy an 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.

### **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.

### **Courts, Inquests and Public Inquiry**

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

- Any 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

### **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 Senior Investigating Officer in conjunction with the Family Liaison Co-ordinator or 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.
- 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 Senior Investigating Officer receiving regular briefings and debriefings.
- The Senior Investigating Officer in conjunction with the Family Liaison Co-ordinator or 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.

The risk assessment forms assess the potential risk, including:

- The circumstances that could give rise to harm
- The possibility of harm occurring
- The severity of the harm
- Who could be harmed
- What measures could be implemented to prevent or reduce the possibility of harm
- Copies of the risk assessment form can be found at Appendix A.

Risk assessments will be made by applying a common sense approach to analysing the potential for physical risk or any other risk considered by the assessor.

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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer, 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 Senior Investigating Officer and the person making that decision.

### 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 Senior Investigating Officer, Family Liaison Co-ordinator and Family Liaison Advisor will always take into account the possible dynamics of a family's structure to ensure that an appropriate level of support is offered.

In identifying and prior to meeting the family, the Senior Investigating Officer 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.

### Supporting and supervising the Family Liaison Officer

The Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer should ensure that Family Liaison Officers are only deployed in the role on one **active** enquiry at a time. (e.g. initial deployment following incident, pre-trial or other cases **necessitating frequent contact** between Family Liaison Officer and family). The Senior Investigating Officer should confirm that Family Liaison Officers have exited from families involved in other cases prior to their deployment in a new investigation. When required the local Family Liaison Co-ordinator will provide advice and guidance to assist with any deployment decisions.

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· the suitability of the officer for retention in the role</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· whether additional Family Liaison Officers should be deployed</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· the needs of the family</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· any changes in family or Family Liaison Officer circumstances</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· any changes in the investigation</li> </ul>

The Senior Investigating Officer 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. The responsibility of the Senior Investigating Officer in supervising the implementation of the exit strategy cannot be overstated and the Family Liaison Officer must not be left to do this alone. The exit strategy will also be fully documented within the Senior Investigating Officer policy file.

Responsibility does not lie with the Senior Investigating Officer alone and the Family Liaison Officer will be expected to share and take responsibility to ensure that:

- the Senior Investigating Officer is fully aware of both family and Family Liaison Officer's personal needs
- the Senior Investigating Officer is fully aware of planned visits and activity
- risk assessments have been completed prior to initial deployment to any address

- regular briefing and debriefing sessions are attended
- an exit strategy is considered at an early stage in conjunction with the Senior Investigating Officer
- mandatory welfare debriefs are attended

**Strategic and Tactical Management**

In formulating the Family Liaison Strategy the Senior Investigating Officer will aim to achieve a partnership approach with the family within the investigation. All decisions made will be recorded within the Senior Investigating Officer’s Policy File, the Family Liaison Officer’s Disclosure Booklet and agreed by the Senior Investigating Officer. The Strategy will be defined and developed taking into consideration the needs of the family, the lines of enquiry and the available intelligence. This is a dynamic process that will be reviewed at regular intervals and in consultation with the Family Liaison Officer.

The Strategy recorded in the Senior Investigating Officer’s Policy File will include:

The Family Liaison Strategy objectives. Classically they will include:

· Providing the family with as full and up to date information as possible about the incident and its investigation.
· Obtaining full family background and other relevant details as directed by the Senior Investigating Officer.
· Ensuring the investigation is not compromised by the injudicious disclosure of information.
· Gathering evidence in terms of witness statements and exhibits from the family.

The selection of Family Liaison Officers and criteria employed to select them.

Decisions and reasons affecting the level of release of information to the family.

Any requests made by the family that have not been acceded to and the reason for this action.

Any complaints made by the family and the Senior Investigating Officer’s action to progress and resolve the matters raised.

Decisions concerning involvement of other support services including the Victim Support Scheme and community interest groups at the local level.

Decisions concerning the involvement and working with representatives of the family, e.g. the involvement of a solicitor.

The involvement of an Independent Advisory Group in appropriate cases.

Family media strategy.

Arrangements for supporting the Family Liaison Officer and welfare strategy.

Any decisions regarding the deployment of an Family Liaison Officer to a suspect's family.

Exit strategy for the Family Liaison Officer.

Where there are surviving victims following a major incident, consideration will be given to the deployment of Family Liaison Officers to provide appropriate support to those victims.

### **Suspect within the Family**

When a suspect is potentially within the family group, great care will be taken in deploying a Family Liaison Officer and a risk assessment taken to support the decision making process. The following issues will be taken into consideration: Does the deployment and tasking of a Family Liaison Officer require authorisation under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. (e.g. rules relating to Covert Human Intelligence Sources).

Enhanced monitoring of the work and interaction with the family including the Family Liaison Officers welfare and safety.

The level of information disclosure to the Family Liaison Officer and in turn the family.

The process by which any intelligence that arises from Family Liaison Officer contact with the family is to be managed.

In view of the potential for intelligence and evidence gathering, the need for the Family Liaison Officer to be clear concerning his or her interaction with the family in respect of the requirements of:

- The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984
- Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999
- Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
- The Police Act 1997 and
- The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

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

The deployment of a more experienced or senior Family Liaison Officer.

The deployment of a new Family Liaison Officer when a suspect is arrested.

The deployment of a second Family Liaison Officer for corroboration issues in addition to supporting the principal Family Liaison Officer.

Not using the Family Liaison Officer in any search or arrest in the family group.

Investigative/evidential impact of deployment.

A Family Liaison Co-ordinator, Family Liaison Advisor or other nominated trained risk assessors' advice should be sought when developing a strategy concerning such deployments.

### **Defendant's Family**

In appropriate cases, Senior Investigating Officers 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 Senior Investigating Officer's Policy File.

### **Communication with the Family**

The Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer should visit the family at regular intervals (possibly with the Family Liaison Officer). 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
- 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

By maintaining regular contact with the family, the Senior Investigating Officer will be able to determine for themselves the relationship with the family and address any concerns or needs they may have, by actively encouraging them to comment on any family liaison or investigative issues.

In maintaining regular contact, the Senior Investigating Officer will have the opportunity, at the appropriate time, to receive feedback from families to allow for strategic dissemination of lessons learnt in terms of both good practice and opportunities for improvement.

### **The Family and the Media**

Media interest in major inquiries is inevitably high. The Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer, 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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.

### **Indirect Communication**

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. Senior Investigating Officers 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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.

### **Independent Advisory Groups**

In cases where police family liaison has been ineffective, strained or has broken down or in circumstances where the Senior Investigating Officer 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.

### **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 Senior Investigating Officer will make every effort to allay those concerns.

The Senior Investigating Officer should be guarded against telephone discussions and will ensure that a facsimile message 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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, Senior Investigating Officers 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 Senior Investigating Officers 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.

### **Exit Strategies**

Family Liaison Officers will remain focused in their primary role as an investigator throughout the investigation. Where the Family Liaison Officer has developed a good relationship with the family there is a potential for the family becoming over reliant on the Family Liaison Officer and the Family Liaison Officer over reliant on the family. The implications of this could have a long-term effect on both the family and the Family Liaison Officer. Exit strategies should be well timed and executed, possibly by a personal visit from the Family Liaison Officer and Senior Investigating Officer indicating the procedure from that point on. Any such exit strategy should be caring and considerate.

The Senior Investigating Officer in conjunction with Family Liaison Co-ordinator or Family Liaison Advisor, and Family Liaison Officer should discuss the development and implementation of an exit strategy at an early stage following deployment. To assist the exit strategy, close liaison with other support agencies will be maintained to ensure that the family continues to receive counselling and other support appropriate to their needs and wishes.

The original Family Liaison Officer or other nominated officer should be available for the family where they have particular concerns about the investigation. However any welfare issues should be passed on to a suitable welfare support organisation for them to provide appropriate care and assistance.

It is considered good practise for a Family Liaison Officer not to become actively involved in any funeral service. However in certain circumstances the Senior Investigating Officer may authorise certain involvement by a Family Liaison Officer and an appropriate entry will be made within the Senior Investigating Officer's policy file.

### **Role of the Family Liaison Officer**

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 Senior Investigating Officer to ensure 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.

It will assist officers who are employed in the role to more effectively discharge their responsibilities by making themselves conversant with the guidelines concerning Senior Investigating Officers, Family Liaison Co-ordinators and Family Liaison Advisors contained within the ACPO 'Murder Investigation' and 'Road Death' manuals.

The primary function of a Family Liaison Officer is that of an investigator. In performing this role the officer will also offer to provide, give and facilitate support to the family to meet their identified needs.

Officers will not under any circumstances attempt to assume the responsibility of

personally counselling a victim's family whether qualified to do so or not. This does not, however, preclude a Family Liaison Officer from offering sympathy and/or moral support. In fact, one of the most important skills a Family Liaison Officer can possess is the ability to listen. This is a simple skill that is often overlooked or taken for granted, but will be greatly appreciated by the family.

### **Personal Criteria**

It is important to understand that two distinct selection processes govern employment in the role. The first of these relates to the overall selection criteria for training in the role, as set out earlier within this section. The second relates to deployment of a Family Liaison Officer in a particular case. Even though an individual has been trained and is fully competent, circumstances may dictate that an individual's deployment or retention in the role with a particular family is inappropriate.

There is an onus on the Family Liaison Officer to inform the Senior Investigating Officer, Family Liaison Co-ordinator or Family Liaison Advisor of any factors that they are aware of, that makes their deployment or continued retention inappropriate. e.g. change in officer's personal circumstances, views expressed by the family, conflicts within the family etc.

### **Action on Appointment**

On appointment the Family Liaison Officer will discuss the strategy for working with the victim's family with the Senior Investigating Officer. The level of involvement by the Family Liaison Officer and specific tasks allocated during the investigation will be governed by this strategy. It is therefore essential that the Family Liaison Officer establish the parameters of their role during the inquiry. The Family Liaison Officer will be clear about the objectives they are seeking to meet in accordance with the Senior Investigating Officer's instructions.

The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for the passing of appropriate information regarding the inquiry to the family with the agreement of the Senior Investigating Officer (in order to avoid compromising the inquiry). As an investigator, the Family Liaison Officer will usually be responsible for the taking of statements from the family, particularly relating to the identification of the body and antecedents of the victim. Further statements from the family on more contentious issues will be tasked to the Family Liaison Officer at the discretion of the Senior Investigating Officer. In addition, Family Liaison Officers will sometimes be responsible for the formulation of a family tree and the gathering of all relevant information/intelligence emanating from the family.

The Family Liaison Officer will meet the family as soon as possible. Before meeting the family the Family Liaison Officer will:

Familiarise themselves with the inquiry (this may be done through a briefing, particularly in instances of mass disaster).

Familiarise themselves with information concerning the family, including any known family composition or group dynamics, cultural or lifestyle considerations, religious beliefs or possible communication requirements in terms of language or disability.

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. Establish the extent and nature of 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.

Conduct a thorough risk assessment of the environment following initial contact with the family as detailed within this policy.

### **Record Keeping**

At the beginning of an inquiry the Family Liaison Officer will be provided with two documents for record and note keeping:

Contact Log

Disclosure Booklet

The 'Contact Log' will be used to record all details of contact with family members, representatives of the family and other parties connected to the family. The 'Disclosure Booklet' will be used to record all other details obtained from the family and any notes taken whilst carrying out the role of Family Liaison Officer.

Both the log and booklet will be maintained by the Family Liaison Officer and supervised, at regular intervals by the Senior Investigating Officer, Family Liaison Co-ordinator or Family Liaison Advisor and registered on HOLMES. Where HOLMES is not in use, the documents will be recorded and maintained within the administrative system utilised by the investigation team.

Record keeping is essential to the role of family liaison. It provides the facility for the Senior Investigating Officer to manage the liaison effectively. It ensures that there is an accurate and transparent record for any future review or legal process.

Both the Contact Log and Disclosure Booklet will be maintained in line with force instructions relating to 'Original notes' and care will be employed in their completion, taking into account the possibility of future disclosure. In addition it is also important to retain any other means used to record any information relating to contacts such as loose pieces of paper or notebooks to ensure evidential integrity and to meet the requirements of the Criminal Procedures and Investigation Act 1996.

Where the Family Liaison Officer suspects a member of the family of being involved in the offence, they will immediately bring it to the attention of the Senior Investigating Officer, being mindful of the implications of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 in such circumstances.

The following information should be recorded in the Contact Log or Disclosure Booklet:

Details of all strategic and tactical decisions agreed with the Senior Investigating Officer, Family Liaison Co-ordinator or Family Liaison Advisor relating to the Family Liaison Strategy.

Date and time of all contacts made including the times of any meetings.

Method of contact and venue where applicable e.g. by telephone, at home address.

Detail the purpose of contact and any information exchanged.

Details of any complaint made by the family and action taken to appraise the Senior Investigating Officer.

Details of any request made by the family not acceded to and action taken to appraise the Senior Investigating Officer.

Details of who initiated the contact, e.g. police, family, others.

Details of non-family members present at meetings – care and discretion will 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 that were refused or declined and any reasons given.

Date and time of submission of information to HOLMES or other administrative system.

### **Working and Communicating with the Family**

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 Senior Investigating Officer in connection with their role and issues concerning the family. The Family Liaison Officer will take part in regular briefings and debriefings with the Senior Investigating Officer and investigation team. Any information released to the family will first be authorised by the Senior Investigating Officer.

Depending on the size of the family, Family Liaison Officers may find themselves dealing with an individual or whole families. 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.

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.

During the initial contact with the family and in any event during the early stages of the inquiry, the Family Liaison Officer will draw the family's attention to and confirm their understanding of the conduct of a police investigation and the role of the Family Liaison Officer. Each family should be provided with the Family Liaison Officer's leaflet – 'Who we are and what we do.'

The Family Liaison Officer will have a number of issues that will require addressing with the family in the early stages:

Providing immediate appropriate information to the family concerning the death of the victim and explaining to the family what happens now in respect of the body e.g. the post mortem(s) and Coroners' processes. The family will be informed of their right to have a representative present at the post mortem.

The Family Liaison Officer will establish early liaison with the Coroner's Officer and remain in regular contact. The Family Liaison Officer will introduce the Coroner's Officer to the family at the earliest opportunity. The Coroner's Officer will be an additional point of contact for the family, in relation to queries regarding the viewing, identification, release of the body and retention of body parts.

Establishing from family members any immediate evidence, information or rumours they may be aware of, so that it can be passed directly to the Senior Investigating Officer for urgent attention.

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 cases the Family Liaison Officer will act quickly and inform the Senior Investigating Officer without delay.

Giving or facilitating initial practical support for members of the family.

As far as is possible protect the family from unwarranted media intrusions.

Facilitating the family's wishes to visit the scene where it is divorced from the family home. There is a need to balance evidence gathering with the emotional needs of the family.

Arranging access to medical services for the family (e.g. family members suffering the effects of trauma) if they wish.

In particular cases it may be appropriate to explore with the family, at an early stage, the involvement of statutory or voluntary local support organisations, including local community interest groups.

In cases of homicide, the Family Liaison Officer will be fully conversant with the contents of the Home Office packs 'Information for Families of Homicide Victims' and 'Advice for bereaved families and friends following a death on the road.'

Family Liaison Officers will have ready access to supplies of the relevant pack. The pack will be provided to one or more family members at an early a stage. It is possible that the family may not read or use some sections of the pack for some time and the Family Liaison Officers own knowledge of the 'Criminal Justice' system and Coroners' processes will be utilised to provide the necessary information to family members in conjunction with the provided pack. In addition the obligation of the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in explaining any decisions made in accordance with its 'Victims Charter' will be explained and, where appropriate, a meeting facilitated.

### **Viewing, Identification and Release of the Body**

It will be recognised that the formal identification procedure and viewing 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) 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 viewing 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 Senior Investigating Officer.

### **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).

### **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.

### **Return of Property**

It will be the responsibility of the Senior Investigating Officer to decide when property is to be returned. Issues concerning wills and probate will be borne in mind prior to returning property to the family and the Force Solicitor's Office should be consulted where appropriate. Reference should also be made within the Senior Investigating Officer exhibit retention and destruction policy.

When considering the return of property to the family, the Family Liaison Officer will display sensitivity in respect of the items being returned, for example, cleaning of contaminated clothes, the destruction of damaged clothing following consultation with the family.

### **Media**

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

### **Supporting Agencies**

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 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.

### **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.

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 Senior Investigating Officer 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 Senior Investigating Officer 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.

### **FLO Selection and Pre-requisite**

Prerequisite for FLO Training:

- Crime FLO's must be competent at PIP Level 2 – (ICIDP trained)
- For specialist roads policing, FLO's must be competent at PIP Level 1
- PIP Levels will not be taken into account for Mass disaster/DVI FLOs. All FLO's will have a specialist input for DVI on their FLO Course. But they will be trained FLOs irrespective of their PIP status.

Candidates should have the following personal qualities:

- Resolute, compassionate and committed
- Emotionally aware
- Take ownership
- Collaborative
- Deliver, support and inspire
- Analyse critically
- Innovative and open-minded

The FLO must inform the SIO/SIM/SPOC of any factors that makes their deployment or continued retention inappropriate.

*For example, if they have suffered a significant loss or recently has undergone a major life trauma.*

### **Training and Continuous Professional Development**

- FLO/FLA/FLC must be delivered by at least one trainer and/or subject matter expert who is operationally competent in the subject-area being covered.
- A trainer delivering the FLO/FLA/FLC programmes should fulfil the following designated criteria:
- Meet the College trainer standard.
- Have the requisite knowledge and understanding of the FLO/FLA/FLC curriculum (APP and Practice Advice Guidance).
- Be either accredited at the requisite PIP level or be assisted by a co-facilitator/SME who is accredited to the relevant PIP level.

### **FLO Occupational Health and Welfare**

- Family Liaison Roles are exposed to higher levels of vulnerability in their day to day tasks when dealing with bereaved families.
- All officers involved in Family Liaison must complete a bi-annual psychological screening test.
- Bi-annual screening tests are to ensure they are maintaining mental and physical wellbeing.
- Any officer deployed in a DVI context will complete the Government Health Questionnaires at the start and end of each deployment.

### **Record Keeping and FLOs**

- Record keeping is essential to the role of family liaison.
- Records enable the SIO to manage the liaison effectively and ensures an accurate and transparent record for any future review or legal process.

### **Information Sharing**

- [APP – Information and Support for Families](#)
- FLOs must inform the bereaved families of any DHR / SCR chaired by the Local Authority.
- FLOs must obtain the families consent before providing the Local Authority with their details.
- Any information sharing between other agencies must be conducted with the relevant legal power of duty.

### **Memorandum of Understandings (MOU)s**

- [MoU between Care Quality Commission \(CQC\) & National Police Chiefs Council \(NPCC\)](#)
- [MoU between Accident Investigation Branches \(AIB\) & National Police Chiefs Council \(NPCC\)](#)
- MoU between IOPC & NPCC
- [MoU between Health & Safety Executive \(HSE\) & National Police Chiefs Council \(NPCC\)](#)
- [MoU between NPCC, FCDO and Chief Coroner of England and Wales \(Deaths Abroad\)](#)

### **Promotion / Distribution**

It will be available on Staffordshire Police website and the Force Intranet both through the PNLD and the 'Family Liaison' page within the MOCD section. It will be promoted both centrally and locally through established training events and forums.

### **Monitoring Review**

The policy will be formally reviewed every 12-months by the Force Family Liaison Co-ordinator in conjunction with the Principal Senior Investigating Officer.

#### **Related Documents**

Links to related documents:

**Gatekeeper** - the Author suggested the following Procedure document(s) to link to.

#### **Relevant Dates and Review Period**

Effective Date:	01/10/2009
Review Date:	17/06/2022
Review Frequency:	Annually

#### **Policy Basis and Implications**

2. Legal Basis:	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 Criminal Justice Act 1994 Criminal Procedures Investigation Act 1996 Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
3. Management of Police Information (MoPI):	<b>MoPI Policing Purpose:</b> Protecting Life and Property, Preventing the commission of offences, Any duty or responsibility arising from common or statute law <b>MoPI Review, Retention and Disposal addressed as follows:</b> In line with the crime type under MOPI.
4. Associated Benefits:	Defined nationally in order support victims and witnesses for Homicide, serious RTC and DUI investigations.
5. Consultation:	Consultation has taken place regionally and nationally with other forces and appropriate FLO coordinators, Policy of other forces has been reviewed in conjunction with APP guidance, within force this has been reviewed by the force lead and Family liaison coordinator, FLO ROLE IS VOLUNTARY AND ONLY APPLIED TO POLICE OFFICERS. Federation is aware of the APP in respect of this.
6. Financial Implications:	Financial savings via the completion of electronic forms.
7. Human Resources / Training:	No training implications
8. Associated Policy:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Authorised Professional Practice for Family Liaison</li> <li>- FLO Deployment Procedural Guidance</li> <li>- Human Tissue Procedure</li> <li>- Sudden Unexpected Death and the Medical Investigation National Guidance</li> <li>- Authorised Professional Practice for Homicide (Murder Investigation Manual 2006)</li> <li>- Authorised Professional Practice for Investigation of fatal and serious injury road collisions</li> <li>- Authorised Professional Practice for Disaster Victim Identification</li> <li>- College of Policing role profiles for Family Liaison Coordinator, Adviser and Officer</li> </ul>

- SUDIC Protocol / Child Death National Guidance
- CHIS policy

**FOI, Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment**

**Indicators**

FOIA:	Release to Public		
ECHR:	Compliant with proportionality test	Articles engaged:	Article 2 Right To Life; Article 5 Right to Liberty and Security; Article 6 Fair Trial; Article 8 Right to respect for Private and Family life; Article 9 Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion; Article 14 Prohibition of Discrimination; Protocol, Article 1 - Protection of Property
EIA:	Compliant	Compliant with Code of Ethics:	Yes

**Indexing**

Categories: Major Crime

**OFFICIAL**