

**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

Published

| Event History

**Policy owned by Operational Services  
Sudden Death - Investigation and Reporting****1. Policy Purpose and key drivers**

This Policy applies to any death that has come to the attention of Staffordshire Police by reason of it being described as violent or unnatural, the cause of death is unknown/unexplained and often unexpected. Such instances are commonly and collectively referred to as 'Sudden Death'.

The aims of this policy are:

- When investigating a case of sudden death to ensure that all persons concerned with such a death receive a professional service and recognition and account is taken of the multicultural nature and diverse needs of anyone affected by a sudden death.
- To ensure the dignity of the deceased.
- To ensure Staffordshire Police personnel recognise and understand their responsibilities when dealing with a report of a sudden death.
- To promote best practice or indicate where best practice advice may be found.
- To ensure there is a consistent standard of approach by Staffordshire Police across the different Coroner's administrative areas and that the needs of the Coroners are met.
- If other agencies are involved with the Police in the investigation of sudden death to distinguish, by agreement, between those areas for which the Police are accountable and those that are the responsibility of those other agencies. Together with those other agencies to ensure the exchange of appropriate information.

The policy provides for a structured approach for dealing with reports of Sudden Death from initial action to the conduct of an investigation through to final disposal at court or inquest.

The correct classification of the death provides decision makers with a framework to select the least intrusive, but most appropriate, interventions to complete the investigation and to ensure that any action taken is proportional to achieve the objectives of the investigation.

**The Role of H.M. Coroner**

The office of H.M. Coroner is a historic and firmly established office having responsibility for a number of duties including:

Coroners inquire into the causes and circumstance of a death under legislative powers and inquiries are directed solely to ascertain:

- who the deceased was;

- how, when and where the deceased came by their death; and,
- the particulars ,if any, required by legislation to be registered concerning the death.

A Coroner will conduct an investigation, legal inquiry, when informed the body of the deceased is lying within their district or geographical jurisdiction. A Coroner is no longer restricted to holding inquests within their own districts and have the option to relocate it if it is in the interests of the bereaved family.

The Coroner is expected to open an inquest where there is reasonable suspicion that the deceased has died a violent or unnatural death, where the cause of death is unknown or if the deceased died while in custody or state detention as defined in law and in addition, the Coroner will also investigate where the deceased has not been seen by the doctor issuing the medical certificate of cause of death, or during the 14 days before the death.

### Related Documents

Links to related documents:

[Sudden Death - response to suspected "Chemical Suicides" \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Attendance and Non Attendance Criteria \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Brief Overview of Coroners & Frequently Asked Questions \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Completion of Form 12 \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Confirmation of Death \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Deaths in the Workplace \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Help and Support with Bereavement \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Initial Action at the Scene \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Property of the Deceased - Non Suspicious Circumstances \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Suspicion of Suicide \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Risk of Infectious Diseases \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Removal of Bodies \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Firearms & Firearms Certificates \(Procedure\)](#)  
[Sudden Death - Identification of the Deceased \(Procedure\)](#)

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

Sudden Death – Attendance and Non Attendance Criteria; Sudden Death – Brief Overview of Coroners & Frequently Asked Questions; Sudden Death – Completion of Form 12; Sudden Death – Confirmation of Death & Removal of Bodies; Sudden Death – Deaths in the Workplace; Sudden Death – Firearms & Firearms Certificates; Sudden Death – Help and Support with Bereavement; Sudden Death – Identification of the Deceased; Sudden Death – Initial Action at the Scene; Sudden Death – Property of the Deceased – Non Suspicious Circumstances; Sudden Death – Removal of Bodies; Sudden Death – Risk of Infectious Diseases; Sudden Death – Suspicion of Suicide

### Relevant Dates and Review Period

Effective Date: 21/01/2016  
 Review Date: 23/05/2018  
 Review Frequency: Annually

### Policy Basis and Implications

2. Legal Basis: The legal parameters within which sudden death investigations are conducted can be found in common law, case law, international law and legal conventions.
3. Management of Police Information (MoPI): MoPI Policing Purpose:

Protecting Life and Property, Preserving order, Preventing the commission of offences, Bringing offenders to justice, Any duty or responsibility arising from common or statute law  
**MoPI Review, Retention and Disposal addressed as follows:**  
 Reports of Sudden Deaths are recorded on the Force Command and Control system (STORM) and are held electronically. The paper based reports prepared for Her Majesty's Coroners are held by those Coroners and they have their own management regime.

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| 4. Associated Benefits:        | Effective investigation of reports of sudden death ensuring no investigative opportunities are lost. More efficient use of Police resources by being able to identify at an early stage those sudden deaths that are to be investigated by the Police and those that can confidently be investigated by the Coronal process |
| 5. Consultation:               | Her Majesty's Coroners<br>West Midlands Ambulance Service<br>Primecare contract health services<br>Police Coroners Officers for Staffordshire<br>Staffordshire Police Investigative Services Department<br>Staffordshire Police Justice Services Department<br>Police Federation<br>Unison                                  |
| 6. Financial Implications:     | It is anticipated that appropriate application of this policy will result in significant savings in police resources and no additional funding is required  |
| 7. Human Resources / Training: | There is a CBT package giving correct instruction on the reporting standard required for sudden deaths and the completion of Sudden Death report Form 12  |
| 8. Associated Policy:          | Major Investigation Operating parameters; Road Death Investigation.   |

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

FOIA:	Release to Public		
ECHR:	Compliant		
EIA:	Compliant	Compliant with Code of Ethics:	Yes

**Indexing**

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| Categories: | Crime Investigation<br>Death<br>Major Crime<br>Roads Policing |
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