



<b><u>Policy Title</u></b>	Critical Incident Management
<b><u>CCMT Sponsor</u></b>	ACC Local Policing
<b><u>Department/Area</u></b>	Operational Support
<b><u>Section/Sector</u></b>	Headquarters Operations

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## 1.0 Rationale

The intention of this document is to ensure that so far as is reasonably possible Thames Valley Police provide an effective response to incidents graded as or have the potential to be **critical incidents** anywhere within the Force.

### 1.1 Critical Incident definition

The ACPO Practical Advice on Critical Incident Management is a strategic document and it aims to bring national clarity to the concept and terminology of critical incidents and consistency to their management. The document considers the causes of critical incidents and focuses on three main objectives:

- Preparation
- Management
- Restoring best confidence

This advice defines a critical incident as ***any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.***

## 2.0 Intention

- To raise the awareness of Thames Valley Police employees to the fact that, when responding to or attending any incident the effectiveness of their response could have a significant impact on the confidence of
  - the victim,
  - their family and/or
  - the community*in Thames Valley Police or the police service.*
- To ensure that all officers and staff understand the concept and terminology used in critical incident management.

- To provide guidance and instruction to police officers and staff on how to respond to and deal with a critical incident

### **3.0 General Principles**

- The '*effectiveness*' of the police response is a measure of the professionalism, competence and integrity demonstrated by the officers dealing with the incident.
- '*Significant*' should be interpreted as being particular to each incident, but critically relates to the impact on the individual, family or community.
- '*Confidence*' refers to the medium or long-term confidence in policing - of victims, families and communities.

**3.1** The definition is intentionally wide because although high profile or large scale incidents have an increased potential to escalate into critical incidents, small scale (e.g. level 1 crime such as theft, criminal damage or harassment) and internal incidents can, and do, escalate into critical incidents if they are not managed correctly. We must encourage a culture of vigilance and quality assurance so that any incident that has the potential to escalate into a critical incident is identified early and is managed effectively.

**3.2** In addition, large scale critical incidents will generally have their origins in a response originally within the capability of a single BCU. It is therefore essential that preparation, identification and management starts early, continues throughout the life of the incident and focuses on the police response to all incidents.

### **4.0 Challenges & Representations**

To ensure transparency and accountability, any decision made as a result of following this policy should be clearly documented.

Challenges/representations in respect of decisions made in applying this policy should be addressed to:-

Superintendent  
Head of Headquarters Operations Department  
Operational Support  
Thames Valley Police  
Oxford Road  
Kidlington  
OX5 2NX

### **5.0 Guidance, Procedures & Tactics**

These will be covered in the supporting standard operating procedure.

## **6.0 Communication**

### **6.1 Links to Police National Legal Database/Other**

This policy will be published on the Policy Management Unit Intranet site.

- ACPO (2006) Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management
- ACPO (2006) Murder Investigation Manual
- ACPO and Home Office (2005) Hate Crime: Delivering a Quality Service
- ACPO (2005) Guidance on major Incident Rom Standard Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP)
- ACPO (2006) Guidance on the Police National Mobilisation Plan
- ACPO (2006) The Murder Investigation Manual
- ACPO (2000 Practical Advice to Core Investigative Doctrine
- ACPO (2000) ) Guidelines Relating to the Role of Chief Officers in Murder / Major Crime Investigations
- ACPO (2005) Guidance on the National Intelligence Model.
- ACPO Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace
- ACPO (1983) Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms
- ACPO (2005) Practice Advice on professionalizing the Business of Neighbourhood Policing (Draft)
- Neighbourhood Policing Programme (2006) Neighbourhood Policing; BCU Commander Guide
- Thames Valley Police Independent Advisory Group policy
- Thames Valley Police Critical Incident Response plan for Faith groups

### **6.2 Communications Strategy**

The policy will be published as follows:

- The Policy Management Unit Intranet site
- Force Weekly Orders.
- Managers Brief
- Thames View.
- Command and Control Reference Database.
- Critical Incident training

The target audience for this policy is all members of Thames Valley Police.

## **7.0 Compliance and Certification**

### **7.1 Human Rights Audit**

#### **(i) Legal Basis**

Not applicable as this policy does not engage any of the Articles of the Human Rights Act

#### **(ii) Human Rights Articles Engaged**

This policy does not engage with any of the Articles of the Human Rights Act.

#### **(iii) Prohibition of Discrimination**

This policy does not have the potential to discriminate.

### **7.2 Diversity Impact Assessment**

This policy has been assessed for its relevance to the six strands of Diversity and has been rated as "LOW" impact.

### **7.3 Diversity (Human Resources)**

In the application of this policy, the Force will not discriminate against any persons regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnic origin, religion, age or disability.

### **7.4 Data Protection**

Personal data and information gathered in connection with this policy will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **7.5 Freedom of Information Act**

All disclosures made in connection with this policy will be considered and sanctioned by the appropriate authority

This policy may be made available to the public.

## **7.6 Protective Markings**

This document is NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

## **7.7 Health & Safety at Work**

This policy is an administrative procedure and does not raise any operational risk.

## **8.0 Monitoring and Review**

### **8.1 Links to PPAF/ Force Priorities**

This policy does not directly relate to any of the domains within the Policing Performance Assessment Framework.

### **8.2 Review Process**

Superintendent HQ Operations will maintain a register of all confirmed critical incidents.

This policy should be reviewed annually, but also in light of any pertinent issues identified in feedback or de-brief comments from on-going critical incidents.

**THAMES VALLEY POLICE**  
**Standard Operating Procedure**  
**CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT**

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## **1. Definition of a Critical Incident**

***Any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community in Thames Valley Police or the police service.***

There are two main facets to Critical Incident management:

- i) Identifying and dealing with critical incidents
- ii) Taking proactive steps to restore public confidence after a critical incident has been identified.

- 1.1** The police service in the UK has a tradition of policing with the consent of the communities it serves. This tradition recognises that policing is most successful when it is based on the active and voluntary participation of all members of the community. The police service must build and maintain the trust and confidence of citizens by delivering an effective police response to all incidents if it is to gain the participation of the communities it serves.
- 1.2** This guidance focuses on providing a quality service to every incident first time, every time, at every level. Critical Incident management is simply about good policing.

## **2. Management Principles - Preparing for Critical Incidents**

- 2.1** It is imperative that efficient monitoring and quality assurance is implemented for every incident. Where issues or problems are identified during an incident, supervisors / managers should consider what immediate action and support is needed to address them.
- 2.2** Critical incidents can be caused by an accumulation of issues, one of which may have been a poor first response. Poor management processes will mean that these issues are not identified and addressed, and this impacts on the overall effectiveness of the police response.
- 2.3** Ineffective and/or inconsistent implementation of force protocols, policies and procedures has been identified as one of the main reasons why critical incidents develop. Policy and procedures are usually developed over time and incorporate current legislation and identified good practice.
- 2.4** Quality assurance processes should promote a positive approach to incident management providing support and guidance.
- 2.5** Any response to an incident should be focused, motivated, well managed and accountable. The response should also address the diverse needs of victims and witnesses.
- 2.6** An incident should not be declared critical simply because there is a risk that the police may be criticised. The decision to declare should be based on the

effectiveness of the police response and whether it is likely to have a significant impact on public confidence.

### **3. Identification of Critical Incidents**

- 3.1** All officers and staff must encourage a culture of vigilance and quality assurance so that any incident that has the potential to escalate into a critical incident is identified early and is managed effectively.
- 3.2** The definition needs to be sufficiently broad in order to ensure that potential critical incidents are not overlooked. It is essential that such incidents are identified at an early stage so that an effective police response can be implemented.
- 3.3** However, it is important that the definition is applied in a common sense way. A wide range of 'routine' policing incidents can have a significant impact on the confidence of victims and their families; not all will fall within the definition of 'critical'. For an incident to be 'critical' it will need to have some 'added dimension'.
- 3.4** Undoubtedly, a critical incident will have developed (or have the potential to develop) a high profile in the public arena. There is not an exhaustive list of what elements of an incident could attract such a profile, however, critical incidents may well involve a victim or subject who is a 'vulnerable person' or a member of any minority community or group.
- 3.5** Often, the incident itself may have an actual (or potential) element of seriousness about it and examples *could include* the following:
- a homicide
  - a serious assault
  - a vulnerable missing person
  - an operation involving the police use of firearms, which results in death or injury
  - an incident of a type that has been subject to heightened media attention, e.g. paedophile activity or a series of racist or homophobic attacks
  - a death following police contact (eg: death in custody)
  - Hate Crime/escalation of community tension
  - Fatal/serious injury polacc
- 3.6** Equally, an apparently 'routine' incident may have the potential to become 'critical' due to its unique circumstances, including its impact on the community. Officers should, therefore, always consider the wider implications of the incident they are dealing with.
- 3.7** Whenever a critical incident is identified, it must be addressed promptly and efficiently. Reassuring, rebuilding and maintaining the confidence of the victim, their family and community should be fundamental to critical incident management.

**4. Notification and escalation**

- 4.1** Any officer or member of police staff, who believes that an incident has escalated or the potential to escalate into a critical incident, they should contact their line manager, the Duty Inspector or Headquarters Control Room Inspector (HBI) immediately. HBI will also monitor incidents (URNs) in 'fast-time' with the purpose of identifying potential critical incidents.
- 4.2** HBI will ensure that the duty inspector for the BCU / LPA is notified of any potential critical incident and that the officer attends the scene (dependent on the circumstances) immediately to assess the situation and direct the police response.
- 4.3** If at any stage, HBI considers that a critical incident has occurred, the following will be contacted.
- Duty Inspector
  - Duty PACE and Critical Incident Superintendent

If the incident is **declared** as a critical incident, then the following will also be contacted, where appropriate:

- Duty Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)
  - Duty Assistant Chief Constable (ACC)
  - On call Gold Superintendent
  - BCU / LPA commander
  - Identified Head of Department
  - Local CADO
  - The on-call Media manager
  - The on call Welfare Officer
- 4.4** When a critical incident involves (or is likely to involve) significant community tension or unrest the nominated Silver commander will also consider the following:
- BCU / LPA commander
  - Force CADO (who can act as Gold's Community Impact Advisor)
  - Contact Supt HQ Operations and 'on-call' Gold Supt (if different).
  - Contact relevant tactical advisors
  - Consider 'Overlap' arrangements to provide support to the local police area concerned
  - Consider notifying the National Community Tension. This will be done via Force Community and Diversity Officer (CADO) during normal working hours.
- 4.5** Dependent on the circumstances of the incident, the HBI may need to raise the security access level on the relevant URN.
- 4.6** A proforma outlining the pertinent details of the incident (see Appendix 'A' ) should be completed at an early stage and forwarded to Superintendent HQ Operations, who will maintain a register of all declared critical incidents.

**5. Operational Response and incident assessment**

- 5.1** The duty inspector for the BCU / LPA will attend the scene of any actual or potential critical incident (dependent on the circumstances) within 1 hour of being notified.
- 5.2** The inspector will undertake an initial assessment of the incident to ascertain whether or not it is 'critical' and shall ensure that the HBI is updated.
- 5.3** The response to a critical incident should be determined by the circumstances of the incident itself. However, the supervisors attending the scene should ensure that effective police action is taken at an early stage to address the needs of:
- the victim
  - victim's family
  - the community
  - the investigative process
- 5.4** The 'on-call' Detective Inspector will be contacted at an early stage and should attend the scene in appropriate cases to oversee the initial stages of the investigation.
- 5.5** A Gold, Silver and Bronze Command structure will be instigated in response to all incidents declared as being 'critical incidents'.
- Gold Command will be undertaken by the duty ACC or BCU commander in the initial stages.
  - Silver Command will normally be the responsibility of the Duty PACE and Critical Incident Superintendent. HBI may fulfil this role during the initial stages of an incident until a local commander is in a position to take over. This can be re-appraised after consultation with the BCU Senior Management Team
  - Bronze Command will be undertaken by the duty inspector in the initial stages of most incidents.
- 5.6** Other initial actions will be dependent on the nature of the specific critical incident.
- 5.7** All decisions (and the rationale for them) will be documented in the appropriate policy log or on Command & Control as soon as practicable.

**6. Command Responsibilities**

- 6.1** Within 24 hours of a declared critical incident, an officer of ACPO rank (or the relevant BCU commander) will convene a Gold Group.
- 6.2** Gold Group  
The purpose of the Gold Group is to provide strategic leadership and direction.

Its functions are:

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- Challenging assumptions and mindsets
- Providing access to expert advice
- Accessing independent advice
- Reviewing the progress of the investigation
- Reviewing investigative strategies
- Reviewing the resources allocated to an investigation
- Commissioning (and Reviewing) Community Impact Assessments
- Develop a media strategy
- Reviewing decision logs
- Supporting comparative case analysis
- Maintaining openness and accountability
- Responding to the requirements of any external investigation / enquiry, e.g. an Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC)
- Advising HMIC of critical incidents affecting the Police Service

### 6.3 Strategic intentions of the Gold Group

- I. To ensure that Thames Valley Police provides an effective and professional response to the incident at all stages.
- II. To provide support, reassurance and timely information to family, witnesses and Thames Valley Police staff.
- III. To provide reassurance to the community and the public acknowledging the impact that the incident may have on the community's confidence.
- IV. To ensure that the interests, integrity and reputation of Thames Valley Police and its' staff are maintained and safeguarded.

*These should be reviewed in line with the incident and other impact factors.*

### 6.4 Objectives

The Group's objectives will address:

- the needs of the victim
- the needs of the family
- the needs of the community
- the needs of the investigation

NB: When a person or persons have died as a result of the actions of the Force, a senior officer will speak to the family concerned and that should normally be the duty ACC unless there are specific circumstances which suggest another officer would be appropriate. This consideration will be within the remit of the Gold Group.

### 6.5 Membership

The Gold Group may include any/all of the following members:

- ACPO or BCU commander (chair)
- A representative of the LPA's senior command team
- The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO).
- Initial Investigating Officer (IIO). As required by Chapter 6 ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms (2001).

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- Post Incident Manager (PIM). As required by Chapter 6 ACPO Manual of Guidance on Police Use of Firearms (2001).
- Supt HQ Operations
- Community Impact Advisor (the Force CADO). As recommended by the National Operations Faculty: Community Disorder - A Tactical Police Guide.
- Family Liaison Co-ordinator / Family Liaison Officer
- Independent Advisor (s) (see Appendix B for terms of reference)
- Corporate Information / Media manager
- Legal Services Department
- Staff Association representatives (e.g. Police Federation, Superintendents' Association, Unison, Black Police Association, and Lesbian & Gay Police Association.)
- A member of the Police Authority (see Appendix C for terms of reference)
- Corporate Health
- Force Chaplain

*(The membership of the group will vary over time - see 'Time scales' below).*

### 6.6 Agenda

The 'core' agenda of Gold Group meetings should include:

- i. Terms of reference
- ii. Factual update
- iii. Investigative progress
- iv. Review of decision making/policy
- v. Family concerns
- vi. Community issues
- vii. Community Impact Assessment Review
- viii. Staff welfare issues
- ix. Resources
- x. Disclosure issues
- xi. Media Strategy
- xii. Legal Advice
- xiii. Other impact factors

### 6.7 Impact factors / De-brief issues

The Gold group should consider other impact factors in relation to previous critical incidents that may affect or influence the post incident response, management of staff, etc.

Any issues raised during Gold Group meetings in relation to good practice, amendments to the policy / SOP, etc should be forwarded to Supt. HQ Operations for necessary action.

### 7. Timescales

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- 7.1 Once the 'fast-time' response to a critical incident has been implemented, the ACPO / BCU commander sponsor will consider what infrastructure needs to be put in place to support the Gold, Silver and Bronze levels.
- 7.2 It will not always be necessary to set up Gold Control facilities however, in all cases, the duty ACC ( or the Duty PACE / Critical Incident Superintendent) will commence arrangements for the formation of a Gold Group as soon as is practicable after a 'critical incident' has been declared.
- 7.3 The frequency of Gold Group meetings will be determined by the ACPO / BCU commander chairperson, in accordance with the circumstances of the incident. Without prejudice to the above, daily meetings of the Gold Group may be the norm in the first few days following a critical incident.
- 7.4 Significant dates such as the anniversary of the incident, court proceedings, inquests and public enquiries may require the Gold group to re-convene.

### 8. **Restoring Public confidence**

- 8.1 Where a loss of public confidence has occurred, the initial objective must be to restore confidence in the ability of the police to provide an effective and quality service.
- 8.2 Community issues raised by an incident may have an impact into the longer term and the Gold Group may need to continue its activities for some months, although its meetings may become less frequent.
- 8.3 In the longer term, other agencies have a role in pre-empting critical incidents and building strategies for community cohesion. The Gold Group and BCU / LPA commanders need to ensure that opportunities to work with these agencies are taken up at an early stage.

**Notification of a Critical Incident**

Date of Incident	
URN No.	
Location of Incident	
Brief details of incident	
Who called the critical incident?	
Initial Duty Inspector	
Gold Commander	
Date of initial Gold Meeting	
Key issues arising from the incident	
Signed	
Print Name	

## Independent Advisory Group

### Terms of Reference

#### Introduction

An Independent Advisory Group consists of members who are:

- (a) not members of the Thames Valley Police Force;
- (b) who have a sufficient degree of independence from the Force;
- (c) who have no connection with the judicial process; and
- (d) whose role, fundamentally, is to make submissions to the Force for consideration.

Independent Advisors are able to engage in a range of policing activities, either on a case-specific basis, or as members of a recognised advisory group.

#### Key Principles

The following key principles should be noted:

- advisors should remain entirely independent of the police service;
- advisors are engaged to critically appraise organisational policies, practices and procedures;
- advisors are able to make significant contribution in relation to both strategic and tactical considerations;
- advisors are free to make observations both within the police service and to the wider community;
- advisors are not liable for the outcomes of police decision-making;
- advisors are not answerable to police;
- advisors should be committed to installing just and fair relations between the police and the communities we serve and, just and fair relations between the communities;
- advisors should bring relevant knowledge to the group
- the police are not responsible for advisors' actions;
- the police are not obliged to follow advice that is given (although appropriate explanations should be given where recommendations are not followed).

In order to be truly effective, Independent Advisors must maintain:

- their independence
- the ability to criticise
- their credibility to communicate with communities

#### Independent Advisory Group involvement

The decision to involve Independent Advisors in a specific investigation, an issue, or issues, is a decision for Gold or Silver.

The numbers of IAG members, who may sit on a Gold/ Silver Command meeting are to be determined by the senior officer in charge after consulting the relevant Community and Diversity Officer.

**Beyond the role of an adviser**

- to investigate an incident or criminal offence;
- to seek out and interview witnesses or suspects;
- to risk contaminating criminal or civil evidence;
- to speak to the media on the behalf of the police;
- to act as a mediator or facilitator.

**Conflict of interest**

Any objection raised by whomsoever that a conflict of interest allegedly exists, between an IAG member and an issue being discussed: must be recorded by the senior officer in charge; s/he must then decide whether or not to expel the member from the relevant discussion or meeting either for the issue or issues in hand. The expulsion, for the time period, must be decided to the standard of satisfaction (the standard of satisfaction must be above the level of opinion).

Where an IAG member may believe that s/he has a conflict of interest then that must be immediately declared and if necessary to withdraw from issuing advice to the police until the issue that triggered the conflict of interest expires.

**Conclusion**

The terms of reference reinforce that lay involvement enhances operational policing and poses no threat to the office of constable or Chief Constable as it does not affect the particular powers, responsibilities or accountabilities of either.

## The Role of the Police Authority in Gold Groups

A Police Authority member will attend a Gold group at the invitation of the Gold Commander of that group.

The P.A. member is primarily there as an observer. They will not be part of any decision making process nor will they input to discussions on operational matters.

Their role which should be agreed with the Gold Commander at the outset will comprise:

1. To constructively challenge any assumptions and mindsets
2. To see that the group has processes in place to identify and address:
  - the needs of the family
  - the needs of the community
  - the needs of officers involved in the incident
3. To act as a sounding-board and support for the sponsor throughout the process, in particular supporting the ACC/BCU commander in any meetings with the public/media if requested.
4. To report back to the Chairman, officers and members of the Authority
5. In the longer term to work with the Force and the Authority through the Local Policing Boards to re-assess community impact and take any further action which may be necessary to restore public confidence.