



# POLICE SCOTLAND

Keeping people safe

## FAMILY LIAISON

### Standard Operating Procedure

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## CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE
2. INTRODUCTION
3. UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHY
4. STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITY
5. PRINCIPAL ROLES
  - 5.1 SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER
  - 5.2 SENIOR IDENTIFICATION MANAGER
  - 5.3 FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR
  - 5.4 FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR
  - 5.5 FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER
  - 5.6 FAMILY LIAISON STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP
  - 5.7 FAMILY LIAISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE
6. DEPLOYMENT OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS
7. SELECTION AND TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS
  - 7.1 SELECTION OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS
  - 7.2 TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS
8. ROLE OF THE SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER AND SENIOR IDENTIFICATION MANAGER
  - 8.1 FAMILY LIAISON STRATEGY
  - 8.2 STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL MANAGEMENT
  - 8.3 IDENTIFYING THE FAMILY
  - 8.4 SELECTION AND DEPLOYMENT
  - 8.5 BRIEFING THE FLO
  - 8.6 RISK ASSESSMENT
  - 8.7 FAMILY NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES
  - 8.8 SUPPORTING AND SUPERVISING THE FLO
  - 8.9 SIGNIFICANT WITNESS INTERVIEWS
  - 8.10 INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE POLICE INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW COMMISSION
  - 8.11 SUSPECT WITHIN THE FAMILY
  - 8.12 COMMUNICATION WITH THE FAMILY
  - 8.13 INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

- 8.14 WORKING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FAMILY
- 8.15 FAMILY AND THE MEDIA
- 9. ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR (FLC)
  - 9.1 FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR
  - 9.2 ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS
  - 9.3 SUPPORT FUNCTIONS
  - 9.4 TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATORS
- 10. FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER (FLO)
  - 10.1 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER
  - 10.2 PERSONAL CRITERIA
  - 10.3 ACTION ON APPOINTMENT
  - 10.4 VICTIMOLOGY
  - 10.5 RECORD KEEPING
  - 10.6 WORKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH THE FAMILY
  - 10.7 INDIRECT COMMUNICATION
  - 10.8 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO THE FAMILY
  - 10.9 VIEWING AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE BODY
  - 10.10 POST MORTEM EXAMINATION
  - 10.11 RETENTION OF ORGANS AND RELEASE OF THE BODY
  - 10.12 FUNERALS
  - 10.13 IDENTIFICATION PARADES
  - 10.14 RETURN OF PROPERTY
  - 10.15 MEDIA
  - 10.16 EXIT STRATEGY
  - 10.17 VICTIM INFORMATION AND ADVICE
  - 10.18 SUPPORT SERVICES
  - 10.19 WELFARE
- 11. FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR (FLM)
  - 11.1 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR
  - 11.2 SELECTION CRITERIA
  - 11.3 DEPLOYMENT
  - 11.4 MAINTAINING RECORDS OF MEETINGS
- 12. NATIONAL FAMILY LIAISON ADVISOR
- 13. FAMILY LIAISON IN MASS FATALITY INCIDENTS

- 13.1 INTRODUCTION
- 13.2 INTERPOL DVI STRATEGIC AIM
- 13.3 DVI COMMANDER
- 13.4 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRES
- 13.5 EXIT STRATEGY
- 14. ABDUCTION OF UK NATIONALS
- 15. INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS
  - 15.1 INTRODUCTION
  - 15.2 CRITERIA FOR DEPLOYMENT
  - 15.3 CONSULAR DIRECTORATE
  - 15.4 POLICE ACTION
  - 15.5 ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER
  - 15.6 FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS DEPLOYED ABROAD
  - 15.7 BEST PRACTICE
  - 15.8 INTERPOL

**APPENDICES**

		<b>In Use</b>
Appendix 'A'	'C' Division	No
Appendix 'B'	'V' Division	No
Appendix 'C'	'P' Division	No
Appendix 'D'	'A' and 'B' Divisions	No
Appendix 'E'	'E' and 'J' Divisions	No
Appendix 'F'	'N' Division	No
Appendix 'G'	'G', 'K', 'L', 'Q' & 'U' Divisions	No
Appendix 'H'	'D' Division	No
Appendix 'I'	List of Associated Legislation	No
Appendix 'J'	List of Associated Reference Documents	Yes
Appendix 'K'	List of Associated Forms	No
Appendix 'L'	Glossary of Terms	No
Appendix 'M'	Useful Telephone Numbers	Yes
Appendix 'N'	Support Agencies	Yes
Appendix 'O'	Additional Contacts	Yes

## **1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides police officers and police staff with instruction and guidance on the purpose of the deployment and management of Family Liaison Officers (FLOs).

## **2. INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 One of the most important considerations throughout the investigation of a death is providing support to the family of the deceased. Families should be considered as partners in an investigation and must be treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and according to their diverse needs.
- 2.2 This principle must be reflected at all levels of the police service and due consideration given to any police action which may impact on a family, from the media statements made by the Chief Constable, to the telephone operator who responds to a query from a family member.
- 2.3 The guidance set out in this document should be considered in circumstances in which there has been an unexplained or violent death and will include cases of homicide and mass fatality incidents. It can also be considered in circumstances that do not involve a fatality where family liaison might enhance the effectiveness of the police response, for example, hate crime.
- 2.4 This document also recognises the potential of family liaison for preventing some incidents from becoming critical. It also provides guidance in relation to the investigation and management of such incidents. Whatever the circumstances in which it is used, once engaged, family liaison must be sustainable and effective.

## **3. UNDERPINNING PHILOSOPHY**

- 3.1 In the event of the death of a human being, where there is a police investigation, the police have a positive duty to communicate effectively and inclusively with the bereaved family. On most occasions this can be achieved by deploying a trained Family Liaison Officer. In discharging their responsibility for family liaison, the aims of the police service are:
- To analyse the needs, concerns and expectations of the 'family' in order to identify relevant and realistic action that should be taken, in the context of their human rights and the obligations set out in this document.
  - To work with the 'family' in order to comply with their right to receive all relevant information connected with the enquiry, subject to the needs of the investigation. To gather all information and evidence that will assist the investigation in a way which takes cognisance of their fundamental right to privacy and family life.
- 3.2 The main objectives arising from these aims are:

- To provide information to and signpost support for the family in a sensitive and compassionate manner in accordance with the needs of the investigation;
  - To gather evidence and information from the family in a manner which contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity; and
  - To secure the confidence and trust of the family thereby enhancing their contribution to the investigation.
- 3.3 The initial priority must be to establish communication with the family as soon as practicable in order to furnish them with any information that they require in accordance with the needs of the investigation. The officer first having contact with the family has a crucial role and may not be a trained Family Liaison Officer.
- 3.4 Nevertheless, the needs and requirements of the family must be identified from this stage onwards. In supporting the family throughout the investigation, sensitivity, compassion and respect for the needs and requirements of the family must underpin the approach to gathering evidence and information.

#### **4. STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITY**

- 4.1 Strategic responsibility for family liaison at national level is undertaken by the Specialist Crime Division, which has established the Family Liaison Strategic Working Group.
- 4.2 The Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) will identify an appropriately trained officer of Superintendent rank to chair the group, which will undertake strategic responsibility for the formulation and development of family liaison policy.

#### **5. PRINCIPAL ROLES**

##### **5.1 SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER (SIO)**

- 5.1.1 A Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) is the lead investigator in cases of homicide, stranger rape, kidnap or other complex investigation. This requires the SIO to:
- Perform the role of officer in charge;
  - Develop and implement the investigative strategy
  - Develop the information management and decision making systems for the investigation;
  - Manage the resources allocated to the investigation; and
  - Be accountable to Chief Officers for the conduct of the investigation.

## **5.2 SENIOR IDENTIFICATION MANAGER (SIM)**

5.2.1 The role of the Senior Identification Manager (SIM) in instances of mass disaster, relates to the formulation and development of a Family Liaison Strategy. This will be achieved in close consultation with the SIO. In formulating the strategy, the SIM must aim to achieve a partnership approach with the family in the context of the investigation. The selection, deployment, support and supervision of the FLOs is crucial to this role.

## **5.3 FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR (FLC)**

5.3.1 The Family Liaison Coordinator is responsible for the administrative supervision of the family liaison scheme, providing assistance and advice to SIO/SIMs, the maintenance of a register of FLOs, providing support and advice for FLOs, and ensuring their continuous professional development.

## **5.4 FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR (FLM)**

5.4.1 The role of the Family Liaison Mentor (FLM) is to provide support, independent guidance and advice to FLOs regarding liaison issues. They should be able to discuss issues with FLOs arising from their deployment, provide support, guidance and advice to FLOs based on previous experience of the FLO role and to act as liaison between the FLO and FLC.

## **5.5 FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER (FLO)**

5.5.1 The role of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) involves the day-to-day management of the partnership with the family in the investigation and close liaison with the SIO/SIM 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.

## **5.6 FAMILY LIAISON STRATEGIC WORKING GROUP**

5.6.1 The Family Liaison Strategic Working Group is made up of Family Liaison Coordinators from across Scotland and includes representatives from the British Transport Police and Scottish Police College.

5.6.2 The main purpose of the group is to ensure that there is a common approach to family liaison across the PSoS, to develop family liaison in the areas of crime, roads policing, racism and civil emergencies and to identify and disseminate best practice.

5.6.3 The group meets four times a year where matters relating to family liaison are discussed. These include:

- The setting and review of Family Liaison Policy for Scotland;
- Provision of Training;
- Corporate Homicide;
- Deaths / Hostage Taking Overseas;

- Mass Disasters / DVI; and
- Provision of Strategic Advice.

5.6.4 Any issues relating to Family Liaison work can be brought to the attention of the group through the relevant FLC.

## **5.7 FAMILY LIAISON NATIONAL EXECUTIVE**

5.7.1 The chair of the Family Liaison Strategic Working Group represents the PSoS as a member of the Family Liaison National Executive, which in turn reports to the ACPO Homicide Working Group. This ensures a common response to family liaison across the UK.

## **6. DEPLOYMENT OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS**

### **6.1 DEPLOYMENT CRITERIA**

6.1.1 Family Liaison Officers should be deployed in the following cases:

- Murder;
- Suspicious deaths where there is obvious or apparent criminality;
- Missing person enquiry where there is reason to suspect foul play;
- Any other serious criminal enquiry where deployment of a FLO would be significantly beneficial to the progress of the enquiry

6.1.2 Where COPFS has directed an independent investigation in the case of:

- Deaths in police custody;
- Victims or families of police shootings;
- Police related road deaths;

fully trained independent Family Liaison Officers will be deployed by the Senior Investigator of the Police Investigation and Review Commission (PIRC)

6.1.3 The deployment of FLOs may also be considered in other types of non-criminal deaths where communication has to be maintained between the police and family of the deceased for an extended period. As the availability of trained FLOs will inevitably be limited, careful consideration should be given to their use in relation to non criminal deaths.

6.1.4 Family Liaison Officers should be considered in the following cases:

- Death which is likely to be subject of a Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI);
- Multiple deaths due to a public transport accident;
- A critical incident;
- Any death which is likely to raise serious public concern, and generate significant and sustained media interest;



- The investigation of every road collision involving a fatality, potential fatality or life changing injury;
- Hate crimes 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.

6.1.5 Great care must be taken in the selection, briefing and supervision of FLOs undertaking such deployments. In particular, those dealing with and encountering not only potential hostilities towards the Police Service, but also the question and perceptions of the ability of the police to impartially investigate the alleged events. The importance of a family liaison strategy in these circumstances cannot be overstated and will invariably extend far beyond the scope of any criminal investigation and include, for example, police complaints and misconduct inquiries.

6.1.6 It is considered best practice to deploy two trained FLOs to any incident. Where logistical issues such as mass death incidents occur, mutual aid may be required.

6.1.7 The deployment of FLOs in pairs has obvious benefits for both the family and the investigation. In cases where one FLO is unavailable for reasons such as annual leave, court or sickness, then the resilience that a dual deployment provides ensures that the liaison function can continue, without the need to introduce a new FLO who is unfamiliar with both the family and the investigation.

6.1.8 Ultimately the number of FLOs to be deployed in each case is a decision for each SIO to consider and this should be clearly documented by the SIO in their Policy File after consultation with the FLC.

## **6.2 DELIVERY OF DEATH MESSAGES**

6.2.1 Families of bereaved persons should be informed of the fact of death as soon as is practical by an appropriately briefed police officer.

6.2.2 As a general rule, a FLO should not be deployed to deliver a death message as this may delay the process of informing the family.

6.2.3 A Risk Assessment should always be carried out prior to a FLO being deployed to a family and attending the family home.

6.2.4 The deployment of a FLO to pass a death message would conflict with this requirement thereby compromising the Risk Assessment process. Where a decision is taken to deploy a FLO to carry out this task, careful consideration as to the circumstances and reason for doing so must be made by the SIO and such decisions should be recorded in the SIO Policy File and FLO Log Book.

## **7. SELECTION AND TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS**

### **7.1 SELECTION OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS**

7.1.1 Those performing the role of a FLO must always act with the highest degree of professionalism and must carry out their duties with great sensitivity. Careful consideration should therefore be given about the suitability of the officers to be trained to work with the family. Officers should be volunteers, having a clear and reasoned motive reflecting a genuine commitment for wishing to train and operate as a FLO.

7.1.2 Officers who wish to be considered for the role should submit an Application Form through their line managers. Line managers should consider the application and provide comments on their personal knowledge of the applicant.

7.1.3 Each applicant should be interviewed by the FLC in order to assess their applicants understanding of the FLO role and suitability. Other selection criteria may also be applied in line with the PSoS selection processes and may include an assessment by Occupational Health.

7.1.4 Selection for this role will be considered from police officers that match the following broad based criteria:

#### **7.1.4.1 Experience**

Officers will not be considered unless they meet the criteria below and have gained appropriate operational experience:

- Have proven investigative skills in their particular discipline;
- Be capable of producing the highest quality evidential statements;
- Be trained in investigative interviewing
- Be experienced in dealing with productions.

#### **7.1.4.2 Personal Qualities**

- Be able to display good interpersonal skills;
- Possess good communication and listening skills;
- Be confident and self-assured;
- Be able to manage their stress;
- Have the ability to work alone with minimal supervision;
- Be flexible and non-judgmental; and
- Be able to accurately record information from the family.

#### **7.1.4.3 Knowledge**

- Understand the principles of stress management;
- Possess a good knowledge and understanding of professional support services;

- Possess a good knowledge and understanding of the communities within which they work;
- Understand the legal and procedural issues associated with their particular discipline;
- Understand how Major Incident Rooms operate;
- Understand how Casualty Bureau operates; and
- Understand Interpol Disaster Victim Identification protocols.

7.1.5 In addition to these qualities, care and consideration is required in selection in circumstances where officers have suffered a significant loss in the past 18 month period, or have recently undergone a major life trauma such as divorce or serious illness of a close relative or partner. Officers who apply to become a FLO should be consulted in the decision making process around these factors. The potential impact should be considered on a case-by-case basis rather than automatically excluding any officer who has experienced such a trauma from selection for training.

## **7.2 TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS**

7.2.1 All FLOs are trained to a national standard. These officers undertake a five day training course, which is delivered at the Scottish Police College. Local divisions will deliver additional training, such as disability equality training, if considered to be appropriate to their circumstances in order to provide continuous professional development to those trained in the role and to ensure that best practice can be shared.

7.2.2 The Family Liaison Strategic Working Group will keep this training under review to ensure that it remains current and relevant.

## **8. ROLE OF THE SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICER (SIO) AND SENIOR IDENTIFICATION MANAGER (SIM)**

### **8.1 FAMILY LIAISON STRATEGY**

8.1.1 It is essential that prior to any FLO deployment the SIO/SIM has formulated a family liaison strategy. The strategy should set out the objectives for the liaison between the family and the investigation and are the basis for tasking the FLO. These objectives should include:

- Gathering material from the family;
- Obtaining Victimology;
- Keeping the family updated on the progress of the investigation;
- Ensuring the investigation is not compromised by the disclosure of information; and
- Police and family media strategy.

- 8.1.2 The Family Liaison Strategy is one of the most important considerations that the SIO/SIM will have to address throughout the investigation. In discharging this obligation the SIO/SIM must take into account the following issues:
- The roles and lines of responsibility for the management of the FLOs should be clearly set out;
  - There must be direct communication between the SIO/SIM and FLO in connection with their role and issues concerning the family;
  - That FLOs are an integral part of the investigation team and are expected to be present at and take part in all regular team briefings and debriefings; and
  - That the FLOs attend debriefings with Welfare or Occupational Health, or with a nominated individual for that department, in accordance with PSoS guidance. Failure to attend arranged debriefings without reasonable cause should negate the officer's future deployment as a FLO.
- 8.1.3 A FLO should be deployed at the earliest possible moment after a risk assessment has been conducted. This process is detailed under the Risk Assessment section of this guidance.
- 8.1.4 In determining the family liaison strategy it is essential that the SIO/SIM consider the needs of both the family and the FLO. The strategy must take into account a number of important factors:
- Identifying the family;
  - Selection and appointment;
  - Supporting and supervising the FLO;
  - Strategic and tactical management;
  - Suspect within the family;
  - Communication with the family;
  - Family and the media;
  - Indirect communication;
  - Working with representatives of the family;
  - Any additional issues in connection with deaths abroad; and
  - Exit strategies.
- 8.1.5 FLOs should be fully aware of the aims and objectives of their deployment prior to meeting with the family and should have sight of the family liaison strategy document.

## **8.2 STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL MANAGEMENT**

- 8.2.1 In formulating the Family Liaison strategy the SIO/SIM must aim to achieve a partnership approach with the family within the investigation. The strategy should be defined and developed taking into consideration the needs of the family, the lines of enquiry and the available intelligence.

8.2.2 This is a dynamic process that must be reviewed at regular intervals and in consultation with the FLO.

8.2.3 As strategies in complex cases can be very lengthy and change at various stages throughout the life of the enquiry, the strategy should be filed as an 'Other Document' through the HOLMES or Manual Card Index system. The fact that a strategy has been written should be recorded in the SIOs policy file.

8.2.4 The strategy should include the family liaison strategy objectives and include:

- Obtaining full victimology, lifestyle and behavioural information and any other relevant details as directed by the SIO/SIM;
- Providing the family with as full and up to date information as possible about the incident and its investigation;
- Ensuring the investigation is not compromised by the injudicious disclosure of information;
- Gathering evidence and productions from the family (given the potential for compromising the FLOs relationship with the family and to minimise the chances of a challenge to the integrity of the evidence recorded, FLOs should only be asked to interview significant or vulnerable witnesses in very exceptional circumstances);
- Family media strategy;
- The selection of FLOs 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 SIO/SIMs action to progress and resolve the matters raised;
- Decisions concerning involvement of other support services including Victim Information and Advice (VIA), Victim Support Scheme (VSS) 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;
- Arrangements for supporting the FLO and welfare strategy; and
- Exit strategy for the FLO.

### **8.3 IDENTIFYING THE FAMILY**

8.3.1 The term 'family' should include:

- Partners;
- Parents;
- Siblings;
- Children;

- Guardians; and
- Others who have had a direct and close relationship with the victim.

8.3.2 SIO/SIMs must always take into account the possible dynamics of a family's structure to ensure that an appropriate level of support is offered. This is particularly important in situations where the family is extended, split in some way or involves the possible association of the victim with a particular cultural or lifestyle diversity.

8.3.3 In identifying and prior to meeting the family, the SIO/SIM should 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 should be gathered to ascertain if anything is known about the victim or the family, which may have a bearing on the conduct of the investigation and the development of the family liaison strategy.

#### **8.4 SELECTION AND DEPLOYMENT**

8.4.1 It is essential that FLOs be primarily, if not exclusively, dedicated to the task. To perform their function effectively they must be an integral part of the enquiry team.

8.4.2 The role of the FLO is both sensitive and complex, balancing the needs of the family with a requirement to gather evidence and to preserve the integrity of the investigation. There are many cases where the lifestyle, family, friends and associates of the victim may hold the key to identifying witnesses, suspects or other vital information. The family liaison role is pivotal to the success of the investigation.

8.4.3 In considering the deployment of FLOs the SIO/SIM should take account of the individual FLOs ability to effectively perform the function, at that time. The following circumstances will have a bearing on the selection process:

- A recent bereavement of a close relative, partner or other major life trauma;
- Workload;
- Frequency of recent deployment in the role;
- Previous experience in the role;
- Availability, annual leave, court or similar commitments;
- Previous contact and relationship with the family (this should be avoided to reduce the impact of the role on the professional objectivity of the officer and the exit strategy);
- Previous compliance with requirements to attend welfare and/or occupational health debriefs; and

- Whether the FLO lives or usually works near the family's residence (the likelihood of chance encounters with the family outside the confines of the officer's role as a FLO during the course of other duties or while off-duty should be minimised).

8.4.4 It is common for split families, or complex family dynamics to be encountered when selecting and deploying FLOs. In such instances the SIO/SIM should consider the deployment of additional FLOs; however, care must be taken to ensure that there is a coordination of information flow to the various family sections and that the information passed is both accurate and consistent to each.

8.4.5 On occasions, gender may be a critical factor both for cultural or other reasons. Where the victim is from a minority group, particular lifestyle diversity or hard to reach or hear group, consideration should always be given to having independent advice to assist with effective communication.

8.4.6 The choice of FLO could be affected by the nature of the incident under investigation, for example:

- Its scale, in nature and complexity;
- The community impact assessment;
- The likely media interest;
- Risk assessment;
- Where direct contact with the family is limited;
- Community tensions are running high;
- There is a hate crime element to the homicide;
- An officer with specialist skills is required (having received the appropriate additional training); or
- The SIO deems it necessary and appropriate to deploy a FLO to an incident that falls outside core family liaison business. Where this is the case the SIO/SIM is expected to detail the decision making process in their policy file.

## **8.5 BRIEFING THE FLO**

8.5.1 The SIO/SIM is responsible for briefing the FLO once deployed and prior to meeting with the family for the first time. The briefing should include the following:

- What details are known about the alleged offence;
- What information is already in the public domain;
- What information is known about the family (background and composition);
- Risk assessment;
- Aims and objectives of the deployment;

- What enquiries they wish the FLO to carry out in regard to the family;
- Witness categorisation;
- Reporting chain (SIO/Deputy SIO/FLC);
- Resources available to the FLO (mobile telephone/vehicle);
- Expectations including attendance at briefings, FLO log entries and SIO examination of log entries; and
- FLO welfare checks.

8.5.2 Where the SIO/SIM is tasking the FLO with specific actions they wish to be carried out this can be assisted by completion of the Victim Profile Checklist Form.

## **8.6 RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.6.1 Family liaison risk assessments are a careful and systematic examination of the work activities of those undertaking family liaison duties. The responsibility for ensuring the FLO Generic Risk Assessment is amended/adapted to suit individual needs and requirements is the responsibility of the SIO/SIM with, where necessary input from the FLC and/or FLM.

8.6.2 The SIO/SIM has a 'Duty of Care' in respect of officers performing a family liaison role and towards other persons who could be affected by this activity. The PSoS has a statutory obligation for ensuring the health and safety of officers and other persons who may be affected by their actions/ activities and to assist in this process should ensure that:

- FLOs are officers with operational experience that enables them to have knowledge of potential risks associated with modern policing;
- Those wishing to be trained in the role have completed the relevant application form for the role;
- An appropriate selection procedure exists 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 line manager, SIO/SIM or deputy, receiving regular briefings and debriefings;
- Officers have access to an FLC and/or FLM for appropriate support;
- Supervisors are able to monitor the work of the officers 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; and
- An individual Risk Assessment is developed from the Family Liaison Generic Risk Assessment prior to the deployment of the FLO and regularly reviewed throughout the deployment period.



- 8.6.3 An individual risk assessment should be recorded in writing detailing what areas have been considered, risks identified and any action or control measures put in place to address the risk. Prior to the deployment of a FLO, the officer passing the 'death message' should gather and record relevant information on Risk Assessment Form 1 to enable a suitable and sufficient specific risk assessment to be developed from the Generic Risk Assessment Form.
- 8.6.4 As a general rule, this should not be the FLO, as this may compromise the risk assessment process (See Delivery of Death Message in previous section of this document).
- 8.6.5 SIO/SIMs are required to carefully brief and de-brief officers tasked with making initial contact with a victim's family. In particular those officers tasked with passing a death message or officers noting complaints or information from victims' or their families in all other cases, which may require the deployment of FLOs.
- 8.6.6 Officers tasked with making initial contact with a victim's family will play a significant role in the initial information gathering process required to complete the risk assessment forms. Such information detailed on Risk Assessment Form 1 will include:
- Details of the person notified or reporting incident;
  - Details of next of kin (in cases of suspicious deaths or life threatening cases);
  - Description of the family home;
  - Family composition or group dynamics;
  - What information was passed to the family and how it was received;
  - Any known hostility towards the Police;
  - Previous police involvement with victim and/or family or their profile within the community;
  - Any threats of revenge or vigilante action;
  - Cultural or diversity issues;
  - Communication or language considerations; and
  - Other hazards or safety issues identified.
- 8.6.7 The SIO/SIM must ensure that intelligence checks and a thorough search of databases are carried out to establish as much information as possible about the premises, the occupants, family members and persons who frequent the premises, where FLOs are ultimately to be deployed. Once these checks have been carried out a specific risk assessment using Risk Assessment Form 2 should be completed by the SIO/SIM, who should be a trained risk assessor. This form assesses the potential risks associated with a number of subjects, including:
- The circumstances that could give rise to harm;
  - The possibility of harm occurring;

- The severity of the harm;
  - Who could be harmed; and
  - What measures could be implemented to prevent or reduce the possibility of harm.
- 8.6.8 Common sense should apply when considering the potential for physical risk, or any other risk, and the measures to be put in place to combat such. In some instances the SIO may have to decide whether the risk that is identified should be further disseminated to others, including those external agencies who may themselves be involved in providing care, support or counselling to the 'family'. A risk to police officers does not necessarily mean that others will be at risk. In cases where it is thought that others might be at risk, advice should be sought regarding the content of any disclosure of information in order to comply with the Data Protection Act and Human Rights legislation.
- 8.6.9 It is the responsibility of the SIO/SIM to regularly review the Individual Risk Assessment with regard to any FLO deployment they have responsibility for. When completed, the Individual Risk Assessment should be regarded as a dynamic document and must be amended/updated when circumstances change and new potential risks are identified.
- 8.6.10 It is incumbent on FLOs to bring to the attention of the SIO/SIM any change in circumstances that may require measures put in place to reduce potential risks. Changes in circumstances may include the following:
- **People**  
Once deployed FLOs may encounter additional family members who become involved in the liaison process. In such cases, officers should gather as much information as possible in relation to these individuals, in a sensitive and professional manner. Such information will provide the SIO with a sound knowledge of the family dynamics.
  - **Action/Activity**  
The family liaison strategy should be reviewed at regular intervals throughout each deployment. This may be amended depending on the tasks that the FLOs are required to carry out. Any change in the FLO role should be measured against the potential impact that it may have on the family and whether or not there is a potential for an increased risk.
  - **Location**  
As much information as possible should be obtained in regard to the address(es) to which a FLO is to be deployed. This should include the location of the property and whether or not this has an impact on the potential risk to officers attending there. In the early stages the information may be limited, however once deployed the FLO may obtain additional facts in regard to the property and its location which the SIO will have to consider. If at any time during a deployment there is a change in location, then a further risk assessment should be carried out in relation to the new property

- **Environment**

The property that the FLOs will be deployed to should be viewed as their workplace for the duration of the deployment as they may be spending considerable time within the location. As a result, the condition of the property should be a suitable environment for officers to work within.

- 8.6.11 If a risk is identified, such as the cleanliness of the property etc, then the FLO must bring it to the attention of the SIO. Once this is highlighted, the SIO can then implement suitable control measures to combat the risk. In carrying out this process, it may become apparent that external agencies will have to be involved in the provision of care, support or counselling for the family.
- 8.6.12 While the risk assessment process appears to concentrate on the FLOs the guidelines apply to any officers involved in the liaison, including the SIO.
- 8.6.13 Every FLO deployment must be considered on its own merits. SIO/SIMs should refer to the Family Liaison Officer Generic Risk Assessment in addition to taking into account the information provided by the officer making initial contact with the victim's family, when developing a specific Risk Assessment Form for the investigation concerned
- 8.6.14 Once the risk assessment process has been completed, the SIO/SIM should discuss with the FLO the risks identified and control measures put in place prior to the FLO making contact with the family. The risk assessment should be signed off by the SIO/SIM and retained.

## **8.7 FAMILY NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES**

- 8.7.1 In cases where a split family is identified or there are complex dynamics affecting the family group, the SIO, in consultation with the FLC, should consider the deployment of separate FLOs as appropriate. In cases where more than one FLO is deployed, care must be taken to ensure the accurate coordination of information flow to the family. In cases of multiple deployments, consideration should be given to deploying a suitably experienced FLO to coordinate family liaison response.
- 8.7.2 On occasions, gender may be a critical factor both for cultural reasons and operational factors. Where the victim is from a minority group or particular lifestyle diversity, consideration should be given to the deployment of a FLO with specific knowledge and experience of that community. Such consideration should be balanced against the impact that any previous relationship between the officer and the family might have on the professional objectivity of the officer and the exit strategy.
- 8.7.3 The SIO/FLC should also carefully consider the deployment of an officer who reflects the cultural or lifestyle background of the family members. The attachment of such an officer to a family without prior consultation can, on occasion, be detrimental to the police/family relationship and be viewed as tokenism. Deployment in such circumstances should only be made following discussion with family members and should be endorsed as appropriate by the SIO/SIM as the result of a carefully reasoned and recorded decision.

## **NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

8.7.4 Where an SIO encounters or anticipates any diversity issues with a family they should consult with and seek advice from their Safer Communities Department. Advice can also be obtained from the Police Scotland Diversity Booklet - A Practical Guide.

### **8.8 SUPPORTING AND SUPERVISING THE FLO**

8.8.1 The SIO/SIM has a duty of care and an obligation to support and constantly monitor the health and welfare of FLOs. SIO/SIMs should in particular be aware of the dangers of undue stress levels being maintained by FLOs as they are exposed to the raw emotions and needs of the bereaved. They must not be left feeling abandoned or isolated.

8.8.2 The SIO/SIM must ensure that FLO logs are regularly supervised to ensure the effective management and conduct of the liaison. Where practicable, this should be done prior to their submission to the major incident room. SIO/SIMs must be prepared to continuously review the deployment of a FLO. In doing this, the SIO/SIM should consider:

- The suitability of the officer for retention in the role;
- Whether additional FLOs should be deployed;
- The needs of the family;
- Any changes in family circumstances;
- Any changes in the FLOs circumstances; and
- Any changes in the investigation.

8.8.3 The service will have made a considerable investment in the training and development of a FLO. Therefore, it should be emphasised that the SIO/SIM has a responsibility for ensuring that a FLO is not deployed any longer than is necessary to meet the immediate needs of the family and the investigation.

8.8.4 When such needs have been met, consideration should be given to implementing an exit strategy for the FLOs and responsibilities for liaison being transferred to VIA in accordance with the PSOS/COPFS Protocol 2010 – Managing Family Liaison. The responsibility of the SIO/SIM in supervising the implementation of the exit strategy cannot be overstated; the FLO must not be left to do this alone.

### **8.9 SIGNIFICANT WITNESS INTERVIEWS**

8.9.1

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

8.9.2 Where a FLO is tasked to conduct a significant witness interview, it is important that they are debriefed afterwards and their ongoing deployment in the role with the family reviewed.

8.9.3 Any decision to task a FLO to conduct a significant witness interview, the rationale for it and the decisions made after they have been debriefed, should be recorded in the SIO's Policy File.

**8.10 INVESTIGATIONS CONDUCTED BY THE POLICE INVESTIGATION AND REVIEW COMMISSION (PIRC)**

8.10.1 Where the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) has directed an independent investigation in the case of:

- Deaths in police custody;
- Victims or families of police shootings;
- Police related road deaths;

fully trained independent Family Liaison Officers will be deployed by the Senior Investigator of the PIRC.

**8.11 [REDACTED]**

8.11.1 [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- 8.11.2 The advice of the FLC should be sought in developing a strategy concerning such deployments.
- 8.11.3 A FLO must never be used in any other role that could undermine the family's confidence in them.
- 8.11.4 When dealing with families care must be taken to ensure that a FLO does not stray into the area of a Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) as described under RIP(S)A, whether qualified to do so or not.

## **8.12 COMMUNICATION WITH THE FAMILY**

- 8.12.1 The SIO should meet the family as soon as practicable and in conjunction with the wishes of the family. This introductory meeting should be a main priority during the initial stage of the investigation.
- 8.12.2 It is essential for the SIO to make this contact, thereby establishing personal links with the family and ensuring their needs are being met. The crucial importance of this meeting cannot be over emphasised. However, where the incident at hand is of significant scale, for example, a mass death incident, this may not be practical or achievable and arrangements should be made for deputies or the FLC to attend.
- 8.12.3 The location for the meeting should be arranged and agreed with the family. If there is a delay in the SIO meeting the family this should be recorded in the policy file, together with the reasons for it.
- 8.12.4 The SIO/SIM should provide the family with:
- Their contact details;
  - A brief explanation of the roles of the SIO/SIM and FLO;
  - What the family can expect from the police i.e. a commitment to fully investigate;
  - An indication of the willingness to learn from the family through feedback; and
  - An offer to facilitate a visit to the scene and/or other key sites.
- 8.12.5 As family members are often in a state of shock and do not recall all that is said to them at the time, it is particularly important they are able to contact the SIO to clarify issues. The family should be encouraged to express any concerns that may arise regarding the conduct of the investigation or the quality of the family liaison.

8.12.6 In ensuring the building of trust with a family it is vital that any commitment or assurance given is documented, carried out and its result passed on to the family. Likewise if the assurance or commitment is not brought to fruition, this must also be documented and a timely explanation given to the family.

8.12.7 Care must be taken and unrealistic promises should not be made to the family. Family members should not be given an expectation of confidentiality as the nature of the police officers role precludes this from being possible.

8.12.8 The SIO should offer to visit the family at regular intervals. Other than in exceptional circumstances, the FLO should be informed of the visit and consideration should be given to conducting this visit with the FLO. Particular consideration should be given to SIO contact at times of significant events/anniversaries for example:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

8.12.9 By maintaining regular contact with the family, the SIO/SIM 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.

8.12.10 In maintaining regular contact, SIO/SIMs will have the opportunity, at the appropriate time, to receive feedback from families, to allow for strategic dissemination of lessons learned in terms of both good and bad practice.

### **8.13 INDIRECT COMMUNICATION**

8.13.1 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. SIO/SIMs must look to families to be part of an effective investigation as it is much harder to support, protect and work with a family remotely. Anything short of direct dialogue with the family has the potential to impair the intelligence flow, weaken the investigation and further undermine the confidence of the family in the investigative process.

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

#### **8.14 WORKING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FAMILY**

- 8.14.1 When there is no direct dialogue with the family, the family should be encouraged to appoint a representative to act on their behalf (this will often be a Solicitor). The wishes of the family must always be respected in this regard. The family may find it more comfortable and less traumatising to communicate through a representative. Solicitors may have legitimate concerns that their client families are frightened of or upset by the police or about the progress of the investigation. The SIO/SIM should make every effort to allay those concerns.
- 8.14.2 The SIO/SIM must ensure that any telephone call with a representative is subsequently supported by written correspondence to provide a formal record of communication. The presence of the representative must not deter the SIO/SIM 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.
- 8.14.3 SIO/SIMs must always maintain a positive and professional approach while they are working with representatives of the family. 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.
- 8.14.4 It is imperative that SIO/SIMs guard against allowing the lack of direct contact with families to cloud their perceptions and should focus on providing them with support and sustaining an effective investigation.

#### **8.15 THE FAMILY AND THE MEDIA**

- 8.15.1 Media interest in major enquiries is inevitably high. The SIO/SIM 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.
- 8.15.2 The FLO should actively discourage the family from issuing statements to the media that are independent of the investigation and could impact on the investigative process. To achieve this it is important for the family to be involved in a partnership approach with the SIO/SIM, together with the Force press officer and FLO to develop and agree the police/family media strategy. This is particularly important when media appeals involve publishing a photograph or video and specific information regarding the victim or family.
- 8.15.3 In some cases, however, the family may wish to deal with the media directly. In these circumstances, the SIO should endeavour to agree a plan with the family to ensure that this does not adversely impact on the investigation.



- 8.15.4 Where it is not possible to pursue such a strategy, the SIO/SIM should 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.
- 8.15.5 Whether the family deals with the media directly or through the police, they should be reminded that any material arising from such contact, including video recordings, photographs or written accounts, remain the property of the media. This could be used again, at a later date, without consultation or reference to the wishes of the family.

## **9. ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR (FLC)**

### **9.1 FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATOR**

- 9.1.1 The PSoS will appoint an officer of supervisory rank to act as a coordinator or FLOs. Coordinators should have received appropriate training to prepare them for their role. The FLC is responsible for the strategic and tactical support to FLOs and SIO/SIMs as well as the administrative and support functions.

### **9.2 ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS**

- 9.2.1 To provide administrative supervision of the FLO scheme and maintain a register of all FLOs, providing:
- Details of their lifestyle diversity, which may be provided on a voluntary basis by FLOs;
  - Ethnic and cultural origins;
  - FLO experience (types of incident where deployed) and brief synopsis of specific FLO skills utilised and enhanced;
  - Details of other skills or qualifications held by the officer (e.g. language skills); and
  - Current availability status of the FLO.

### **9.3 SUPPORT FUNCTIONS**

- 9.3.1 To act as a support point for SIO/SIMs who may require advice concerning:
- The development of case specific Family Liaison Strategies;
  - Deployment of FLOs and the functions of family liaison;
  - Skills of a particular FLO in terms of culture/lifestyle diversity, knowledge or experience base; and
  - Complex cases with multiple deployments of FLOs and coordinating the information that comes from them.
- 9.3.2 To act as a support point for FLOs by:
- Providing advice and direction;

- Maintaining a register of contact details of appropriate organisations, lay people and professional consultants to assist them in their role;
- Acting as a channel for welfare/occupational health support;
- Acting as an independent channel for FLO de-briefing to draw out good practice;
- Liaising nationally to share and gather good practice for implementation locally;
- Providing a network point for FLOs requiring advice from other FLOs who have experience in dealing with particular scenarios;
- Promoting and facilitating mutual FLO peer group support;
- Monitor FLO related workloads and manage deployments and availability of FLOs; and
- Monitoring the provision and attendance at the Welfare/Occupational Health sections.

9.3.3 At the conclusion of each FLO deployment, the FLC should canvass both the FLO and the SIO/SIM, seeking comments on the performance of the FLOs, training gaps or issues that may require to be addressed. In addition any problems or difficulties which may have arisen and how they were resolved and any best practice issues identified should also be discussed.

9.3.4 The FLC or their nominated deputy should meet formally with all FLOs at least twice a year. The Coordinator or the officers themselves may also arrange for the FLOs to get together on an informal ad-hoc basis in order to share their experiences. The Coordinators meetings will give an opportunity to discuss good practice, new legislation and give any additional training input that is appropriate.

9.3.5 The FLC should ensure that FLOs are only deployed in the role on one active enquiry at a time and should confirm that FLOs have exited from families prior to becoming involved in another case. It is recognised as best practice that a period of time should elapse between deployments.

9.3.7 The family liaison coordination functions as described in the foregoing must be fulfilled. The PSoS must ensure that those selected to carry out this role are suitably trained.

#### **9.4 TRAINING OF FAMILY LIAISON COORDINATORS**

9.4.1 Officers selected to undertake the role of FLC should be suitably experienced FLOs. They will be required to attend the National Training Course for FLCs, which is facilitated at various police training establishments throughout the United Kingdom.

## **10. FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER (FLO)**

### **10.1 THE ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER**

- 10.1.1 The role of the FLO involves the day-to-day management of the partnership with the family in the investigation and close liaison with the SIO/SIM to ensure families are treated appropriately, professionally and with respect to their needs.
- 10.1.2 It may involve working in a variety of situations in very demanding and stressful conditions over sustained periods of time.
- 10.1.3 The primary function of a FLO is that of an investigator. In performing this role the officer will offer, give and facilitate support with consideration being given to the needs of the family.
- 10.1.4 It will assist officers who are employed in the role to more effectively discharge their responsibilities by making themselves conversant with the guidelines concerning SIOs and FLCs contained within the Murder Investigation Manual, the Road Death Investigation Manual, the Emergency Procedures Manual and the Police Scotland Diversity Strategy.
- 10.1.5 Officers must not, under any circumstances, attempt to assume the responsibility of personally counselling a victim's family, whether qualified or not to do so.
- 10.1.6 This does not preclude a FLO from being a compassionate investigator.

### **10.2 PERSONAL CRITERIA**

- 10.2.1 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, whereas the second relates to deployment as a FLO 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.
- 10.2.2 There is an onus on the FLO to inform the FLC/SIO/SIM of any factors that they are aware of, that make their deployment or continued retention inappropriate, e.g. change in officer's personal circumstances, views expressed by the family or conflicts within the family.

### **10.3 ACTION ON APPOINTMENT**

- 10.3.1 On appointment the FLOs should be made aware of the Family Liaison Strategy prepared by the SIO in the case. The level of involvement by the FLO and the tasks they will be required to undertake should be governed by the strategy. It is essential that the parameters of the role of the FLO during the deployment are set out in a clear and unambiguous manner and they are aware of their aims and objectives.

- 10.3.2 The FLO is responsible for the passing of appropriate information regarding the enquiry to the family with the agreement of the SIO. As an investigator, the FLO will usually be responsible for taking statements from the family relating to identification of the body, lifestyle, victimology, and behavioural characteristics of the victim.
- 10.3.3 Careful consideration should be given when significant or vulnerable witnesses within the family require to be interviewed.
- 10.3.4 Given the potential for compromising the position of the FLO with the family and to minimise the chances of a challenge to the integrity of the evidence recorded, the SIO must decide whether or not the FLO or other members of the enquiry team should carry out this task.
- 10.3.5 The FLOs must meet with the family as soon as is reasonably practicable after deployment. Before meeting with the family the FLO will:
- Establish that a risk assessment for the deployment has been carried out;
  - Receive an operational briefing from the SIO or FLC;
  - Familiarise themselves with any available information and/or intelligence that could impact on the deployment;
  - Establish the extent of previous police contact with the family since the incident/death;
  - Establish what information has been passed to the family prior to their deployment, to whom and by whom; and
  - Establish what information concerning the incident is already in the public domain.
- 10.3.6 The FLO will also be responsible for the following tasks:
- To obtain relevant background details of the victim and family members;
  - To act as a consultant to the family in respect of legal procedures;
  - To act as a consultant to the family in respect of police investigative procedures;
  - To ensure the family receive appropriate information;
  - To advise the family on the progress of the investigation;
  - To advise the family on the existence and role of appropriate support agencies and how to contact them; and
  - To acquire and document all evidence related to the family and people associated with it.

## 10.4 VICTIMOLOGY

- 10.4.1 In the aftermath of any homicide one of the highest priority actions is the gathering of victimology or lifestyle information about the victim. This is generally done by tasking the FLO at an early stage and should be submitted to the Major Incident Room in the form of statements and messages. These should be cross-referenced to the Family Liaison Log. The carbonated copy of each page of the log should also be submitted to the Major Incident Room (MIR).
- 10.4.2 This information would be gathered from those that have been identified as being close to the victim. Often this is the family of the deceased, but on occasion enquiries can reveal that those closest to the victim were friends and associates that have to be identified through sensitive but thorough investigation.
- 10.4.3 The advantage of having this lifestyle information is that in the early stages it can open up possible lines of enquiry by identifying routines, places frequented, associates etc, which might not be immediately apparent.
- 10.4.4 Identifying why someone has become a victim of a serious crime can be a vague and subjective exercise; therefore this type of information is often at its most useful when it can be compared against the movements and routine of an identified suspect.
- 10.4.5 All victimology information has the potential to provide the investigation with lines of enquiry. It is important to prioritise these lines at an early stage. The FLO should seek to obtain:
- A photograph of the victim, which is as true a likeness as to how they looked before the incident;
  - A full Personal Description Form (PDF) to include, jewellery worn and a description of how hair was worn prior to the incident and any other styles used;
  - A breakdown of the typical routine of the victim in the weeks leading up to the incident, broken down into a daily basis;
  - Any variations to that routine;
  - Precursor events no matter how unimportant or unrelated they may seem to be (strange phone calls, altercations etc);
  - Names and details of associates and their relationship with the victim. Consideration should be given to completing a personal descriptive form for each one;
  - Hobbies and activities including memberships of clubs;
  - Methods of transport used by the victim;
  - Social activities, pubs, clubs, wine bars, coffee shops, restaurants frequented;
  - Whether the victim was young, disadvantaged or elderly, or vulnerable in any other way; and

- Whether there is an explanation for the presence of the victim at the scene.
- 10.4.6 All the aforementioned should be submitted to the MIR in compliance with MIRSAP guidelines and HOLMES conventions. If in any doubt, advice should be sought from the SIO/FLC as to how material should be submitted.

## **10.5. RECORD KEEPING**

- 10.5.1 At the outset of every deployment the FLO will be issued with and commence an approved Police Scotland Family Liaison Log. This log will be where all records of contact will be documented with the family/next of kin, representatives of the family and any other parties connected with the family. The recognised log should be the only method of recording this contact.
- 10.5.2 Entries to the log should be made timeously, accurately and should be examined at regular intervals by the SIO. The log contains numbered self-carbonated pages, which allows the log entries to be submitted to the HOLMES Receiver or where HOLMES has not been utilised to the Office Manager responsible for the administration of the enquiry.
- 10.5.3 Record keeping is an essential part of a FLO deployment. It provides the facility for the SIO/SIM to manage the liaison effectively.
- 10.5.4 Officers completing the FLO log should be aware that the document is subject of disclosure requirements. It is therefore important that where any other means of recording contact has been made prior to entry into the approved log, such as notebooks etc then, to ensure evidential integrity, these notes should also be retained. The FLO log should include the following information:
- Details of all non-sensitive strategic and tactical decisions agreed with the SIO/SIM affecting 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;
  - Details of the purpose of the contact and any information exchanged;
  - Details of any complaint made by the family and action taken to appraise the SIO/SIM;
  - Details of any request made by the family not acceded to and action taken to appraise the SIO/SIM;
  - Details of who initiated the contact, e.g. police, family or others;
  - Details of non-family members present at meetings (care and discretion should be employed in establishing these details if they are not volunteered or already known);
  - All attempts to contact the family or their representatives without success;
  - All attempts to contact the family, which were refused or declined and any reasons given; and

- Date and time of submission of the entry to the enquiry system (where applicable).

10.5.5 Where the FLO becomes aware of any sensitive issues that may require to be brought to the attention of the enquiry, they should be submitted to the incident room as “Officers Information” on a message form.

10.5.6 Under no circumstances should Intelligence be entered into the FLO log. The normal procedures should apply in regard to intelligence submissions.

## **10.6 WORKING AND COMMUNICATING WITH THE FAMILY**

10.6.1 The conduct of the first contact with the family is vital in laying the foundations for a successful partnership.

10.6.2 At no time must a family be deliberately misled. Contact must be honest and as far as possible open. It is of paramount importance that families are treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and with consideration given to their needs. Officers must never make assumptions as to the particular needs and expectations of a family.

10.6.3 FLOs must be aware that some of their actions and those of the police generally may be misunderstood. FLOs must minimise these possibilities by ensuring that actions and decisions are explained fully and considerately, ensuring that adequate time is taken to do so.

10.6.4 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 must be provided with the timely sharing of all possible information so far as the investigation permits. The FLO should have direct communication with the SIO/SIM in connection with their role and issues concerning the family. Any information released to the family must first be authorised by the SIO/SIM.

10.6.5 Depending on the size of the family FLOs may find themselves dealing with one or more family members. 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 must be given to the closest relatives and/or partners providing a source of regular contact, should they feel able to do so.

10.6.6 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 FLO 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.

- 10.6.7 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 must be taken that all information is clearly relayed and understanding sought. Furthermore caution should be exercised when interpreters are engaged in the investigative process, to ensure that gender, personal background or beliefs are not conflicting with those of the family.
- 10.6.8 During the initial contact with the family and in any event during the early stages of the enquiry the FLO must confirm with the family their understanding of the conduct of a police investigation and the role of the FLO.
- 10.6.9 The FLO will have a number of issues that should be addressed 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 in respect of the body e.g. the post mortem(s) and Procurator Fiscal processes;
  - Personal safety or have been subject to threats or intimidation they may request police protection or assistance. In all cases the FLO must act quickly and effectively informing the SIO/SIM 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 wishes of the family to visit the scene. There is a need to balance evidence gathering with the emotional needs of the family;
  - Facilitating access to medical services for the family (e.g. family members suffering the effects of trauma) if required; and
  - 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 VSS, VIA and community groups.
- 10.6.10 In cases of homicide, the FLO must be fully conversant with the contents of the 'Information for Bereaved Families and Friends following Murder or Culpable Homicide', which covers the following topics:
- The role of the Procurator Fiscal;
  - The criminal prosecution;
  - What to do after a death in Scotland;
  - Organisations able to offer support and advice;
  - Coping when someone close has been killed;
  - Going to court;
  - Witnesses in court; and
  - The Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme.
- 10.6.11 Similarly in cases of road death, the FLO must be fully conversant with the contents of the BrakeCare pack 'Advice for Bereaved Families and Friends Following a Death on the Road'. This pack covers the following headings:



- What happens now?
- The criminal prosecution;
- Claiming money;
- Useful contacts;

10.6.12 It has been recognised as appropriate to include a list of the contact names and telephone numbers of the FLO, SIO/SIM and their deputies and the times at which they may be contacted, in whichever pack is issued for easy reference by the family.

10.6.13 It is clear from the list above that the pack contains information, which may be needed by family members at various stages during the investigation.

10.6.14 Some of this information deals with issues, which are very difficult for family members to face. After bereavement by homicide, mass disaster or fatal road traffic collision, feelings of shock and loss of control are acute.

10.6.15 FLOs should have ready access to supplies of the packs. The pack should be provided to one or more family members at as early a stage as possible in order for bereaved people to establish some control over their access to the information.

10.6.16 Versions of the pack are also available in Braille, audio and translated versions of the most commonly used languages in Scotland. The Scottish Executive funds this scheme and is committed to, wherever possible, ensuring that the pack is translated into any language necessary to meet a families needs.

## **10.7 INDIRECT COMMUNICATION**

10.7.1 In cases where direct dialogue with the family has been ineffective, strained or has broken down the SIO/SIM may consider involving local advocates to facilitate communication.

10.7.2 In such cases the FLO may be used as a resource for the group and be present at meetings they hold with the SIO/SIM. FLOs may have to brief the group on the conduct and content of their liaison with the family and at the direction of the SIO/SIM, act upon the recommendations of the group.

10.7.3 In some cases the FLO may be expected to work alongside local advocates in the liaison process. The motive for involvement of the group is to build the family's trust and confidence in the police investigation, with the objective of restoring effective direct police communication with the family. The group should be afforded every assistance and support as directed by the SIO/SIM.

10.7.4 In some instances, communication might take place through representatives of the family. In many of these cases they will be solicitors or members of community interest groups. It is extremely important that direct dialogue exists between the family and police to ensure that the family is being supported appropriately and there is a direct conduit of information flow. The FLO must work constructively and positively with any representative of the family to ensure that the family are supported and are receiving correct information concerning the progress of the investigation.

10.7.5 FLOs must work towards the goal of restoring direct communication with the family. It is important that any communication with representatives of the family is recorded in the FLO log.

## **10.8 DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO THE FAMILY**

10.8.1 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.

10.8.2 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 because sub judice rules will be in effect.

10.8.3 Family members are significant witnesses and there is a need from the outset to exercise extreme care in the information that is shared with them. This is to safe guard against allegations being made, at any later trial, that the information shared by the FLO contaminated the evidence of a particular family member(s). In all such cases it is important that the FLO maintains an accurate record of all that is said to and by him or her in the FLO log and seeks the guidance from the SIO.

10.8.4 It is important that the FLO fully explains the possible effects of information disclosure to the family particularly the transition that occurs following the charge of suspect(s) (sub judice).

## **10.9 VIEWING AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE BODY**

10.9.1 The FLO will have a crucial role to play in the identification process of the deceased. In the case of mass fatalities the FLO role in this regard cannot be understated.

10.9.2 Close liaison with the SIO/SIM and the Procurator Fiscal concerning the issues of viewing, identification and body release must be undertaken by the FLO.

10.9.3 It must be recognised that the formal identification procedure and viewing of the body are separate processes. The formal identification will form an essential element of the post mortem process.

- 10.9.4 Formal visual identification of a body may not always be possible due to the injuries sustained or decomposition of the remains. The SIO/SIM, in liaison with the Procurator Fiscal, will decide what processes will be employed to establish the identity of the deceased, especially if they are invasive, mutilate or use DNA. When other forms of identification are to be undertaken, for example, fingerprints, dental charting or DNA profiling, the process and reasons for it must be explained in an open and honest manner by the FLO whenever possible.
- 10.9.5 In cases where the Procurator Fiscal or Pathologist deems an invasive technique necessary (for example, removal of limbs or body parts) an explanation and the reasons for such a process must be provided to the family.
- 10.9.6 Where DNA profiling and the taking of samples are appropriate the FLO should approach an appropriate person (preferably the mother of the victim, where available) in confidence and ask if there is anything that the police should know about lineage before obtaining blood samples for DNA purposes.
- 10.9.7 In cases where formal visual identification is not appropriate, this must not be confused with the needs of family members to view the remains for bereavement purposes.
- 10.9.8 The Police have no legal right to refuse such a request to view regardless of the condition of the remains. The FLO must not make assumptions on behalf of the family or pass comment on whether it is advisable to view or not. Sensitive and responsive management of viewing may be critical to the family grieving and might prove to be of long-term benefit.
- 10.9.9 The FLO, after consultation with the SIO/SIM, should ask the family who they wish to nominate to formally identify the body. Provided that no conflict occurs in this decision the wishes of the family should be followed.
- 10.9.10 It is advisable that the FLO view the body at an early stage and should be repeated before viewing by any family member. The FLO will thereafter be in a position to advise and prepare the family member/s for the viewing.
- 10.9.11 The information established and sensitively given should include:
- The condition of the body, including any odour, colour, temperature and a detailed description of the nature and extent of any injuries. Details of the injuries to be disclosed to the family should be agreed with the SIO in order to prevent specialist knowledge from being revealed. This is relevant in cases where there is no disfigurement as much as in cases where disfigurement has occurred. Where viewing takes place after the post mortem the FLO should, in advance, explain to the family the necessity and consequences of this procedure;

- A detailed description of the layout of the parts of the mortuary that the family members will go in to and the facilities they contain. FLOs should bear in mind that when people pay their last respects they often want to touch or kiss the body, need to perform particular cultural rites or to view the body again later. Guidance should be sought about whether this is possible or appropriate;
- Where available, a photograph of the deceased may be used if it is likely to assist family members to decide whether they wish to view or to prepare them to view the deceased;
- Subject to the needs of the investigation, the family should also be provided with any other information that they wish to know; and
- The FLO should also liaise with the Pathologist, mortuary staff or police staff attending the post mortem to ensure that the body is in a presentable state and, where possible, blood and other debris wiped away from the face and other exposed parts of the deceased.

10.9.12 In some circumstances, for example, where family members wish to view again, or in split family situations where the FLO might have to accompany other members of the family to view, FLOs should remember that the body might have deteriorated in the intervening period. In such instances the FLO should ensure that they view the body again prior to the family in order to prepare them.

10.9.13 The FLO should be prepared to spend time with the family at the viewings. This is one of the most traumatic times for the family as this may be the last time they see their loved ones and some will find it difficult to let go.

10.9.14 Wherever possible, family requests concerning the nature of the viewing, contact with the body or performing cultural rites should be met. In cases where investigative priorities prevent requests being facilitated, the reasons must be fully explained to the family. In other cases where difficulties arise, the Procurator Fiscal should be consulted in order to alleviate any family concerns. Any difficulties that cannot be resolved should be brought to the attention of the SIO/SIM who should consider making representations to the Procurator Fiscal if appropriate.

## **10.10 POST MORTEM EXAMINATION**

10.10.1 The FLO will be required to explain the requirement for a post mortem examination to establish a cause of death. The thought of such an examination can cause considerable distress to families, particularly where cultural or religious beliefs are contrary to such a process-taking place. In such circumstances FLOs must proceed with sensitivity explaining the reasons for a post mortem.

10.10.2 At the conclusion of the post mortem examination the pathologist will issue a 'Medical Certificate of the Cause of Death' stating, where known, the cause of death. This certificate should be handed to the family in order that they can register the death with the relevant registrar who will then issue the family with a 'Death Certificate'.

- 10.10.3 When a death is registered, the public has access to the cause of death recorded on the certificate. Where the SIO considers the cause of death to contain information, which is regarded as specialist, there may be instances where disclosure of such facts may significantly prejudice the enquiry. This may ultimately lead to the ends of justice being defeated.
- 10.10.4 To address such occasions a Registration of Death Protocol was agreed between the PSoS and The General Register Office for Scotland.

### **10.11 RETENTION OF ORGANS AND RELEASE OF THE BODY**

- 10.11.1 At the conclusion of the post mortem, the FLO should establish which tissues and/or organs, or other samples have been retained for further pathological examination and the reasons for their retention. FLOs should be prepared to discuss these issues with the family.
- 10.11.2 In cases where such samples have been retained, the FLO must ensure that all tissues and/or organs, or other samples have been detailed on a letter from the Procurator Fiscal. This should explain what has been retained and the reasons for the retention.
- 10.11.3 The letter should be hand delivered by the FLOs to the family. In such cases FLOs will have to address the subject of disposal of these samples with the family.
- 10.11.4 The Procurator Fiscal is responsible for authorising the release of the body of the victim to the family. The FLO should consult regularly with the SIO/SIM and Procurator Fiscal in regard to when the body will be released, and ensure that the family are kept up to date with developments.
- 10.11.5 In cases of homicide the family should be made aware that there may be a requirement for an additional post mortem examination(s) to be carried out on behalf of the defence. This process can often impact significantly on when the body can be released.

### **10.12 FUNERALS**

- 10.12.1 In almost all instances where a FLO deployment has taken place the family of the victim will be anxious for the release of the victim's remains in order that they can make the necessary arrangements for the funeral. This is a particularly sensitive issue for families and can be extremely challenging in cases where there are cultural or religious beliefs to take into account.
- 10.12.2 It is not uncommon for the exit meeting to be arranged for sometime shortly after the funeral has taken place, as their investigatory role is often over.
- 10.12.3 The wishes of the family should be borne in mind and officers should ensure that they do not attend the funeral without the prior knowledge and agreement of the family. There may be occasions where there is an operational reason for the FLOs, or other officers, to attend and in such cases those in attendance must ensure that they carry out their duties in a sensitive and professional manner.

- 10.12.4 In instances where a FLO attends the funeral, they should keep a discreet distance and ensure that they do not take an active part in proceedings. At the conclusion of the service, officers should decline any invite to attend any post funeral event.
- 10.12.5 Whether a FLO, or other officer(s), attends a funeral should be discussed with the SIO and the reasons for the decision to attend or otherwise entered in the SIO policy file and FLO log.

### **10.13 IDENTIFICATION PARADES**

- 10.13.1 Should an identification parade be necessary, the FLO must ensure that evidential standards are maintained at all times. The FLO must not be involved in taking a family witness to the parade and can have no undue influence over the witness.
- 10.13.2 In certain circumstances, consideration may be given to using another officer to carry out this specific role at identification parades. The reasons for the temporary withdrawal of the FLOs and introduction of another officer should be fully explained to the family.
- 10.13.3 Identification parades in which victims' families are involved may be a significantly traumatic occasion and the first time that they have come into contact with the suspected perpetrator(s).
- 10.13.4 The FLO must discuss with the SIO the possibility of deploying another officer who is independent of the investigation to guide and support the family members through this process.
- 10.13.5 It is important that the officer, who is not a member of the enquiry team, takes time to explain the generic process of the identification parade, bearing in mind that it may be a conventional or VIPER parade, to prepare family members for this experience.

### **10.14 RETURN OF PROPERTY**

- 10.14.1 Issues concerning wills or when a person dies intestate should be borne in mind prior to returning property to the family. Legal advice may be required in any case, where there is a possibility that property may be subject to a dispute between family members.
- 10.14.2 When considering the return of property to the family, the following should be borne in mind:
- What property does the family wish to be returned;
  - How do they want the property returned, e.g. cleaned; and
  - Need there be a long delay in any return of property.
- 10.14.3 Property being returned should be inspected by the FLO to ensure that:
- All police and court production tags have been removed;

- Any clothing has been cleaned and pressed when requested to do so; and
- Any jewellery or other personal effects have been cleaned and properly presented when requested.

10.14.4 The family must always be consulted before any cleaning of property takes place to establish their views. The FLO should liaise closely with the productions officer on all matters pertaining to productions. It is essential the property is returned rather than relatives asked to collect it from a location that may cause upset and trauma.

10.14.5 Health and safety issues must always be taken into account whenever property is searched and/or cleaned. Specialist companies may be used to provide logistical support, in respect of the issues set out in this section in any circumstances, particularly instances of mass disaster.

## **10.15 MEDIA**

10.15.1 In reporting events concerning a sudden, unexplained or violent death, the media representation of the victim, their persistence and scale of reporting can depend on many factors and speculation surrounding the victim. These might include the victim's age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, lifestyle, notoriety and the circumstances surrounding their death. All of these factors may be surmised and inaccurately reported. Similar factors concerning the alleged perpetrators might be reported and weighed up against the victim and also be speculative and inaccurate.

10.15.2 The persistence of the media to obtain a story or information may involve repeated calls on family homes and canvassing of friends, acquaintances and neighbours.

10.15.3 Such factors may exacerbate the trauma of families who should be prepared for media interest. FLOs should advise families when it may be likely that such factors or a combination of them could have an impact.

10.15.4 FLOs should ensure they apprise themselves of media reporting of the case on a daily basis, through close liaison with the appointed press officer, to ensure that they are prepared for potential questions that might be raised by families.

10.15.5 FLOs are reminded that the media takes a number of formats, including local and national press, radio, TV, Internet and, potentially, the newsletters of local community organisations.

10.15.6 It is likely that the press will want a photograph of the victim at the earliest opportunity. The FLO should consult with the family, and with their agreement, obtain an approved recent photograph, which is a good likeness for potential publication. Photographs may be given to representatives of the press following consultation with the SIO/SIM and appointed press officer on condition that they do not approach the family direct.

10.15.7 In delivering the SIO/SIMs media strategy, the FLO should:

- Establish the view of the family on participation in the police media strategy and any associated appeals;
- Apprise the SIO/SIM of media activity around the family;
- Inform the family of the police media strategy, and ensure they are aware of all media releases by the police.

10.15.8 The FLO must not issue any statements to the media unless specifically requested to do so by the SIO and in liaison with the appointed Press Officer. FLOs must ensure that they are in a position to notify families of any form of media release made by the Police prior to it being broadcast or published.

10.15.9 There may be occasions where the Press Officer is made aware of a television broadcast or news article that is going to be aired or published. SIOs and FLOs must maintain a dialogue with this officer so that, in such instances, they can be made aware of these developments and arrange to notify the family prior to the release of the information.

## **10.16 EXIT STRATEGY**

10.16.1 FLOs must remain focused on their primary role as that of an investigator throughout their deployment. Where the FLO has developed a good relationship with the family, there is potential for the family becoming over reliant on the FLO and the FLO becoming over reliant on the family. The implications of this could have a long-term effect on both the family and the FLO.

10.16.2 Once the investigatory role of the FLO is exhausted then steps must be taken for the FLO to exit and responsibility for liaison with the family handed over to VIA.

10.16.3 At the outset of their deployment, FLOs should make families aware that there will come a point when they will exit their role and that VIA will undertake the liaison responsibility. This will avoid any confusion that the family might have regarding the responsibilities of the FLO.

10.16.4 Once deployed, FLOs should make early contact with VIA and submit the PSoS – COPFS Victim Profile Form at the earliest opportunity. It is also recognised as good practice that VIA identify the individual who will be responsible for the family once the FLO has exited. This will also allow the FLO the opportunity to provide the VIA representative with early information surrounding the victim, family background, circumstances of the death and the involvement of any support agencies.

10.16.5 The timing and location of the exit meeting should be agreed between the family, FLO, VIA Officer and SIO. The Procurator Fiscals office is normally the location for an exit meeting, however, a police station or the family home, subject to any relevant risk assessment, are also suitable.

10.16.6 It is recognised as good practice for the SIO, or their Deputy, to chair the exit meeting, as they are responsible for the implementation of the Family Liaison Strategy throughout the deployment in question.



- 10.16.7 Once the formal handover to VIA has taken place, the SIO or Deputy will become the police single point of contact for the family, in the event that they have any queries or concerns that they wish addressed. Any welfare issues must be passed to a suitable welfare agency/support organisation for their attention.
- 10.16.8 Once the FLO has exited the family there should be no further contact between the FLO and the family.
- 10.16.9 It should be emphasised that whether or not an exit strategy is implemented it is an operational decision for the SIO/SIM to be made according to the circumstances at the time.

## **10.17 VICTIM INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

- 10.17.1 Victim Information and Advice (VIA) is a dedicated service within the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). The principal aims of VIA are:
- To provide information to the next of kin of a victim and witnesses regarding the Criminal Justice process in general;
  - To keep victims and bereaved next of kin informed about the progress of the case; and
  - To advise on and facilitate referral to other agencies for specialist support and counselling as required.
- 10.17.2 VIA works closely with other statutory agencies including the Police, Scottish Courts Service and also voluntary organisations such as Victim Support Court Witness Service, Women's Aid and Victim Support Scotland.
- 10.17.3 VIA is an integral part of COPFS and VIA staff work closely with their colleagues at the local Procurator Fiscals office. As they are not involved in prosecuting cases, they are able to concentrate solely on victims and next of kin. They are specially selected and trained for the job and come from a variety of backgrounds. The service is specifically designed to support and guide victims and their carers through the Criminal Justice process and attempt to increase their satisfaction and understanding of that experience.
- 10.17.4 There should be early contact between the FLO and the VIA Officer appointed. The FLO must provide the VIA Officer with a detailed Victim Profile by completing a PSoS/COPFS Victim Profile Form. This form should include information about the deceased, circumstances of death, details of family contacts, family dynamics, diversity issues, information about support agencies and any other relevant information.

- 10.17.5 VIA will advise the FLO of the outcome of preliminary court proceedings. At this time, consideration should be given to the FLO withdrawing from the case and passing responsibility for giving information to the family to the VIA officer. The exact timing of this handover will depend on the circumstances of the case. It may be after the funeral, after the accused first appears in court, or it may be later if police investigations have not been completed. Further guidance regarding this matter is detailed in the 'Exit Strategy' section of this document.
- 10.17.6 VIA staff are managed by the local Procurator Fiscal. The business practices, policy and quality of VIA work is devised, implemented and monitored by a central VIA Team, led by the VIA Director, as part of the Crown Office headquarters function.
- 10.17.7 Refer to the PSoS / COPFS Protocol 2010 – Managing Family Liaison for further information governing communication and liaison between Procurators Fiscal, VIA staff and FLOs.

### **10.18 SUPPORT SERVICES**

- 10.18.1 Police officers are not in a position to provide full practical support and guidance when working with victims' families. The FLO 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 GP), in accordance with their needs.
- 10.18.2 There are a number of agencies and networks that can provide assistance at local and national level. The nature of the support that families require varies considerably, depending on their individual needs and they should be fully involved in the decision-making process.
- 10.18.3 Useful telephone numbers of organisations and agencies that might be able to assist persons who have been bereaved are included in Appendix 'M'. Further information regarding Support Agencies is provided in Appendix 'N'.

### **10.19 WELFARE**

- 10.19.1 Working with a bereaved family is one of the most demanding, and at times, stressful environments that any officer will encounter. The welfare of any individual carrying out such work, often for protracted periods, is of paramount importance. The Police Service has an obligation for the welfare of its employees and as such, SIO/SIMs should be fully conversant with their responsibilities for any officer(s) carrying out the role of a FLO.
- 10.19.2 The SIO/SIM should hold regular welfare meetings with the FLO throughout the course of the deployment and complete the relevant welfare section at the rear of the FLO log. FLOs should also be offered annual attendance at their local Well-Being or Occupational Health Units.

- 10.19.3 Notwithstanding the responsibilities of the SIO/SIM, FLOs also have a responsibility to inform the SIO/SIM or FLC of any reason that may affect their ability to continue with their current or any future deployment e.g. a family bereavement or other significant event.

## **11. FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR (FLM)**

### **11.1 ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON MENTOR**

- 11.1.1 In instances where a FLO has been deployed a Family Liaison Mentor (FLM) should also be deployed. The FLM role is to provide support, independent guidance and advice to FLOs in terms of Family Liaison issues and to:

- Be available to discuss issues with FLOs arising from their deployment;
- Provide support, guidance and advice to FLOs based on previous broad based experience of the FLO role; and
- Act as liaison between the FLOs and the FLC.

- 11.1.2 In order to ensure impartiality the individual selected to carry out the FLM role must not be connected to the enquiry to which the FLOs are deployed.

### **11.2 SELECTION CRITERIA**

- 11.2.1 The FLM should be a trained FLO who is willing to carry out the role and undertake further training. They must also be:

- An experienced Family Liaison Officer;
- Trained to a recognised national standard;
- An experienced investigator; and
- Conversant in major incident procedures.

### **11.3 DEPLOYMENT**

- 11.3.1 An FLM should be deployed in all instances where a FLO has been deployed. The deployment should be carried out in accordance with local arrangements. Support, guidance and advice can be obtained from the FLM in relation to the following:

- Family Liaison Strategies;
- Media issues;
- Diversity issues;
- Dealing with intelligence received from families;
- Maintaining suitable Boundaries;
- Issues encountered during deployment that may affect their role; and
- Personal issues raised that may effect the deployment.

## 11.4 MAINTAINING RECORDS OF MEETINGS

- 11.4.1 Each local area should have in place a process of recording the content of the meetings between the FLO and FLM. These records may contain matters of a sensitive nature and will be subject to the rules of disclosure. Access to the records should be restricted to the FLM, FLO and FLC. Local arrangements should be put in place to ensure the security and confidentiality of the records. The following information should be recorded within the log:
- Date, time of meeting(s);
  - Details of subjects raised; and
  - Details of any advice or guidance given by the FLM.
- 11.4.2 It should be noted that it is not the role of the FLM to personally resolve any issues raised by the FLOs. It is their role to offer advice and guidance to the FLOs who in turn must decide whether or not to act on the advice given.
- 11.4.3 Any welfare or occupational health issues should be addressed through the appropriate procedures. If during discussion with the FLO/s the FLM is informed of something that he or she feels may impact on the integrity of the investigation, then they must immediately inform the FLC of their concerns.
- 11.4.4 In cases of mutual aid it is expected that a FLO will have access to an FLM provided by their own local area.

## 12. NATIONAL FAMILY LIAISON ADVISOR

- 12.1 The National Family Liaison Advisor is seconded to the National Crime Agency (NCA). Their role relates to the provision of strategic and operational advice and the provision of training in relation to family liaison, including the:
- Provision of strategic advice to forces in respect of implementing the guidance set out in this manual;
  - Provision of operational advice to SIO/SIMs and FLCs when requested;
  - Coordination of training provision for ACPO forces (England and Wales only);
  - Coordination of training provision for FLCs throughout England and Wales; and
  - Development and maintenance of national family liaison policy and guidance.
- 12.2 The National Family Liaison Advisor may be contacted through the specialist Operations Centre of the NCA at Wyboston.

## **13. FAMILY LIAISON IN MASS FATALITY INCIDENTS**

### **13.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 13.1.1 One of the most important considerations in the aftermath of a disaster is the relationship between bereaved families and the police. The term disaster in this context should be taken as any incident involving a large number of casualties and where the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) process is implemented.
- 13.1.2 The guidance contained within this document provides advice on family liaison in the immediate aftermath of a mass fatality incident. It does not distinguish between the types of incident that may occur where the DVI process is implemented.
- 13.1.3 The period following a disaster is intense and often confusing for all those concerned, which of course includes the families of those missing. These families are desperate for information and they must be treated in an appropriate manner.
- 13.1.4 In the event that a family has reported someone missing a FLO will be appointed to the family concerned. The appointment of a FLO will benefit the family and the investigation. The benefits include:
- Providing a single point of contact (SPOC) between the SIO/SIM and family;
  - Provide a two-way flow of information and intelligence;
  - To ensure the gathering of ante-mortem data in the appropriate manner without undue delay;
  - Completion of the Interpol DVI forms in a professional and timely manner;
  - To gather any physical material that may aid identification which would stand up to forensic scrutiny;
  - The obtaining of all relevant statements regarding lifestyle and victimology;
  - To ensure that the family receive timely and accurate information regarding the investigation and recovery operation;
  - To ensure that the family are assisted through the Criminal Justice process and if relevant the coronial process in England and Wales;
  - To ensure that all requests made by the family to view the deceased are met;
  - To assist in facilitating visits to the scene(s); and
  - To assist in the provision of suitable support services.
- 13.1.5 All dealings with the family must be recorded in the FLO Log.

- 13.1.6 Such events, by their very nature, attract significant media interest, which will centre around the families of those reported missing. There should be a media strategy in place and advice should be offered to families from a suitable representative from the Media Relations department.

### **13.2 INTERPOL DVI STRATEGIC AIM**

- 13.2.1 The strategic aim will be to ensure the most effective investigation possible into the death of an individual involved in a mass death incident, by the immediate implementation of a family liaison strategy. This strategy will include the deployment of a trained FLO to each family believed to have lost a relative in any such incident. The strategic aim will include:

- **Victim Identification**  
This will facilitate the rapid and accurate identification of disaster victims and human remains by timely collection, collation and submission of ante-mortem information.
- **Investigation**  
The investigation will provide a framework to facilitate the two way documented flow of information between the DVI Commander, the family and the identification of critical intelligence, which will support the overall investigation. This will include all relevant information to the family about the judicial process.
- **Community Reassurance**  
A joint media strategy should be agreed with the family to encourage witnesses to come forward and give the public and community reassurance in the investigative process.
- **Support from other Agencies**  
This will ensure that families have access to information that will enable them to make informed decisions about the support and assistance that can be obtained from other appropriate organisations.

### **13.3 DVI COMMANDER**

- 13.3.1 The DVI Commander is responsible for the overall strategy relating to recovery, identification and repatriation of victims. Family liaison falls within this strategy and as such requires a distinct strategy of its own.
- 13.3.2 The strategy should seek to address staffing levels, clear chains of command and an agreed disclosure policy so that only approved information is given to families. The key objectives of the family liaison strategy should be:
- Providing the family with as full and up to date information as possible about the incident and its investigation; and
  - Obtaining a full family background and other relevant details relating to the victim, as directed by the DVI Commander.
- 13.3.3 The level of information passed to families should be as high as possible as they will be in desperate need for information. It is of paramount importance that the police can identify themselves as the primary and most reliable source of such information.

- 13.3.4 The DVI Commander should appoint an appropriately trained FLC(s) to manage the family liaison response. The FLC should be involved in the process of compiling the family liaison strategy in any mass fatality incident. Their role will include:
- Facilitating the delivery of the family liaison strategy;
  - Supporting and advising the DVI Commander on issues relating to the delivery of family liaison;
  - Acting as a channel for welfare support;
  - Liaising nationally and internationally to share and gather good practice;
  - Monitoring the workload of FLOs;
  - Ensuring that any necessary equipment such as vehicles and telephones are made available to FLOs;
  - Act as a quality assurance point for work submitted by FLOs to ensure that the DVI Commander receives timely and accurate information;
  - Ensuring that all relevant paperwork from the FLOs is completed and submitted in a timely and efficient manner; and
  - Implementation of appropriate exit strategies.
- 13.3.5 All FLOs should be trained to a standard of DVI awareness that would allow them to have a full understanding of any ongoing investigation into a mass fatality incident. This requirement is essential, as they will be expected to explain the processes involved in such an investigation to a bereaved family.

#### **13.4 HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE CENTRES**

- 13.4.1 Where a large-scale disaster has occurred involving mass fatalities, families often attend at or near the scene. In such instances setting up a central resource centre should be considered.
- 13.4.2 This will assist the police and families by providing a focal point where relatives can receive information and assistance. In the short term, this could also help to maximise the family liaison effort by having FLO resources available to capture all the ante-mortem information as well as forensic samples in the immediate aftermath.
- 13.4.3 A central resource centre will require the involvement of other agencies and will allow families to make informed choices based on their immediate needs.
- 13.4.4 Visits to the scene can also be organised so as to ensure that they do not interfere with any rescue or recovery work that is ongoing. It will also reduce the risk of relatives attending unaccompanied at the scene, which can be harrowing and disruptive to the DVI teams.
- 13.4.5 Suitable premises must be identified which are not in the vicinity of the scene, but which have sufficient transport links.

### **13.5 EXIT STRATEGIES**

- 13.5.1 The DVI Commander and FLC should ensure that exit strategies are implemented at the appropriate time.
- 13.5.2 FLOs who have been involved in responding to a mass fatality incident must be offered the opportunity to attend a de-brief. This will ensure that any welfare issues are addressed and working practices reviewed prior to any subsequent deployment.

## **14. ABDUCTION OF UK NATIONALS ABROAD**

- 14.1 One of the most demanding roles performed by a FLO is being deployed to a family following abduction of UK nationals abroad. The responding officers provide appropriate support to the family whilst achieving the aims of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO).
- 14.2 The deployment of FLOs also provides an opportunity to obtain the necessary Ante Mortem collection from the family.
- 14.3 Further guidance is provided in the Good Practice Guidance Following Abduction of UK Nationals Abroad.

## **15. INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATIONS**

### **15.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 15.1.1 In recent years FLOs have been deployed on several occasions to assist the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) in cases where British nationals have been the victims of serious crimes or major disasters abroad. These have included cases of murder, manslaughter, serious sexual offences, fatal road collisions, terrorist incidents and where people have been missing in suspicious circumstances.
- 15.1.2 There is the potential of misunderstandings when two organisations work together, but these can be overcome by an understanding of each other's roles, responsibilities and boundaries and working together as a team.
- 15.1.3 It is recommended that an SIO is appointed in any case where a FLO is deployed in the above circumstances, and that the SIO works closely with the FLC.
- 15.1.4 It is particularly important that all liaison with an overseas police force is conducted in a sensitive and diplomatic manner. Care must be taken to ensure they do not feel their procedures are being questioned, their professionalism queried or that the UK force is trying to intrude on their investigation. It must be emphasised that the role of the FLO in these cases is to assist the overseas force by facilitating the relationship with the family, and with evidence gathering in the UK.



- 15.1.5 The following sets out the roles and responsibilities of the various UK agencies involved the specific roles of the FLO, FLC, SIO and best practice to ensure a professional service is provided to the family and overseas investigating force.

## **15.2 CRITERIA FOR DEPLOYMENT**

- 15.2.1 Although considered, FLOs will not be deployed in ALL cases where a British national is murdered, or the victim of another serious crime abroad. They will generally only be deployed if there is an investigative role for them. The following are circumstances in which a FLO may have an investigative role:

- Identification of the victim is an issue and there is a need for ante-mortem samples such as DNA, dental records, fingerprints etc. or samples from family members;
- The foreign police service is requesting that enquiries are conducted in the UK.

- 15.2.2 If the victim's body is returned to Scotland, then the local Procurator Fiscal (PF) may instruct local enquiry to be carried out to clarify how the person died. FLOs can assist the PF in these circumstances. The PF may also order a post-mortem examination, even if one was conducted abroad. It is always worthwhile in such cases to make contact with the PF at an early stage. It should be noted that the PF can investigate deaths abroad under certain circumstances by virtue of section 11 of the Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995.

- 15.2.3 In cases where a victim's body is returned to England or Wales en-route to Scotland the coroner may have to conduct an inquest.

- 15.2.4 FLOs or other police experts, such as murder or roads policing investigators can be deployed in cases where there is likely to be significant media attention, if the family has concerns regarding the foreign police investigation or are experiencing problems in obtaining information.

## **15.3 CONSULAR DIRECTORATE**

- 15.3.1 FLOs, FLCs and SIOs should have some understanding of the Consular Directorate (CD) within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). This should include, its role and responsibility, what it can and cannot do, both at home and abroad and where it sits within the wider FCO.

- 15.3.2 The FCO in London, and in Embassies and High Commissions abroad, is made up of various departments, which include chancery (political and legal), commercial management and consular. It is the Consular Directorate, through its consuls and vice consuls, which deals with British nationals in distress abroad.

- 15.3.3 Whatever happens abroad is reflected in the CD in London by desk officers (DO) working in the Country Casework Team. The DO will liaise with the Consular Officers (CO) dealing with the Incident abroad. It is the DO that a FLO will work with when dealing with cases of British nationals murdered abroad etc.
- 15.3.4 On notification of a death abroad the CO will:
- Liaise with local authorities such as police, judiciary to confirm identification and establish known facts;
  - Make efforts to obtain copies of police reports for a UK Coroner, family, etc.
  - Remain updated on any police/judicial Investigation;
  - Provide a list of English speaking lawyers, doctors, interpreters, etc. to families;
  - Assist the family should they visit the country concerned;
  - Advise the family on repatriation, cultural issues, police and judicial systems, etc.
  - Liaise with the DO In London.
- 15.3.5 The CO cannot investigate crimes or carry out criminal research or interfere in criminal investigations or the judicial process. They can advise families on the most appropriate way of making their concerns known, and in some cases they can press these concerns personally. However in some countries consular officials are not recognised as “interested parties” and as such local police and judicial authorities will not discuss on-going investigations with them. In these cases families are advised to engage the services of a local lawyer to represent their interests. The CO will not provide legal or medical advice or pay for repatriation, legal/medical or interpreter fees.
- 15.3.6 When the death is first notified, the DO will arrange for the local force to notify the next of kin as soon as possible. This should not normally be carried out by the FLO. The initial telephone briefing of the circumstances and information will be followed by written confirmation, either by fax or email.
- 15.3.7 The DO and their line manager will decide, in consultation with the police adviser, whether to request the deployment of a FLO. If it is decided to do so, this will be done through the force FLC or on call senior CID management. The normal deployment procedures should be followed as with any other deployment. The FLC in must also ensure that the force executive is informed.

#### **15.4 POLICE ACTION**

- 15.4.1 The SIO/FLC must decide on the most appropriate officer to appoint. This should be an experienced FLO who is able to:
- Answer in general terms, the many questions families may have, most of these often around murder investigations;

- Manage possible frustrations within the family during an investigation, which will be different to one conducted in the UK. There may be a lack of detailed information and many other issues emanating from an investigation taking place many miles from the UK possibly being carried out under very different police and judicial systems.
  - Manage the frustrations of the family without adding to them by joining them in their anger over perceived deficiencies in the investigation or procedures of another country, or by raising their expectations.
- 15.4.2 The SIO/FLC should manage this aspect of the FLOs work, and ensure any investigative product, such as DNA samples, other productions, statements; reports, etc. are quality controlled before being forwarded to the foreign force.
- 15.4.3 The SIO/FLC also needs to decide on a robust exit strategy with the FLO. If the FLOs role is reduced to passing on information, that may not be an effective use of their skills and should be continued by the FCO Desk Officer.
- 15.4.4 If the PSoS decide to deploy a FLO in cases where the FCO have not requested assistance, then the desk officer should be informed with the details of the deployment. The working relationship between the FLO and FCO should continue as detailed elsewhere in this advice. In these circumstances the force should be aware of setting precedents and a possible inconsistency of service.

## **15.5 ROLE OF THE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER**

- 15.5.1 On being deployed and having received a briefing from the DO the FLO should carry out the following tasks;
- Meet the family, to obtain any details they have of the case, and to gain an understanding of their needs and family dynamics
  - Liaise with the appropriate Coroner's Officer, if the deceased is being returned to England and Wales.
- 15.5.2 Consideration should be given to the FLO and SIO meeting early with the DO at the FCO, to discuss a Joint strategy for the deployment. This will include how Information is passed to the family. Most communication should be through the FLO, to avoid duplication and mixed messages, however, the DO will need to call periodically to confirm to the family the FCO responsibility and commitment to the case. Before they do so, they should be advised to call the FLO for an update on family dynamics, and to update the FLO after their call to the family.
- 15.5.3 At this meeting the DO can give the FLO Information which will help in decision-making, for example, cultural issues in the country, police/judicial systems, likelihood of getting co-operation from the local authorities, advice on repatriation and what consuls can and cannot do. This type of information will give FLOs and SIO/FLCs a greater understanding of the likely Issues, which should help in managing a family's expectations.

- 15.5.4 The meeting should be documented. If it is not practicable to hold this meeting, the police and DO should discuss this strategy in a telephone call. The Police Adviser to the Consular Directorate is also available for advice.
- 15.5.5 Once the Issues are agreed, consideration should be given to asking the family whether they would like a meeting with the FLO and desk officer at the FCO. The issues can be discussed, so all parties understand each other's needs, roles, responsibilities and boundaries. The relationship between the family, FCO and police should then start on a solid foundation with the police and FCO working as a team.
- 15.5.6 FLOs must avoid giving unrealistic expectations to the family, for example:
- Intimate they will be able to travel abroad to get information and liaise with the foreign force;
  - That the UK force will try and investigate the matter abroad;
  - That the case will/should be investigated the way it would in the UK;
  - Promise to get information.
- 15.5.7 Significant frustration that can build up in these cases caused by a lack of understanding of different investigative and judicial systems. Many other countries do not require the same level of evidence that is required in the UK. In some countries it is the Judiciary that leads on an Investigation and not the police.
- 15.5.8 It should also be considered that other countries may not be familiar with the role of a FLO or understand the concept of family liaison. This should be remembered when requesting information from an overseas force. This can sometimes lead to the foreign force thinking that they are being criticised or the UK force Wants to intrude in the investigation, or to assist them when they do not wish any assistance.

## **15.6 FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS DEPLOYED ABROAD**

- 15.6.1 If a visit abroad is being considered advice should be sought from Interpol London, on [REDACTED]. Further advice can be obtained from the Police Adviser, Consular Directorate, Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- 15.6.2 The first consideration must be whether there is real operational need for the FLO to travel. Can the family be catered for by the foreign police force or by consular officers? Will the FLO be performing a chaperoning role only?
- 15.6.3 In the event of a deployment abroad then Interpol in London should be informed so they are aware of the deployment, even if arrangements were not made through them.
- 15.6.4 The SIO should discuss the objectives/strategy, schedules, etc., with the DO and discuss what assistance consular officials abroad may be able to provide. In addition the SIO should discuss a media strategy with the press departments of both the FCO and the PSoS.

- 15.6.5 Once overseas the FLO should meet with the local CO to discuss issues and agree on roles and responsibilities. Consideration should also be given to arranging a meeting between the CO, family and FLO to ensure each understands their objectives and responsibilities, as well as the boundaries and limitations inherent to that country. The FLO should ensure that the CO is updated with progress on a daily basis.
- 15.6.6 When deployed abroad FLOs should remember that as a UK police officer they require the host country's permission to be there and whilst there have no powers or authority to question witnesses or officials.

### **15.7 BEST PRACTICE**

- 15.7.1 In cases involving foreign investigations the SIO/FLC should attempt to liaise directly with the foreign force. This can be done through Interpol, the FCO or the foreign embassy in London. It can sometimes be difficult to achieve, but if successful, will speed communication, help instil confidence and avoid misunderstandings. If this objective is achieved, ensure the DO is updated regularly
- 15.7.2 Use experienced FLOs for such deployments due to the unique challenges that can arise when dealing with a foreign investigation.

### **15.8 INTERPOL**

- 15.8.1 Interpol is the largest international police organisation in the world, with 182 member countries spread over 5 continents. Every member country has an Interpol office called a National Central Bureau (NCB). The NCB in the UK is based in London.
- 15.8.2 The London NCB is part of the International Division of Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) and is the single point of contact for foreign law enforcement agencies requiring assistance with overseas investigations.
- 15.8.3 In the context of the murder of British nationals abroad, the NCB may be asked by the overseas police force to arrange delivery of the initial notification to the family in the UK, or to deal with requests for further information and evidence. In such instances the NCB will contact the FCO Desk Officer, informing them of the details of the request, what action has been taken by the NCB, together with the contact details for the victim's family and those of the police that have been tasked.
- 15.8.4 The UK NCB has the legal authority to provide UK agencies with evidential material from around the world, in addition to facilitating requests for evidence to be obtained in the UK. It also has an obligation to satisfy International requests for the exchange of information.
- 15.8.5 The NCB is available for advice and support 24 hours a day.

**LIST OF ASSOCIATED REFERENCE DOCUMENTS**

- [PSoS / COPFS Protocol 2010 – Managing Family Liaison;](#)
- [Registration of Death Protocol](#)
- [Good Practice Guidance Following Abduction of UK Nationals Abroad.](#)

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**LIST OF ASSOCIATED FORMS**

- Family liaison victim profile Checklist
- Family Risk liaison Assessment - Form 1 (061-001)
- Family liaison Risk Assessment – Form 2 (061-002)
- COPFS Victim Profile (061-004)
- Application for the role of family liaison officer (061-003)

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**USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

**BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**

**The Compassionate Friends Scotland**  
17 St Magdalanes Road  
Perth  
PH2 0BN

[REDACTED]

**Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland**  
Riverside House  
Friarton Road  
Perth  
PH2 8DF

[REDACTED]

**Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project**  
(Advice, support and counselling for the  
gay community).

7.00pm – 10pm  
Aberdeen: [REDACTED]  
Edinburgh: [REDACTED]  
Glasgow: [REDACTED]

**Lesbian and Gay Helpline**

Switchboard Helpline 24hr  
London: [REDACTED]  
Aberdeen: [REDACTED]  
Edinburgh: [REDACTED]  
Glasgow: [REDACTED]

**Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM)**

[REDACTED]

**People Experiencing Trauma and Loss**  
29 Clydesdale Street  
Hamilton  
ML3 0DD

[REDACTED]

**CHILDREN**

**Childhood Bereavement Project**  
(Information about services for bereaved  
children nationwide).

[REDACTED]

**Child Death Helpline**  
(A helpline for those affected by the death of a child)  
Open Every Evening 7pm-10pm,  
Mon-Fri 10am-1pm  
Wed 1pm-4pm

[REDACTED]



**NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

**Child Victims of Crime**

Registered charity supported by the British Police Rugby Section (publish a self-help guide for Parents / guardians, consider applications to fund counselling, holidays and equipment). Referrals must be made by a police officer.

[REDACTED]

**The Compassionate Friends**

(Support/friendship for bereaved parents and their families by those similarly bereaved).

Help line: [REDACTED]  
10am-4pm 6.30-10pm 7 day  
[REDACTED] Local Rate

**Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths**

(Counselling for bereaved parents 9am -11pm staffed helpline). [www.fsid.org.uk](http://www.fsid.org.uk)

[REDACTED]

**The Traumatic Stress Clinic**

NHS Open weekdays 9am-5pm

[REDACTED]

**Winston's Wish**

(Support for bereaved children and young people up to the age of 18).

[REDACTED]  
(Mon-Fri 9-5pm)

**ROAD DEATHS**

**BrakeCare**

(Helps emergency and counselling services to support people affected by road death and injury).

[REDACTED]  
Helpline [REDACTED]

**Campaign Against Drinking and Driving**

(Support and assistance for those bereaved through road fatality).

[REDACTED]

**Road Peace**

(National Charity for Road Crash Victims).

Help line [REDACTED]

**OTHER SERVICES**

**Criminal Injury Compensation Authority**

[REDACTED]

**Samaritans**

(24 hour emotional support for those in crisis)

[REDACTED]

**Victim Support Scotland**

[REDACTED]

**Victim Support UK**

[REDACTED]

**Families of Murdered Children (FOMC)**

99 Wood Crescent  
Motherwell  
ML1 1HQ

24hrs - [REDACTED]

## SUPPORT AGENCIES

### BRAKECARE

BrakeCare is a division of Brake, a national, not-for-profit organisation working to stop deaths and injuries on roads. BrakeCare produces an information pack, Advice for Bereaved Families and Friends Following a Death on the Road, which is given to families when they are informed of the death of a loved one by police officers. The information contained in the pack ranges from advice about how to cope with grief, to what happens during police investigations. The BrakeCare pack is distributed to all police forces so that they can be handed out when police officers are delivering the death message. BrakeCare also offers advice to people affected by a road death over the telephone and can refer people to professional therapists if needed.

BrakeCare can be contacted on [REDACTED] (For Police officers only).

### SUPPORT AFTER MURDER AND MANSLAUGHTER (SAMM)

The FLO should be able to advise the family if there is a Support After Murder and Manslaughter (SAMM) group in their area. SAMM is a self-help group whose members generously give their time to support others. FLOs should not expect SAMM to be burdened with compensation claims, benefit queries, housing problems, explaining the court system, employment problems or, in general, the myriad of practical and legal problems that casework with bereaved families involves because such issues require considerable administrative support. There is an explanatory leaflet about SAMM in the Home Office pack.

### VICTIM SUPPORT

Victim Support Scotland (VSS) gives free and confidential help and support to all those affected by crime. They have specially trained people who are able to support people bereaved by violent crime.

They can offer information, emotional support and practical help to victims, witnesses and their family and friends.

FLOs must familiarise themselves with the role of Victim Support in their area together with current referral guidelines. A very positive way of achieving this is to secure Victim Support input about their service in FLO training. In every case the involvement of Victim Support should be referred to the SIO/SIM. Care is needed concerning the referral if family members have not been eliminated from involvement in the crime because there may be a possibility that the referral may frustrate the progress of the enquiry. However, in all cases the needs of the family must be recognised and considered in line with the necessity to support investigative functions.

## **NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED**

The consent of the family for involvement of Victim Support is essential prior to a referral being made. However, it is known that many bereaved relatives initially reject the involvement of any support agencies because of the difficulty in making decisions, in the immediate aftermath of the killing, about what help they may need. For this reason, where families do not consent to involvement of Victim Support, the offer should be repeated at a suitable later date.

It is the responsibility of the FLO to inform the family of the existence of Victim Support at the earliest appropriate moment and inform the SIO/SIM of their wishes. It is important that the FLO is able to describe with reasonable accuracy what Victim Support offers, i.e. emotional support, practical help, and information about criminal justice process; not counselling or financial support.

An early introduction to Victim Support will make it easier for the police and Victim Support to work in partnership to provide appropriate information and support to family members. Early introduction also makes it easier to achieve a good transfer to the services offered by Victim Support when the FLO withdraws from the family. Victim Support Co-ordinators are well informed about other local agencies available to help victims of crime. In most areas, Victim Support has good liaison with other support agencies, for example SAMM, and they will help families obtain the type of support that is most relevant to their needs.

The trained volunteer nominated by the Victim Support manager should meet with the SIO/SIM and the FLO to be briefed about the case.

Victim Support Scotland helpline [REDACTED] (available Monday to Friday 9-4.30pm) or contact Victim Support line ([REDACTED]) or the UK Victim Support line ([REDACTED]) provides a central contact point at local call rates. The Support line is available 7 days a week and in the evening, though it does not provide a 24 hour service. It can be used by:

- Family members who want immediate telephone support;
- Family members who wish to be referred to their local Victim Support schemes or Witness Service, or who want information about other specialist service providers;
- Officers seeking information about Victim Support or the Witness Service, including contact for family members in another part of the country.

Where referral to Victim Support has initially been declined, the FLO should sensitively offer referral again as the investigation progresses and the needs of the family change.

It is good practice, where possible, for the initial introduction to or meeting between a family and a Victim Support volunteer to take place with the FLO present to establish good inter-agency working.

Ongoing liaison must be established between the FLO and Victim Support volunteer to ensure that the information that is given to the family is consistent, avoiding any confusion, misinformation or embarrassment.

## THE WITNESS SERVICE

The Witness Service is run by Victim Support Scotland and is available in every Sheriff and High Court in Scotland. It should be used by the FLO and may assist in alleviating some of the fears associated with attending court or giving oral evidence. In many cases this is the family or witnesses' first experience of a courtroom and many do not understand the legal procedure and protocols. Support through this procedure and an explanation of the rules of giving evidence is essential to avoid the experience being traumatic or re-victimising. The Witness Service provides this support and it is available to defence and prosecution witnesses, though not to suspect/accused.

The Witness Service provides a free and confidential service including:

- Someone to talk to in confidence;
- Information on court procedures;
- A quiet place to wait before and during the hearing;
- Someone to accompany the family into the courtroom when giving evidence;
- Provides support at conclusion of the case and to get more help and information.

The Witness Service, however, cannot discuss evidence or offer legal advice. Further details on the Witness Service can be located in the phone book under the name of the court, or by contacting the VSS helpline on [REDACTED].

Stress during the trial is high and there is a possibility that the family will experience extreme anxiety. The potential conflict between the prosecution and defence during the case and some of the specific evidence that may be given (e.g. by the pathologist, photographs) will impact on the family. The FLO has a duty to advise the family about court etiquette and the potentially distressing nature of specific evidence that may be given. Where members of the family are significant witnesses such issues should be raised sensitively and the need to negate possible defence allegations of "coaching" should be borne in mind.

## FURTHER ADVICE

If families are reluctant or unwilling to accept offers of help from organisations such as Victim Support, SAMM and BrakeCare, FLOs should be pro-active in seeking out and establishing alternative avenues of support for families. There are other statutory and voluntary organisations, community interest and religious groups that will be able to offer practical support, help and, in some cases, counselling services. FLOs should share this information with the families and assist the family to make contact with such organisations if the family so desire.

The FLO should encourage feedback from the family to establish the adequacy of the support provided by other organisations and assist the family in making contacts with alternative avenues of support, if appropriate.

In cases where the victim is from a minority ethnic community or from a diverse lifestyle background, it is particularly important that the FLO makes pro-active use of

local community contacts to guide, advise and support family liaison where appropriate.

Victim Support may also be able to provide advice.

The FLC should be consulted regarding the appropriate points of contact concerning the avenues of additional support which are appropriate in particular cases.

The SIO/SIM must be consulted before information is shared with the families.

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## ADDITIONAL CONTACTS

### VICTIM INFORMATION AND ADVICE

The VIA National Team leader is based at  
Legal House, 101 Gorbals Street, Glasgow  
G5 9DW,  
Telephone: [REDACTED], Fax: [REDACTED]

### NATIONAL FAMILY LIAISON ADVISOR

The National Family Liaison Advisor may be contacted through the specialist  
Operations Centre of the National Crime Agency at Wyboston, telephone [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED].

### POLICE ADVISOR TO CONSULAR DIRECTORATE

The Police Adviser to the Consular Directorate can be contacted on [REDACTED].

### NATIONAL CENTRAL BUREAU

The National Central Bureau in the UK is based in London and is available for  
advice and support 24 hours a day on [REDACTED].