



Service Procedure

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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ABSTRACT:

This Procedure relates to the management of Critical Incidents and the completion of a Community Impact Assessment.
A critical incident can occur both internally or externally, therefore this policy applies to **all personnel** involved in the management of a critical incident

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2. INTRODUCTION

- (1)
 - (a) This Service Procedure explains the definition of a Critical Incident and provides guidance on identifying appropriate police responses to such incidents.
 - (b) It is intended to assist officers and staff in delivering personal, professional and protective policing to everyone. In pursuit of this, we will work with communities and partners to make Northern Ireland safe, confident and peaceful.
 - (c) Adherence to this procedure will contribute to the achievement of the outcomes identified in the Northern Ireland Policing Plan.
- (2) **Definition of a Critical Incident**

This procedure is concerned with the management of:

Any incident, where the **effectiveness** of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (the Police Service) response is likely to have a significant **impact** on the **confidence** of the victim, their family and/or the **community**.

3. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- (1) **Drivers for Change**
 - (a) Policy Directive 10/07 - Managing Actual/Potential Critical Incidents was amended in 2010 to reflect the recommendations made by HMIC and other interested parties. HMIC had highlighted the need for increased understanding of and ability to 'grip' critical incidents at the earliest opportunity (HMIC Report on Critical Incident Management, 2009).
 - (b) National Guidance provided by ACPO has been updated in Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management 2nd edition 2011.
 - (c) Service Procedure 50/07 – Community Impact Assessments has been cancelled and the relevant sections have been incorporated in this Service Procedure. Guidance on the completion of the Community Impact Assessment has been included in the Critical Incident Guidance Centre available through the PoliceNet Crime Training WebPages.
- (2) **Aims**
 - (a) This Service Procedure aims to ensure early identification and a professional response by the Police Service to events recognised as critical incidents, along with sensitive work to maintain public and community confidence.
 - (b) This policy supports and complements other PSNI Service Procedures, the Policing Plan and National Guidance. It cannot suggest a prescriptive model; every incident is different and the response to the Critical Incident must be as unique as the incident itself.
- (3) **Application**

The Police Service must continue to build and retain the confidence and trust which is so essential to successful policing. The quality of our response to all incidents underpins this. This policy and supporting procedures applies to all Police Service personnel.
- (4) **Legal Basis**

Though there is no specific legislative requirement for this procedure, it ensures police response to incidents is standardised which should ensure that the following are taken into account:

 - (a) The Human Rights Act 1998;
 - (b) Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;

- (c) Race Relations (NI) Order 1997;
- (d) Part II of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 (provisions for Vulnerable and Intimidated Witnesses);
- (e) Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000;
- (f) Section 32 Police (NI) Act 2000;
- (g) Civil Contingencies Act 2004;
- (h) Full consideration should also be given to Articles 2(1), 2(2) and 3(3) of the PSNI Code of Ethics.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SERVICE PROCEDURE

The proper management of Critical Incidents has the potential to cultivate good public relations with various members of the community and construct and enhance appropriate partnerships.

(1) Financial Implications/Value for Money/Continuous Improvement/Efficiency

- (a) The occurrence of a Critical Incident may place increased demands on policing resources. All activities and associated expenditure connected with a Critical Incident should be clearly identified and recorded separately.
- (b) This will enable effective resource management and (where appropriate) assist the making of bids for contingency funding (See PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre for costing guidance and template).

(2) Human Resources/Training

- (a) All Senior Supervisors and above (Inspectors and staff equivalent) must attend Critical Incident training. Training places can be reserved via the PSNI eServices Learning Portal (Course ref CRM60 refers). This may include refresher training for those who have attended previous training.
- (b) Critical Incident Training is delivered by the PSNI Police College, Crime Training Unit. Additional training can be provided for Specialist Courses, Career Development, and Leadership Development Programmes as required.

(3) Partnerships

The Police Service should always seek to proactively nurture and develop relationships with those who can contribute (internally or externally) to effective policing including the management of a Critical Incident. This may include members of Standing Independent Advisory Groups, Community Safety Partnerships, District Policing Partnerships, Community/Police Liaison Committees, Community Forums and other local community groups. Internally it will include the PSNI Staff Associations. It will also include the Policing Board, its members and committees or other bodies such as The Victims Commission. This cannot be an exhaustive list.

(4) Risks

The successful management of Critical Incidents assists the Police Service in achieving the investigative standards required by the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

(5) **Bureaucracy**

- (a) This procedure introduces minimal additional bureaucracy. Effective and durable record keeping is already required by relevant legislation.
- (b) The procedure places a requirement to properly de-brief all Critical Incidents.

(6) **Estates**

Often no additional facilities will be required in addition to those that are normally required for a non-critical incident of the type under consideration. However where an incident has developed or escalated to Critical Incident additional resources may be needed. This will be considered in the unique circumstances of each case.

(7) **Consultation**

The following were consulted during the 2011 review for this procedure:

- (a) All PSNI ACPO level officers/staff;
- (b) District Commanders/Heads of Branch;
- (c) Police Federation for Northern Ireland (PFNI);
- (d) Superintendents' Association of Northern Ireland (SANI);
- (e) PSNI Human Rights Adviser;
- (f) Critical Incident SPOC network.

5. PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

(1) **Definition of a Critical Incident**

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

- (a) Confidence in **the police response starts with the initial point of contact** between the Police Service and the person contacting the police or making the initial report. This continues through every stage of the police response. Consequently when responding to an incident each member of staff, must ensure:
 - (i) Their own response and decisions are consistent with Police Service standards for the incident;
 - (ii) Assess if there are any critical elements present that may impact on the way the police response is perceived;
 - (iii) Identify any indication implicit/explicit of public concern about the effectiveness of the police response.
- (b) **Key terms in the definition are:**
 - (i) **Any incident:** any event or incident has the potential to become critical at any stage;
 - (ii) **Effectiveness:** this is a measure of the professionalism, competence and integrity evident in the police response to an incident;

- (iii) **Significant impact:** 'significant' should be interpreted as being particular to each incident but critically relates to the 'negative' impact felt by the victim, family or community;
- (iv) **Confidence:** to be effective, a police service requires the confidence of those it seeks to serve;
- (v) **Community:** can be defined in a number of ways. Communities may be identified by their demographic or homogenous background for example, age, faith or sexual orientation; this is not an exclusive list. A community may be internal or external to the police service. We must recognise that people may be part of a number of distinct communities, and it will often be for individuals to define what community they are a part of. The Police Service must not stereotype or make assumptions about community membership.

(2) **'Major' or 'Critical' Incident**

- (a) There is often confusion as to whether an incident is 'Major' or 'Critical' and whilst an incident may be considered to be both concurrently, they are very different things.
- (b) A 'major incident' is any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, and generally includes the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people. (PSNI Guidance on Emergency Procedures, 2010 refers).
- (c) This normally involves some immediate impact on public safety, disruption and/or risk, and has to be immediately managed and contained, involving a wide scale deployment of multi-agency resources not just police.
- (d) The police response is essential within this and although generally these situations could also be flagged as a Critical Incident it should be recognised that 'Major' and 'Critical' are **distinct** issues. In many occasions it is possible that either the 'Major' or 'Critical' part of the incident can be closed down while the other remains active until the police involvement in the incident is completed.
- (e) Major Incidents, by their nature, can on occasions lead to a public enquiry where the actions of all responders may be scrutinised at length. Where a major incident is of such a scale or magnitude it may be prudent to declare as both 'major' and 'critical' on this occasion.
- (f) It should also be remembered that an incident status could change at any point so that even if it has been closed originally, it can be re-opened as a Critical Incident if confidence issues emerge. For further guidance with respect to Major Incidents please contact Emergency Planning Unit, PSNI HQ.

(3) **Characteristics of Critical Incidents**

- (a) Any type of incident (or linked series of incidents) can become critical at any stage. Often it is the 'context' within which the incident takes place which can elevate even the most routine incident to 'critical', for example the vulnerability of the victim.
- (b) Responding effectively to incidents is about **dealing with people in a personal, professional and protective manner**, and understanding the impact of the incident or event on their lives, their families and the community.
- (c) To improve police understanding of critical incidents, a national review was carried out in 2006/07 which looked at a number of cases which, although not labelled as critical at the time, nevertheless had characteristics that would now result in the declaration of what would now be recognised as a critical incident.

- (d) The risk factors or characteristics identified in this national review of Critical Incidents were:

(i) **Assumptions/stereotyping**

Personal assumptions, perceptions and stereotypes can adversely influence the direction or priority of response to an incident. Assumptions made can also lead to an under-estimation of the seriousness of an incident;

(ii) **Procedures**

Any police involvement with the community, our partners and internally across departments has the potential to fall below expected standards as a result of procedural failings, for example:

(aa) Failure to follow or interpret procedures correctly or effectively;

(bb) Failure to keep proper records;

(cc) Failure to ensure that the victim, families and other relevant bodies are kept up to date with the progress of the case and relevant decisions or directions that have been made.

(iii) **Family and Community Issues**

A failure to recognise and address the diverse needs of a victim, their family or the community may inadvertently alienate them or cause misunderstandings. Victim care and community engagement must recognise, and be sensitive to, individual needs and views. [See also paragraph (4) - Role of Emotional Intelligence].

(iv) **Decision-making**

(aa) The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has approved the adoption of a single National Decision Model (NDM) for the Police Service. The ACPO Ethics Portfolio and the National Risk Co-ordination Group have developed this values-based tool to provide a simple, logical and evidence-based approach to making policing decisions.

See ACPO (2011) National Decision Making Model Guidance paper.

(bb) Ever since its creation the police service has been making good decisions. Police decision making, however, is often complex; decisions are required in difficult circumstances and they are open to challenge. Decisions must be carefully thought through, made on the basis of best available information and demonstrate the use of a range of information sources. It is imperative that the rationale behind decisions must be carefully recorded for audit and review purposes.

(v) **Management**

The effective management of staff and workloads will help to ensure that the right person with the appropriate skills and experiences is dealing with the incident in the right way. The right level of supervision and support in an investigative context will help to avoid the potential overlooking of investigative opportunities or other shortcomings in the effectiveness of the police response being missed.

For full details of the 2007 review, see: ACPO (2007) Practice Advice on Critical Incident Management.

(4) The Role of Emotional Intelligence and Situation Awareness

- (a) Emotional Intelligence is the ability to recognise one's own feelings, those of others and effectively manage emotions within relationships. It is important to remember the importance of emotional intelligence and the impact that our actions have on others. A number of high profile public enquiries have identified the importance of emotional intelligence to lessen the impact of Critical Incidents.
- (b) It is possible to gauge general feelings of tension and vulnerability in the community, and to predict criticality factors which are likely to have an effect on how the victim, their family or the community may react to an incident, irrespective of the quality of the police response.
- (c) Gauging the mood of communities and monitoring the impact that incidents and events have previously had on them will help to identify the type of incidents which, in the future may have a significantly higher likelihood of escalating into a critical incident if they are not dealt with effectively at the outset.
- (d) Situation awareness takes into account general feelings of vulnerability and insecurity, and also the economic, political and social factors which impact on the local community. It can be developed through:
 - (i) Proactive community engagement;
 - (ii) Environmental scanning;
 - (iii) Collating and analysing community intelligence and information;
 - (iv) Competent call handling and interrogation of computer recording systems.
- (e) Situation awareness linked to intelligence systems will provide information for business processes such as threat and risk assessments, NIM tasking and co-ordination, and officer briefing and debriefing. (ACPO, 2011, Critical Incident Management, 2nd edition.)

(5) Recognising Critical Incidents

- (a) The Police Service has a duty to respond to every incident in the right way, first time, every time and at every level. The definition is deliberately broad in order to ensure that Critical Incidents (both internal and external) are not overlooked. It is essential that such incidents are identified as early as possible so that an effective police response can be implemented. This applies to all Critical Incidents, internal or external.

An 'Internal' Critical Incident is one in which the principal 'stakeholders' are employed by the Police Service, for example bullying, discrimination, corruption or other inappropriate behaviour, as well as the death or serious injury of a colleague. Whilst Police Service employees are also members of the wider NI community; it is also important to recognise that Police Service employees actually constitute a distinct community internally – one whose confidence we also need to make every effort to retain and develop. The way in which such incidents are dealt with clearly has the potential to impact on their confidence in their own organisation's (the police) response. The process of dealing with a critical incident internally follows the same principles of dealing with an external critical incident and every effort should be made to ensure that effective response in dealing with all matters. (See also ACPO, 2011, Critical Incident Management, 2nd edition.)

- (b) Any incident that the police deal with could become a critical incident and have a significant impact on confidence, but not every incident will do so. The early and effective recognition of a critical incident or the potentially critical incident is the key to resolution.
- (c) Whilst this applies to everyone involved; the role of the First Responder and their supervisor cannot be underestimated. HMIC (2008) Leading from the Frontline recognises frontline sergeants as “leaders of people and guardians of excellence in service delivery”. It can be seen that intrusive and supportive supervision by first-line supervisors within the Police Service is pivotal to the effective management of Critical Incidents.
- (d) Pre-planned events (large or small scale) have the potential to develop into Critical Incidents. It is, therefore, vitally important during the planning process that the identification and prevention of Critical Incidents starts early, and focuses the police response.
- (e) Where a policing operation could affect the community in any way, a Community Impact Assessment (CIA) must be included in the planning process. It may also be appropriate to convene a Gold Group during the planning phase to ensure that all aspects of the operation, particularly any possible negative effects, have been considered and addressed. (PSNI Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace and Criminal Justice Strategy refers.)
- (f) Officers should also be particularly aware of the impact of crimes which act as a “signal” to a community that they are at risk. An incident of this nature also has the potential to become critical at any point; (See PSNI Equality, Diversity and Good Relations Strategy 2011-2016 Page 17).

(6) **The Impact of a Critical Incident**

- (a) Critical incident management should start with **early identification** of any incident which has the likelihood to escalate, or has already escalated, into a critical incident, before it starts or while it is still ongoing. It is particularly important that this includes incidents that are within the capability of the District or Department.
- (b) If small critical incidents are not identified early, they could escalate into a larger-scale incident which could have a long-term impact on community confidence. Early action should be taken to rectify issues that may affect the quality of the police response, before they have that significant impact on confidence.

(7) **Notification**

- (a) A key element of critical incident management is to give senior officers early notification of incidents that have escalated, or are likely to escalate into a critical incident. Early recognition of the criticality factors will help to do this.
- (b) All officers or members of police staff dealing with an incident (which will include call handlers and first responders) should continually ask themselves:
 - (i) What am I dealing with?
 - (ii) What might it develop into?
 - (iii) What impact might this incident have?
 - (iv) Who do I need to tell if I think this may escalate into a critical incident?

Further information is available on the PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre.

(c) **Role of the First Point of Contact**

- (i) **The first point of contact (FPOC)** for a critical incident could be anyone within the Police Service regardless of their role. Their initial actions and decisions taken could have a significant impact on the confidence that the complainant has in our response.
- (ii) In all cases basic principles apply and early advice should be sought from a supervisor if the FPOC assesses if it may be or is likely to become a Critical Incident.
- (iii) **The Senior Supervisor on duty (at least the rank of Inspector or staff equivalent)** is authorised to declare any incident as critical.
- (iv) The first point of contact should:
 - (aa) Where appropriate, apply the “Golden Hour” principles to maximise the saving of life, preservation of evidence, managing the task and maintaining public confidence. Consider positive intervention i.e. prompt arrest of suspect where appropriate; Further information is available on the PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre;
 - (bb) Establish relevant information through careful and sensitive questioning. Clearly, precisely and promptly communicate information to those responding;
 - (cc) Inform the Senior Supervisor on duty as soon as possible when an incident is identified as critical or potentially so, even if the incident has been dealt with and closed;
 - (dd) Ensure Police Service Standards are met and maintained when dealing with the incident;
 - (ee) Identify whether criticality factors are present which may aggravate or cause loss of confidence in the police response. Where confidence issues in the police response are raised, take steps to resolve them as soon as possible;
 - (ff) Update CCS (Command & Control System) in order that the log reflects actions taken and that the incident is critical. Ensure appropriate CCS closing sub codes (CRIT) are applied for Critical Incident. Review the critical incident regularly and make any necessary adjustments to its status.

(8) **Declaring a Critical Incident**

Declaration of the Critical Incident may be required even when information is sparse. Early recognition of an incident which has the potential to become ‘Critical’ but has not yet done so allows the Police Service to give that ‘Focus and Grip’ which is required.

However an incident should not be declared critical simply because there is a risk that the police may be criticised or that a major incident has occurred. Remember this also applies to internal incidents.

For further information see (ACPO, 2011, Critical Incident Management, 2nd edition).

(a) **Role of the Senior Supervisor**

As a guide the supervisor who declares the Critical Incident should be of **the rank of Inspector or staff equivalent**. Where, on assessment, the supervisor’s judgment is that a critical incident has occurred they should, via appropriate line management structures inform the relevant Senior Management Team (SMT) of the incident.

(b) **Where the Senior Supervisor is informed of a Critical Incident they must:**

- (i) Ensure that the police response is appropriate and supports the policies and procedures for that incident type.
- (ii) Review the Incident, assessing whether the initial identification is correct and confirm that a Critical Incident has been declared at this stage.
- (iii) Where appropriate, take control of the incident until such time the incident is either completed, or command has been handed over to the designated Silver Commander or other appropriate authority. Where appropriate, attend the scene.
- (iv) Where the Critical Incident identification is deemed incorrect, the rationale needs to be documented clearly and the initial identifying staff member informed of this decision. Details of this decision should be recorded on CCS for audit and review purposes.
- (v) Where the initial Critical Incident status has been agreed, inform SMT/Duty Officer that a critical incident has been declared as soon as possible. The Senior Supervisor should be prepared to brief and explain the following:
 - (aa) Details of the incident and any intelligence available (including any grading of information);
 - (bb) Details of any offences involved;
 - (cc) Why the matter is being considered critical;
 - (dd) Actions taken and considered;
 - (ee) Identification of scenes (people/locations/victims);
 - (ff) Victim, family or community tensions or complexities;
 - (gg) Media issues/interest/actions taken.
- (vi) Take immediate steps to manage or resolve victim, family or community confidence issues. Where relevant **an initial Community Impact Assessment should be completed within four hours of initial assessment**. Supervisors should always consider gaining a local independent perspective from partner agencies, stakeholders, community representatives or Independent Advisers.
- (vii) Make sure all relevant decisions have been identified, are in place and are being clearly documented; ensure that CCS is updated in a timely fashion. (Think audit and review.)
- (viii) Where police are dealing with a critical incident which involves the movement of a large number of people to an Emergency Support Centre (ESC); arrangements already exist in Belfast to activate an ESC through Belfast Resilience Forum, and associated partners. Similar arrangements are in place in rural districts and can be activated through local council plans for ESCs. These ESC are available for activation not just in emergencies or major incidents, but through negotiation for events which result in the displacement of significant numbers of people. For further guidance please refer to your local Emergency Planning Officer or the Emergency Planning WebPages on PoliceNet.
- (ix) Ensure all relevant documents have been completed and that, where appropriate, the relevant C&C serial report reflects that a Critical Incident has been declared. Ensure that the appropriate **CCS closing sub code (CRIT)** has been applied.

- (x) Notify the district/departmental Critical Incident SPOC and Critical Incident Development Team. [See paragraph (17), Critical Incident Co-ordination & Advice]. For additional advice and support see PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre (accessed via the PoliceNet Knowledge Centre).

(c) **Role of the Area Commander/Duty Officer**

Where an incident comes or is brought to your attention as a Critical Incident:

- (i) Ensure Service Procedures and policies for incident type are being followed;
- (ii) Confirm incident has been correctly identified and appropriate incident management is in place. (See previous section, role of Senior Supervisor);
- (iii) Consider the appropriate tiered level of response, whether:
 - (aa) Level 1 (district/departmental);
 - (bb) Level 2 (regional) or
 - (cc) Level 3 (service-wide). [see paragraph (9)(b) below].

Further details available on the PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre

- (iv) Make sure all relevant decisions have been identified, are in place and are being clearly documented. (Think audit and review);
- (v) Inform Senior Duty Officer ASAP as per paragraph 5(8)(b)(v) above; apprise the Senior SMT as necessary;
- (vi) Where incident is considered critical, SMT to inform ACPO Chief Officer;
- (vii) SMT should ensure that the appropriate recording is commenced to capture resource costs;
- (viii) Ensure that a comprehensive Community Impact Assessment has been completed;
- (ix) Where incident is identified as no longer a Critical Incident, document decisions, update CCS with appropriate closing codes. Debrief to secure organisational learning;
- (x) Notify the district/departmental Critical Incident SPOC and Critical Incident Co-ordinator via email to zcriticalincidents. [See paragraph (17), Critical Incident Co-ordination & Advice].

(d) **Role of the ACPO/Chief Officer**

- (i) There is an obligation on chief officers to ensure that critical incidents are only declared when it is necessary and appropriate to do so, and that the response is proportionate to the scale of the incident;
- (ii) Where a Critical Incident has been declared the District Commander/Head of Branch in consultation with the relevant ACPO Chief Officer will confirm the declaration. In the event of any possible conflict of interest, another ACPO officer, appointed by Service Command, will fulfil the role.

- (iii) At this point the **appropriate level of command response** shall be confirmed [see paragraph (9) Command and Control]. Consideration must also be given to command resilience and temporary allocation of command support where necessary in order to ensure that (where appropriate) the appointed Gold and Silver Commanders are not distracted from their responsibilities by everyday policing issues.
- (iv) The ACPO Chief Officer who confirms the declaration of a Tier 3 (Service-wide) Critical Incident shall ensure that all Service Command officers/Departmental Heads (ACPO level) are informed without delay, except where to do so would hinder the progress of an investigation. This will enable all departments to consider possible implications that may come within their remit and plan for appropriate response to requests from Gold/Silver Command.

(e) **Return to Normality (Closure)**

The question of closure is a vitally important one and the restoration of normality a key aim for the Service. The ACPO Chief Officer who declared the Critical Incident will ratify any decision on closure or scaling down. The decision to close a critical incident, and the rationale, must be carefully documented and communicated to relevant parties.

(9) **Command and Control**

- (a) Chief Officers will want to ensure that critical incidents are led through unambiguous command and control that clearly outlines the roles and accountability of the personnel involved. To assist chief officers in determining the appropriate command response, the ACPO (2009) Guidance on Command and Control provides a nationally recognised framework for deployment of a Strategic (Gold), Tactical (Silver) and Operational (Bronze) command structure.
- (b) Using a tiered response allows the command structure to be scaled up or down in the light of changing circumstances. This is important where, for example, because of heightened community tensions, a minor crime or low level ASB incident could escalate into a large-scale policing response crossing District boundaries.

Tier 1 – District/Departmental Response. This will include critical incidents within the capability of one District/Department and where actions and risk are limited to that area.

Tier 2 – Cross District/Department Response. This will include critical incidents that impact on more than one District or Department. It will also include series of linked incidents that have occurred in more than one District. There is limited potential for the actions and risk to spread further.

Tier 3 – Servicewide Response. This will include critical incidents with a service, inter-service or national dimension and where there is a significant threat to public confidence and the reputation of the police services involved. Management of the critical incident will require substantial activity by a significant proportion of the lead service's resources.

See also PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre and ACPO (2009) Guidance on Command and Control.

- (c) The Regional/Departmental Chief Officer who confirms the declaration of a Critical Incident shall determine the appropriate level of Command Response. The Tiered Response approach enables a flexible command structure appropriate to the incident.
- (d) In appointing a Commander, at Gold, Silver or Bronze, consideration must be given to the nature and seriousness of the incident, the training and experience of the individual. It must be clearly understood and recorded who is in command at any given time.

- (e) Whilst the Gold Commander retains strategic oversight and ultimate command of the incident which includes the resourcing of the incident, they may not in reality 'own' or have the capacity to direct all of the resources required during the Critical Incident response. This may include, for example, the deployment of (C2) Serious Crime Branch resources and/or resources from another District or Department. In the case of multiple demands from simultaneous critical incidents it may not be possible to reach a satisfactory resolution between Gold Command(s) and the resource owner. In this instance it may be necessary for the matter to be raised with the Chief Constable or Deputy Chief Constable for resolution.
- (f) In protracted operations it may be necessary, in the interests of resilience, to hand over command responsibility. In such circumstances there must be a clear hand over procedure including briefing, which will be fully documented.

(10) Gold Groups

- (a) The principal function of the Gold Group should be strategic, ie, they provide impartial support, advice and analysis to help resolve the incident and help the gold commander set the gold strategy. They should not get involved in tactical or operational activities, although the gold strategy will inform action taken by the silver or bronze. The Gold Commander is ultimately responsible for any strategic decisions affecting the police response.
- (b) A Gold Group will also help to ensure co-ordination in multi-agency critical incidents, and can support links with the local community and other legitimately interested parties. Care should be taken, however, to ensure that the views canvassed represent those of the individuals and groups affected by the critical incident. Gold Groups should include communities who may not appear to be directly affected but could be indirectly affected.
- (c) The specific function, membership and content of a Gold Group will vary for each critical incident. The Gold Commander will need to ensure that a sound framework for discussion is maintained during meetings, which are likely to be complex and highly-charged. Gold Group meetings should be minuted and will be subject to disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996, unless Public Interest Immunity (PII) applies.
- (d) Where appropriate the Gold Commander should convene a Gold Group within 12 hours of a Critical Incident being declared.

See also: PSNI Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace and Criminal Justice Strategy and Gold Group Guidance in the PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre.

(11) Victim and Family Liaison

- (a) One of the most important considerations throughout any investigation is the relationship between victims, their families and the police. Victims and families should be treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and in accordance with their diverse needs. (See also Policy Directive 05/06 – Dealing with Victims and Witnesses).
- (b) The importance of positive relationships and effective communication with victims, families and wider communities cannot be overstated. The benefits are likely to include:
 - (i) Open and honest dialogue between the police, and victims, families and communities;
 - (ii) Increased understanding of family and community needs;
 - (iii) Confidence in the police response;
 - (iv) Improved community intelligence;

- (v) Increased investigative opportunities;
- (vi) Improved policing outcomes.

For further information see (ACPO, 2011, Critical Incident Management, 2nd edition).

(c) Family Liaison

It may not be appropriate in every case to deploy Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) to the victim and/or their family, but in all cases the basic principles of victim care should be followed.

- (i) National Guidance for Family Liaison (NPIA, 2008) is primarily designed for use where a sudden, violent or unexplained death has occurred and interaction with the bereaved family is required. However, the guidance and a FLO deployment can be used with serious investigations especially where a critical incident has occurred and problems centre on the family's' confidence in the police.
- (ii) In all cases, the Family Liaison Co-ordinator must be consulted in this process before an FLO is deployed; the use of a local police Single Point of Contact for the family maybe considered more appropriate.
- (iii) Where a death following police contact has occurred (see Policy Directive 04/09 – Policies and Procedures relating to the Police Ombudsman for NI) it will be necessary to liaise with the PONI SIO around this aspect.

See also NPIA (2008) Family Liaison Guidance.

Further advice can be obtained from the FLO Co-ordinator (Serious Crime Branch, C2).

(d) Family Representatives

- (i) Some families or victims will not want to deal directly with the police and will appoint a solicitor or other intermediary to represent their interests. They are entitled to do this and the police should respect their wishes. Every effort should be made to build and maintain a positive working relationship with the family representative.
- (ii) The police should:
 - (aa) Try and anticipate, but not make assumptions about the needs of the family or their representative (e.g., for information regarding the incident);
 - (bb) Respond promptly, through pre-agreed communication methods, to all requests received from the family and their representative;
 - (cc) React quickly to changes in the nature and context of the incident and communicate these to the family and their representative in clear and unambiguous language or terms;
 - (dd) Recognise that the needs of the family and their representative may vary over time or in changing circumstances (for example, case reviews, memorial services, anniversaries).
- (iii) Where an incident develops a significant public or media profile, strategies should be implemented to safeguard the welfare of the family. These should be reviewed regularly to take account of any emerging issues. A complete log of contacts, meetings and conversations should always be kept by the FLO and FLO co-ordinator.

- (iv) Families have a right to challenge the way in which an investigation is dealt with and the Police Service should always try to address any such concerns in an open, honest and constructive way.

(e) **Family Meetings**

Family meetings are likely to be integral element of any family liaison strategy. Further guidance on this subject can be obtained from the FLO Co-ordinator (Serious Crime Branch, C2).

(12) **Community Issues**

Involving the community in the management of a critical incident can help to reduce the impact of any problems and provide a bridge between the police, and the victim, their family and the wider community. These consultations can take place with or include local community leaders, elected and independent members of the PCSP or members of standing Independent Advisory Groups (IAG). The guiding influences must be around the individual's ability to be representative of the community **and** the provision of independent advice.

(a) **Independent Involvement**

- (i) The principle of independent involvement is fundamental in:
 - (aa) Developing sensitive and effective policing;
 - (bb) Challenging assumptions and mindsets;
 - (cc) Demonstrating openness and accountability;
 - (dd) Providing an independent, community/non-police perspective;
 - (ee) Building family/community confidence and trust.
- (ii) In examining the principle of independent involvement, there is an important distinction to be drawn between '**Independent Advice**' and '**Mediation**'. For further information see (ACPO, 2011, Critical Incident Management, 2nd edition).

(b) **Independent Advice**

- (i) Independent Advisers are able to engage in a range of policing activities, either on a case-specific basis, or as members of a recognised Advisory Group. The decision to have independent advisers is for the Gold Group. The types of people who may be involved in this role include members of standing Independent Advisory Groups (IAGs) (see below) and others whom the Gold Group believe would give relevant advice for example member(s) of the local PCSP, Policing Board Members, Policing Board Committees or other statutory bodies such as The Victims Commission. An appointed SIO may also consider seeking independent advice in order to progress an investigation.
- (ii) The following matters should be noted:
 - (aa) Advisers should remain entirely independent of the Police Service;
 - (bb) Advisers are engaged to critically appraise organisational policies, practices and procedures (whether strategic or tactical);
 - (cc) Advisers are free to make observations both within the Police Service and to the wider community;

- (dd) Advisers are not liable for the outcomes of police decision-making or answerable to the police;
 - (ee) The police are not responsible for advisers' actions;
 - (ff) The police are not obliged to follow advice that is given (although appropriate explanations should be given where recommendations are not followed).
 - (iii) Criminal Justice Department (Community Safety Branch) have established and can facilitate access to a number of bespoke IAG's to provide advice on issues relating to:
 - (aa) Older people;
 - (bb) Black and minority ethnic and faith groups;
 - (cc) People with disabilities;
 - (dd) LGBT;
 - (ee) Youth.
 - (iv) Consideration should be given to including Independent member representation of the NIPB/PPS on the Gold Group. It can be mutually helpful to the board and police to have such members involved given their functions as part of the accountability mechanisms for the Police Service.
 - (v) District Commanders should seek to develop an IAG representative of local community needs as part of the everyday delivery of policing services.
 - (vi) In the case of an internal critical incident it may be appropriate to seek independent advice from appropriate staff associations.
- (c) **Mediation**
- (i) A non-police mediator – or advocate – is someone who performs a negotiating, enabling or bridge-building role (eg with a family or community group) in support of the management/investigation of a crime, incident or event. In NI mediation has been used to good effect on a range of critical and/or sensitive issues however there may be significant risks to be considered. Any decision to use a mediator will require careful risk management.
 - (ii) Mediation inevitably involves participation. Mediators therefore become part of a process, rather than remaining independent of it. The decision to engage a mediator and the rationale for doing so must be fully documented.
 - (iii) Mediators must understand and agree to:
 - (aa) The terms of reference for their role;
 - (bb) Their legal obligations as an agent of the police;
 - (cc) The need to complete and retain records of contacts with other parties;
 - (dd) The rules of disclosure and constraints of subjudice;
 - (ee) The risks of evidence contamination in connection with significant family witnesses;
 - (ff) The need to maintain regular contact with the police to provide updates on the mediation process;

(gg) Fair trial issues and the adverse consequences of 'coaching' allegations;

(hh) The need for an appropriate exit strategy.

(d) **Timescales**

(i) From the outset of any Critical Incident response, it is important to recognise the distinction between:

(aa) Short term investigative/inquiry issues;

(bb) Medium and long-term community issues.

(ii) However issues surrounding longer-term community confidence can affect short-term investigative activities for example the inability of an Inquiry Team to access witness evidence due to the reluctance of witnesses to come forward.

(13) **Community Impact Assessments (CIA)**

The aim of a CIA is to identify and manage any factors relevant to an incident or policing activity that may impact upon the community. The identification and assessment of any impact lies with the Police Service generally in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders, agencies or groups.

(a) The completion of a comprehensive CIA is essential in order to ensure:

(i) Protection of vulnerable individuals and groups;

(ii) Promotion and retention of community confidence;

(iii) Development of community intelligence;

(iv) Understanding of all aspects of the incident being dealt with and the environment in which the activity is proposed.

(v) That legal responsibilities are complied with Section 32(5) Police (NI) Act 2000.

(b) A CIA should be completed for:

(i) **All Critical Incidents** and any incident which in the opinion of the Silver/District Commander has the **potential** to become a Critical Incident;

(ii) **Serious Crime Incidents**

For the Police Service purposes Serious Crime Incidents are defined as:

"Murders, attempted and suspected, and other serious crimes of public concern when enquiries are likely to be protracted, complicated or involve the deployment of large numbers of personnel;"

Source: PSNI Service Procedure 47/2004 – Duties of Personnel Attending a Serious Crime Scene.

(iii) **Major Planned Policing Activity**

The Silver/District Commander should consider completion of CIA for any major planned policing activity where there may be a significant impact on the community, examples may be public processions or large scale search/arrest operations;

- (iv) Any other incident or activity where the Silver/District Commander deems its completion necessary.
- (c) To streamline the procedure for requesting the Community Impact Assessment, the information detailed below will be required in the initial request.
- (d) This will avoid any delay as a result of seeking further information from the investigating officer.
- (e) Given the time required to complete the CIA effectively, early notification should be given, when possible. In all cases the following details should be provided:
 - (i) Grounds and/or reasons for the planned activity;
 - (ii) Date and time of the planned activity;
 - (iii) Name and address of subject (and URN if applicable);
 - (iv) Who is conducting the planned activity?
 - (v) If intelligence lead, then the grading of the document and a short summary of the detail contained in the document;
 - (vi) Is there any risk to witnesses? (Required for every Community Impact Assessment);
 - (vii) In relation to any search for firearms or explosives, the request should state clearly if a PSNI Search adviser and PSNI Firearms TAC adviser has been consulted;
 - (viii) Wherever possible, once the premises have been entered and secured by the search team, the Sector Inspector or Sergeant must be contacted in order for a local community rep to be advised of the ongoing police operation in the area.
- (f) An initial CIA should be completed within 4 hours of a Critical Incident being declared and be reviewed regularly and particularly after each significant event or action.
- (g) The Silver Commander in murder or other serious crime investigations that are being managed as a Critical Incident should ensure that the CIA is prepared in consultation with the SIO.
- (h) The CIA Form: - A template has been designed to provide a structured approach to completing CIAs and their completion should be seen as adding value to the integrity of the planning process;

The CIA form (Form CIA) is available electronically on PoliceNet. Districts/Departments should ensure that where a CIA is to be completed; this is done so only using the prescribed format.

- (i) **Accountability**
 - (i) The impact of the police operation upon the community and/or minority groups will be discussed, considered and challenged in the public arena;
 - (ii) It is essential therefore that the impact management process is ethical and transparent;
 - (iii) The responsibility for completing the CIA lies with the Silver/District Commander and should be undertaken in close liaison with the SIO where one is appointed;
 - (iv) It is crucial that the CIA is evidence/intelligence based, objective and capable of withstanding scrutiny.

(j) **Intelligence**

- (i) Essential to predicting tensions within the community and minority groups will be accurate community intelligence that is effectively analysed to inform a CIA;
- (ii) Community intelligence has been defined as:

“Local information, direct or indirect, that when assessed provides intelligence on the quality of life experienced by individuals and groups, that informs both the strategic and operational perspectives in the policing of local communities”;

Source: Winning the Race: Policing Plural Communities, Revisited.
- (iii) Other sources of police intelligence should also be utilised.

(k) **Inter-Agency Exchange of Information**

- (i) Fundamental to CIAs are arrangements to allow the confidential exchange of information;
- (ii) Confidence in inter-agency collaboration will only develop when there is a mutual trust of confidentiality between the parties. This has particular relevance to CIA and specific consideration must be given as to how information is shared, acted upon and, if appropriate, disclosed;
- (iii) Intelligence must not be disseminated except via C3 and only if the intelligence has the appropriate handling code.

(l) **Disclosure**

The CIA may contain sensitive material and should be listed appropriately if considered for disclosure under the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996.

(m) **Protective Marking**

- (i) The CIA should be handled, transmitted and stored as required by Information Assurance (IA) Service Procedure 18/2010 and associated IA Standards. Particular reference should be made to Standard 1.08 on Protective Marking which also advises on secure disposal of protectively marked assets.
- (ii) It can be accessed on PoliceNet.
- (iii) Reference should also be made to Service Procedure 3/2012 - Records Management.

(14) **Media and Public Meetings**

- (a) Critical Incident management must include the development of an appropriate media strategy, which is a key area in the management of the incident and is often the conduit by which the wider community assess and perceive the effectiveness of the police response.
- (b) It is important that **all developing issues are flagged up to the Corporate Communications Branch (CCB)** as soon as possible. This will assist CCB in getting a full overview of the incident, background details, a timeline of events, which is essential for putting in place an effective media plan. It will also help ensure that a proactive rather than reactive strategy is put in place – which is important for building public confidence and providing key community reassurance.
- (c) Where a Critical Incident has been declared, the Head of CCB will be notified by the Senior Officer confirming the declaration. The Head of CCB will at the outset appoint a senior lead press officer who will:

- (i) Be part of the Gold Group;
 - (ii) Provide strategic media advice to the Gold Group;
 - (iii) All media lines should be, wherever possible will be co-ordinated, agreed, and promulgate with the lead press officer.
- (d) The communication strategy must be an integral part of the overall strategic management of the incident by the Gold Group. It is vital for the Police Service to understand and seek advice on the relationship and interaction between:
- (i) The experience of families and communities;
 - (ii) Media interpretation, analysis and subsequent reporting;
 - (iii) The consequent impact on an investigation.
- (e) This is an area where there is clear potential to impact on family/community confidence in policing services. The relationship, and communication, between the Gold Group/the SIO/FLO/Media Officer is crucial to how police handling of the event is perceived by these groups. An effective media strategy will also need to respond quickly and transparently to deal with any perceived or alleged police mishandling of an incident/event or where it is alleged that mistakes in following procedures have occurred.
- (f) It is also important that, when dealing with a 'Critical' event, the media strategy addresses the 'back to normal' phase of police activity/response in relation to that event, in order to manage public expectations and deal with public reassurance issues.
- (g) Whilst primacy on media matters lies with the Gold Group for any Critical Incident, with the Gold Commander being the final authority in this area, it is important that the media strategy is agreed with Silver Command, involves the SIO and where appropriate Legal Services Department. It is essential that all concerned speak with one agreed voice.
- (h) **Public Meetings**
- (i) A public meeting may be necessary in order to:
 - (aa) Address public concerns about a case;
 - (bb) Appeal for witnesses;
 - (cc) Develop community intelligence – particularly with regard to community concerns and tensions;
 - (dd) Provide information regarding police actions and intentions.The use of a PCSP public meeting may be appropriate in this instance.
 - (ii) Meetings should be prepared in line with overall investigation and media strategies – and after consultation with:
 - (aa) Family members and intermediaries;
 - (bb) Community representatives;

- (cc) Independent Advisers;
- (dd) Gold Group members;
- (ee) Press officer*
- (iii) *The inclusion of the latter is a particularly important source of advice in respect of a meeting, which will inevitably attract media attention. As stated earlier it should be remembered that the use of, or attitude of, the media in connection with public meetings can often be the conduit through which the event becomes 'Critical' in the perception of the community.

(15) Information Sharing

- (a) The question of sharing information is clearly relevant to communication with:
 - (i) Family members;
 - (ii) Intermediaries;
 - (iii) Community representatives;
 - (iv) Independent Advisers;
 - (v) Gold Group members;
 - (vi) Statutory partner agencies.
- (b) The following considerations are relevant when deciding what information it is appropriate to share during the course of an investigation:
 - (i) There is a presumption in favour of openness – to families, their representatives, and Independent Advisers and Gold Group members;
 - (ii) There is a need to challenge mindsets – to examine the validity of reasons given for withholding any information. Where no good reason exists, the information should be given;
 - (iii) Open and honest dialogue is an important means of developing confidence and trust with families, advisers and the community. It is also a significant means of ensuring openness and accountability in an investigation;
 - (iv) Protocols, legislative requirements and MOU with partner agencies.
- (c) However, on certain occasions, there may be reasons why it is felt necessary to maintain confidentiality. Examples might include:
 - (i) Protection of an intelligence source;
 - (ii) Participation of a protected witness;
 - (iii) Material subject to Public Interest Immunity (PII), for example information given to police by third parties in confidence, or matters relating to intelligence or methodology;
 - (iv) Where a potential breach of Article 2 ECHR may arise in connection with a third party;
 - (v) Information received by a Member of Public (MoP) and subject to confidentiality in accordance with Service protocols.

- (d) In such instances, a brief and simple explanation should be provided for relevant parties, outlining:
 - (i) The fact that a decision has been taken not to disclose certain information;
 - (ii) The reason(s) why such a decision has been taken.
- (e) The decision and rationale should be recorded in the appropriate log. Consideration should also be given to the appropriate security labelling of documents under the guidance of the 'Government Protective Marking Scheme' and potential disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- (f) SIOs and Gold Groups should seek legal advice on disclosure in complex or sensitive cases. The Law as it relates to Disclosure will always apply.

(16) Costing Critical Incidents

- (a) The Police Service needs to create and maintain a system for the costing of Critical Incidents.
- (b) Such information may subsequently be used in the bidding for further resources, the review process or for public information purposes.
- (c) Home Office Activity Based Costing Guidelines allow this separation of Critical Incident Costs from other District/Regional activity.
- (d) A costing template for the collation of Critical Incident costs and further assistance can be obtained from Critical Incident Co-ordinator. For further details please visit Critical Incident Guidance contained within the PoliceNet Crime Training WebPages.

(17) Critical Incident Co-ordination and Advice

- (a) The organisational responsibility for Critical Incidents falls within the remit of the Security and Serious Harm Programme Board (SSHPPB) which is chaired by ACC, Crime Operations. The lead officer with responsibility for Critical Incidents is a member of the SSHPPB. A Critical Incident co-ordinator assists in this role.
- (b) The Critical Incident co-ordinator will:
 - (i) Manage Critical Incidents Service Procedure Review;
 - (ii) Provide an advisory service to Districts/Department planning for or dealing with Critical Incidents;
 - (iii) Scrutinise Gold Command immediate de-brief reports and make recommendations to Service Command via the SSHPPB;
 - (iv) Facilitate/co-ordinate Post Event Formal Service De-brief of selected Critical Incidents as required by Service Command;
 - (v) Produce a Post Event Formal Service De-brief report where applicable;
 - (vi) Review and maintain the PoliceNet Critical Incident Guidance Centre which can be accessed via the PoliceNet Crime Training WebPages;
 - (vii) Maintain and support a network of Single Points of Contact (SPOC) at District/Departmental level;
 - (viii) Contribute to the development of training courses and scenarios;

- (ix) Co-ordinate/plan seminars and annual conference for Service/Regional/District Command as required.

(c) **Single Point of Contact (SPOC) Network**

- (i) Each District/Departmental will have a Critical Incident Single Point of Contact (SPOC), who will act as a liaison officer for critical incidents in their respective areas/department. The SPOC will ordinarily be the Ops Manager or other member of the SMT as appointed by HOB/Commander.
- (ii) Through district/departmental management processes the SPOC will regularly review incidents dealt with in the district/department. This will assist in the identification of critical incidents that may have been missed.
- (iii) The SPOC will be responsible for liaison between the Critical Incident co-ordinator and the District/Department during a critical incident. The SPOC in consultation with the Gold Commander will co-ordinate and/or facilitate the completion of the District/Departmental Critical Incident debrief.

(d) **Incident De-briefing**

- (i) Incident Commanders should consider a formal debrief process for police officers and staff involved in all critical incidents, as well as any non-police groups or individuals involved in the police response to an incident. This will provide an opportunity for identifying good practice and lessons learned which can be included in future training, planning and risk management. It will also help to address any potential welfare issues, and support referrals to appropriate staff associations or occupational health representatives for further support and advice.
- (ii) Further assistance and guidance on the completion of the Critical Incident debrief can be obtained through the Critical Incident co-ordinator. The Critical Incident Co-ordinator may be contacted by email to zcriticalincidents.

(18) **Staff Welfare Issues**

- (a) Although the purpose of the structured response to a Critical Incident is to deal with the victim(s), their family and/or the community, it is important that the Police Service is aware of the potential impact on their own staff. These reactions include most commonly an acute stress response, which, if not managed appropriately may deteriorate, and impact upon longer term functioning.
- (b) Incidents involving the discharge of a firearm by a police officer or where, following police contact, death or serious injury occurs, by their very nature, are highly emotive and stressful for all involved. In these circumstances it may be necessary to task a Post-Incident Manager. Policy Directive 03/06 - Post Incident Procedure - Deployment of Post Incident Managers refers.
- (c) OHW provides support within two phases. This support is provided to both police officers and staff who are directly involved in the critical incident.
 - (i) Phase 1; 'Diffusing' should take place ASAP, preferably before stand down and within 24 hours of the incident occurrence or involvement.
 - (ii) Phase 2; a Critical Incident Support Debrief (CISD) will be provided within 14 days of the incident or involvement.
 - (iii) The Diffusing and CISD are carried out by a trained Peer Support Officer (PSO) who is a police officer or staff member trained to provide this structured support. A PSO can be accessed through the local HR manager or (out of hours) via the BRC Callout Desk.

- (iv) Where appropriate or required, additional support and intervention will be available from OHW via the officer's respective HR Department. Service Procedure No 16/95 – Critical Incidents – Management of Psychological Aspects also refers.

(19) **Conclusion**

Effective critical incident management is about helping us deliver our goal of working with communities and partners to make Northern Ireland **safe, confident and peaceful**. It is about intelligently reacting to events and dealing with them in a professional manner and being ready to do that in a personal, impartial and accountable fashion. If we keep our promises, act in partnership and are open and transparent in line with our human rights and legal obligations we will inspire confidence from the communities we serve.

(20) **Internal Links**

Further and more detailed information can be found in the documents listed below. This is not an exhaustive list;

- (a) ACPO Practice advice on Critical Incident Management (second edition) 2011;
- (b) Policy Directive 04/09 – Policies and procedures relating to the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- (c) Policy Directive 05/06 - Dealing with Victims and Witnesses;
- (d) Policy Directive 03/06 - Post Incident Procedures – Deployment of Post Incident Manager;
- (e) Service Procedure No 47/04 - Duties of Personnel Attending a Serious Crime Scene;
- (f) Service Procedure No 30/04 - Police Investigations into Unexpected, Unexplained or Suspicious Deaths;
- (g) Service Procedure No 16/95 – Critical Incidents – management of psychological aspects;
- (h) PSNI Manual of Guidance on Keeping the Peace and Criminal Justice Strategy;
- (i) PSNI Guidance on Emergency Procedures 2010;
- (j) PSNI Equality, Diversity and Good Relations Strategy 2011 – 2016;
- (k) ACPO Family Liaison Strategy Manual;
- (l) PSNI Code of Policing Ethics;
- (m) Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework Document, 2005;
- (n) A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland.* (*cepu.nics.gov.uk);
- (o) HMIC Leading from the Frontline, 2008;
- (p) HMIC report on Critical Incident Management, 2009.

6. CANCELLATION

Policy Directive 10/07 – 'Managing Critical Incidents', is hereby cancelled.

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED

Managing Actual/Potential Critical Incidents – SP10/12

