

Briefing and debriefing

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Briefings should set the style and tone for an operation. Briefing provides the information needed to direct deployed resources. This information is also used for debriefing personnel in order to obtain further relevant, available information.

The national briefing model

This is a way of describing the briefing and debriefing process and can be broken down into five key elements:

- briefing of intelligence
- individual and team tasking
- delivery methods
- debriefing
- results

Briefing and debriefing process

Briefing of intelligence	Individual and team tasking	Delivery methods	Debriefing	Results
priority locations crime/incident series subjects high-risk issues linked tasking and deployment	set by tasking and coordination group (T&CG) allocated to team by intelligence function team leader accountability audit trail and feedback to T&CG	fit for purpose secure allow remote access enable slow-time briefing properly equipped properly and regularly maintained	tactical review results: impact and risk assessment welfare working practice issues lessons learned audit trail and feedback	Outputs intelligence reports stop/search forms offence reports and files tasking results Outcomes enhanced organisational memory accurate intelligence products business attainment public safety reassurance crime reduction

Briefing

All police personnel should be thoroughly briefed on the purpose of an operation prior to participating in it. The time available for briefing will vary, depending on the circumstances.

Briefings can also be used to inform personnel about how to respond to the [media](#).

Content

This should be tailored to the needs of the team. For example, a team returning to work after rest days should be provided with facilities to self-brief on historical issues, but a formal briefing on current and relevant tasking for that day is required.

Briefing structure

Briefings should be structured according to the needs of the operation and directions from the [gold, silver and bronze](#). The IIMARCH (information, intention, method, administration, risk assessment, communications, human rights and other legal issues) model is a form of briefing structure that can be used. See the [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\) briefing tool](#) for more information.

The IIMARCH model

I Information	Operation timeline, location details, brief history (if applicable) evaluated intelligence, partner and community issues, results of community impact assessment/equality impact assessment.
I Intention	Gold strategy, tactical plan, available powers and policy.
M Method	Tactical plan, available powers and policy, contingency plans.
A Administration	Identity of commanding officers, specific officer duties, operational policies (eg, protocols, arrest, media) partner responsibilities, duty times and locations, briefing times and locations, health and safety, policing style and dress code.
R Risk assessment	Individual assessment of all relevant risks.
C Communications	Mutual aid command protocols, communications plan, radio equipment and channels, call signs, information for public dissemination, contact information.
H Human rights and other legal issues	Relevant European Convention on Human Rights Articles, rationale for justification of operation, disclosure details.

- Information – operation timeline, location details, brief history (if applicable) evaluated intelligence, partner and community issues, results of community impact assessment/quality impact assessment.
- Intention – gold strategy, tactical plan, available powers and policy.
- Method – tactical plan, available powers and policy, contingency plans.
- Administration – identity of commanding officers, specific officer duties, operational policies (for example, protocols, arrest, media) partner responsibilities, duty times and locations, briefing times and locations, health and safety, policing style and dress code.
- Risk assessment – individual assessment of all relevant risks.
- Communications – mutual aid command protocols, communications plan, radio equipment and channels, call signs, information for public dissemination, contact information.
- Human rights and other legal issues – relevant European Convention on Human Rights Articles, rationale for justification of operation, disclosure details.

Using the model assists personnel to meet briefing objectives, and to assess the most suitable method and environment in which to deliver the briefing.

Operation order

The operation order is a document that links basic information regarding an event or incident with the structure of the police response and, primarily, the operational resource requirement. The purpose of an operation order is to focus and coordinate the police response towards specific objectives, by describing how resources are to be deployed.

Gold strategy parameters

The operation order should be developed in accordance with the parameters set by the [gold strategy](#). The order itself may be delegated to a planning team consisting of geographically relevant or local commander(s) and other officers experienced in the planning process.

Duration and complexity of the operation

The operation order should reflect the duration and complexity of the operation and identify contingency plans. It should not replace the briefing, but where possible should be available for use in conjunction with the briefing.

Briefing staff on the media

Any staff coming into contact with the media or members of the public should be given general guidance about the information that they should or should not release. A generic media aide-memoire may be distributed to all personnel as general guidance.

For further information see the [APP on engaging with the media](#).

Briefing objectives

Personal briefing styles vary, but there are certain key objectives to meet in a briefing. These are to:

- ensure that the team has assimilated the relevant information contained within the briefing (this can be checked by conducting random knowledge checks to confirm understanding)
- ensure that individual members of staff understand their responsibility for the allocated task
- confirm there are sufficient resources to conduct the required tasks (this includes situations where staff may self-brief, for example at remote stations)

Briefing prompts

It may be helpful to develop a briefing prompt sheet which covers these key objectives and facilitates the delivery of the briefing.

Training

Commanders should be given specific training to deliver briefings and debriefings so that they have the required skills to conduct them effectively. Preference may also be given to using an appropriately trained, dedicated briefing team.

Method and environment

Commanders should consider the most appropriate briefing method to use, based on the number of staff involved and the complexity of the information to be passed on. Briefing does not necessarily have to be conducted verbally or in person. Geographic location or timing may mean that other methods – such as e-based, audio-recorded or written – are more suitable.

Good communication

If the briefing environment is not conducive to good communication, the briefing process is undermined. This applies to physical briefing space and digital/virtual briefing methods.

Media/non-police representatives

Careful consideration should be given to the content of any briefing where the media or non-police representatives are in attendance. This should avoid inadvertently disclosing tactical and sensitive information, or identifying officers who may ordinarily work in covert roles.

Checklist

Briefings should be:

- secure to prevent unauthorised access or sensitive information being compromised
- concise but sufficiently detailed to thoroughly inform
- adequately timed
- consistent, particularly where large number of officers are involved
- documented as part of an operation audit trail

Debriefing

The purpose of debriefing is to identify good practice and areas for improvement, which could include [organisational learning](#) and joint organisational learning (see [Joint Organisational Learning \(JOL\)](#) via [JESIP](#) for more information). The gold, silver or bronze commander should establish, at an early stage, the debriefing arrangements required and identify who should be responsible for compiling and assessing any debriefing material generated.

Pressure on operational staff can lead to debriefing being overlooked. This should not be allowed to happen as effective debriefing will ultimately minimise bureaucracy, streamline current procedures and reduce demands on operational staff.

See the Knowledge Hub [Specialist Operations National Structured Debrief community](#) for identified good practice and areas of learning (you will need to log in).

Commencing a debriefing

The debriefing process should have a [structure](#) and begin in the early stage of an operation so that those personnel deployed in the initial phases can provide information for later phases of the police response. A full record of the debriefing should be retained for [audit and disclosure](#) purposes.

Organisational learning

Effective debriefing leads to many positive results for an organisation. The use of the [national briefing model](#) in forces ensures a consistent flow of communication between different departments, and from managers to patrol and neighbourhood teams. This means that more staff have a better understanding of their role in the organisation and how they can contribute to performance. It also allows more information to be collected, which in turn assists future command decision making.

Debriefing processes should be incorporated into the daily business of policing. When this happens, there are significant outcomes for the organisation as a whole and more outputs from operational teams in respect of, for example, intelligence material, arrests and public reassurance.

The evaluation of the outcomes and processes of operations enhances corporate knowledge and develops the expertise of staff involved. This is particularly relevant in an [emergency and/or major incident](#) when several organisations would be involved. A greater understanding of policing issues leads to improved effectiveness of future operations.

Emergency and/or major incident

Major incidents are any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, and generally include the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people.

Report

Following the conclusion of an emergency and/or major incident, a report should be produced detailing the experiences gained by those organisations involved in it. This benefits the wider policing community, emergency services and other organisations.

Multi-agency report

The [strategic coordinating group](#) determines how a multi-agency report will be compiled and circulated.

Each of the organisations and emergency services involved in an incident may conduct their own internal debriefings. Issues arising from those debriefings that are internal to an organisation should be addressed by them in an appropriate manner.

Issues

Issues identified that have implications for more than one organisation, or that apply on a multi-agency basis, should be brought to a forum convened to address the outcomes of the internal debriefings. This forum should be seen as an opportunity for all organisations involved to understand and share what went well during the response and recovery processes and to identify areas for development.

In order to progress the outcomes of this process, all participating organisations should compile and agree an action plan.

Debriefing performance management

If there are issues regarding the operational performance of a team during an operation, the team supervisor should send a report to the manager in charge of that team. This ensures that lessons learned are disseminated appropriately. It also helps to prevent mistakes recurring and allows the spread of good practice.

Dissemination

Information and other products from the debriefing process should be circulated at local and force level so that they are accessible to all personnel. This ensures that organisational memory systems can grow and develop. This can be done via the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), or the person commissioning the debrief liaising with the [Knowledge Hub Specialist Operations National Structured Debrief community](#) (you will need to log in), or via [JOL](#) for multi-agency debriefs with joint agency learning.

Debriefing structure

Staff debriefing is likely to be one of the most productive areas for capturing information. A debriefing must be tailored to the needs of the team in question, but the structure, purpose and focus of the debriefing should be consistent. Although a debriefing should ideally occur at the end of a shift, this may not always be possible. A hot debrief should always be conducted at the end of a police operation.

Debriefings need to be structured and must follow a set agenda. They should be a standard phase of every operation, and the information obtained should be used to benefit future operations.

The recommended debriefing structure is the national decision model mnemonic [VIAPOAR](#), but forces may develop their own structured debriefing templates.

There is a range of issues (operational and tactical, organisational, evidential) to address in a debriefing process, although not all will be required in every situation. Each has a different but equally important purpose.

Partner agencies

Where partner agencies were involved in the police response, they should be invited to participate in the debriefing. This is particularly important with larger or protracted incidents or operations where aspects of the command structure, tactics or equipment used can be reviewed for future learning. Forces should use the outcome of partner agency debriefings, if appropriate, in future responses. See [JESIP](#) for further detail.

Where any debrief is conducted involving partner agencies the debrief report should be uploaded to [JOL](#) alongside the Knowledge Hub in order to capture lessons identified.

Audit and disclosure

A full record of the debriefing, including the time, location and those present must be retained for auditing purposes. This record is material which is potentially disclosable under the provisions of the [Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996](#) and the [Freedom of Information Act 2000](#).

If a senior investigating officer has been appointed, they may require all debriefing material to be indexed and retained in case of subsequent criminal proceedings or some other form of legal or judicial inquiry. A statement can be added to written material to clarify the purpose of the debriefing and to avoid potential litigation in the future.

The restrictions relating to debriefing during post-incident procedures should be noted.

Tags

Operations