PROCEDURE – Responding to Incidents

Number: D 0503  Date Published: 7 February 2017

1.0 Summary of Changes

This procedure has undergone its yearly review. The only amendments made are to update the author and owner details.

2.0 What this Procedure is about

This procedure outlines how Essex Police will manage levels of response to calls from the public to provide a victim focussed service. It includes the classification of an emergency incident and sets out response times.

The Force has refined its incident grading policy to adhere to the most recent version of the National Contact Management Principles and Guidance.

*Compliance with this procedure and any governing policy is mandatory.*

3.0 Detail the Procedure

3.1 General Principles

The Force Control Room (FCR) receives emergency calls direct from the public: whilst the Force Switchboard, direct dialled extensions, letters, electronic communication (e.g. email, SMS, social media etc.) and direct public contact provides a point of access for non-emergency contacts.

The Force Switchboard shall attempt to resolve the problem of the caller at the first point of contact where at all possible. This may be achieved by determining whether the person they wish to speak to is available, taking a message, providing advice or sign-posting the caller to another agency. Where this cannot be achieved, the call should be routed to the most appropriate department or contact having assessed the caller’s needs, and ensure that there is a ‘warm’ handover to a colleague who is in a position to assist.

Those first in contact with the caller should conduct a risk assessment in accordance with the T.H.R.I.V.E. principles and identify whether the matter is an ‘enquiry’ or an ‘incident’ and strive to meet the caller’s needs.

In making a T.H.R.I.V.E. assessment the call handler will consider the Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigation, Vulnerability and Engagement associated with the incident.

The Call Handler will record any contact in accordance with National Standards of Incident Recording and the National Crime Recording Standard.
An ‘enquiry’ may be a caller providing information, or a request from a caller for:

- Information;
- Further contact by a member of the Force; or
- Further contact or action by another agency.

An ‘enquiry’ would not ordinarily necessitate the creation of a STORM incident. However, once the call taker has applied the principles of T.H.R.I.V.E. and has determined further police action is required; the creation a STORM incident may be considered.

An ‘incident’ is any event that requires either:

- Investigation at scene;
- The possible exercise of police powers;
- The presence of a member of the Force to reassure a member of the public; or
- Anything that, under the National Standards of Incident Recording (NSIR), requires that an incident record be created.

The Essex Police STORM Command & Control system will be used to record “incidents”.

3.2 Assessing the Risk

Whilst the National Contact Principles and Practice gives examples of the priorities for police attendance based on broad incident type; this guidance must be supplemented by an early risk assessment of the specifics of the information provided by the caller.

The National Decision Making Model (NDM) should be used to inform this process, and where a STORM incident is created it will be prioritised in conjunction with the nationally agreed ACPO response grades.

When using the NDM call takers must use the T.H.R.I.V.E. model to ensure that they use the information available to make informed decisions. T.H.R.I.V.E. sits within the “Assess threat / risk and develop a working strategy.” box within the NDM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Some considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Threat of what? When and How?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>To person, property, reputation?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Consider reasonable potential risks?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>What are the investigative opportunities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Consider vulnerabilities of all persons involved. Not just victim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Are they part of a hard to reach group?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROCEDURE – Responding to Incidents

Number: D 0503 Date Published: 7 February 2017

Every incident requires a T.H.R.I.V.E. update placed on to the STORM incident by the call taker. Except incident that are identified as, Sexual Offences, Hate Crime or incidents of Domestic Abuse.

For some incidents this will be very simple, in that, the response grade will obviously be an emergency and in this case all that is expected is, “THIRVE – HIGH.”

If officers are not going to deploy resources under an emergency response then more justification is required. This will be especially relevant if police are not going to be deployed to the incident and the caller is going to be passed to another agency or no service will be offered at all. Officers need to consider writing more to rationalise their decision making for subsequent scrutiny.

3.3 Prioritising Incidents

If a STORM incident is created, once a T.H.R.I.V.E. assessment has been conducted at the point of first contact, it will be graded as requiring either an emergency or a non-emergency attendance as below:

3.3.1 Emergency Response (Grade 1 – urban /Grade 2 - rural)

An emergency response encompasses circumstances where an incident is reported to the police which is taking place and in which there is, or is likely to be a risk of:

- Danger to life;
- Use of or immediate threat of use of violence;
- Serious injury to a person;
- Serious damage to property.

Where the incident relates to an allegation of criminal conduct, it will be dealt with as an emergency if:

- The crime is, or is likely to be serious, and in progress;
- An offender has just been disturbed at the scene;
- An offender has been detained and poses, or is likely to pose, a risk to other people.

Where the incident relates to a traffic collision, it will be dealt with as an emergency if:

- It involves or is likely to involve serious personal injury;
- The road is blocked or there is a dangerous or excessive build-up of traffic.
PROCEDURE – Responding to Incidents

Number: D 0503 Date Published: 7 February 2017

Where the above circumstances do not apply, an incident will still be classified as an emergency if:

- The circumstances are such that a police call handler has strong and objective reasons for believing that the incident should be classified as an emergency;
- Force deployment priorities require an immediate response.

Where an emergency response is required, in urban areas we will aim to arrive within 15 minutes and in rural areas within 20 minutes.

The call handler will provide an estimated time of arrival, where appropriate, of getting to the person in need safely and as quickly as possible.

3.3.2 Non-Emergency Incident

An incident will be classified as non-emergency if it does not meet the emergency criteria outlined above.

The consequences of classifying the incident as a non-emergency means only that the police response may not be immediate, and may encompass a range of solutions, some of which do not require the attendance of an officer.

A non-emergency incident attracts three levels of initial response:

- Priority;
- Scheduled appointment;
- Resolution without deployment.

3.3.3 Priority Response (Grade 3)

A priority response will be required where the police call handler assesses that there is a degree of importance or urgency associated with the initial police action, but an emergency response is not required.

Priority response incidents are typical in circumstances where:

- There is genuine concern for somebody’s safety*;
- An offender has been detained but poses no risk to others;
- A witness or other evidence is likely to be lost**;
- A person involved is vulnerable or a repeat victim;
- A hate incident/crime is reported;
- The Force has pre-determined that incident type to be a priority.

*These would include reports of missing persons or domestic abuse, which upon initial assessment (using internal assessment processes) suggest there exists a significant risk to an individual that would be mitigated by early police attendance.
**This would include burglary of a person’s home where early attendance is likely to secure evidence.

Whilst some incident types may *typically* attract this response grade – the overarching initial assessment of threat, risk or harm will inform the initial response grading.

Where a priority response is identified, we aim to attend the scene as soon as possible and in any case within one hour.

3.3.4 Scheduled Appointment (Grade 4)

Where an incident does NOT require an emergency or priority response but still requires police attendance, it will result in a scheduled appointment response.

These circumstances typically arise where:

- The response time is not critical in apprehending offenders;
- The matter is service-oriented and a better quality of initial police action can be taken if it is dealt with by:
  - A pre-arranged police response by a suitable police resource;
  - Attendance at a police clinic or surgery at a time and location of the caller’s choice.

Where an incident requires an appointment, it will be made at a time that suits the caller and (unless agreed otherwise) for attendance within 48 hours of the first contact.

Where attendance suitable to the caller cannot be made in the case of FCR, the incident will be transferred to the IMU without allocation for an appointment to be arranged.

The exception to this is where the circumstances are considered as such that active oversight of the incident is required to minimise risk to the public or an individual.

3.3.5 Resolution without Deployment (Grade 5)

Resolution without deployment can occur where the needs of the caller can be adequately met through provision of advice, information, helpdesk or telephone investigation function or signposting to another lead agency/service.

A non-emergency contact that does not require a police attendance will be dealt with over the telephone, by letter or electronically (such as by email, SMS etc.). In such circumstances, advice will be given, questions answered and, if suitable, the caller put in touch with someone who can help. This includes signposting to the Police National Legal Database frequently Asked Questions (PNLD FAQs) database.
3.4 Incident Re-grading

Incident re-grading to vary the attendance time target should be carried out only where there is credible information that any of the urgency factors have altered since the incident was created. This means that the incident can be upgraded, as well as downgraded.

*Any decision to upgrade/downgrade an incident must have a clearly documented rationale using the T.H.R.I.V.E model.*

3.5 Downgrading an Incident

An incident requiring a police response can only be downgraded from an emergency or priority grade by a FCR Supervisor or (in accordance with procedure associated with Domestic Abuse incidents) an officer from the Domestic Abuse Investigation Team.

This will only occur as a result of:

- Further information provided by the caller or victim;
- Intelligence or information which reduces the threat to the victim; or
- Where the supervisor believes the initial response grade was in error.

Before authorising the downgrade the FCR Supervisor must:

- Assess any additional information or intelligence;
- Ensure that appropriate checks have been made of PNC, Local Intelligence and previous reported incidents on storm;
- Record on the incident their actions and rationale for downgrade.

A lack of available resources MUST never be a reason for downgrading a response.

Local supervisors requesting a response downgrade need to obtain the approval and authorisation of a FCR supervisor. The FCR Inspector will determine any disputed request.

3.6 Upgrading an Incident

The dispatcher is able to upgrade an incident provided the assessment is based upon further information. In these situations, the FCR dispatcher must advise the attending unit and a record made on the STORM log.

If a unit has been dispatched on a priority response and emergency equipment is being used to make progress, there is no need to upgrade the incident on STORM.
PROCEDURE – Responding to Incidents

Number: D 0503          Date Published: 7 February 2017

An officer may decide not to respond under emergency conditions if they feel this is appropriate. Any supporting information must be communicated to the dispatcher and recorded on the incident.

3.7 Incident Management

All incidents that require timely police attendance will remain with FCR until they either have been resolved or no longer fit the criteria of requiring a timely response.

FCR will be responsible for all incidents which have a command and control function. Once that function is complete then the incident will be sent to LPA for management. This will only be done by an FCR supervisor who is satisfied that this is appropriate and there appears no on-going risk to the public or individual concerned.

4.0 Equality Impact Assessment

This procedure has been assessed with regard to an Equality Impact Assessment. As a result of this assessment it has been graded as having a low potential impact as the proposals in this procedure would have no potential or actual differential impact on grounds of race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, transgender, disability, age, religion or belief or sexual orientation.

5.0 Risk Assessment

In applying this procedure officers and staff need to consider the safety of the public and their own safety at all times. We have a positive duty to uphold every person’s right to life and when responding to calls for assistance must not unduly place any person’s life at risk.

The following Essex Police policy and procedures are to be adhered to at all times:

- H 0403 Procedure – Patrolling and Incidents on Fast Roads
- D 2000 Policy – Safe Driving

6.0 Consultation

The following were invited to provide feedback in the consultation phase during the formulation of this document:

- Federation
- Unison
- Health & Safety
- Equality & Diversity Department
- FCR
PROXYUTE – Responding to Incidents

Number: D 0503 Date Published: 7 February 2017

7.0 Monitoring and Review

Compliance with this procedure will be monitored by the Review and Compliance Team within Corporate Services through regular inspection. The outcome from inspections will be forwarded to the FCR Commander.

This procedure will be reviewed every 12 months by, or on behalf of, the Head of the Force Control Room.

8.0 Governing Force policy.
Related Force policies or related procedures

- B 1601 Procedure – Missing Persons
- D 2000 Policy – Safe Driving
- D 2001 Procedure – Safe Driving
- A 1001 Procedure – Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour
- H 0403 Procedure – Patrolling and Incidents on Fast Roads
- B 1701 Procedure - Domestic Abuse Initial Grading and Attendance

9.0 Other source documents, e.g. legislation, Authorised Professional Practice (APP), Force forms, partnership agreements (if applicable)

- National Call Handling Standards (ACPO 2005);
- National Contact Management Principles and Practice (ACPO/NPIA 2012);
- Principles contained within the National Standard for Incident Assessment (ACPO/NPIA Draft April 2012);
- National Standard for Incident Recording (NPIA 2011);
- IPPC Learning the Lessons Bulletin 8 (October 2009);
- Essex Police’s Approach to Managing Cases of Domestic Abuse (HMIC 2013).