



PD 109 Family Liaison Officer  
Co-Ordination and Deployment

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**Linked Documents:** ACPO Family Liaison Officer Guidance 2008  
All Policies and procedures where the use of a Family Liaison Officer may be required.

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**SECTION 1 VERSION CONTROL**

Version No.	Date	Post Holder/Author	Post	Reason for Issue
1.0	2008		DI Crime	New Policy
1.1	May 2014	Neil Fletcher	Policy and Change Officer	Update

**SECTION 2 AIMS / OBJECTIVES**

Liaison with the family of someone who is missing or has died in traumatic circumstances is one of the most demanding of all tasks performed by Police Officers. It is of paramount importance that families are treated appropriately, professionally, with respect and consideration is given as to their needs at all levels of the Police structure. Families should be considered as an integral part of the investigation and this concept is central to its success.

Securing the confidence and co-operation of a victim’s family can positively impact on the wider issues of community trust and confidence as well as bringing positive benefits to the investigation.

The aims and objectives of this policy are to ensure the four main objectives of Family Liaison are achieved.

In cases of unexplained death, missing persons, road deaths, and critical incidents, primary responsibility for family liaison rests with the police.

The four main objectives of family liaison are:

- To provide honesty, transparency, support and information in a sensitive and compassionate manner to the family who are themselves victims of crime.
- To ensure family members are given timely information about other police departments and support agencies and that referrals are made to Victim Support and other agencies in accordance with the family’s wishes.
- To gather evidence and information from the family in a manner that contributes to the investigation and preserves its integrity.
- To secure the confidence and trust of the family.

## **SECTION 3 DETAILS**

### **ROLES**

#### **Family Liaison Officer (FLO)**

The primary function of a FLO is as an investigator. Whilst performing this role the officer will offer to provide, give and facilitate support to the family. Officers will not counsel families whether qualified or not. This does not preclude the officer from offering sympathy, empathy, relevant support and advice.

The FLO will be expected to manage the day to day relationship with the family involved in the investigation as well as maintain close liaison with the SIO to ensure that the families are being treated appropriately, professionally and with respect to their needs. This may involve working in a variety of situations, in very demanding and stressful conditions over long periods of time.

FLO's are responsible for risk assessing any deployment prior to meeting the family. FLO's will be selected by FLC's taking into account relevant skills and abilities to meet the investigative needs of the enquiry taking into account their Personal Development Review and availability.

#### **Family Liaison Co-ordinator (FLC)**

This role is not rank specific but the officer should be a suitably skilled supervisor. To assist and advise in the selection, deployment and welfare matters of FLO's, including assisting with the preparation and completion of the FLO strategy and debrief of the deployment. The FLC, together with the Homicide Administrator (EMSOU) will maintain a database of suitably qualified FLO's, identifying any specialities and monitor their ongoing training, experience and welfare.

An FLO is a force resource and occasions may arise where deployment of specific FLO's may be contentious. The FLC will resolve disagreements with any departmental/area managers.

#### **Principal Family Liaison Co-ordinator (PFLC)**

This role is currently held by an officer of the rank of Chief Inspector but could be delegated to any suitably qualified/experienced supervisor. This position is skill specific, not rank specific.

The role is one of managing the Family Liaison Personnel and process, including having input into the selection process, selection for specific deployments, liaison with SIO's and line managers and be the Force point of contact.

### **DEPLOYMENT**

The responsibility for selection and deployment of a FLO will lie with the FLC. However, the SIO can request a specific FLO for their personal skill set, language or cultural knowledge/experience, etc. The decision will be based on the criteria identified by the SIO as well as:

- Availability
- Current workload

- Specialist knowledge and expertise
- Previous deployment history
- Suitability for the specific deployment
- Culture and religious considerations

It is accepted that there will be occasions when the requirement for a FLO is of an urgent nature. However, under normal circumstances the deployment of a FLO will follow a proper briefing including the agreement of a strategy and the completion of a risk assessment. Death messages will be delivered expediently and not specifically by a FLO. If this is not possible then a FLO should be deployed as soon as practicable thereafter.

The first stage in the deployment process will be identification of the family which may be complicated by the family dynamics, i.e. being split through divorce or separation. The SIO/FLC will need to consider these family dynamics in detail to ensure the most effective and appropriate deployment.

Once the need for the deployment of a FLO has been identified by the SIO, they will contact the FLC and give them a summary of the incident and details of the family.

The FLC will determine a suitable FLO and contact them directly. If the FLO has no prohibiting reason why not, they will be deployed immediately.

At the initial stage of selection it is the responsibility of the FLO to immediately bring to the attention of the FLC any reason why they may not be suitable for a specific deployment.

Once selected, the FLO will be briefed by the FLC or the investigative team in relation to the operation, strategy and assessment.

The selection of an FLO will be case dependent, taking into account whether the family are known to the FLO, risk assessment, previous contact, etc.

A FLO can be appointed in operations outside of homicide investigations. These could include missing persons, sudden and unexplained death of an infant or death of an elderly person in a care home. The list of what an FLO can be used for is not exhaustive and the policy does not attempt to identify specific incidents.

The needs of the family are paramount. Factors which may impact on the FLO deployment include:

- Gender – may be a critical factor for cultural, religious and other reasons
- Where the victim is from a minority group, i.e. ethnicity, hard of hearing, mental frailties, elderly.
- Community impact.
- Hate crime element.
- Where there is direct involvement of a solicitor or community organisation acting on behalf of or for the family in such a manner that direct contact with the family is limited.
- Risk assessment.

FLO's do not necessarily need to be deployed to deliver a 'trauma' message. This is a core policing skill.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

The FLO database will be managed by the Homicide Administrator (EMSOU). All administrative matters relating to Family Liaison will be dealt with by this individual.

FLO's will normally be deployed in pairs with one FLO coming from a criminal investigation background and the second from the policing area where the family reside.

Newly appointed FLO's will be deployed with more experienced FLO's in a mentoring role to allow the less experienced FLO to gain experience.

Due to the nature of the role, FLO's can self refer to the Occupational Health Unit at any time but otherwise referrals for counselling will be made annually.

A FLO log book will be maintained throughout each Family Liaison deployment. This is an official document and as such is accessible to all parties involved in the judicial system.

## **SECTION 4 LEGISLATIVE COMPLIANCE**

This document has been drafted to comply with the general and specific duties in the Equality Act 2010; Data Protection Act; Freedom of Information Act; European Convention of Human Rights; Employment Act 2002; Employment Relations Act 1999, and other legislation relevant to policing.