Practice Advice Family Liaison Deployment – Supporting and Welfare Considerations

This document is intended to provide some minimum standards and expectations for the welfare of FLOs, and outline processes and structures for forces to consider when ensuring the health and wellbeing of staff.

(Note: In this practice advice, Senior Investigating Officer (SIO, includes references to Lead Investigators, Investigating Officer or Officer In the Case)

The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) / Senior Identification Manager (SIM) has a duty of care to support, review, and constantly monitor the welfare and health of all staff under their direction. SIO / SIMs should be aware of the dangers of undue stress levels being endured by Family Liaison Coordinators (FLCs), Family Liaison Advisors (FLAs) and Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) as they are exposed to the raw emotions and needs of the bereaved. One of the key considerations to any family liaison deployment is that the FLO is always a volunteer to conduct the role. Officers performing these roles must not be left feeling abandoned or isolated.

There are a number of other documents in existence which provide guidance regarding supporting the welfare of staff. This document is not intended to replace any of these publications, it is designed to complement them and some further welfare considerations in the management of family liaison.

Further Documents:-
- **HSE (2008) working together to reduce stress at work – A guide for employees**. Sedbury, HSE Books.
- **Psychological Risk Management – Introduction and guidance – May 2017 – College of Policing**
- **Blue Light Wellbeing Framework – Organisational Development and International Faculty – May 2017**
- **Policing Vision 2025 – APCC and NPCC (4.6)**
- **Police Dependent Trust – Self-support techniques after a traumatic incident**

Strategic leads for family liaison should be responsible for the decisions that affect recruitment, assessment, suitability, welfare and wellbeing of family liaison. FLCs, FLAs and FLOs should be empowered to take responsibility for welfare as outlined below.

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Psychological Risk Management Assessment

The Psychological Risk Management Assessment is a new tool that is being rolled out by the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS). It is a psychological screening tool to assess psychological health using psychological questionnaires to measure clinical symptoms including anxiety, depression and psychological trauma. Screening also includes measurements of resilience, coping skills and other personal or work factors which can be used to explain the presence or absence of clinical symptoms. It is important to outline, pre-screening of any kind is not supported. Screening as outlined above should always supplement (but never supersede) good line management. Neither should screening be used in isolation of direct healthcare professional support.

Family Liaison Officers

Health and Safety legislation requires organisation to have programmes to control risks to health. Psychological risks of developing stress, anxiety, depression and PTSD are high in some roles and therefore there is a legal Duty of Care to introduce health screening and surveillance to mitigate these risks. Although policing in itself is a high risk occupation, it has been found that some roles in policing can carry a higher risk that other roles. NPWS has assessed all the roles in the police and the FLO has been found to be in one of the highest risk categories.

Further information can be found on www.oscarkilo.org.uk website and in particular the OK-NPWS Live Service 4 – Psychological Risk Management.

In order to support staff, it is important to safeguard those in high risk roles. As well as the process outlined above forces should still:-

1. **<u>Understanding wellbeing (how to look after yourself)</u>**

FLCs and FLAs need to understand wellbeing and should:

- Provide commitment to support and proactively invest in mental health and stress within the workplace
- Have an awareness of the signs of mental health/stress and ways to seek support

  Stress management is arguably the most important resource for responding well during challenging times. While it is impossible to remove all the stress from your life, by learning to identify the stressors you can begin to develop healthy coping strategies that contribute to long term good mental health.

- Have the confidence to challenge the culture of stigma around mental health and stress
- Show an awareness and understanding of mental health and stress at work and how work can affect the FLO at work or within their personal life
- Ensure that mental health training and awareness is given to FLCs/FLAs/FLOs
- Ensure that they create a supportive environment for the FLO and that they are given the confidence to speak about stress and mental wellness during deployments.

- Possess knowledge of how to proactively look after their own wellbeing and improve resilience
FLCs, FLAs and FLOs require skills to help them better self-care, manage complex working environments and reflect their unique shared experiences in role.

In order to support peers and look after themselves, FLOs need to understand wellbeing and should therefore:

- Commit to support colleagues in mental health and stress within the workplace
- Have an awareness of the signs of mental health/stress and ways to seek support
- Have confidence to challenge the culture of stigma around mental health and stress
- Have an awareness and understanding of mental health and stress at work and how work can affect the FLO at work or within their personal life
- Have knowledge of how to proactively look after their own wellbeing and improve resilience

2. **Communicating wellbeing**

In order to support staff FLCs and FLAs have a responsibility to provide wellbeing information:-

- During initial training course
- At CPD events
- As part of their discussions with FLOs prior to, during and post deployment.
- As part of the FLO Strategy, Risk Assessment and withdrawal Strategy
- As part of wellbeing and welfare promotion within the workplace, to include where staff can access services and information.
- As part of FLC/FLAs building relationships with Occupational Health and Senior Leadership Teams. They must recognise that this is a high risk role and invest in communicating with staff on the signs and management of trauma

3. **Proactive wellbeing support**

In order to support staff, it is important to safeguard those in high risk roles and therefore:

- Each force should have a robust pre-selection assessment for FLOs.
- Each force should have a robust pre-deployment assessment and also ongoing assessment of FLOs
- Each FLO should have a dedicated FLC or FLA as outlined within the management structure
- Regular meetings with individual FLOs should be completed, to include a discussion and assessment on wellbeing, stress and resilience. It should take into consideration what on going support is required and their suitability to continue with deployments. Records of such meetings should be maintained in accordance with force policy.
- Each force should have a robust monitoring system of FLO deployments including whether there are any deployment concerns, which should be responded to.
- The FLC/FLA should work in conjunction with the FLO's line manager to ensure appropriate support and awareness of deployments

- The FLC/FLA should explore what can be offered by their Occupation Health, local charities or organisations
- Each force should consider availability of peer support for FLOs, FLAs and FLCs
- During FLO deployments, the support required for FLOs should be under continual review
- Following any withdrawal strategy, the FLC/FLA should conduct a de-brief of the deployment; including a welfare and wellbeing assessment and what learning can be shared
- Any resistance or refusal to comply with referrals must be considered by the FLC/FLA before any further deployment of the FLO.

www.oscarkilo.org.uk Blue Light Wellbeing Framework - Provides resources and signposts including Statutory Agencies, Staff Associations and Networks as well as Charities and Support Networks