



# Suffolk Constabulary Policies & Procedures

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**Title:** Media Liaison

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## 1 Release Of Information - General Guidance

- 1.1 Suffolk Constabulary has an open, positive policy for dealing with the media for two main reasons.
- 1.2 Firstly, we depend upon public support to do our job effectively and the public's perception of our work is moulded by what they see in the media.
- 1.3 Secondly, issuing accurate timely information about incidents, through the media, can often result in the police receiving vital information from the public which can help solve crimes.
- 1.4 As such, every member of staff has a responsibility for promoting the work of Suffolk Constabulary and maintaining good media relations.
- 1.5 The basic tenet of the Media Liaison Policy and Procedure is 'only withhold what you must'. If information cannot be released for valid reasons, this should be explained to the media.
- 1.6 This procedure is designed as a general guide to media liaison. It applies to all public information put out by Suffolk Constabulary by whichever means, including face-to-face interviews, written press releases, verbally on the telephone or media line, and electronically through the website or by email. If

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there are any queries about the manner in which a media enquiry should be handled, the advice of a press officer should be sought.

- 1.7 There is certain information that cannot be released for valid reasons. Restrictions on the release of information are explained in the Restrictions On Release of Information part of this procedure. In these situations, where possible, the reason for not releasing information should be explained to the media.

## 2 Key Guidelines

- 2.1 Reasonable requests from the media for information, comment and interviews should be dealt with by the appropriate person. This would normally be the member of staff who knows most about the subject/incident and can respond authoritatively to any questions (usually the Officer in the Case (OIC)).
- 2.2 The general rule of thumb is that staff can release the same information to the media as they would if they were responding to a direct question from a member of the public.
- 2.3 The information should be issued in a clear, concise way - stressing any areas of appeal and any crime prevention advice.
- 2.4 Often the best method of dealing with the media is to reduce any comment/appeal down to three or four key points. Use plain English, when issuing information and avoid jargon, where possible.
- 2.5 **Remember:** The media is merely a means to communicate with the public. We need to focus on what the police want to gain from issuing the information, whether it is informing/warning the public about an incident, an appeal for help/information, issuing the description of an offender or providing crime reduction advice.

## 3 Supporting Officers & Staff

- 3.1 Given the large volume of media enquiries that the police deal with, it is accepted that mistakes, inaccuracies or errors of judgement may occur.
- 3.2 However, where comments are made in good faith and are well reasoned, staff are assured of the support of both Senior and Chief Officers.
- 3.3 Notwithstanding the above, anyone who intentionally passes information to the media, which is likely to frustrate an investigation or to embarrass/undermine the credibility of the organisation, could face disciplinary or misconduct action.

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## 4 General Responsibilities

- 4.1 As previously stated, in line with this procedure's clear and unequivocal presumption of openness, reasonable requests from journalists for information, comments and interviews, should be met by the appropriate member of staff.
- 4.2 The Media Services Manager, Police Headquarters Press Officer and Area Press and Public Relations Officers (known generically as Press Officers throughout this document) all have specific roles in facilitating media liaison. However, everyone has a responsibility for promoting the work of Suffolk Constabulary and maintaining good media relations.
- 4.3 The Press Officers are specialist advisors, responsible for advising staff on all issues involving the media and for shaping and developing public perception of Suffolk Constabulary.
- 4.4 The Press Officers operate an 'on-call' system, so there is always a Press Officer available to give advice, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Outside office hours, the on-call Press Officer can be contacted through the Force Operations Room (FOR) Inspector/Supervisor.

## 5 Specific Responsibilities

- 5.1 The Media Services Manager and Police Headquarters Press Officer are responsible for:
  - Coordinating media liaison throughout the Constabulary area and taking the lead on dealing with queries with force-wide implications.
  - Specifically dealing with all queries relating to Constabulary policy and procedure, discipline, complaints against police, the opinion of Suffolk Constabulary, press releases of a sensitive nature and all queries addressed to Chief Officers or senior staff based at police headquarters.
  - Coordinating media relations on behalf of the Police Authority.
  - Taking the lead on media liaison following major incidents or serious crime.
  - Ensuring that relevant partner agencies have been consulted with and are aware of the content of any relevant press releases.
  - Directing and supporting the work of the Area Press and Public Relations Officers.
  - Giving assistance and advice on the formulation of press releases and issuing of information.
  - Coordinating media liaison at royal visits.
  - Publicity for constabulary – wide campaigns and initiatives.
  - Providing advice to all personnel regarding media liaison.

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- In house media training, including providing assistance to the Training Section.
- Leading on internal communications through the production of Constabulary publications, such as the 'Constables County' newspaper, and use of the Intranet.
- Certain radio and television interviews on behalf of Suffolk Constabulary.

5.2 The Area Press and Public Relations Officers are responsible for:

- Dealing with routine media enquiries of a localised nature, creating and maintaining daily liaison with local journalists and other members of the media.
- Monitoring local media and drawing items of interest to the attention of the Area Commander.
- Media liaison following major incidents or serious crime as directed by the Media Services Manager, Gold Commander or Senior Investigating Officer
- Ensuring that relevant partner agencies have been consulted with and are aware of the content of any press release.
- Arranging publicity for local initiatives and campaigns.
- Circulation of press releases issued locally.
- Keeping the PHQ Press Office fully informed of local developments.
- Acting as local correspondents providing regular contributions for inclusion in Constabulary publications.
- Assisting with media liaison in the event of a major incident or serious crime, as directed by the Media Services Manager.
- Assisting with Royal Visits.
- Giving media training to police staff.
- Providing advice to staff regarding media liaison.

## 6 Attendance At Court

- 6.1 The media are governed by strict guidelines within the precincts of court. Similarly the police are restricted in what they can do or say, outside the legal proceedings, within the precincts of court.
- 6.2 As such, police Press Officers will not usually attend court, unless there is a specific role for them to fulfil.
- 6.3 In exceptional circumstances, Press Officers may attend court, such as at the end of high-profile trials where staff need support or there has been a great deal of pressure from the media, and/or a victim/their family.

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6.4 The attendance of Press Officers at court will be agreed with the Media Services Manager, dependent upon the circumstances.

### 7 Attendance At Incident Scenes

7.1 Press Officers will only attend the scenes of incidents if there is a specific media liaison role for them to fulfil.

7.2 The attendance of media at the scene, carrying out their work outside a police cordon, would not usually necessitate the attendance of a police Press Officer. A Press Officer can work more effectively from an office that contains the infrastructure necessary to disseminate information widely.

7.3 The decision to send a Press Officer to a scene should be made by the Media Services Manager. The criteria for a Press Officer attending a scene is that there should be a clearly identified role for them to fulfil, such as facilitating interviews, issuing information or taking the media into secure areas.

### 8 Positive Media Coverage

8.1 The public has a genuine interest in police work and the media provide an effective means of communicating information to the public.

8.2 As such, all staff are encouraged to use the media to proactively highlight positive stories and good working practise. This type of publicity is valuable in building public confidence in the police.

8.3 The media should also be used to educate the public about crime reduction and to facilitate the successful investigation of crime.

8.4 All staff and officers should be on alert for opportunities to promote community safety information and should contact their local Press Officer to ensure that they are made aware of all relevant activities that are due to take place.

### 9 Authorisation Of Press Releases And Interviews

#### General Guidelines

9.1 The decision on who should deal with the media should be made on the basis of their knowledge of a subject/incident, not their rank or other criteria.

9.2 For example, the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) in charge of an investigation is usually best placed to answer queries about the investigation. Similarly, a member of staff who is leading on an initiative, or a Chief Officer with particular knowledge of subject, would normally deal with the media on that matter.

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- 9.3 Every effort should be made to avoid tokenism. Staff should not be selected to deal with the media not be selected because of their race, sex or sexual orientation.
- 9.4 Any member of staff who is approached by the media should ensure their line manager and the PHQ Press Office, via the Area Press and Public Relations Officer, is made aware of a query and any information released. This allows the PHQ Press Office to co-ordinate the release of information and to ensure all sections of the media receive consistent information – as well as guarding against the media playing one part of the organisation off against another.
- 9.5 All releases relating to Constabulary policy, disciplinary matters, complaints against police, opinions expressed by the Constabulary and press releases of a sensitive nature will be issued through the PHQ Press Officer at Headquarters, on the approval of a Chief Officer.
- 9.6 Officers and police staff should give their full name and rank or role when dealing with the media. The anonymous title of 'police spokesperson' should not be used.
- 9.7 By agreeing a comment with partners, prior to its release, a consistent and credible public message is assured. Relevant partner agencies should be consulted, where appropriate, regarding the content, timing and method, of releasing information to the media. On certain occasions a joint press release may be appropriate.
- 9.8 Media strategies/protocols exist with a number of agencies such as the Independent Police Complaints Commission, the Crown Prosecution Service, Criminal Justice Service, Social Services, Education, the military, local councils and Health. The advice of the press office regarding existing protocols should be sought before any comment is made on an issue involving partners.

### Authorisation of Press Releases

- 9.9 Press Officers have responsibility for ensuring each press release has been properly authorised before it is issued. All press releases must be authorised by the Senior Investigating Officer, the officer dealing with an incident or their supervisor.

### Radio and Television Interviews

- 9.10 It is the policy of this constabulary that whoever is responsible for dealing with an incident should front any television or radio interviews. A press officer will only front an interview in exceptional circumstances.
- 9.11 The immediacy and intimacy of radio and television makes them tremendously powerful in shaping public opinion.

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- 9.12 No officer or staff should be interviewed on radio or television without ensuring the local Area Press Officer has been given advance notice. Such interviews will normally be authorised by the PHQ Press Office.
- 9.13 The PHQ Press Office should also be given prior notification of all proposed television interviews, in order to ensure Chief Officers are made aware.
- 9.14 Where an immediate response is necessary, such as at the scene of road collisions, officers and staff should confine their comments to known facts and avoid giving opinion. The PHQ Press Office should then be notified that the interview has taken place and told what information has been released.
- 9.15 No interviews will be given on policy and procedure, or matters of a controversial or sensitive nature, without the permission of a Chief Officer. The PHQ Press Office should be informed of such requests and will liaise with the appropriate Chief Officer to seek authorisation.
- 9.16 Whenever possible a Press Officer should be present during any television or radio interview to give advice and record the interview.
- 9.17 For television interviews and photographs officers and staff should be mindful of their appearance and the image they project. Correct uniform should be worn wherever possible. Inappropriate tattoos should be covered and dark glasses removed. Hats will usually be worn, as they are part of the uniform. However on occasion where a slightly less formal response is required or where shadow makes the officers face difficult to see it will be acceptable not to wear a hat.

### Timing

- 9.18 In the absence of a genuine operational reason for not releasing information, details of an incident should be released, at the first available opportunity, in order to maximise the response to appeals, to locate witnesses, to seek information and to exercise the Constabulary's duty of care to the public i.e. to warn them of dangerous offenders/ situations.
- 9.19 The media tend not to publish incidents that are historic and the usefulness of a media appeal, as an investigative tool tends to diminish as time passes.
- 9.20 A decision taken by the SIO not to publicise an incident should be documented in the investigation manual.

## **10 Restrictions On Release Of Information**

### General Guidelines

- 10.1 Despite the Constabulary's open policy towards the media, there are obviously occasions when there are restrictions on the amount of information that can be released.

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10.2 The demands of the media have to be balanced against the needs of the victim and the requirements of the Constabulary. Additionally staff need to be aware of current legislation, such as the Data Protection Act and The Human Rights Act, where issues such as proportionality and necessity need to be considered prior to personal information being released.

10.3 Some examples are listed below. Any queries about the advisability of releasing information should be directed to the Media Services Manager.

### Requests for No Publicity

10.4 Requests from members of the public for no publicity will normally be respected, unless it is deemed that publicity is in the public interest. If the media become aware of an incident, where such a request has been made, then basic details will be released without identifying the victim(s).

10.5 Wherever possible, the wishes of the victim, their legal guardian or next of kin should be sought and considered when deciding whether to publicise an incident.

10.6 The onus is on the officer dealing with the incident to ascertain the wishes of the victim about publicity and make the Press Office aware by filling in the relevant box on the computer log.

10.7 Where an overriding Duty of Care exists, such as children being accosted and details of missing vulnerable people, details should be made public.

10.8 Staff should be aware that national media coverage of incidents can result in public awareness and concern over some issues being heightened, increasing the public interest and the need for the police to provide information on these incidents.

### Naming Victims of Crime

10.9 Victims of crime will not normally be identified. Details identifying the victims of crime should only be released with the victim's consent. In cases where the victim is unable to express a view, such as serious injury or those involving children, the wishes of next of kin should be sought.

10.10 Staff need to be mindful that, in some circumstances, referring to a victim's race, age or street where they live can effectively result in identification.

10.11 In cases where the aggrieved person does not want their personal details released, general information about the incident can and should be given to the media (e.g. a house/shop in London Road, Ipswich, was broken into on Sunday 3 May and £200 worth of electrical goods stolen).

10.12 Where releasing their identity may leave victims vulnerable to further crime, such as elderly people living alone, victims (including businesses) will not normally be named. In such cases, the reasons for the decision should be

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explained to journalists in order to encourage them to follow suit, should they discover the name from another source.

- 10.13 Murder/manslaughter victims' details will normally be released once positive identification has taken place and next of kin informed. The death is a matter of public record and the identity will be released at the inquest opening. If there is a need to delay releasing these details – such as difficulties informing next of kin – the media should be made aware to encourage them to withhold publication if they learn the identity from another source.
- 10.14 In the event of a racist incident, consideration of the victim(s) must always be at the forefront of any decision to publicise the incident. Consideration should be given to the fact that details such as reference to a victim's ethnic origin when combined with details of his age or street or village can result in identification.
- 10.15 Before issuing any press release, careful thought must be given to what positive results any publicity will achieve. It must be bourn in mind that the release could result in high profile publicity, as rural racism is an issue of great interest to the media.
- 10.16 The victim(s) as well as interested members of partner agencies including Suffolk County Council's Racial Harassment Initiative should be informed beforehand of all of the possible consequences of issuing a press release, this will enable all parties to make an informed decision on whether or not a press release should go out.
- 10.17 The media should be briefed on all of the sensitive issues surrounding the case and the possible consequences publicity could have for the victim(s).
- 10.18 Care should be taken with the type of language used to describe offences. Offences should not be described as racially motivated or racially aggravated where there is no clear evidence to directly support this.
- 10.19 When answering questions from the media it is important to make clear the distinction between a 'racist' and a 'racially motivated' incident. The first relies on perception, the second on actual evidence – one is subjective, the other is objective. Describing an incident as racist does not necessarily mean that it is racially motivated.

### Road Traffic Collisions

- 10.20 We do not give out the personal details of people involved in non-injury Road Traffic Collisions (RTC).
- 10.21 Where people have been seriously injured in a RTC (where they have been detained in hospital for treatment), the media may want personal details to carry out condition checks with the hospital.

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10.22 In these circumstances, we will only give out the personal details of seriously injured people if we have their permission. As such, the wishes of the injured person, or their parent/guardian/next of kin, must be sought at the earliest possible stage.

10.23 Officers and staff should bear in mind any active legal proceedings when considering what details to release of road collisions. If there is uncertainty about what details can be released, the advice of the Press Office should be sought.

10.24 The names of American forces personnel or their dependants will not be released. All media enquiries should be referred to the appropriate USAF Base Public Affairs Officer.

### Fatal Road Collisions

10.25 The identity of those killed in road traffic collisions are a matter of public record and will be released by the Coroner at inquest.

10.26 As such, following a road death, details of the deceased will be released to the media once positive identification has taken place and next of kin have been informed.

10.27 Next of kin should be informed that the details will be released to the media, and the reason for this policy.

10.28 If there is a delay in releasing details, caused by problems in establishing formal identification or contacting next of kin, the reason should be explained to the media, as they may well have found out the identity as a result of their own inquiries and this explanation may help them make a decision on whether or not to publish the information they have.

### Victims of Other Accidents

10.29 Accidents which happen in public places should be handled in the same manner as road collisions.

10.30 When accidents do not occur in a public place, particularly those occurring in the home, there should be a presumption against revealing the identities of victims without their permission. A person's right to privacy in their home should be respected.

10.31 However, where a clear cautionary safety message needs to be issued, information about the incident should always be released (without identifying the victim).

10.32 Accidents in the workplace (industrial accidents) are handled by the Health and Safety Executive. The Health and Safety Executive should be consulted with before any details of an incident or those involved in an incident are released.

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Swift release of details can alleviate concern among the next of kin of other people working in the same location.

#### Sudden Deaths/Suicides

10.33 Although details of routine sudden deaths will not normally be pro-actively offered to the media, incidents of interest should be given out.

10.34 These include suspected suicides that attract widespread public attention (such as someone jumping from a bridge in full view of a number of people), suspected drug-abuse deaths or incidents where a clear cautionary safety message can be issued (such as accidents resulting from the misuse of equipment).

10.35 Providing formal identification has taken place and next of kin have been informed, general information about the incident – including the age and home address (town or village) of the deceased, but excluding the name – can be released.

10.36 The same information will also be released in response to direct media queries about sudden deaths that had not been previously offered to the media.

10.37 When publicising sudden deaths, it is essential no information or comment is made which pre-empts the verdict of the coroner. Publicising that someone died after falling from a ladder or that a quantity of drugs were found in the house with a body, allows people to draw their own conclusions but does not prejudice the inquest.

10.38 Inquests are officially Coroners' Court and the public/media have a right to attend. The media must be informed prior to all inquests. Fuller details, including a pro forma for notifying the media, are contained in the Sudden Deaths and Inquests Procedure.

#### Suspicious/Unexplained Deaths

10.39 It is important that correct and appropriate language is used when describing incidents involving sudden/suspicious deaths.

10.40 The following four categories should be used:

- Category One – Sudden death, with clear and immediate evidence of foul play, which is being treated as a murder: this will be referred to as **Murder** and will be treated as a major incident from the outset.
- Category Two – Sudden death where victim has clearly been the victim of foul play but precise cause of death is not clear. If we are treating it as a major incident and we have strong suspicions, then we should say so. This should be referred to as an “**Unexplained Death**” that we are treating as **Suspicious**. Reference should be made to post mortem and who is conducting it.

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- Category Three – Sudden Death where there is no clear evidence of how the victim died, no definitive evidence of foul play and we are awaiting results of post mortem before deciding what action to take: this should be referred to as **Unexplained**. Reference should be made to the Post mortem and who is conducting it.
- Category Four – Sudden Death where foul play is not suspected but precise cause of death is unknown. This should be referred to as an “**Unexplained Death**” and it should be stated that “**Foul play is not suspected**”.

## Embargoed Information

10.41 If it is considered necessary for operational or other reasons to place an embargo on any news item, the matter must be referred to the SIO, then the media can be advised of the embargo. Wherever possible the reason for the embargo should be explained to the media.

## 11 Legal Issues

### Contempt of Court/Sub-Judice

- 11.1 Restrictions arising from the judicial process must be observed. The Contempt of Court Act 1981 extended the offence of contempt to include any speech, writing, broadcast or other communication addressed to the general public which creates a substantial risk that the course of justice will be seriously impaired or prejudiced in any active proceedings in court.
- 11.2 A case is deemed to be sub-judice once proceedings are active and no information can be released which may prejudice any future trial. Proceedings are active once a person has been arrested; reported for summons; a warrant for arrest has been issued; court proceedings have started; or a person has been orally charged with the offence.
- 11.3 Any infringement of the contempt law carries with it the possibility that prosecution evidence will be devalued or rendered inadmissible at court, damaging the chance of an offender being convicted.
- 11.4 Journalists who can prove they took all reasonable steps to ensure proceedings were not active prior to publication have a statutory defence in cases of contempt. This places a responsibility upon the police to ensure the media are made aware when proceedings become active in cases which are subject to on-going publicity.
- 11.5 Once proceedings are active, the onus is on the media to either attend court or to approach the clerk of court for accurate information about cases. Police officers should not issue this information.
- 11.6 Any queries on sub-judice matters should be referred to the Press Office or ‘on call’ Press Officer.

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### Informing the media of arrests/charges

- 11.7 If an incident has received publicity, there is a legal requirement on the police to inform the media of any arrests/charges.
- 11.8 Failure to inform the media could result in them unwittingly being in Contempt of Court (see above) by publishing details which could prejudice a future trial. If a query is received from the media about an incident, officers should always inform them if someone has been arrested or charged.
- 11.9 Where a case is the subject of on-going publicity, the senior officer dealing with a matter should ensure the press officer and subsequently the media are made aware when arrests/charges are made.
- 11.10 The media will normally respect requests to delay publicising the fact someone has been arrested/charged – if there are valid operational reasons. Such requests should be dealt with by the Press Office or the 'on call' Press Officer.

### Identifying People Under Investigation

- 11.11 Details of an offender will not be released to the media until that offender has been charged.
- 11.12 We will not confirm that any named individual or company is under investigation, although basic information (e.g. a 40-year-old Leiston man is currently being interviewed in relation to...) can be given to the media.
- 11.13 If a suspect is subsequently released without charge, released on bail or cautioned, this can be revealed to the media. But, again, the person should not be identified.
- 11.14 When a suspect has been charged and kept in custody prior to appearing before court, their name, age, address and occupation may be given, along with details of the charge and forthcoming court appearance.
- 11.15 Similar details may be given when someone is reported or charged and bailed to a court at a later date. However, if these details have been released and the case is subsequently discontinued, the media should be informed as soon as is practical.
- 11.16 Suffolk Constabulary will not usually name an individual prior to charging nor an individual who is the subject of a caution, breath test, speeding or fixed penalty notice or who has been reported for summons.
- 11.17 Care must also be taken in cases involving sexual offences or crimes against juveniles, where naming the suspect may identify a surviving victim. In such cases, basic details (i.e. age, sex and town address) may be released and the media should then be encouraged to attend court to get fuller details, including details of any reporting restrictions.

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11.18 On other occasions, there may be legitimate operational reasons why the senior investigating officer may want to withhold the name of a charged person until the court appearance. Such cases should be discussed with the Press Office.

11.19 Care should also be exercised in cases where someone has been arrested, bailed or charged with an offence but dies before standing trial. Although, in law, a dead person has no rights, publicising the fact they were accused of an offence maligns their name without giving them the chance to 'clear' themselves. Where it is felt necessary to publicise such information, in response to media queries or as part of a separate investigation, the next of kin should be consulted and reasons for wanting to issue the information explained.

### Juveniles

11.20 Special care must be taken when dealing with matters affecting juveniles. Where a person under 17 years is involved, or has potential involvement in any civil or criminal proceedings, no information may be released which is likely to disclose his/her identity.

11.21 The only exception to this is where the Court has ruled that the identity of the individual concerned should be made public and have lifted the relevant reporting restrictions, such as occasionally happens with Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs).

### Pre-Verdict Media Briefings

11.22 Suffolk Constabulary will not, as a rule, engage in pre-trial briefings due to the inherent risks of prejudicing a trial.

11.23 The decision to hold a pre-verdict media briefing during/before a trial will only be made on the authority of the Assistant Chief Constable, in consultation with CPS, the Media Services Manager and Senior Investigating Officer.

11.24 Briefings will be held in exceptional circumstances, and if:

- There is intense media interest and such a briefing is the best way of ensuring accurate reporting and minimise the potential for distress to victims/relatives and witnesses.
- There is a desire to highlight an aspect of the case in the public interest.
- An innovative or unusual technique was used in the detection of the crime.
- There is a desire to highlight particularly good police work. Full details on the national ACPO Guidelines on Pre-Verdict Media Briefings are held in the PHQ Press Office.

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11.25 Due to the legal restrictions on sub-judice and disclosure, such briefings should only be held in exceptional circumstances and should not be held more than two weeks before trial.

11.26 The CPS should authorise the release of the contents of any briefing. Briefings should only be used to give out factual information. Officers should not enter into speculation about events or individuals, as this could prove detrimental to the prosecution case.

11.27 All journalists attending briefings must sign indemnity forms (copies held at PHQ Press Office), ensuring they are aware of their legal responsibilities.

### Post Trial Comment and the Release of Prosecution Materials

11.28 Suffolk Constabulary will not usually issue post trial comment. Under no circumstances should an officer comment on the sentence given by the Court.

11.29 If officers are approached for comment following the conviction of someone at court, they should limit themselves to speaking about the investigation. The opportunity should be taken to highlight any areas of particularly good police work and/or unusual aspects of the investigation, such as the use of new techniques/technology. Officers should avoid commenting on the sentence or passing comment on the offender (such as describing them as evil).

11.30 The CPS has issued clarification on access by the media to prosecution material.

11.31 Prosecution material which is considered to be non-contentious and can usually be released to the media once it has been shown to a jury, or after a trial includes:

- Maps/photographs (including custody photos of defendants) /diagrams.
- Videos showing scene of crime as recorded by police after the event.
- Videos of property seized (e.g. weapons, clothing as shown to jury in court, drugs haul or stolen goods).
- Sections of transcripts of interviews/statements as read out (and therefore reportable, subject to any orders) in court.
- Videos or photographs showing reconstructions of the crime.

11.32 Prosecution material which may be released after consideration by the CPS includes:

- CCTV footage of defendant (especially where it shows defendant and/or victim shortly before or during the crime) which has been viewed by jury and public in court.
- Video and audio tapes of police interviews with defendants, victims and witnesses.

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- Victims' statements.
- Psychiatric or medical statements.

11.33 The CPS' policy on victims and witnesses gives a commitment to treating them with respect and sensitivity and taking all practicable steps to help them through the often difficult experience of becoming involved in the Criminal Justice System. Where victims, or the families of deceased victims, and witnesses have a particular objection to certain prosecution material being released to the media then these views will be taken into account in making a decision.

11.34 If someone is acquitted, officers should avoid saying anything that may imply guilt (such as 'we are not looking for anyone else'). Comment should be limited to the fact the case will be reviewed in the light of the court result and the file remains open/the investigation is continuing.

11.35 Officers should make the PHQ Press Office aware of requests of this nature. The content of any statement should be agreed, prior to release.

### 12 'Police Broadcast Messages' – Television And Radio

12.1 Arrangements for Police Broadcasts are set out in detail in the Home Office Consolidated Circular. Television and non-urgent radio transmissions will be forwarded to the PHQ Press Office. Urgent matters for radio transmission should be forwarded to the FOR. Special local arrangements for broadcasts, where public safety is at risk, are laid down in the Constabulary Major Incident Plan.

12.2 To reach the BBC's 'connecting in a crisis' service, contact BBC Radio Suffolk on 01473 250000 (main number) or the newsroom direct on 01473 340707. Out of hours, calls should be made to the main news centre in London on 0207 765 4899.

### 13 Information On The Website

13.1 The rules which apply to issuing a press release are applicable to publishing information on the Suffolk Constabulary website.

13.2 Information on the website must be regularly reviewed to ensure that it is current and that its content has not become prejudicial as the criminal justice process takes its course.

13.3 To avoid unwittingly breaching court orders, Suffolk Constabulary will not usually place details about arrests, charges or convictions on its website. When a suspect is arrested every effort should be made to ensure that all releases referring to the offence are removed at the earliest opportunity.

13.4 If any personal details of an offender charged with an offence are placed on the website, they should be removed within seven days of charge and even within

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that time should be amended or removed if charges are added or altered, or if the court imposes restrictions on naming.

### 14 Helping The Media

- 14.1 While the media should not be allowed to hinder or obstruct at scenes of incidents, every reasonable effort should be made to facilitate the media in carrying out their job, including taking film or photographs.
- 14.2 All representatives of the media must be dealt with fairly and equally. If problems arise, a Press Officer should be informed of the situation.
- 14.3 The police are not the arbiters of good taste. We do not have the right or ability to control what the media print or broadcast.
- 14.4 However, the media will respond to reasonable requests not to publish/broadcast material, if there is a valid reason. If there is a request, from an officer, victim or next of kin, that photographs or film taken at an incident should not be used, the officer dealing will:
- Inform the photographer/cameraman of the request.
  - Inform a supervisory officer.
  - Arrange for full details to be immediately brought to the attention of a Press Officer or Force Operations Room, who will contact a responsible person in the newspaper or television company and inform them of the request.

### 15 Major Incidents

- 15.1 A Press Officer must be alerted at the early stages of a major incident, including firearms incidents detailed in the 'Guidelines for dealing with Specific Incidents' section of this procedure, in order to establish a working relationship with the media from the outset.
- 15.2 The public's perception of the effectiveness of the Constabulary's response to a major incident will be shaped by the media. It is essential that the media receive regular updates of accurate information.
- 15.3 The officer in charge of the incident will ensure that a Press Officer is continually provided with up-to-date information. A chronological log will be maintained for this and other purposes. The Press Officer should also be invited to attend senior officer briefings in order to ensure they are fully informed when advising officers and preparing press releases.
- 15.4 During the early stages of a major incident it is important that a short press release – giving the basic details of the incident – is made available to the media. Senior officers are reminded that such a release is a priority matter to enable the Press Office to function efficiently.

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15.5 In these instances the Press Office will be responsible for:

- Establishing an effective media liaison strategy, in consultation with Gold.
- Arranging the provision of the necessary facilities for media liaison.
- Collating information and issuing press releases.
- Monitoring the media, arranging for press conferences to be tape-recorded and for video recordings to be made of televised interviews.
- Authorising the issuing of an initial, basic, press release, if appropriate.
- Directing and coordinating the work of the Area Press Officer(s).

15.6 Full details of Media Liaison at major incidents are included within the Suffolk Constabulary Major Incident Plan and the Joint Suffolk Major Incident Media Plan.

### 999 Telephone Failure

15.7 Contingency Plan No 8 covers the failure of the 999 emergency telephone system.

15.8 In cases of prolonged failure (two hours or more), the Media Services Manager or Control Room Duty Inspector will arrange for the basic details (i.e. area covered and alternative arrangements made for emergency cover) to be broadcast.

15.9 However, media queries about the cause of the failure, number of houses affected and duration of failure should be directed to the British Telecom Press Officer on 0845 7262624 or in the event of a national emergency 08457 555999.

### Aircraft Accidents

15.10 Investigations into the cause of aircraft accidents, aside from the work carried out by the police and coroner, are carried out by the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) of the Department of Transport, based at Farnborough, Hants, (not the Civil Aviation Authority, which regulates air traffic). The Department of Transport Press Office will issue media comment on behalf of the AAIB – telephone 0207 944 3387.

### Bomb Hoaxes

15.11 Details of hoax bomb calls should not be offered to the media, because publicity leads to more hoaxes and increases public disquiet. There is a standing agreement that the media will not usually publicise malicious bomb hoaxes (unless there is a valid news story of overwhelming public interest). If the media are aware of the incident, officers should confirm the details but should also request no publicity.

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### Counter Terrorist Action

15.12 ACPO have developed a media and External Communication Strategy for Community Reassurance in relation to Counter Terrorism. A copy of this guidance is available in the PHQ Press Office.

### Crime Figures/Statistics

15.13 The release of information about short-term statistics from small areas should be avoided as they can give a misleading picture. Statistics reflecting long-term trends are more reliable. As a general rule, no comment should be made prior to information being presented to the Police Authority.

15.14 Commanders are free to comment at any time on Police Authority papers concerning local operational matters, but should not speak on consultative papers or items with force-wide implications.

15.15 Commanders are free to release their zone's statistics and comment upon them, as they feel appropriate. Statistics and comment on countywide matters will also be available to the media, with Chief Officer approval. Such information must be released through the PHQ Press Office.

### Death in Custody

15.16 The Home Office definition of a death in the care or custody of the police covers those who die while detained by police, while in the hands of police or as a result of the actions of a police officer in the execution of his or her duty.

15.17 Following such a death, a statement should be drawn up by a press officer and authorised by an officer of ACPO rank.

15.18 The statement should confirm that death has occurred, confirm the details of the deceased (providing next of kin have been informed); confirm the cause of death, subject to the agreement of the Coroner, the IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission) and the investigating officer. Confirmation that the matter has been referred to the IPCC, the name of the investigating officer once appointed, confirmation of whether an officer(s) has been transferred or suspended, details of any charges in connection with the investigation and, if appropriate, details of any police prisoner procedures.

### Explosions

15.19 Cases of criminal explosions will be handled by the PHQ Press Office. If there is a non-criminal explosion, officers should be careful about identifying the cause of the blast. Media enquiries should be directed to the relevant body (i.e. Gas or Electricity Board).

### Firearms Incidents

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15.20 Information about any firearms incident, including those involving armed police officers, will only be given out after consultation with PHQ Press Office, with the authority of the Operational Commander.

15.21 Detailed information on tactics employed by the police or names of armed officers will not be released.

15.22 In any release where armed officers have opened fire, it should be stressed that our officers are trained to 'shoot to stop' an offender in order to ensure the safety of themselves and the public. We do not train officers to shoot to kill, as sometimes maintained by the media.

### Forged Bank of England Notes

15.23 Publicity concerning the forging of bank notes should not be issued without previous consultation through the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) Counterfeit Currency Unit on 0207 238 8000 or the NCIS Press Office on 0207 2388248/2382476.

### Fraud

15.24 In some cases it is important that details of a type of fraud occurring should be publicised to warn the public and put them on their guard.

15.25 However, it is our policy neither to confirm nor deny that specific companies or individuals are being investigated for fraud prior to charges being brought. Any queries about cases that might involve the Fraud Squad should be referred to the PHQ Press Office.

### Infectious Diseases

15.26 Publicity relating to infectious diseases will only be arranged through the PHQ Press Office, in consultation with the Environmental Health Department/Community Physician for the relevant district authority.

15.27 Before an agreed statement is given to the media, the PHQ Press Office will ensure that details have been passed to the Regional Health Authority's Press Liaison Officer.

### Kidnapping/Life at Risk

15.28 Special provision has been laid down by the Home Office Consolidated Circular for news blackouts in cases of kidnapping or where life may be put at risk if information is published.

15.29 A news blackout can only be imposed through the PHQ Press Office, on the authorisation of a Chief Officer. Any such incidents must be reported to the PHQ Press Office without delay, to ensure nothing appears in the media that may endanger life.

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15.30A blackout is a voluntary agreement between police and news editors. Invoking the agreement places a series of obligations on both parties and full details of these obligations and a copy of the national News Blackout Agreement is held at the PHQ Press Office.

### Missing Persons

15.31 Commanders may authorise publication of details of missing persons. Full advantage should normally be taken of facilities offered by the media to help locate the person, subject to the views of parents or guardians in the case of children.

15.32 Where possible, a photograph of the missing person should be included for publication/broadcast. If details are published, the media must be informed without delay when the person is located. The PHQ Press Office should be made aware of all such appeals.

### National Issues

15.33 Suffolk Constabulary will not comment on proposed legislation.

15.34 Comments on national issues made on behalf of the Constabulary will be released through the PHQ Press Office, with Chief Officer approval.

15.35 Commanders should not make statements directly to the media expressing opinion on national issues, unless speaking on behalf of a staff association.

15.36 When staff association representatives speak on national issues they should ensure their comments are clearly attributed to the relevant association and are not perceived as reflecting the views of Suffolk Constabulary.

### Old Cases

15.37 Requests from the media for police assistance in producing features/reconstructions of 'old' crimes (over three years old) should be directed to the PHQ Press Office.

15.38 ACPO guidelines on reconstructions and old cases are held in the PHQ Press Office. The PHQ Press Officer will liaise with a Detective Superintendent or a Chief Officer to decide if the Constabulary will cooperate with such requests.

15.39 We should only take part if publicity is likely to benefit the investigation and should be mindful of the effect on victims and/or their families.

### Other Emergency Services

15.40 Police officers should not be drawn into commenting on the work of other emergency services (such as the number of fire tenders at an incident or response time of ambulances). All such enquiries should be directed to the service in question.

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### Post Office

15.41 Details of mail bags stolen on or from railway premises or trains will not be disclosed to the media but enquiries of such a nature will be referred to a Press Officer.

### Prison incidents

15.42 No information on incidents, such as hostage taking or serious disorder, which may occur in prisons or young offender institutions will be released to the media without the approval of the Home Office Press Office.

15.43 However, information about escaped prisoners/absconders should be released as soon as possible, in liaison with the Home Office Press Office or the prison concerned.

15.44 Releases should contain the following information:

- Name, age and detailed description of the prisoner,
- Details of sentence and offence,
- Any connection with a town/area.

15.45 They should also contain the following line:

‘If anyone sees xxxx, they should phone the police with the details. They should not take any further action.’

15.46 Similar information can be released when prisoners fail to return after temporary home leave, or breach the conditions of their parole licence by absconding.

15.47 Details of incidents that occur within the precincts of court, including escapes, can only be released after liaison with the Home Office Press Office. Prior to issuing any information about an incident in court, or an incident involving a defendant that could be linked with an on-going trial, a check should be made with the Clerk of the relevant court or the police Court Liaison Officer to ensure no order has been made which prohibits publicity.

### Public Order

15.48 Key messages are available from the PHQ Press Office and should be disseminated to all officers dealing with instances of public disorder to ensure a coordinated response.

15.49 Details of demonstrations/public order incidents can be released, complete with numbers of arrests and general nature of charges. However, details of the police operation should be discussed with the officer in charge before being released. No comment should be made regarding the ethnicity or political beliefs of those involved.

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### Radioactive Substances

15.50 Statements will only be made through the PHQ Press Office or 'on call' Press Officer, after consultation with the radiological expert in attendance at the scene. Only the facts will be given in any statements issued to the media.

15.51 Arrangements for broadcasting information where public safety is at risk are laid down in the Suffolk Constabulary Major Incident Plan. Enquiries on technical matters must be referred to the appropriate body.

### Rewards

15.52 Victims of crime, or other interested parties, sometimes want to offer rewards to encourage members of the public to come forward with information.

15.53 Rewards can be offered but only if the wording indicates that the reward is offered for information leading to the "arrest and charging/conviction" of offenders. We will not offer rewards to facilitate the recovery of property alone or offer immunity from prosecution (no questions asked).

15.54 Any offer of a reward should be evidenced in writing and signed by the person offering it, before the reward is publicised.

### Serious Crimes

15.55 The PHQ Press Office or 'on call' Press Officer will be responsible for issuing information following all serious crimes (i.e. murder, rape or major robbery enquiries). He or she is directly responsible to the Senior Investigating Officer for collating information, preparing press releases and liaison with the news media.

### Sex Offenders

15.56 Information about registered sex offenders will not usually be proactively released, unless there is an identified risk to the community.

15.57 Home Office Guidelines and current working practice has shown it is more effective to manage those on the high risk and sex offenders registers, as widespread publicity only leads to offenders going underground by moving, changing their names and refusing to inform authorities of their whereabouts – which can put the public at greater risk

15.58 Any query about sex offenders should be discussed with the relevant Public Protection Officer and the Constabulary's representative of Suffolk's Multi Agency Public Protection Panels (MAPPP), prior to a response being given.

### Sexual Offences

15.59 Officers must ensure that no information is disclosed at any time that could cause the victim of an alleged sexual offence to be identified. Details of the

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accused may be released but NOT if these details are likely to identify the complainant.

### 16 Descriptions Of Suspects' Colour/Ethnicity

- 16.1 It is essential for any description(s) contained in press releases to be as clear as possible to allow the public to help the police trace individuals suspected of committing crime.
- 16.2 These descriptions should be based purely on the best information gathered from witnesses, CCTV etc.
- 16.3 They should also be couched in appropriate language, avoiding terms that could cause offence.
- 16.4 If a person's colour is referred to in a description, it will be either black or white. Other colours, such as brown, are unacceptable and should not be used. The term 'of mixed race' can also be used where appropriate.
- 16.5 Following any reference to colour should be an ethnic origin classification to add detail to the description.
- 16.6 These are:
- Asian
  - Southern European/Mediterranean
  - Eastern European
  - Middle Eastern
  - Far Eastern
  - African Caribbean
  - Polynesian
- Example:** "The man is described as black and appears to be of African Caribbean origin".
- 16.7 Where it is inappropriate to use a colour classification, an ethnic origin classification will suffice.
- Example:** "The woman is of Middle Eastern appearance".
- 16.8 It is important to remember that descriptions are based on someone's appearance to a witness or victim – and do not stem from an assumption made by the police about their actual ethnic origin.

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### 17 Publication Of Details/Photographs Of Wanted Persons

- 17.1 People will usually only be named as wanted for specific offences before charge in exceptional circumstances, where it is deemed that public safety is at risk and/or there is a real risk of re-offending.
- 17.2 Care must be taken in the wording of such releases to minimise the risk of prejudicing a future legal proceedings. This information will only be issued through the PHQ Press Office, upon the authorisation of the Detective Chief Superintendent or a Chief Officer, after consultation with CPS.
- 17.3 Caution will be used in the release of photographs or photofit pictures for publication, so subsequent evidence of identification is not prejudiced unnecessarily.
- 17.4 Police photographs identifying suspects wanted for questioning will only be issued in exceptional circumstances, on the specific instructions of the Detective Chief Superintendent, as these indicate the suspect has previous convictions. The photographs will be issued through the PHQ Press Office.
- 17.5 However, where identification is not likely to be an issue or there is the possibility that publicity may result in an early arrest, photographs/footage from cameras – such as CCTV cameras showing robberies in progress – should be issued to the media as soon as is practical. Such pictures should be issued through the PHQ Press Office, in liaison with the local Area Press Officer.
- 17.6 When a photofit or E-fit picture is released it will be stressed that it is a type-likeness and not an exact reproduction of the suspect. The release of photofits/E-fits should be authorised by someone of at least Detective Inspector rank, to ensure a common standard and approach is maintained across the force. The E-Fit Procedure should be referred to.
- 17.7 Names/photographs of offenders who are at large, having been charged, convicted and sentenced in their absence, may be released along the same lines as those used for prisoners who have escaped/absconded (see Prison Incidents).

### 18 Release Of Defendants' Photographs During/After Court Cases

- 18.1 ACPO guidelines exist for issuing police photographs of defendants during/after court cases.
- 18.2 In general, such photographs will only be issued following conviction in serious cases, through the PHQ Press Office on the approval of a Chief Officer.
- 18.3 Official police photographs of defendants will not be issued prior to or during court cases, as identification may become an issue in the hearing. Similarly, photographs will not be released of a defendant who is acquitted.

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- 18.4 Although there is usually no legal restriction on releasing official police photographs (or any other photographs which formed part of the evidence), this should only be done contemporaneously in cases of particular public interest, involving serious crimes and in the absence of any court order preventing identification of the offender.
- 18.5 Photos will only usually be issued on receipt of a formal written request from the media. This request should detail why the photograph should be released. Suffolk Constabulary will usually consider releasing a photograph when an offender has been sentenced to three or more years in prison or where there is an overriding public interest argument.
- 18.6 Photos will only usually be released where the offender has been remanded in custody since their arrest, depriving the media of the opportunity to take their own photograph. Where possible, the media should be encouraged to obtain their own pictures of defendants. Routine issuing of defendants' photographs encourages the media to use the police as a picture agency, creating an additional administrative and financial burden on the Constabulary.
- 18.7 Any official police photographs issued should be produced minus reference numbers (such as criminal record numbers). Particular care should be taken when considering requests for photographs in terrorist incidents, where offenders may welcome extra publicity/notoriety. (This should be weighed against the possible benefits of using photographs to aid intelligence gathering).

### 19 Media Attendance On Police Operations

- 19.1 Media requests to see the police 'in action', by attending operations such as drugs raids and firearms incidents, should be authorised through the PHQ Press Office.
- 19.2 Facilitating such requests often results in very positive publicity. It also allows the media greater insight into the workings of, and problems encountered by, the police. However, media attendance on operations needs to be carefully planned, as it should be recognised that the presence of the media can create practical difficulties for officers.
- 19.3 When considering allowing the media to attend police operations, it is necessary to consider whether this action would:
- Interfere with an individual's rights to a fair trial under the Human Rights Act.
  - Interfere with an individual's rights to privacy under the Human Rights Act (which may be affected by entering private property without permission, taking film or photographs on private property without permission and broadcasting or publishing any such material).
  - Cause unjustifiable distress or harassment to those being investigated.
  - Prejudice the innocent.

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- Cause distress to innocent members of the public.
- Jeopardise future police operations.
- Put media personnel in a position where they are at risk.

19.4 The reasons why it was felt the attendance of the media was justified should be recorded.

19.5 An Indemnity Agreement, plus Guidance Notes, have been drawn up to indemnify the Constabulary against any legal problems which might arise as a result of media attendance on police operations.

19.6 All media attending police operations must sign the Indemnity Agreement and be given a copy of the Guidance Notes, laying out the legal position on trespass, disclosure and contempt of court. Copies of both these documents are available from the PHQ Press Office and local Area Press Officers.

### Video footage

19.7 Suffolk Constabulary will not release images from CCTV camera systems, material recorded in cars, aircraft or any other source to the media in the absence of a genuine policing purpose.

19.8 Care must be taken that any material released does not risk prejudicing any future criminal proceedings. In appropriate circumstances, advice should be sought from the CPS before material is released.

### Witnesses

19.9 On no account should the identity of a witness be revealed without prior consultation with the PHQ Press Office and the authorisation of the SIO.

## **20 Requests From Film Companies**

20.1 Suffolk Constabulary will not take part in documentaries made by profit making companies unless there is a genuine policing purpose for doing so.

20.2 We should only consider accommodating these or any other requests where there is a clear benefit to the Constabulary such as the promotion of a public safety/reassurance message or the facilitation of the investigation of crime.

20.3 Great care should be given to the details of filming and in particular to the filming of material that could prejudice an ongoing investigation or court case.

20.4 Filmmakers will not give up editorial control of their films. Appropriate legal advice should be sought from the outset to ensure that the content of such films reflects the requirements of all parties involved.

20.5 The CPS should be consulted where there is a possibility of any proceedings being affected by the content of any production.

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20.6 This procedure has been written taking into account local best practise and national guidance issued by ACPO Media Advisory Group (MAG).

20.7 A full list of current ACPO MAG guidance notes is available in the PHQ Press Office. These notes include:

- Individuals under investigation.
- Pre verdict briefings.
- Old cases.
- Sex offenders.
- Deaths in Custody.
- Naming of victims and Witnesses.
- Photos.
- Video.
- Media on operations.
- Racist incidents.
- Kidnap (not a public document).

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Arrests & Charges	People under Investigation
Authorisation of Press Release	Photos of Defendants
Bomb Hoaxes	Photos - Publication
Contempt of Court	Police Broadcast Messages
Counter Terrorism Action	Police Operations - Attendance
Court Attendance	Positive Media Coverage
Crime Figures & Stats	Post Office
Death in Custody	Post-Trial Comment
Embargoed Information	Press Officer - Area
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Interviews - Radio & TV	Sudden Deaths
Juveniles	Suicides
Key Guidance	Supporting Staff
Kidnapping - Life at Risk	Suspicious Deaths
Legal Issues	Telephone Failure - 999
Major Incidents	Timing of Publicity
Media Services Manager	Victims of other Incidents
Missing Persons	Video Footage
Naming Victims of Crime	Wanted Persons
National Issues	Website Information

**Department:** Corporate Communications  
**See Also:** Media Liaison Policy  
 Disclosure Of Information Policy  
 Previous Convictions Policy  
 Data Protection Policy  
 Information Security Policy  
 Website Publication Scheme

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