



HUMBERSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Service Improvement

Operational Debrief Policy

Owner	Director of Service Improvement
Responsible Person	Head of Health and Safety
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of a debrief is to capture learning outcomes from incidents and training exercises in a structured format. This is to ensure that all Service personnel can benefit from the resultant experiential learning. The debrief procedure can be formal or informal and will take place as soon as is practicable, post event.

Debriefs are an essential element of improving personal and organisational performance. They should not be seen or used as a method of apportioning blame or instigating disciplinary action. The different levels of debrief are explained below.

The process will identify any significant information or lessons learned. Whenever possible, the Incident Commander should debrief crews prior to leaving the incident or training ground. Equipment, PPE, systems of work and training can all be improved as part of this performance management system.

It is imperative that any observations during incidents or exercises are recorded through an Operational Assurance (OA) assessment. Meaningful data is crucial to the success of the OA process.

Predominantly, the Incident Commander (IC), or if in attendance, the Tactical Advisor, (TA) is best placed to facilitate the operational debrief by virtue of their role and time spent at the incident. For this reason, they are nominated as the “Debrief Officer”.

For a tactical debrief, the OA section will nominate a Debrief Team (DT) to facilitate and report the outcomes of any debrief, but the overall responsibility to initiate the process through OA is on the Debrief Officer.

In the absence of a TA, (for example, at smaller incidents or within Service Control), the IC will carry out the debrief, consider the outcomes and report accordingly through an OA assessment.

When a debrief is required following a significant event or an incident of interest, then an independent DT will be established by the OA section. This method is to be used as a way of assisting the organisation understand the direct and indirect causes of events without any pre-conceived bias.

There are three levels of debrief:

1. Operational
2. Tactical
3. Strategic

The appropriate level to be instigated will be determined by the IC or TA. The OA section may elevate the level of debrief where it is believed that the incident carries any Service-wide implications. The decision to raise the level of debrief is not restricted to the size of incident but is based on the need to deal with the associated outcomes within a wider context.

2. OPERATIONAL DEBRIEF

An operational debrief will require little preparation and may be in the form of a “hot” debrief at the conclusion of an incident or exercise. This is the ideal opportunity for all crew members to discuss any risk critical issues or exceptional practice. Constructive contributions from all crew members should be encouraged. The process must involve allowing all personnel time to reflect on their own performance by undertaking a personal review. Taking this time can help individuals to analyse the activities they carried out and the decisions they made. This will allow them to recognise and act to address any related development they may benefit from. This learning can be mapped against individual PDR Pro accounts at a local level or through the OA process for wider organisational learning.

ICs are required to perform hot debriefs at the conclusion of every incident or exercise to ensure such relevant learning has been identified. This can reasonably be expected at almost all incidents. The outcomes of the debrief must be formalised and recorded on an OA assessment, which is then processed by the OA Section. The assessment is used to capture safety critical actions, areas of concern and exceptional practice. The identified implications and actions will then be forwarded by the OA Section to a relevant actioning manager, who will formally record their responses and the subsequent actions taken to resolve the issues raised.

3. TACTICAL DEBRIEF

A tactical debrief will be instigated for the following reasons:

- the outcomes generated by an incident or exercise are beyond the limitations of an operational debrief,
- the OA section believe it necessary for the purposes of operational learning, or
- operational discretion has been used.

Operational Discretion

Operational discretion enables an Incident Commander (IC) to operate safely and effectively in rare and exceptional circumstances where a relevant procedure does not exist or to follow one would detract from their objectives. It allows them to adapt or deviate from a standard operating procedure with the overarching principle that the potential benefit of the unorthodox action outweighs the risks involved.

It is not an option to avoid or substitute an established procedure unless justifiable by one of the following intended outcomes:

- to save human life,
- to prevent significant escalation, or
- where taking no action may lead to others putting themselves at risk.

Operational discretion should only be considered where outcomes validate the unusual, unorthodox or innovative action taken. An awareness of related procedures, availability of resources and the competence of crews is necessary for its successful usage.

Application of operational discretion is subject to the following additional requirements:

- Control must be informed using standard radio protocol that 'operational discretion is in use'.
- It should be for the minimum period necessary to achieve the intended outcome.
- ICs must log all relevant decisions made for its use in context with the complexity of the incident. Logs must be made in personal issue notebooks and on the ARA at the earliest opportunity according to the incident priorities.
- Reversion to the appropriate standard operating procedure must be actioned as soon as possible once the desired objective has been achieved.
- For the purposes of post-incident learning, the use of operational discretion must be recorded on an operational assurance assessment. This will enable the appropriate review of any related procedure, policy or equipment issue to improve future safety by means of a tactical debrief.

A tactical debrief is an organised meeting to discuss and report outcomes using a formal platform. The ultimate aim is to improve Service-wide effectiveness by assuring that our operational activities are being adhered to and remain fit for purpose. A formal tactical debrief should take place within 21 days of the incident or exercise and, where possible, during normal office hours.

A formal DT will be made up of a minimum of two personnel who are trained in the College of Policing structured debriefing methodology. Their role will be to facilitate the debrief, assisted by the command team.

The debrief tool kit will consist of:

- A structured Briefing Plan
- A debrief Questionnaire
- A debrief Report

Resultant outcomes will be formalised within 21 days of the tactical debrief.

Attendance at debriefs is not mandatory as it is acknowledged that availability cannot be guaranteed. However, for maximum benefit, all key personnel from the incident or exercise should be present. Invited personnel are, therefore, expected to make every effort to attend. Personnel who are unable to attend should notify the DT of any significant areas for consideration prior to the debrief (nil returns are required), utilising the Debrief Questionnaire.

Representatives from the Health, Safety and Environment, OA Section and Service Control must be invited to all tactical debriefs. Consideration should also be given to inviting representation from the following:

- Emergency Preparedness Section
- Command Unit/Command Support
- Functional Sectors (where employed)
- Sector Commanders
- Incident/Exercise Observers
- Service Delivery
- Training and Development
- Business and Public Safety (for available plans/CFRMIS information)
- Corporate Communications
- Appropriate Trade Union Health and Safety Representatives.

4. STRATEGIC DEBRIEF

Criteria:

- Any multi-agency/single agency incidents/exercises where Silver or Gold command is established;
- Relevant large-scale realistic training exercises.

Prior to a strategic debrief, a tactical level debrief (organised and facilitated by the DT), must be completed.

Any additional issues raised will be dealt with by the OA section.

5. MULTI-AGENCY DEBRIEF

Humber Local Resilience Forum (LRF) have an agreed protocol in place for capturing the lessons identified following a 'Declared Emergency' and other significant events, in a way that can be readily distributed for action and robustly monitored.

The main objectives of the process are to identify those areas where improvements can be made to aid future similar events and highlight aspects that have worked well, which have proven beneficial to the successful resolution of the situation or event.

Outcomes from the process should be used to review and revise existing multi-agency response arrangements and also enable any necessary amendments to individual organisational plans and procedures.

6. ARRANGING MULTI-AGENCY 'DECLARED EMERGENCY' DEBRIEFS

Following a 'Declared Emergency', Humber Emergency Planning Service (HEPS) will normally arrange a multi-agency debrief and produce a written summary of the

resultant discussions. The lead responding organisation will be expected to Chair the meeting, but the Local Authority will Chair if there is no clear lead.

HEPS will also arrange a multi-agency debrief at the request of a Category 1 Responder following an incident that was not a 'Declared Emergency' but was multi-agency and could reasonably be expected to influence the work of the LRF. Wherever possible, multi-agency debriefs will usually be held within 14 days of the incident.

HFRS and other responder organisations are responsible for arranging their own internal debriefs for single agency incidents, exercises and training events. It is expected relevant outcomes from this process will feed into the multi-agency debrief process.

7. JOINT ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING (JOL) AND NATIONAL OPERATIONAL LEARNING (NOL)

Where a single agency debrief has taken place the NOL SPoC is responsible for ensuring the Service makes recommendations on whether an issue is considered relevant to other fire and rescue services and whether those issues should be reported through the National Operational Learning process. The NOL SPoC will utilise the appendix H of the NOL Good Practice Guide to assist in deciding whether any lessons identified must be shared via NOL.

Where a multi-agency debrief has been convened, responders should, wherever possible, use the default template to group areas identified into appropriate headings and identify which subgroup of the LRF would be responsible for progressing them, before sending the information to heps@eastriding.gov.uk.

HEPS are responsible for collating returns and making them available for discussion during the multi-agency debrief. Organisations are responsible for providing appropriate representation at multi-agency debriefs, particularly where they have made specific comments that may require clarification for other attendees.

The LRF are responsible for agreeing the contents of multi-agency debrief reports and delegating actions to the appropriate subgroups.

HEPS will forward actions to the LRF subgroups and table a summary report to the Humber LRF Strategic group.

The LRF interoperability sub-group is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the actions at subsequent meetings and the submission of issues for consideration by the JESIP programme board.

The LRF Emergency Procedures Manual has a section on debriefs which should be followed for a multi-agency debrief. Part of this guidance requires that lessons identified, or notable practice should be assessed by the LRF Interoperability Group for submission to Joint Operational Learning (JOL). HEPS will then complete the JOL submission.

HFRS will nominate a JOL Single Point of Contact (SPoC) who will be responsible for inputting any single agency lessons identified or notable practice onto JOL and/or NOL. The full roles and responsibilities of the JOL SPoC are outlined in the JESIP document “JESIP Roles and Responsibilities v3” published in 2018.

**If you require further guidance/information relating to this document,
please contact the Operational Assurance Manager**

APPENDIX A

STRUCTURED BRIEFING PLANNING



HUMBERSIDE
Fire & Rescue Service

HUMBERSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

TACTICAL DEBRIEF PLANNING

**Health and Safety
Operational Debrief Policy**

Debrief Officer (including Rank/Role):	
Contact Number:	
Email Address:	
Incident No/Date /Name:	
Brief description of role with regards to the Incident:	
Key Areas and Questions	Notes
Authority/Issues/Parameters Are there any ongoing investigations? (Consider disclosure issues) Any interoperability considerations?	

Key Areas and Questions	Notes
<p>Participants</p> <p>Are all willing to take part?</p> <p>What experience have they had of a tactical debrief?</p> <p>Do they know each other?</p> <p>Any welfare issues? <i>Consider any welfare issues and balance the benefits and risks that the debrief may have on individuals concerned.</i></p> <p>Will there be a need for a subject matter expert?</p> <p>Who will be sourcing and providing the subject matter expert?</p> <p>Will questionnaires be sent out to participants in advance?</p> <p>Will the questionnaire be returned prior to the debrief taking place and made available to the facilitator?</p> <p>Consider grouping by role or ranks?</p>	

Key Areas and Questions	Notes
<p>Numbers</p> <p>How many people were involved in the event? <i>Consider the need for additional/bespoke briefings.</i></p> <p>How many people are to take part? (Recommend a max of 12)</p> <p>Are there any observers? <i>Not recommended, only in exceptional circumstances, and only if all parties agree to observer/s, they need to be instructed that they will not be included in the discussions and understand disclosure issues.</i></p>	
<p>Time</p> <p>How much time is available for the debrief?</p> <p>What are the proposed dates?</p>	
<p>Location</p> <p>Where will the debrief take place? <i>The Debrief Officer will confirm the venue is suitable for purpose.</i></p> <p>Will refreshments be provided?</p> <p>Any additional stationary needed?</p>	

Key Areas and Questions:	Notes:
<p>Debriefing Team Responsibilities</p> <p>Name of the Facilitator and experience. <i>Full contact details</i></p> <p>Name of the Scribe and experience. <i>Full contact details</i></p> <p>Provide report in standard format and agree timescales for return of completed report.</p>	
<p>Debrief Officer Responsibilities</p> <p>Confirm that the venue is booked.</p> <p>Confirm that all participants have been notified.</p> <p>If appropriate, find an opening/closing speaker.</p>	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this debrief plan and participate in the debrief process. If you have any further questions on this process, then please contact the Operational Assurance Manager.

APPENDIX B

STRUCTURED DEBRIEF REPORT



STRUCTURED DEBRIEF REPORT
Name of Debrief

Debrief Validated By:	
Date:	
Freedom of information:	
Debrief Location:	
Debrief Team:	
Debrief Participants:	
Debrief Summary:	

NO:	RECOMMENDATIONS	OWNERS	COMMENTS
1.			
2.			
3.			

Areas for Improvement

Item	Identified by	Recommendation No.	Comments

Areas of Good Practice

Item	Identified by	Recommendation No.	Comments

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE



HUMBERSIDE
Fire & Rescue Service

HUMBERSIDE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

DEBRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE

DEBRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE

Humberside Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) are facilitating a structured debrief on [...***name of incident***...] this Incident/Exercise was in response to a [...***name type of incident and summary***...]. The aim of this structured debrief is to provide HFRS the means by which they can review and identify any significant information or lessons learned.

You are asked to complete this questionnaire individually.

Upon collation of the results of this questionnaire, the information gathered, where appropriate, will be included in the final debrief report for the information of HFRS. This is your opportunity to have your views on the effectiveness of our response during this event so that it can be included in the final report and we can benefit from the lessons learned for future events.

A. Personal Details – for clarification purposes only

Name:	Role/Rank:
Station/Dept:	Contact No:
Email address:	

B. Deployment

Using the space below, can you provide a brief detail of your role at the incident.

**OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE
DEBRIEF QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. From your own role perspective, what aspects of the above incident did not go well?

2. From your own role perspective, what aspects of the above incident went well and should be highlighted as good practice for future incidents?

3. What would be your key recommendations for future similar incidents?

4. Please use the text box below for any additional information

Once this questionnaire has been completed please forward it to the Operational Assurance Manager by either email or Internal mail.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and your participation in the debrief process. If you have any further questions, please contact the Operational Assurance Manager.