

The role of the FLO is complex. A FLO has to balance the needs of the family with the requirement to gather material and preserve the integrity of the investigation. There are many cases where the lifestyle, family, friends and associates of the victim may hold the key to identifying witnesses, suspects or other vital information. The family liaison role is, therefore, pivotal to the success of the investigation.

In all cases involving suspected homicide, mass fatality, road traffic collision fatality or hate crime, the SIO/SIM must endeavour to appoint FLOs who are competent in the role or who are undertaking the FLO development programme.

When considering which FLOs to deploy, the SIO/SIM should take account of the individual FLO's ability to perform the function effectively, at that time. The following matters should be taken into account when selecting a FLO:

- Whether they have suffered a recent bereavement of a close relative or partner or other major life trauma;
- Current workload;
- Frequency of recent deployment in that role;
- Previous experience in the role;
- Availability
 - annual leave, court or similar commitments;
- Previous contact and relationship with the victim's family (this should be avoided to reduce the impact of the role on the professional objectivity of the officer and the exit strategy);
- Previous compliance with the mandatory requirement to attend welfare or occupational health debriefs;
- Whether the FLO lives or usually works near the family's residence (the likelihood of chance encounters with the family outside the confines of the officer's role as a FLO during the course of other duties or while off-duty should be minimised);
- The needs of the family.

In cases where a split family is identified, or there are complex dynamics affecting the family group, the SIO/SIM should consider the deployment of additional FLOs as appropriate. In cases where more than one FLO is deployed, care must be taken to ensure the accurate coordination of the information flow to the family. In cases of multiple deployments consideration should be given to deploying a FLC.

On occasions, gender may be a critical factor both for cultural or other reasons.

Where the victim is from a minority group, particular lifestyle diversity or hard-to-reach or hard-to-hear group, consideration should always be given to having independent advice to assist with effective communication.

The choice of FLO may be affected by the incident circumstances, for example:

- Its scale, in nature and complexity.
- The community impact assessment completed for the incident.
- The media interest that it is likely to attract.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary role of the FLO is that of an investigator to assist the SIO/SIM to achieve their aims and objectives. This will include the day-to-day management of the interaction with the family in the investigation and close liaison with the SIO/SIM to ensure families are treated appropriately, professionally and with respect for their needs. It may involve working in a range of different situations in demanding and often stressful conditions over sustained periods of time.

Those performing the role of FLO must always act with the highest degree of professionalism and integrity and carry out their duties with sensitivity. Careful consideration should, therefore, be given to the suitability of the officers to be trained to work with the family. Good practice to be considered includes occupational health screening prior to selection for the FLO Development Programme. Officers should be volunteers and have a clear and reasoned motive reflecting genuine commitment for wishing to train and operate as a FLO.

Officers must not, under any circumstances, attempt to assume the responsibility of personally counselling a victim's family, whether qualified to do so or not. This does not, however, preclude a FLO from being a compassionate investigator. In fact, one of the most important skills a FLO can possess is the ability to listen and this will be greatly appreciated by the family.

Officers who are employed as FLOs should be conversant with the guidance for SIOs and FLCs in the *ACPO (2006) Murder Investigation Manual*, *ACPO (2007) Road Death Investigation Manual*, *ACPO (2002) Emergency Procedures Manual* and the *ACPO (2005) Hate Crime Delivering a Quality Service: Good Practice and Tactical Guidance*. These documents will assist FLOs to carry out their role effectively.

In cases where a FLO needs advice or support, initial contact should be made with the force FLC or FLA. Additional advice is available from the National Family Liaison Adviser. The National Family Liaison Adviser can be contacted through the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) Specialist Operations Centre, telephone: 0845 000 5463.

Selection Criteria

Two distinct selection processes govern employment in the role. The first relates to the overall selection criteria for training; the second relates to deployment as a FLO in a particular case.

5.2 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR TRAINING AS A FLO

Candidates should have the following personal qualities:

- Good communication and listening skills;
- Be confident and self-assured;
- The ability to manage their stress;
- The ability to work with minimal supervision;
- Be flexible and non-judgmental;
- Be able to accurately record information.