

2.1 THE STRATEGIC PHASES OF AN INVESTIGATION

Homicide investigations typically have three distinct strategic phases.

1. **Instigation and initial response** – this involves the deployment of officers to the report of an incident, which may be a homicide, and the action they take to preserve life, secure the scene, arrest offenders and locate material.
2. **The investigation** – this involves developing investigative strategies for gathering the material needed to establish that the incident is a homicide, identifying and arresting suspects, and gathering material for a prosecution.
3. **Case management** – this involves post-charge enquires, preparing the material gathered for the prosecution and the defence, and managing witnesses and exhibits throughout the trial process.

There is usually some overlap between these phases. For example, SIOs arriving at scenes during the initial response are likely to start issuing actions relating to the investigation phase while the initial response is still being completed. Similarly, when a suspect is charged, there may be some investigation phase actions that still require completion while the prosecution file is being prepared. SIOs should not, therefore, view these phases in isolation but should consider how the actions carried out in one phase will impact on the next. Each of these phases is discussed separately in the following sections.

2.2 INSTIGATION AND INITIAL RESPONSE

An investigation starts at the time a report of an incident is made to the police. The way in which reports are dealt with by control rooms and the actions of officers initially deployed to the scene are generally outside the control of the SIO. The SIO only becomes involved once it has been determined that the incident may be a homicide or a major incident. It is, therefore, important that those with responsibility for homicide and major incident investigation ensure that control room staff and patrol officers are fully trained in the actions they should take when such incidents are reported. General guidance on the action to be taken during the instigation and initial response phase of a criminal investigation is provided in *ACPO (2005) Practice Advice on Core Investigative Doctrine*. The following subsection contains specific guidance in relation to homicide and major incident investigation.

2.2.1 INSTIGATION

It is not always obvious from the initial report of an incident that it involves homicide. Reports of bodies found with injuries that may have been caused by an assault, or reports made by those responsible for the homicides, are relatively straightforward and will prompt an appropriate initial response.