

Critical Incident Training for Local LGBT contacts

14 October 2006



The murder of David Morley on the South Bank in 2004 and of Jodi Dubrowski on Clapham Common a year later are just two of the several Critical Incidents to impact the LGBT community in London recently.

A Critical Incident may be a murder or suspicious death, attempted murder serious assault or a series of assaults or other incidents which would impact on LGBT people – the local Borough Commander would normally designate something a CI.

Members of the Met Police LGBT Advisory Group provide independent advice on a broad range of LGBT issues to the Investigating officers and other police personnel when such incidents occur.

Both we and the police have recognised the vital importance of involving local LGBT advisors in such cases to provide local knowledge, contacts and perspective in the event of a Critical Incident in their area.

Critical Incidents, by their nature, can happen suddenly and without notice and it is vital that anyone giving advice understands the role and the 'do's and don'ts' in advance. There simply isn't the time to do this effectively once a CI is underway.

To equip local contacts with the necessary information and skills the LGBT Advisory group working with the MPS have organised this 3-hour seminar to cover the key issues.

Programme

9.30

Annette Wightman

MPS Diversity & Citizen Focus Directorate

Welcome

Bob Hodgson

Co Chair MPS LGBT Advisory Group

Importance of Local CI contacts

Stuart Ryan

MPS Critical Incident Team

What is a Critical Incident?

Nick Scola

Tim Gratton-Kane

MPS Serious Crime Directorate

'Golden Hour' - 'Jargon Buster'

Group Exercise

10.50

Coffee Break

11.10

Bob Hodgson

Group Exercise Debrief

11.40

Michael Verrier

LGBT Advisory Group Critical Incident Chair

Role of Local CI Contact: "Do's and Don'ts"

12.00

Q & A Session

What is a Critical Incident?

Critical incidents are serious incidents with significant community impact. They are often murder investigations, but this is not always the case. The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) defines a critical incident as:

“any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community.”

Which community?

The term “community” can refer to the communities of the victims, witnesses or suspects. It can be a specific geographical neighbourhood or a London-wide (or even regional/national) community linked by age, race, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. For instance, the murder of Jody Dubrowski on Clapham Common in 2005 raised concerns in the London gay community as a whole about the level of homophobic crimes in the city.

Community Impact : Background

- Has there been a **history** of police-community relationship which contributed to a lack of confidence in the police?
- Have **recent incidents** led the community to question whether the police service is sensitive to the needs and concerns of the community?
- Has there been **recent media coverage** which challenges the effectiveness of the service provided by the police to this community?

Current incident

- Have there been **recent trends or clusters** of incidents of a similar nature which have a significant *cumulative* impact on the local community? This includes an increase in crimes with the same pattern or repeat victimisations.
- Has there been or will there be **significant media interest** in the current incident?
- Would the management of this investigation benefit from **independent advice**?

Opportunities

- Would a high-profile response improve **community liaison** for the current investigation and for the future, (e.g. access to community intelligence, strengthening relationships with community groups)? Note that effective liaison includes feedback and debriefing to community advisors.
- Would a high-profile response improve **community confidence for the future**? For instance, this can lead to improved reporting rates from the community.
- Does this incident provide **important lessons** for the management of future incidents?

Victim & Family

- Has the victim, the victim's family or someone from the wider community expressed **concerns about the investigation** which reflect a general perception in the community that the police is not effective or not sensitive in dealing with incidents of this kind?

For some LGBT people, the “family” may be a support network of friends.

Critical Incident Management

Who decides whether an incident should be declared critical?

The decision is taken by the borough commander. This will be in conjunction with the senior investigating officer assigned to the incident. In the case of murders, the investigation transfers to the Homicide Command at the Specialist Crime Directorate (SCD).

What does it mean to declare a critical incident?

The MPS has developed standard operating procedures for critical incidents.

In terms of the investigation of the crime, this means that the incident has priority at the borough level and can request resources from the centre. A Gold Group is formed to coordinate and supervise the management of the critical incident.

What is a Gold Group?

The management of the critical incident is supervised by the Gold Group. The Gold Group not only supervises the direction of the criminal investigation, it is also responsible for strategic issues such as resource allocation, impact assessment, community engagement and media relations.

The group is chaired by an officer from the senior management team of the borough or from SCD. The senior investigating officer of the investigation is the member of the group responsible for operational and tactical issues. There are also family liaison officers and press officers. In LGBT-related crimes, an LGBT liaison officer will be present in the Gold Group. A member of the LGBT Advisory Group is also invited to provide independent advice from a community perspective.

The Role of LGBT Independent Advisors

Members of the LGBT Advisory Group are independent of police in as much as they are not employed by the Metropolitan Police Service. They bring expertise and knowledge which is useful to the police. Their knowledge is based on their being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender members of the public. They have been selected for their knowledge of particular parts of the LGBT community and have an interest in how that community is policed. Advisors may/may not be paid reasonable expenses for giving up their time to help the management of the incident.

Advice given is precisely that: Advice. Responsibility for the outcomes rests wholly with the police.

Generally advisors do not meet the victim, her/his family or any witnesses. They do not normally attend the scene of the incident during the active phase of an enquiry unless on the express request of, and when accompanied by, the Senior Investigating Officer.

Advisors will come across sensitive information regarding ongoing investigations. The police must be able to trust the advisors to the confidentiality of such information.

What kind of advice?

LGBT Independent Advisors provide:

- A community perspective
- How is the incident likely to be perceived by communities?
 - ◆ How are particular police activities likely to be perceived by communities?
- A personal perspective
- As a person who is connected to that particular community, how s/he feels about the incident?
- How s/he feels about what the police are doing and/or proposing to do?

The LGBT advisor will:

- Give advice on the impact of the critical incident on the LGBT community
- Give strategic advice on the police response to the incident with respect to issues that will have an impact on the LGBT community

The advice should cover:

- How key individuals might be feeling.
- How to access effective communication channels with the relevant communities.
- Which individuals and organisations the police could contact for information and assistance with the enquiry.
- Profitable avenues of enquiry and how they may impact the LGBT community.
- Cultural, family related and language issues relevant to the LGBT community.
- How to communicate effectively with the victim, family, witnesses and/or communities.

What are the pitfalls?

It is imperative that independent advisors remain impartial from the police. It is important to stay separate from the investigative process and any possible chain of evidence. For instance, speaking to witnesses or victims could result in the advisor becoming a witness her/himself.

From experience, we have developed some simple rules as guidelines.

As a general rule, an independent advisor does not:

- Give advice to the SIO and her/his team on how to carry out the investigation.
- Undertake enquiries on behalf of the SIO.
- Speak to the victims, witnesses or visit the scene.
- Act as an intermediary to aid communication - this is the role of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO), who may receive advice from the advisor.
- Encourage individual witnesses to give evidence or a statement.
- Be actively involved in a pro-active phase of the enquiry i.e. arrests, searches or interview except to advise on the potential impact of such actions.
- Validate decisions about the investigation
- Read case papers to see if other courses of action can be pursued.
- Speak on behalf of police decision-makers to the media, investigators or other scrutineers.

An advisor should take care to preserve confidentiality of sensitive information

- Do not discuss sensitive information with friends and family.
- Minimise the exposure to sensitive information that is not relevant to his/her role as an advisor, *e.g.* names of suspects and hold-back information on murder scenes.

Critical Incidents for Local LGBT Contacts

As a member of the London Borough of Staindon Police-LGBT forum you meet bi-monthly to discuss LGBT / Policing issues.

Staindon has three LGBT social venues,

- 'Café Laa', mixed and popular with Lesbian groups,
- 'Freetimes' a large pub/wine bar/cafe with disco.
- 'The Railway Tavern', popular with gay men. The pool table attracts younger straight or 'bi-curious' guys which has lead to tension.
- 'North Hills' is a 'cruising area', the subject of occasional complaints from the public.
- Hardly any homophobic incidents are reported to the police, although you know of incidents at North Hills, cases of homophobic abuse by neighbours, some same sex DV and assaults/abuse on people leaving 'Freetimes'
- The current policing priority is street robbery and dealing with HO reporting has yet again fallen off the police agenda.

Recently...

- Two lesbians were homophobically abused outside Café Laa and a scuffle resulted. One of them was arrested.
- A man had his credit cards stolen at North Hills but adamantly refused to report it to the police.
- There were two attacks on gay men on their way home from the Railway Tavern and an attack on a passer by in the same area. Homophobic abuse was used in each case. All were reported to the police but there has been no significant police action.

1 What do you think LGBT people in Staindon might be feeling about Staindon Police?

-
-
-

Late on Friday Evening.....

..... you are phoned by DCI Phil Harris.

- A 21 year old man is in a stable condition in hospital after having been stabbed in the chest.
- The police have discovered that the victim is gay and was on his way home from 'The Railway Tavern'.
- His parents in Scotland have been contacted.

Phil Harris is well known to you from forum meetings and is in charge of the investigation. He is anxious to find other people who may have been assaulted in the same area recently but have not come forward. Clearly any information might be vital.

2 Can you advise Phil Harris on why victims of previous attacks might be reluctant to come forward?

-
-
-
-

On the following Sunday Morning

..... the Borough Commander's p.a. phones you.

- The man who had been stabbed has died.
- "Can you attend a 'Gold Group' meeting at 3pm on what is now a murder enquiry?"

On arriving at the Gold group you are surprised to learn that Phil Harris who had been doing a very good job on the enquiry has suddenly been replaced by a DCI Kent as the SIO. Mr Kent is not from Staindon and appears to have been appointed over the head of the Borough Commander.

3. What are your thoughts about the investigation being taken over by someone from outside the borough who has little knowledge of the Staindon LGBT community?

-

-

The Gold group chaired by the Borough Commander gets under way. You are asked to comment during the meeting on any of the matters raised.

For the purposes of this exercise - discuss and - just record key points

4 The FLO has not arrived yet.

In the meantime PC Anne Fletcher says she has spoken to the family and established that the victim was not married and therefore there are “no further family issues at this time”

-

-

5 As the DPA and Media Officer are on the way Sgt Omar has prepared a brief press statement which describes the victim as “An obviously homosexual male who frequented the Railway Tavern possibly for the purposes of procuring casual sex”

-

-

6 Sgt Omar also suggests the most suitable places for an appeal are the ‘Pink Paper’ and ‘Gay Times’

-

-

7. Phil Harris says that they might have a potential witness but he is very wary of speaking to of police and asks if you would have a word with the witness to reassure him.

-

-

8 PC Fletcher asks if she should alert the Met Police Diversity Directorate at Scotland Yard - but Inspector Bryant suggests that the matter should be kept local at the moment so as not alarm people in other boroughs.

-

9 DCI Kent says there are some “confidentiality issues”, “Hold Back Information” and “covert surveillance techniques” which need to be discussed after you leave. Phil Harris says he knows you and can trust you with this information. The Borough Commander agrees but wonders what advantage there is in you being told the details.

-

-

10 Anne Fletcher says that the victim’s parents are not comfortable talking to the police about their son being gay –and asks if you would be prepared to speak to them on behalf of the police.

-

Can you explain to the police how the parents might be feeling?

-

11 DCI Kent has information that customers and staff from both ‘Café Laa’ and ‘Freetimes’ are arranging some sort of protest at lack of police action on the previous attacks. DCI Kent suggests that just at this crucial time this might hamper the investigation and asks if you would mediate with the protest organisers on behalf of the police.

-

-

12. Inspector Bryant also reveals that The Operations Superintendent is geared up to station a squad of uniformed officers outside 'The Railway Tavern' to hand out appeal leaflets.

-

-