

Sudden and Unexpected Death Policy (only)

OFFICIAL

Government Security Classification Scheme	<i>Policy section:</i> OFFICIAL - Force website approved <i>Procedure section:</i> OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE
Department of Origin	Centralised Crime
Policy Holder	Head of Centralised Crime
Policy Author	D/Supt Rachel Wilson
Related Information	Authorised Professional Practice (APP) – Homicide NPCC Practice Advice on Child Death Investigation Death of an Employee Policy & Procedure Critical Incident Policy and Procedure APP – Investigation of Fatal and Serious Injury Road Traffic Collisions Road Traffic Collision Policy and Procedure. APP - Deaths in custody and successful interventions / adverse incidents Major Crime Investigation Manual Nov 2021 (college.police.uk) Guidance on Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP) Categories for unexpected death investigations March 2023 Work Related Deaths Protocol: Practical Guide (England and Wales)
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Policy

Statement

Merseyside Police will deal professionally with all discoveries and reports of sudden and unexpected deaths, in accordance with relevant legislation and APP. We will act in a compassionate and supportive way to help the families who have suffered the loss of a relative, while ensuring that all enquiries are progressed thoroughly and proficiently.

Officers and staff will work in line with the [Force Strategy](#).

Aims

The main aim of this policy is to embed minimum standards of investigation and scene preservation when dealing with reports and incidents involving the sudden and unexpected death of an individual. This should help to ensure that initial consideration is given to the possibility that a death may be unexplained or suspicious, and if so, is treated as such from the outset, this approach, preventing the loss of evidential opportunities, whilst ensuring we provide the best possible service to the deceased person's family.

The policy is detailed with the aim of helping officers and police staff in their response, providing clear guidance, and recognising national standards.

Objectives

Specific objectives relating to activities are to:

- a) Raise awareness amongst officers and police staff of the requirement to adhere to Golden Hour principles.
- b) Ensure investigations are categorised and dealt with correctly from the outset.
- c) Maximise forensic opportunities.
- d) Support the coronial legislation, processes, and procedures.
- e) Support for families.
- f) Support Officers and Police Staff to use professional judgement and make sound decisions.

Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

This is a non-statutory policy that sets out the principles to help guide decision making. It provides guidance that, on occasions, officers and staff may depart from based on the circumstances they encounter. On such occasions, officers and staff will be supported provided they can demonstrate a clear rationale which can be objectively justified for why they

have departed from the policy. It is to be noted however that all staff involved with managing a death may be required to provide evidence to HM Coroner.

This policy particularly applies to all staff attending the scene of a sudden unexpected death or discovery of a body.

The Chief Officer lead for unexplained or suspicious deaths is the Assistant Chief Constable Crime, PPU and Intelligence.

Outcome Evaluation

Outcomes should reflect the specific objectives previously listed and be measured against these objectives on a routine annual basis.

Policy compliance may also be measured through internal inspection in accordance with Force policy.

Progress against specific objectives should be measured on a routine basis. The Head of Centralised Crime will determine responsibilities and activities involved in measurement.