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Public order public safety

Authorised Professional Practice

Consultation

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1. Overview

Public order public safety (POPS) covers a wide range of events and operations – including festivals, sporting events and disorder – where there is a reasonably foreseeable risk to public order and/or public safety.

POPS Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is aimed at those involved in the planning, policing and command of POPS events and operations. It provides a framework for planning and managing POPS events and operations, as well as for deploying resources at a local, regional or national level.

This APP:

- provides guidance on the command, training, tactical options, role profiles and legislative framework in relation to POPS events and operations
- supports interoperability and the delivery of consistent standards across forces

This APP does not provide guidance for event organisation or management, which is the responsibility of the event organiser.

1.1. Use of discretion

Use of discretion by forces

If a chief officer determines it necessary to deviate from the ‘must’ requirements in this APP and issue separate instructions, due to the operational context or legal provisions appertaining in a specific jurisdiction, they should ensure that this decision aligns to their POPS strategic risk assessment (SRA) and that the rationale is recorded.

Use of discretion by individual officers

Situations involving the management of POPS events and operations often involve a set of circumstances that are constantly evolving. The POPS APP does not intend to restrict police officers from taking innovative actions that are not included in this guidance to resolve incidents, as long as those actions are lawful, comply with human rights and have been adequately risk assessed.

Further information

In the interests of transparency, most of this APP and associated links are publicly accessible. Some areas of the APP are restricted, due to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements and/or the sensitivity of the information. Hyperlinks to those specific sections are restricted and are accessible only to authorised individuals and organisations.

Where they are not the organisers of an event, police forces may want to identify who has responsibility and what they are responsible for during an event. The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) – now the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) – has provided [guidance on public safety policy](#).

1.2. Defining a POPS event

A POPS event or operation can be described as either of the following.

- Any event or operation (spontaneous or pre-planned) where the available information and/or intelligence indicates that there is a reasonably foreseeable risk to public order and/or public safety.
- The range and scope of the event or operation is above and beyond that of day-to-day policing requirements, and requires dedicated, trained and accredited POPS policing resources.

2. Legal framework and legislation

2.1. Legal framework and case law

The police have statutory and common law powers and duties in relation to POPS policing. The police statutory powers and duties in relation to the policing of POPS include those set out in the following:

- [Public Order Act 1986](#)
- [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994](#)
- [Criminal Law Act 1967](#)
- [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#) (PACE)
- [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) (PCSC)

This list is not definitive. Other statutory and common law powers and duties support the policing of POPS events and operations, including powers to prevent breaches of the peace.

These powers and duties must be used in accordance with the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (ECHR). See also the [Human Rights Act 1998](#).

The convention rights of most central relevance to POPS are as follows.

- [Article 10 ECHR](#) (freedom of expression). This materially provides the following.
 - (1) ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers [...]’
 - (2) ‘The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.’
- [Article 11 ECHR](#) (freedom of assembly). This materially provides the following.
 - (1) ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others [...]’
 - (2) ‘No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of administration of the state.’

Interpretation of Article 11(2): Restrictions prescribed by law

In [Kudrevičius v Lithuania \(2016\)](#) [62 EHRR 34], the European Court of Human Rights stated that the term ‘restrictions’ in Article 11(2) must be interpreted as

including measures taken before or during a gathering, as well as those taken afterwards, such as punitive measures.

Arrest, prosecution, conviction and sentence are all restrictions on Convention rights. However, police intervention short of arrest can also amount to an interference with Convention rights.

When determining the lawfulness of a public authority's interference with an individual's Convention rights, the below test has been applied.

1. Is the interference prescribed by law?
2. If so, is the interference in pursuit of a legitimate aim as set out in paragraph (2) of Article 10 or Article 11 – for example, the protection of the rights of others?
3. If so, is the interference necessary in a democratic society to achieve that legitimate aim?

Prescribed by law

The first consideration is whether an interference is prescribed by law. This requires the presence of a specific legal rule that authorises the interference. When trying to interpret whether an interference is prescribed by law, the following should be considered.

- Is there legislative power (such as imposing conditions pursuant to section 12 or 14 of the Public Order Act 1986)?
- Are there statutory powers to use reasonable force and/or arrest, as there are suspected contraventions of criminal law?
- Would the use of powers – for example, to use force – be proportionate, reasonable and necessary?

POPS actions and when they might be prescribed in law

Obstruction of the highway

The obstruction of a highway does not make a public assembly unlawful. Many activities obstruct the highway or cause disruption to traffic. Only unreasonable obstructions of the highway are unlawful. Determining whether an obstruction is

unreasonable requires an individual assessment of the specific obstruction, the disruption it might cause, whether it is intentional and whether participants have a lawful excuse for the obstruction. To act with lawful excuse means to act with lawful justification. This is partly defined in the [Criminal Damage Act 1971](#) under 'without lawful excuse', which states that the required belief for related crimes need not be justified if the belief was honestly held.

If participants have a lawful excuse, no offence is committed and an interference with their Convention rights may not be prescribed by law. Any police action regarding unreasonable obstruction must be proportionate and necessary to achieve the legitimate aim.

Offences of intentional harassment, alarm or distress

ECHR Article 10(1) protects the right to freedom of expression that others may find insulting or offensive.

Individuals taking part in a peaceful protest will only commit offences under [section 4A](#) and [section 5](#) of the Public Order Act 1986 when their conduct involves threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour intended to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

When assessing whether words or behaviour amount to offences under sections 4A or 5, the following factors should be considered:

- content of the words or behaviour
- context and circumstances of the words or behaviour
- intention of the person speaking or acting
- probable impact

The types of conduct that could amount to threatening or abusive – or in relation to section 4A only, insulting – words or behaviour include threats made towards innocent bystanders or individuals carrying out public service duties, and the throwing of missiles by a person taking part in a demonstration or other public gathering, where no injury is caused.

The courts have held that a police officer can be caused harassment, alarm or distress. However, police officers are expected to display a degree of fortitude. For

an officer to be caused harassment, alarm or distress, the conduct complained of must go beyond that which he or she would regularly come across in the ordinary course of police duties.

Section 31(1)(b) and (c) of the [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#) creates racially or religiously aggravated forms of offences under sections 4A and 5. A person commits an offence that is 'racially or religiously aggravated' where either:

- at the time of committing the offence, or immediately before or after doing so, the offender demonstrates hostility towards the victim of the offence based on the victim's membership (or presumed membership) of a racial or religious group
- the offence is motivated (wholly or partly) by hostility towards members of a racial or religious group based on their membership of that group

Where offences are aggravated by hostility related to disability, sexual orientation or transgender identity, this must be treated as an aggravated factor by the court when sentencing (pursuant to section 66 of the [Sentencing Act 2020](#)).

Incitement to hatred

Restrictions on the expression of racist ideas or opinions, statements that incite violence and hate speech are generally legitimate under ECHR Article 10(2) and ECHR Article 17.

Section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986 creates an offence of using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour – or displaying any written material that is threatening, abusive or insulting – if it is intended, or likely, to stir up racial hatred.

Section 29B of the Public Order Act 1986 creates an offence of using threatening words or behaviour – or displaying any written material that is threatening – if it is intended, or likely, to stir up religious hatred or hatred on the grounds of sexual orientation.

Racial hatred

Racial hatred involves hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origins. Jews and Sikhs have been deemed by the courts to be racial groups. Muslims and Christians, for example, have been considered as religious rather than racial groups.

A person who is not shown to have intended to stir up racial hatred is not guilty of an offence under section 18 of the Public Order Act 1986 if they did not intend the words, behaviour or written material to be – or were not aware that it might be – threatening, abusive or insulting.

Religious hatred

Religious hatred involves hatred against a group of persons defined by reference to religious belief or lack of religious belief. The reference to ‘religious belief or lack of religious belief’ is a broad one, and is in line with the freedom of thought, religion and conscience guaranteed by ECHR Article 9.

Although this is not a definitive list, it includes:

- religions widely recognised in the UK
- branches or sects within a religion
- groups of persons defined by reference to a lack of religious belief, such as atheists and humanists

The offences are designed to include hatred against a group where the hatred is not based on the religious beliefs of the group (or even on a lack of any religious belief), but on the fact that the group does not share the particular religious beliefs of the perpetrator.

Section 29J of the Public Order Act provides protection of freedom of expression that prohibits or restricts discussion, criticism or expressions of antipathy, dislike, ridicule, insult or abuse of particular religions, or of the beliefs or practices of those who hold such beliefs.

Breach of the peace

Breach of the peace gives police powers to intervene and/or arrest when an individual causes harm, or appears likely to do any of the following:

- cause harm to a person
- cause harm to that person’s property, in the person’s presence
- put that person in fear of such harm being done through an assault, affray, a riot, unlawful assembly or other disturbance

Police officers may take reasonable action, including arrest, to stop a breach of the peace, or to prevent one that the police officer reasonably anticipates will occur imminently. Reasonable action may also be taken where a breach of the peace has been committed and where it is reasonably believed that a recurrence of the breach is threatened.

Police action should target the persons responsible for the breach of the peace. Action taken that is not directed at the person committing the breach will generally be unlawful.

The guiding principle is that lawful conduct will rarely, if ever, be other than reasonable. Conversely, a violent reaction to the lawful conduct of others will rarely, if ever, be other than wholly unreasonable.

Where there is a reasonable belief that there are no other means to prevent a breach of the peace, the lawful exercise by innocent third parties of their rights may be restricted by the police. This is a test of necessity, which can only be justified in truly extreme and exceptional circumstances.

Before the police can take any steps that restrict the lawful exercise of rights by innocent third parties in any way, they must take all other possible steps – including making proper and advance preparations – to ensure that the breach, or imminent breach, is prevented and that the rights of third parties are protected.

Legitimate purpose

To be a lawful interference of an individual's Convention rights, where a restriction is prescribed by law, it must also be imposed in pursuit of a legitimate aim. A legitimate aim is one of the prescribed purposes for which the relevant Convention right can be restricted.

Proportionality: Necessary in a democratic society

This principle requires a link between the purpose for the interference and the measures employed to achieve that purpose.

1. Is the purpose sufficiently important to justify interference with a fundamental right?

2. Is there a rational connection between the means chosen and the purpose? In other words, will the measures proposed achieve the purpose?
3. Are there less restrictive alternative means available to achieve the intended purpose?
4. Is there a fair balance between the rights of the individual and the general interest of the community, including the rights of others?

A fair balance must be struck between the different rights and interests at stake. Determination of the proportionality of an interference with ECHR rights is a fact-specific enquiry that requires the evaluation of the circumstances in the individual case.

Different considerations may apply to the proportionality of each of those restrictions. The proportionality of arrest, which is typically the police action on the ground, depends on reasonable suspicion.

The proportionality assessment at trial before an independent impartial tribunal depends on the relevant factors being proved beyond reasonable doubt, as well as the court being sure that the interference with the rights under Articles 10 and 11 was necessary. The police's perception and the police action are only two of the factors to be considered.

2.2. Use of force powers

There are situations where police officers may be required to use force. The primary responsibility for using force rests with individual officers. Core questions include the following.

- Does the use of force have a lawful objective – for example, the prevention of injury to others or damage to property, or the effecting of a lawful arrest? If so, how immediate and grave is the threat posed?
- Are there any means, short of the use of force, capable of attaining the lawful objective identified?
- Having regard to the nature and gravity of the threat, as well as the potential for adverse consequences to arise from the use of force – including the risk of escalation and the exposure of others to harm – what is the minimum level of

force required to attain the objective identified? Would the use of that level of force be proportionate or excessive?

It is essential that these core questions are considered in line with the [ten key principles](#) governing the use of force by the police service. A use of force [briefing template](#) is available to officers to remind them of the law when considering use of force.

Proportionate use of force

The proportionate use of force is governed through:

- [Criminal Law Act 1967](#)
- [Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984](#)
- common law (as supplemented by the [Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008](#))
- the rights and freedoms contained within the ECHR govern the police use of force

3. Approaches to POPS

3.1. Use of the National Decision Model and Joint Decision Model

POPS commanders and POPS advisors (POPSAs) should use the [National Decision Model](#) (NDM) to support their decision making when planning POPS events and operations and making dynamic operational decisions.

Commanders responsible for the planning and control of events and operations need to balance the rights of individuals and/or groups, as well as the impact that their decision making has on crowd dynamics and public perception.

Commanders should plan to minimise recourse to the use of force, where it is possible. Example considerations include the following.

- Setting the policing standards, style, tone and dress code. For instance, Code 1 dress and shield deployment may be a justifiable level of protection, but may also send a message to the crowd that should be reserved for higher levels of threat.

- Any less-intrusive tactical options (for example, police liaison teams) that are available before officers are deployed into a scenario that may require them to use force.
- The consequences of placing police into direct contact with the crowd and whether this in itself may increase the need to use force.
- Mechanical substitutes (barriers) that do not require direct contact between the police and the crowd.
- The potential response (for example, alienation or an increase in tension), crowd dynamics (such as exit routes) and public perception when deploying officers.
- Collective use of force (for example, a line of officers with batons drawn dispersing a crowd as a result of command decisions).
- Whether staff are sufficiently trained, accredited, experienced and competent for specific deployments.
- Any relevant past intelligence relating to the group or event (for example, reaction of the group to police tactics at a past event).
- Clarity of command decisions, including the foreseeable levels of force that officers may use. For example, officers directed to disperse a crowd may individually use force to do so. Although those officers would have to justify their use of force, the commander should also consider whether they foresaw the use of force, whether use of force was necessary and whether any further clarity was required regarding the level of force to be used.

POPS commanders and POPSA's should record their conversations, subsequent decisions and actions. They should record the rationale for decisions, including the options that were considered, discounted and supported. This record will ensure that any subsequent review or assessment of actions can be based on the information and intelligence available to the officer(s) at the time that the decision was made.

In the event of multi-agency events or operations with a command structure that includes other agencies, POPS commanders and POPSA's should use the [Joint Decision Model](#) (JDM) to make decisions with other emergency services and agencies.

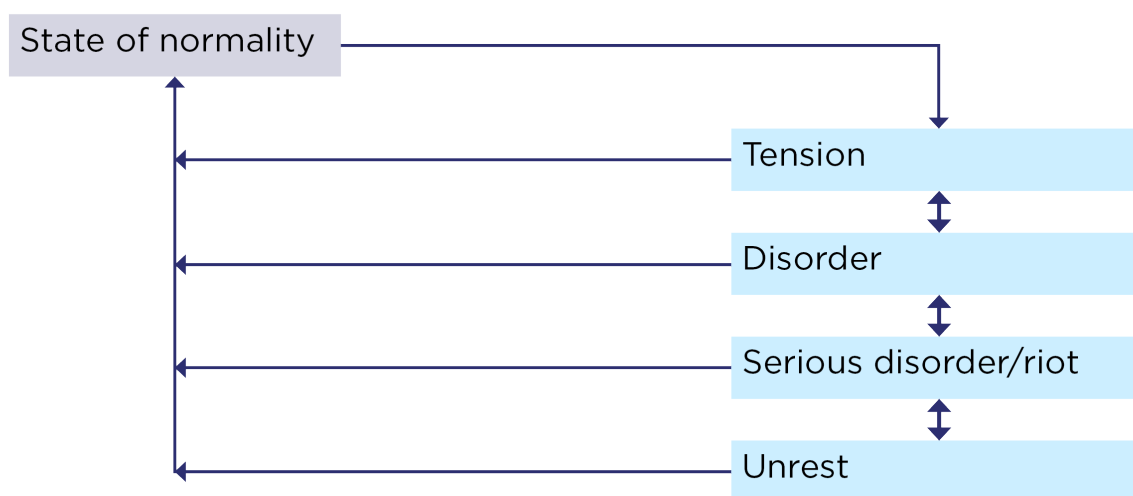
Decision making regarding POPS events and operations can include an element of risk. The [Risk APP](#) provides additional support and clarity relating to decision making and the level of support that officers should expect from their organisation when making decisions.

3.2. Disorder model

The disorder model provides a structure for POPS commanders and POPSAs to understand the nature of disorder. Although this model may not be applicable to all events or operations, POPS commanders and POPSAs can use it to assist their decision making when managing policing operations, events and incidents where there is a risk of disorder or its escalation. The management of tension in communities or social groups should be regarded as a continuous process rather than a one-off crisis intervention.

The consideration of the disorder model should be made alongside any [community impact assessments](#) (CIAs) that are being developed for the relevant event or operation. Forces should also take into account information contained in their [community tension summaries](#) (CTS) document, which is completed each week.

Commanders can use the different stages of the model to decide on their selection of relevant [tactical options](#).



State of normality

The day-to-day state of order and policing services provided within a community can vary widely from one area to another and even by time of day. Effective information

and intelligence management provides accurate information as to the current state of order. It should be recognised that communities are complex in nature and that they may be permanent or transient.

Tension

This manifests as a level of increased concern or feelings within a community, group or crowd. A trigger incident may result in movement from a state of heightening tension to disorder. Such incidents can be caused by the police, the community or a third party.

Disorder

This represents the stage at which the mood is supplemented by action, whether isolated or sustained. It manifests itself in disruption, damage or violence. Such disorder may occur following a single trigger incident or a series of incidents that have a cumulative effect. At this level, unchecked or uncontrolled activity (including ineffective or incorrect police response) may deteriorate into serious disorder.

Serious disorder or riot

This is an escalation into widespread violent behaviour. This may take the form of violent protest, rioting, criminal damage or looting, and may include the use of weapons.

Unrest

This is the (sometimes prolonged) period when the rebuilding of relationships takes place. Sensitivity and trust are key factors in this process. Police and partners should focus on a structured return to a state of normality and should be aware that it is possible to cause a return to disorder or serious disorder through excessive or inappropriate action.

Progression through all stages is not necessary. Dependent on the circumstances, it may be possible to return to the state of normality from any level. The stages from state of normality through to serious disorder or riot can be viewed in terms of an escalation in tension and conflict. A return to the state of normality from any stage can be viewed as a de-escalation.

Disorder model considerations

- The desired outcome should be the return to a state of normality (which may differ before and after an incident of disorder or serious disorder).
- The police, other emergency services, statutory partners and community, group or crowd may have different perceptions of the level of tension, conflict or disorder. Effective community liaison may assist in reducing any disparity.
- Information and intelligence to identify potential or existing conflicts or tensions within communities, groups or crowds can facilitate appropriate interventions.
- Rumours and misinformation relating to a POPS event or operation may circulate. These may include comments on the actions and responses of the police. If appropriate, this misinformation should be corrected as quickly as possible. Prior investment in building relationships and liaising with communities, together with an effective engagement strategy that uses social media, are key factors in being able to dismiss unfounded rumours.
- During periods of disorder, normal policing services (both to the affected community and the wider policing area) should be maintained wherever possible.
- Where force is used, this must be the minimum required to achieve the lawful objective. Any [police use of force](#) could be perceived as unnecessary and may result in escalation. POPSAs should plan to reduce the need for force where possible.
- Active partnership working involving the police, community and other agencies can help prevent disorder and reduce tension.
- A trigger incident is any incident, however minor, that leads to an escalation in the level of tension or disorder.

Further information

The police, in conjunction with partners, have a key role in contributing to the following.

- Building and keeping the peace in the community.
- Restoring peace through local negotiation and appropriate interventions, in order to minimise the effects of criminal activity and local tensions or conflict.

- Holding early neighbourhood-level partnership interventions designed to mitigate the risk of escalation into disorder or serious disorder during the tension and unrest stages. For example:
 - using CIAs and CTSs to assess community tensions and to build information and intelligence
 - using the weekly CTS reporting process to assess community tensions within the relevant force area and current national tensions
 - developing a communication and engagement plan, incorporating key messages
 - deploying and tasking local resources (for example, neighbourhood policing teams and response officers)

POPS commanders and POPSAs should prepare and test contingencies to ensure that the force is capable of dealing with any disorder. These contingencies should include the capability to provide a sudden increase in the level of any police response and the development of a systematic and structured approach to community engagement through local policing teams. If disorder occurs, the objective of any police response should be to secure an early resolution. The response should be sophisticated and sensitive to reduce the likelihood of further escalation.

Used in conjunction with the NDM, the disorder model may also assist in the threat assessment process and the recording of decisions made, as well as their supporting rationale.

3.3. Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles

The [Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles \(JESIP\) doctrine](#) supports the development of a multi-agency response to incidents or POPS events and operations. In the event of a major incident being declared in relation to a POPS event or operation, forces should adopt and implement the JESIP. A major incident is defined as ‘an event or situation which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agency’.

Forces should use the JESIP to support the planning and response to both planned and spontaneous POPS events and operations of any scale whenever two or more emergency services and/or category 1 or 2 responders are involved. It is recommended good practice that the JESIP and supporting information are contained within operational orders and/or briefings for POPS events and operations.

The [JESIP doctrine](#) is based around five main principles:

- co-location
- communication
- coordination
- joint understanding of risk
- shared situational awareness

Where these principles are adopted, a jointly agreed working strategy between all invested parties can be formed. Each component part and agency should know their role, function and purpose as part of a multi-agency response to an incident.

Forces may wish to consider having the JESIP app and associated content installed on force-issued devices, so that first responders can easily access critical information to support the initial response to major incidents.

In the event of a civil emergency, specific information and guidance is contained within the [Civil emergencies APP](#).

4. Policing standards and core principles

POPS commanders and POPSAs should consider the extent to which the response will achieve core operational duties when planning for a POPS event and operation, as set out in the [Operations APP](#) and the following principles.

4.1. Policing standards, style and tone

All officers deployed on an event or operation, including POPS commanders and POPSAs, must ensure that their decision making, advice, conduct and actions are:

- proportionate
- legitimate

- accountable
- necessary
- in accordance with the:
 - [Code of Ethics](#)
 - [Standards of Professional Behaviour](#)
 - [Seven Principles of Public Life](#)

All officers involved in planning and policing an event should be aware of how their conduct and deployment may affect those attending the event and should consider the impact of broader public scrutiny.

POPS commanders should set the policing standards, style and tone at the start of the planning phase of an operation. POPS commanders should be aware of the potential impact on public perceptions relating to the proportionality and legitimacy of the policing operation. The policing standards, style and tone relevant to the operation should be recorded in command logs and operational orders, and should be sufficiently covered in briefings to officers deployed.

When planning and policing an event or operation, commanders should consider the type of event and community feelings towards the event. Commanders should also consider that the policing operation and response pays due regard to any sensitivities related to the event.

POPS commanders should consider any potential impacts on staff and should put in place actions to ensure staff welfare and mitigate any negative impacts. Relevant planning should also consider potential impacts to the community where the event is occurring, as well as the broader community, who may be affected by the event and policing operation.

All officers deployed to events and operations should consider key factors in relation to transparency and legitimacy of a policing operation, which include the following.

- Policing by consent should underpin POPS events and operations.
- Police deployed to an event or operation should be readily identifiable with correct epaulettes showing rank and force identification number, which must be clearly visible.

- Police officers deployed to an event or operation should be appropriately trained and accredited for the roles that they are performing. This should be in line with the national role profiles that have been set for each POPS role.

Where police officers deployed to an event or operation do not satisfy the relevant role profile requirements, a clear rationale for the decision to deploy such staff should be recorded. The risk management measures that have been implemented should be recorded along with a supporting rationale.

Officers who do not satisfy the relevant POPS role profile requirements and are deployed by their force shall only be deployed in their force area and not deployed on mutual aid operations.

POPS commanders and POPSAs who are deployed while not fully satisfying the role profile requirements should:

- inform the Gold POPS commander
- include the following information within their policy log:
 - the fact that they are not fully compliant with the role profile
 - which aspect they are not currently compliant with in the role profile
 - articulate the rationale for performing those roles while operating outside of the associated standards and/or role profile requirements
- identify the chief officer who has underwritten the risk to deploy the POPS commanders and/or POPSAs who are not compliant with the role profile

4.2. Communication

POPS commanders should consider how to best communicate with individuals, groups and organisations who may be affected by a POPS event or operation. This should require a joint approach with event organisers, other emergency services and local authorities to ensure that all communication is consistent and coordinated.

Any communication strategy and subsequent media engagement should be inclusive in terms of content, language and medium used for delivering key messages. POPS commanders and POPS planners should consider [POPS communications and considerations](#) when developing communication strategies as part of a POPS

operation, to ensure they are in keeping with the policing standards, style and tone of the event or operation.

POPS commanders should consider the potential for receiving and responding to freedom of information (FOI) requests in relation to a POPS event or operation.

When working with other forces, partners or agencies, forces should consider who is responsible for responding. Further guidance on FOI requests is contained within the [Information management APP](#).

Further advice and information can be found within the [Engagement and communication APP](#). POPS commanders should also consider the relevant guidance on managing information and should refer to the [Information management APP](#).

4.3. Proportionate response

POPS commanders, POPSAs and POPS planners need to be able to demonstrate the following as a minimum.

- Each event should be viewed as unique and distinct, requiring careful consideration of that event and associated factors. Forces should aim to stop the use of any pre-prepared generic command and deployment plans drafted by POPS planners or previous POPS commanders for repeating events (for example, designated sporting events that re-occur throughout a season).
- Consideration, relevancy and application of human rights principles to that specific event, including specific rationale of those considerations.
- Police powers and relevant legislation applicable to the event or operation should be used appropriately and proportionately. Police powers and relevant legislation should be included in briefings and/or operational orders.
- Use of force implications and considerations, both collective and individual, need to be outlined and included within relevant command logs, operational orders and briefings.
- Planning should be based on available information and intelligence, and should be subject to continuous review in line with the [NDM](#).

POPS commanders can make decisions based on professional judgements that build on the available information and experience, and should not rely just on formally assessed intelligence. POPSA's should also be included in relevant planning meetings to support the POPS commander.

Reviewing and improving

Following a POPS event, reflecting on the policing response can support the development of future proportionate responses. The following questions can assist in drawing out learning:

1. Was there an event or sequence of events that could reasonably have been foreseen?
2. Was there a plan?
3. Were the staff trained and equipped to deliver the plan?
4. Did the plan work?

Throughout the planning and operation phase, POPS commanders and POPSA's should ensure that auditable records are maintained. Question four above emphasises the importance of debriefing policing operations and identifying both critical success factors and lessons learned. These can then be developed as part of a continuous improvement cycle for forces locally and nationally.

4.4. Capacity and capability

The **Strategic Policing Requirement** (SPR), supported by the national POPS SRA, supports chief constables and PCCs to ensure they fulfil forces' national responsibilities. This includes maintaining a POPS capability for deployments within individual force areas and mutual aid deployments at regional and national levels. Forces are therefore required to understand their SPR commitments for POPS capacity and capability, and to ensure that they have sufficient numbers of trained and accredited staff to perform the relevant roles as outlined below.

In the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), the PSNI chief officer POPS lead is required to ensure that PSNI POPS-trained staff meet the relevant standard for PSNI on an annual basis. Where PSNI officers are required to deploy elsewhere in the UK, PSNI's chief officer POPS leads should ensure that PSNI officers fully satisfy the

national [role profiles](#) and standards set by the College of Policing, NPCC and the National Police Coordination Centre (NPoCC) prior to any deployment to Scotland, England or Wales.

Forces are also required to comply with the following additional requirements.

- Deployed POPS equipment, uniform, personal protective equipment and vehicles should meet national requirements, as set by the NPCC thematic tactics, training and equipment working group.
- Sufficient numbers of protected carriers, intermediate and round shields, and other POPS-related equipment should be available, so that the full range of POPS tactics are catered for when deploying on operations both in-force and on mutual aid.
- Basic Deployment Unit (BDU) deployments both in-force and out of force should comply with the national definition of a BDU.
- Police Support Unit (PSU) deployments both in-force and out of force should comply with the national definition of a PSU.
- Plans are developed to mobilise PSUs and these are subject to regular testing within individual forces, within regions and nationally. The NPoCC is responsible for the testing and exercising of POPS capacity and capability.

5. Command structure and role profiles

Forces should ensure that appropriately trained and accredited POPS commanders and POPSAs are deployed to manage spontaneous and pre-planned POPS events and operations. POPS commanders should regard themselves as part of the overall POPS command team when deployed to an event. In the context of events or operations, the term 'command team' includes the Gold (strategic) commander, Silver (tactical) commander, Bronze (operational) commander and POPSAs. Where forces have loggists supporting the command team at a POPS event or operation, they are also considered part of the command team.

Force strategic leads for POPS – officers of at least the rank of assistant chief constable or equivalent, such as Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) commander rank – should ensure that POPS-trained staff fully satisfy the training and accreditation or

re-accreditation requirements for the POPS roles. Robust systems should be in place to monitor compliance and to ensure that POPS staff are sufficiently experienced in policing a variety of events.

POPS commanders and POPSAs should attend their initial training at a College of Policing licensed POPS command centre. They should receive support and mentoring from their force prior to attending the relevant courses, during their operational assessment phase and during their subsequent annual re-accreditation. The [entry routes to POPS command](#) support this approach. Further information is also contained within the [G1 standards, training, equipment and resources](#) document.

National POPS command portfolios and POPS assessor standards can be found through the following:

- [Gold \(strategic\) POPS command portfolio](#)
- [Silver \(tactical\) POPS command portfolio](#)
- [Bronze \(operational\) POPS command portfolio](#)
- [POPSA portfolio](#)
- [POPS assessor and internal verifier standards](#)

All POPS commanders should consider the use of POPSAs and seek their specialist advice at every phase of the POPS event or operation. Where POPSA advice is not required or is not readily available, then the POPS commander should document their rationale as to why they did not, or were unable to, access the POPSAs advice.

The POPS event or operation command structure should be appropriate and resilient to meet the requirements of the event. This may require the addition of other command roles, such as investigation, community, custody or media. Where included in the command structure, their role should be clearly outlined.

When determining a POPS command structure, consideration should be given to where POPS commanders and POPSAs will be located during the event. Gold, Silver and Bronze command should not be located together. There are potential risks of locating POPS commanders in the same venue, which need to be considered and catered for during the operations planning phase.

Consideration should also be given to the location of POPS commanders for the duration of the event. Where possible, POPS commanders should not be located together in the event control room, as there is a risk of losing command and control if that location is compromised (for example, as a result of the venue having to be evacuated). The planning process should include maintaining suitable space and distance between the relevant POPS commanders.

If a force wishes to deviate from the relevant national POPS standards, that decision and the associated risk should be underwritten by the force chief officer or assistant chief officer. The chief officer then indirectly accepts the associated risk on behalf of their force.

The role of a POPS commander can be found in the role profiles section. Further information should be read in conjunction with the [Operations APP](#).

Where there is a multi-agency event, POPS commanders and planners should adopt the [JESIP Joint Doctrine](#).

5.1. Role profiles

All POPS positions and roles have specific role profiles assigned to them. Police forces should ensure they have enough officers trained at each role to fulfil their specific policing requirements, including the ability to mobilise suitably trained and accredited staff. Deployment of POPS resources should be in line with the relevant POPS role profiles to allow forces to police the event or operation, and to prevent the identified risks and threats of the event or operation.

The NPoCC provides national guidance on the specific role profiles associated with POPS events and operations. These include.

- [Gold \(strategic\) POPS commander](#)
- [Silver \(tactical\) POPS commander](#)
- [Bronze \(operational\) POPS commander](#)
- [POPSA](#)
- [PSU commander](#)
- [Level 3 trained officer](#)
- [Level 2 trained officer](#)

- Level 2 (PSNI) trained officer
- PSU carrier driver
- police liaison team (PLT) officer
- forward intelligence team (FIT) officer
- evidence gathering team (EGT) officer
- protestor removal trained (PRT) officer
- PRT (de-bonding) officer
- PRT (at heights) officer
- PRT (confined spaces) officer
- PRT (marine) officer
- attenuating energy projectile operator
- mounted officer
- dog handler
- national police public order tactical trainer
- POPS planner
- dedicated football officer (DFO)
- operational football officer (OFO)

6. Curriculum and training

The College of Policing's National Police Public Order Public Safety Training Curriculum (NPPOPSTC) provides a framework to all forces for POPS training and associated standards. Forces should ensure that all POPS officers are trained in accordance with the NPPOPSTC requirements and associated standards.

NPPOPSTC provides the relevant detail for initial POPS training, refresher training and accreditation or re-accreditation, to ensure that all POPS officers satisfy national requirements.

The NPPOPSTC provides detail on all POPS specialisations and roles, and is governed by relevant licenses issued by the College of Policing. Force POPS chief officer leads – minimum rank of assistant chief constable or equivalent, such as MPS commander rank – are responsible for ensuring that POPS training is delivered as

per NPPOPSTC standards. POPS training delivered by their force should be fully compliant with their associated licenses.

6.1. Accreditation, re-accreditation and entry routes to command

Chief officers are responsible for ensuring that individuals who pass the relevant POPS courses are subject to a continuing professional development (CPD) programme. Commanders must demonstrate that they are operationally competent by performing the role. Their operational competence should be assessed by their force.

Officers seeking accreditation in a relevant POPS role must be assessed by operationally competent peers within the relevant role and who also satisfy the relevant [POPS assessor standard](#). The portfolios must also be reviewed by an [internal verifier](#) (who must satisfy the relevant standards of an internal verifier) before the portfolio is reviewed by the force strategic lead for POPS.

Bronze POPS commanders and POPSAAs must complete first aid training, personal safety training, a multistage fitness test (or approved alternative) to level 6.3 and Level 2 public order training annually. Gold and Silver POPS commanders must review Level 2 tactics at least once annually as part of their annual re-accreditation.

Individual forces may provide further supplementary local training to support the local and regional issues identified in their respective POPS strategic risk assessments.

Forces should retain records of any command accreditation and re-accreditation to evidence and support the CPD of commanders, in addition to compliance with the relevant role profiles and associated mandatory requirements.

7. Developing a policing plan

POPS commanders, POPSAAs and POPS planners should develop an individual policing plan for every POPS event or operation. This section provides information on what needs to be considered in developing the plan.

7.1. Planning

POPS commanders, POPSAAs and POPS planners should ensure that they are involved at the earliest opportunity in planning for events. Key stakeholders, partner agencies and, where appropriate, event organisers should also be included in the planning stages as early as possible. POPS commanders, POPSAAs and POPS planners should aim for clear lines of accountability and should ensure that responsibility is fully understood to support a detailed and coordinated approach.

The POPS planner should prepare an operational order and related documentation on behalf of the Silver commander. This order should give information on legislation and ECHR considerations that are applicable to the event. The order should be developed using the IIMARCH model:

- information
- intelligence
- method
- administration
- risk assessment
- communications
- health and safety

The planning officer should also plan briefing and debriefing mechanisms for staff being deployed on the operation. These briefings should follow the IIMARCH model and, where possible, should include both visual (for example, PowerPoint) and verbal input.

Tabletop exercises can also be used to test the effectiveness of the proposed plan, for significant and complex pre-planned POPS events and operations. Where used, there should be sufficient time between the tabletop exercise and the live event to allow for any relevant changes to be made.

Forces may wish to consider POPS peer reviewers to review proposed plans. A list of peer reviewers can be obtained from the NPoCC. Forces should also use debrief-trained officers to provide key learning points that may assist in planning future POPS events or operations that are similar in nature.

7.2. Community engagement and communication

CIAs and CTSs can be used to gather the opinions and feelings of local communities, which can then be fed into the national picture regarding unrest and community-based issues. Forces may use the [Community impact assessment toolkit](#) to assist in the development of a CIA throughout all phases of the POPS operation. (Note that the link provided will automatically download the toolkit as a .docx file.)

CIAs may be used as a sounding board for any tensions in the local community and can be a source of evidence for the impact that a particular event is having upon a specific geographic location or within specific communities.

Forces should complete and document CIAs to evidence the disruption to the local community. They may also assist in informing the command team and improving the decision-making processes. As there is one CTS per force per week, CIAs can also be used to feed into the weekly CTS assessment.

POPS commanders should consider the benefit of a CIA for the specific event that they are commanding. CIAs can be used as an event-specific process and will assist in developing information and intelligence.

POPS commanders should consider appointing a Bronze commander to oversee, implement and develop a CIA for the event. The information should be a part of the overall planning and associated decision-making process. The use of a CIA will assist in demonstrating overall transparency, legitimacy and proportionality of a policing response to a specific POPS event or operation.

Where forces aim to engage with communities, further advice and information can be found within:

- [Engagement and communication APP](#)
- [CPS community impact statements](#)
- [CPS community impact statements – Adult \(Ministry of Justice guidance\)](#)

7.3. Safeguarding

Forces should understand that various individuals at a POPS event or operation may require safeguarding. POPS commanders should consider the safeguarding needs of individuals and groups in planning for POPS events and operations.

Safeguarding considerations may include:

- the presence of children at events and associated child protection issues
- adults at risk and sexual assault considerations
- vulnerability and safeguarding concerns because of alcohol and/or drug consumption
- mental health
- missing persons protocols
- the provision of relevant medical assistance or mental health first aiders
- the appointment of safeguarding officers with clearly defined roles within a POPS event or operation
- the provision of toilet and washing facilities

Protest camps may be established during protests. Children and young people often accompany older relatives or friends at these camps. As protests may continue for extended periods of time, officers should liaise with health and education partners to consider the safety of the children and vulnerable individuals present at such locations.

While policing an event, police officers may have to deal with vulnerable persons exhibiting signs of mental ill health. Specific guidance in relation to mental health can be found within the [Mental health APP](#).

7.4. Intelligence

Forces should consider [intelligence management](#) and [information management](#) when managing all POPS deployments. Forces should also have BCUs and force-level intelligence structures to provide contextual information and intelligence (for example, community tensions or reaction to a trigger incident), to help mitigate the threat of disorder.

The development of relevant intelligence products helps to define strategic priorities, [tactical options](#) and responses during POPS events and operations.

Information and intelligence are required throughout the lifecycle of an event or incident, for example:

- pre-event (pre-planned), initial response (spontaneous) or to assess rising community tensions
- during the event or incident
- following the event or incident

Intelligence coordinator

POPS commanders should consider appointing a Bronze intelligence role within the command structure during the planning of a POPS event or operation. This is dependent on the nature, size and scale of the POPS event or operation and whether the event is pre-planned or spontaneous. The officer fulfilling the role of Bronze intelligence is responsible for developing an intelligence strategy and providing relevant information and/or intelligence to the relevant POPS commanders.

Also known as Bronze intelligence, the role should:

- manage and coordinate the collection, analysis and dissemination of information and intelligence products, in line with the intelligence requirements for the operation
- establish and manage a dedicated intelligence cell, if required
- liaise with the NPoCC Strategic Intelligence and Briefing Unit (SIB), if required
- produce and disseminate appropriate briefing products (for example, for Gold or Silver commanders to assist with strategy or tactical plan development)
- act as the intelligence advisor to the [Silver POPS commander](#) during the operational phase of an event or incident
- ensure that the Silver POPS commander has access to a co-located 'intelligence pod', if the main intelligence cell is located away from the Silver command structure during protracted or large-scale operations
- ensure that protocols exist for the communication of relevant information and intelligence products to assist any post-incident investigation

- ensure that briefing and debriefing arrangements are in place (for example, appropriate briefing staff and locations)
- contribute to the strategic debrief, ensuring it is disseminated to the relevant parties

POPS commanders may appoint BCU or force-level intelligence managers to perform the intelligence coordinator role.

When using live facial recognition, forces should ensure that they comply with the requirements set out in the [Live facial recognition APP](#).

Further guidance on intelligence management can be found within the [Intelligence management APP](#).

The NPoCC Strategic Intelligence and Briefing Unit

The NPoCC SIB provides national intelligence and weekly POPS intelligence updates to the police service in relation to POPS. They also provide officers to perform specific POPS roles, such as FIT officers. POPS commanders should include FIT officers into their planning and command structure. The SIB also aim to identify and assess persons or groups that are involved in low-level aggravated protest.

Forces should provide the SIB with a national POPS SRA to ensure that its intelligence collection process is fit for purpose. The SIB aims to gather an understanding of these thematic areas in order to support national policing, enabling forces to fully understand any potential threat, harm or risk posed by these groups as assessed in SRA. This detailed level of understanding allows forces to deliver effective and proportionate policing operations.

7.5. Investigation

POPS commanders and planners should consider whether an investigative strategy should be developed as part of the overall plan. This is likely to be dependent on the nature of the event, as well as the scale and scope of the operation. POPS events that present a risk to public safety or have the potential for serious disorder may present unique challenges to the management and investigation of crime. These include:

- potential scale of investigations
- diversity of offences
- difficulties of scene management
- resource implications
- likelihood of high-profile court proceedings
- witness, victim and suspect management
- likelihood of media coverage

Investigating officer, senior investigating officer (Bronze crime)

POPS commanders should consider appointing an investigating officer (IO) or senior investigating officer (SIO) at an early stage in the planning process. The choice of IO or SIO will be dictated by the anticipated or actual investigative requirements of an operation – for example, the level of [Professionalising Investigation Programme](#) (PIP) required. The IO or SIO should perform a Bronze crime role during an operation and is responsible for developing a tactical investigation plan that supports the Gold strategy and the Silver's tactical plan. The IO or SIO should be appropriately trained and accredited to perform the role of IO or SIO. The investigation plan may include the following.

- Resources, including the role of the IO or SIO in the command structure (for example, functional Bronze). IO and SIO post-holders should be trained and accredited as per the national standards for those roles.
- Links to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and prosecution policy. Early liaison with force solicitors and the CPS to assist with the investigation strategy and potential legislation that may be relevant, along with identifying relevant thresholds for arrest and the subsequent processing of any arrested persons.
- Consideration of how CIAs can be included within the investigation element to capture the impact of the POPS event or operation.
- Appointment of a [digital media investigator](#) (DMI) to assist in developing a digital strategy.
- Crime media policy.
- Authority levels.

- Working protocols with the **intelligence coordinator** (Bronze intelligence).
- Methods for evidence collection – for example, officers' notes, **evidence gathering teams**, CCTV.
- Briefing material and methods for key staff.
- Contingencies to deal with crime scene management.
- Intervention plans.
- Development of the evidential chain process to include prisoner handover from point of arrest through to arrival at custody. This will need to take into account the potential that the arresting officer will not be able to leave the incident, particularly during disorder due to the existing circumstances.
- Development of a custody plan to include:
 - identifying sufficient cell capacity
 - transportation of arrested persons to custody
 - seizing of exhibits
 - interviewing and processing teams
- Charging policy.
- Crime scene management in hostile environments.
- Process for obtaining statements from officers, victims, witnesses and members of the public.
- Identifying processes for securing relevant evidence and exhibits, including digital, telephone, video and CCTV, as well as physical evidence such as clothing and weapons.
- Consideration for the use of forensic recovery teams.

The **Silver commander** should preserve any crime scene in balance with the needs of the ongoing police operation. The IO or SIO should advise the Silver commander on the need to preserve a scene. The Silver commander should then advise on the feasibility of preserving that scene with current resources following consultation with the relevant Bronze public order commander. The decision should be recorded.

POPS commanders, POPSA's and planners may use the investigation checklist document to assist in the development of an investigation plan. Further information

regarding investigations, prosecution and case management, and detention and custody can be found through the relevant APP documents:

- [Major investigation and public protection APP](#)
- [Investigation APP](#)
- [Prosecution and case management APP](#)
- [Detention and custody APP](#)

7.6. Digital media investigator

POPS commanders should appoint a DMI to support POPS events and operations that require specialist digital investigative assistance. DMIs can assist and advise in support of real-time spontaneous POPS events and operations, as well as any subsequent investigations. DMIs should support the development of a digital strategy with a POPS commander to reach objectives for how digital media can support the POPS operation.

POPS commanders should liaise with the DMI at the earliest opportunity to minimise potential data loss and maximise investigative opportunities.

[Unlocking digital potential](#)

This covers the National SIO Digital Investigation Strategy Template and how DMIs can help set the digital strategy. This includes communications data, radio frequency propagation survey, internet research and vehicle data. It also covers digital hygiene and how personal devices and connectivity can affect a digital crime scene.

[Managing the digital mountain](#)

This provides an overview of the DMI capabilities, including how they can assist in investigations and create digital media strategies for collecting and analysing targeted digital data.

Forces should refer to the [Extraction of material from digital devices APP](#), where this is required as part of any intelligence gathering function or from an investigative perspective.

7.7. Counter terrorism

POPS planners and commanders should assess the potential threat and impact of terrorism on POPS events and operations. POPS planners and commanders should also make provisions in the event plan to mitigate potential terrorist threats and the associated impact that may be relevant to an event or operation. This plan should consider:

- the current threat picture (including attack methodologies) and the impact on the POPS event(s) or operation(s)
- the proportionate deployment of resources and tactics, including those linked with counter terrorism (CT) policing, to mitigate the threat to a POPS event or operation
- the police role in the event of an attack at a POPS event or operation and any relevant contingency plans

CT policing in the UK is delivered through a network. Information on the capabilities that each component of the network provides is available through the [Counter Terrorism Policing website](#). POPS commanders and planners should understand the role of CT policing capabilities and how to access relevant parts of regional and/or national capability – for example, the National Coordinators Office for Protect and Prepare, and the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO).

Threat levels

UK threat levels from international terrorism are set by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC). Further information on the threat levels is available through the [MI5 website](#).

Planners and commanders should be aware of the threat level and its impact on general policing preparedness and plans. For example, a higher threat level may have an impact on how an event is staged and/or the availability and deployment options associated with some police resources. Where an event or operation also involves an armed operation, a clear command protocol should be established between the relevant disciplines.

POPS commanders and planners should assess the impact associated with the threat level. They should also access and assess the impact of Security Review

Committee updates and advisory messages, as these can provide additional and more specific protective security-informed advice and guidance that can help inform planning and command activity. Commanders should also consider the use of specialist support in the form of a CT security coordinator (CT SecCo) or CT safety advisors (CTSA).

CT security coordinator

Some POPS events or operations may involve a CT SecCo. The role of a CT SecCo is to mitigate the threat of terrorism to an event by:

- developing a security plan that supports a Gold POPS commander's overarching strategy
- coordinating all aspects of protective security (primarily from a CT perspective)
- providing specialist advice on security assets (including operational deployment) and attack methodologies

Events where a Gold POPS commander should consider a CT SecCo include:

- public military events
- party political and other high-security conferences
- high-profile ceremonial and civic events
- events involving protected persons
- crowded place events, including high-profile sporting events

A Gold POPS commander may also consider a CT SecCo for other events where their appointment will help support safety and security – for example, if it is proportionate to the threat level at the time.

POPS commanders and planners should consider the following, in consultation with a CT SecCo.

- The criteria for when to appoint a CT SecCo, and the process for how (this may vary across forces and regions).
- If appointed, the development of clear protocols that are understood by POPS planners, POPS commanders and the CT SecCo, such as the following.

- Outlining the interface between CT SecCo and POPS planning. How does the security plan influence tactical and operational planning and vice-versa? It may also be appropriate for the CT SecCo to attend relevant external meetings, such as the Safety Advisory Group (SAG).
- Articulating the position of the CT SecCo in the chain of command. Is it a specialist advisory role to all levels of command and/or a distinct command position with allocated resources (for example, Bronze security)?
- A shared understanding of the security implications of POPS tactics and capabilities.
- A shared understanding of the POPS implications of security-related tactics and capabilities (for example, impact on crowd dynamics).

Further information on CT SecCo is available via the [Knowledge Hub](#).

Counter terrorism security advisors

The primary role of CTSAs is to provide help, advice and guidance on all aspects of CT protective security to specified industry sectors. CTSAs are also responsible for the provision of protective security advice to crowded places – for example, shopping centres, sporting stadiums, pubs and bars or transport hubs.

CTSAs also work with local authorities and businesses to identify and assess sites that may be vulnerable to terrorist attack. They advise them, as well as other organisations and professional bodies, about counter terrorism protective security guidance that should be incorporated into their general crime prevention plans, advice and guidance.

POPS commanders and planners should consider CTSAs, as they:

- work in support of a CT SecCO to mitigate the vulnerabilities identified in the CT SecCO plan for any event
- may have established relationships and may assist with advice and guidance that can better protect event locations
- provide specialist CT awareness training in line with existing CTSA capabilities, to increase the readiness of sites to respond appropriately to a terrorist attack and to increase vigilance

The police role in the event of an attack

Contingency plans should include the role of police if there is a terrorist attack at a POPS event or operation. All police officers involved in the operation should be briefed and should be aware of Stay Safe principles. [Guidance](#) and an [aide memoire](#) is available to all police officers via College Learn. POPS commanders should include the Stay Safe principles in operational orders and/or briefings. POPS commanders should also be aware of CT command and control structures that cover various terrorism-related scenarios. These including CT-specific roles, such as the assistant commissioner of specialist operations (ACSO), senior national coordinator (SNC) and CT commanders.

CT-relevant engagement and communication

POPS planners should understand the extent and potential impact of any protective security measures and arrangements that owners and operators of publicly accessible locations and/or organisers may put in place for an event.

POPS planners and commanders may provide proportionate and relevant advice to organisers, owners and operators. Engagement related to counter terrorism should be factored into the overarching engagement and communication strategy.

Examples could include:

- [ProtectUK](#), including the availability of information and advice on various aspects of protective security from NaCTSO
- [Action Counters Terrorism \(ACT\) campaign](#)
- the NPCC's [Run, Hide, Tell](#) briefings

7.8. Media

Forces should have an effective media strategy as part of the POPS planning process. An effective media strategy will also assist in demonstrating legitimacy, proportionality, legality and transparency of the policing response to an event or operation.

The Gold POPS commander is responsible for developing a media plan as part of a POPS operation. They should consider early engagement with force media,

communication and engagement leads. They should also consider appointing a Bronze media role within the POPS command structure.

A media plan should also be developed alongside a CIA to facilitate effective communication with the public through media forums and community engagement. This will assist in providing a consistent message and will reduce the opportunities for rumours or for conflicting police messages to circulate.

Gold POPS commanders should also consider the [communication considerations](#) contained within the POPS APP.

If forces have any queries in relation to what can or cannot be shared publicly, they should contact the College of Policing POPS Unit via pops@college.police.uk

8. Deployment

The NPoCC oversees the deployment of officers and staff from across the UK to support forces with specific events and operations. The NPoCC also coordinate mutual aid requests for a variety of POPS events and operations. To assist forces in the facilitation of a mobilisation, the [NPoCC have produced national guidance](#) to outline responsibilities and expectations. For further information, refer to the [Mobilisation APP](#).

8.1. Tactical options

POPS commanders should consider the options available for inclusion in their strategic, tactical or deployment plans. POPSAs may provide specialist advice on each of the [tactical options](#) and POPS commanders should consider seeking advice from POPSAs at the earliest opportunity.

The tactical options can be used in isolation and/or as a combination of options. Gold POPS commanders can specify which tactical options are available, or are not available, for use within the POPS operation. Decision making logs should state which options are, or are not, available and should be recorded in an auditable manner. Silver POPS commanders may set tactical parameters in relation to when specified tactical options are, or are not, available for use by Bronze POPS commanders.

POPS commanders should take a flexible approach to the options they employ, and should consider the following questions to determine the approach.

- What does the use of the specific tactical option(s), on its own or in combination with other tactics, intend to achieve?
- Are the tactical options being considered appropriate, proportionate, legitimate, ethical and the least intrusive means to achieve a legitimate and lawful objective?
- Do the proposed tactics seek to limit, as far as is reasonably practicable, any potential collective and/or individual use of force by police officers engaged on the event or operation?
- How will POPS commanders seek to provide ethical warnings prior to the use of tactics?
- Which tactical options have been considered or discounted and why?
- What advice has been provided by a POPSA relating to the suggested tactical options?
- How will the success of the tactical option be decided, and when?
- What factors could help the tactic to achieve its intended aim or hinder it from doing so? For example, what resources are required (such as appropriately trained and accredited personnel, as per national role profiles)? Are these resources readily available?
- What are the risks involved in the use (or withdrawal) of the tactic? For example, what is the likelihood of the tactic being counterproductive by potentially affecting police legitimacy and public capacity for self-policing?
- How will POPS commanders seek to assess public perception and/or community tension in relation to the use of POPS tactical options? How will they also seek to use this as part of their decision-making process?
- What contingencies and mitigations are available to address these risks? When and under what circumstances should these be used?
- What are the reasonably foreseeable impacts of using the tactical options being considered (for example, political, environmental, sociological, technological, legal, financial or organisational impacts)?

- Would use of the tactic be reasonable, necessary, proportionate and compliant with relevant ECHR articles and relevant domestic legislation relating to the use of force?
- What are the health, safety and wellbeing implications of the tactical option for both the police and public?
- Where will the decision making and associated considerations be held? Will the decision making be able to withstand subsequent scrutiny?
- How will POPS commanders ensure appropriate and timely reviews of the available tactical options?

Innovative practice, learning from implementation and research findings should be shared with the wider police service, through the College of Policing. This enables the evidence base to be built on, tactics to be developed and assessed, and police practices to be improved.

In the event of a multi-agency response partners should also refer to the [JDM](#).

9. POPS incidents

9.1. Post-incident procedures following death or serious injury

In the event that a member of the public dies or receives serious injury following police contact during an event or operation, forces should follow the guidance given in the [Post-incident procedures following death or serious injury APP](#). Gold POPS commander should also ensure that the relevant post-incident procedures are implemented and followed in such incidents.

9.2. Critical incident management

POPS commanders, POPSAs and POPS planners should plan for a POPS events or operation to develop into a critical incident. A critical incident is defined 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'. Critical incidents can be both external (public facing) and internal (confined to a police force and their staff).

Specific guidance on critical incidents is contained within the [Critical incident management APP](#).

10. Thematic guidance and further information

The NPCC has issued the following information and documents that will support the operationalisation of this APP. The advice and instructions contained within them are owned and created by the NPCC.

10.1. United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU)

The UKFPU's primary role is to work with police and partner agencies to reduce incidents of football-related anti-social behaviour, violence and disorder involving UK supporters. The [UKFPU Policing Football Operational Advice](#) assists officers from across the country in the planning and deployment of resources during a football event.

10.2. Events

The organisers of an event have overall responsibility for its management, including the responsibility for public safety. The Health and Safety Executive's [The event safety guide: A guide to health, safety and welfare at music and similar events](#) provides guidance for event organisers.

Police forces should determine whether there is a need for a police presence at an event. An [SAG](#) should act as the first point of reference for all those who are intending to organise a public event.

Safety Advisory Group

The SAG provides advice and guidance on specific areas of responsibility for organisers and other agencies involved in organising a public event. It should be chaired by the local authority and should include senior representation from the police service, as well as other relevant organisations. POPS commanders and planners should provide event organisers with contact details for the SAG, and can follow the provided [template](#) to communicate with event organisers who have not engaged with the SAG.

POPS commanders should determine whether a police presence is appropriate and necessary based upon a review of the available information and intelligence for the event.

Details for SAG arrangements in Northern Ireland can be found at Appendix J to the [**PSNI Service Procedure 15/2007: Policing of Football Matches/Sporting Events**](#).

Police event safety considerations

The requirement for police attendance and action at an event is based on the need for the police service to discharge its core responsibilities:

- preventing and detecting crime
- preventing or stopping a breach of the peace
- traffic regulation (only under statutory powers relating to events)
- activating contingency plans when there is an immediate threat to life
- coordinating emergency response activities associated with a major incident taking place at the event in line with JESIP principles

In certain circumstances, action by the police may be appropriate when a pre-planned event is considered to be unsafe or could potentially result in significant disorder. Such action could be (but is not limited to):

- a letter to the organisers advising of the potential danger and their liabilities
- use of section 13 of the [**Public Order Act 1986**](#) to prohibit public processions (this does not apply in Northern Ireland – see guidance on [**banning a public procession**](#))
- application for injunction

The [**Licensing Act 2003**](#) allows the police to make objections about a temporary event notice. These must be relevant to how the notice will undermine a relevant licensing objective.

Forces should refer to the [**national advice document**](#) when planning POPS events and operations. It provides information to support forces developing policing operations, in conjunction with event organisers.

In addition to the NPCC events guidance, further information and advice can be obtained via the [Sports Grounds Safety Authority](#) (SGSA). Forces should ensure that they have access to these documents and that they use them when planning relevant POPS events or operations and/or developing a policing response to these types of events.

10.3. Unlicensed music event

Forces should refer to the [NPCC Unlicensed Music Event \(UME\) and Rave Operational Advice](#) to ensure that a consistent approach is taken when responding to UMEs.

10.4. Protest

Forces should refer to the [NPCC Protest Operational Advice](#) when planning for the policing of protests.

For further guidance see the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Court Act 2022](#).

10.5. Mounted branch APP

Advice on using mounted officers is in development and will be available in 2023. Mounted officers deployed on POPS events and operations should satisfy the [mounted officer role profile](#).

10.6. Police dog handler APP

Advice for officers on using dogs is in development and will be available in 2023. Dog officers deployed on events or operations should satisfy the [dog handler role profile](#).

10.7. Police Scotland

Due to the specific legislation differences and unique operational challenges found within Police Scotland, forces should refer to [guidance specific to Police Scotland](#) in order to prepare and inform colleagues from across the United Kingdom as to specific legislation and practices.

10.8. Police Service of Northern Ireland

The PSNI have statutory powers and duties in relation to the policing of public processions, related protests and open-air public meetings, including those set out in the following:

- [Public Processions \(Northern Ireland\) Act 1998](#)
- [Public Order \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1987](#)
- [Police and Criminal Evidence \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1989](#)
- parts of the [Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994](#), which extend to Northern Ireland
- [Criminal Law Act \(Northern Ireland\) 1967](#)

The police also have common law powers and duties, including powers to prevent breaches of the peace.

Under the [Public Processions \(Northern Ireland\) Act 1998](#), organisers of public processions and related protest meetings are required to provide notice to the PSNI of specified information. Failure to provide such notice results in the organisers and participants being in breach of the Act but does not render the public procession or protest unlawful. Detailed guidance on this matter is contained in the [PSNI Service Procedure 14/2008](#), as amended and reissued on 9 June 2011.

[Article 4](#) of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 gives the police the power to impose directions on persons organising or taking part in an open-air public meeting. It is a precondition for the exercise of this power that a senior police officer reasonably believes that the meeting may result in serious public disorder, serious damage to property or serious disruption to the life of the community. The purpose of the persons organising the meeting must also be the intimidation of others with a view to compelling them not to do an act they have a right to do, or to do an act they have a right not to do.

A breach of the notification requirement in [section 6](#) or [section 7](#) of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 does not render a public procession or related protest meeting unlawful or mean that an otherwise peaceful public procession or related protest meeting falls outside the protection of ECHR Article 11.

Organisers' intentions

The organisation and participation in a public procession or associated protest that has been prohibited, or action in violation of any conditions imposed upon such an event, would constitute a criminal offence. The event itself is not rendered unlawful.

Restricting the right to peaceful protest

Section 8, **section 9**, **section 9A** and **section 9B** of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 allow for the imposition of conditions on a public procession or associated protest if the Parades Commission – or, on application to review the Parades Commission decision, the secretary of state – considers that the relevant legal conditions are fulfilled.

Principle of proportionality

If all of the relevant legal conditions are fulfilled, then the conditions imposed on a public procession or associated protest under the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 will be proportionate.

Under **section 8** of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998, conditions that may be imposed on a public procession include, but are not limited to, conditions on the route of the procession or a prohibition on entering any place.

Under **section 9A** of the Act, conditions that may be imposed on a protest meeting include, but are not limited to, conditions on the place where the meeting may be held, its maximum duration or the maximum number of persons who may take part in it.

Banning a public procession

Section 9 and **section 11** of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998 provide for the secretary of state to review the Parades Commission's determinations and prohibit public processions in certain defined circumstances.

Article 5 of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987 provides for the secretary of state to prohibit public assemblies in certain defined circumstances.

Chief constables must request the secretary of state to review a determination issued in respect of a public procession by the Parades Commission under **section**

9 of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998. **Section 11** of the Act enables the secretary of state, in specified circumstances, to prohibit the holding of a public procession. Section 11(5)(b) states that, before making any such decision, the secretary of state shall consult the chief constable where practicable.

Offences of intentional harassment, alarm or distress (sections 4A and 5 of the Public Order Act)

Applicable offences are those of:

- provocative conduct (**Article 19(1)** of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987)
- threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour (**Article 9(1)** of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987)
- hindering participants in a public procession (**section 14** of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act 1998)

ECHR Article 10(1) protects in substance and form a right to freedom of expression that others may find insulting or offensive. See **APP on the Human Rights Act 1998**.

Individuals taking part in a peaceful protest come within the terms of the above offences where their conduct moves into the realms of provocative, threatening or other behaviour, as set out in respect of each offence. Further details of the elements of each offence are set out in PSNI's 2013 Public order aide-memoire.

Incitement to hatred

A person who uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or displays any written material that is threatening, abusive or insulting, is guilty of an offence in either of the following instances:

- that person intends to stir up hatred or arouse fear
- having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up, or fear is likely to be stirred up or aroused

See **Article 8** and **Article 9(1)** of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1987.

10.9. British Transport Police

As one of the forces with a truly pan-UK remit, the British Transport Police (BTP) are separate from other forces in this measure. While not a Home Office force, there are regular close working partnerships between the BTP and Home Office forces. The BTP maintain a POPS capability and capacity that meets the relevant national standards and associated role profiles.

10.10. Policing of elections

The policing of elections provides distinct challenges and associated key considerations, as well as having the potential to attract protest activity. Forces may require a POPS command structure and the deployment of trained officers, across a variety of POPS roles, as part of the policing response to elections.

Specific guidance on the policing of elections is contained within the [Policing elections APP](#).

10.11. Unauthorised encampments and trespassing on land without consent

Specific operational advice has been produced to assist forces in the policing of incidents involving unauthorised encampments and trespassing on land without consent. Further guidance can be found in the [Understanding eviction powers](#) training pack.

10.12. Further information

Members of the police service should use both the POPS APP and the POPS community on Knowledge Hub to access the most current information and advice. This community is relevant to all officers from operational planners, PSU Level 3 trained staff, and individuals up to and including Gold POPS commanders.

11. Glossary

ACPO – Association of Chief Police Officers (no longer used – replaced by NPCC)

APP – Authorised Professional Practice

BMU – basic mobilisation unit

BDU – basic deployment unit (Level 3 trained officers)

BTP – British Transport Police

CCTV – closed circuit television

CIA – community impact assessment

CPS – Crown Prosecution Service

CT – counter terrorism

CTSAs – counter terrorism security advisors

DMI – digital media investigator

ECHR – European Convention of Human Rights

EGT – evidence gathering team

FIT – forward intelligence team

JDM – Joint Decision Model

JESIP – Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles

NDM – National Decision Model

NPCC – National Police Chiefs' Council

NPoCC – National Police Coordination Centre

NPPOPSTC – National Police Public Order Public Safety Training Curriculum

PACE – Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984

PLT – police liaison team

POPS – public order public safety

POPSA – public order public safety advisor

PSNI – Police Service Northern Ireland

PSU – police support unit (Level 2 trained officers)

SGSA – Sports Ground Safety Authority

SPR – Strategic Policing Requirement

SRA – strategic risk assessment

UKFPU – United Kingdom Football Policing Unit

UME – unlicensed music event

11.1. Additional reference and historic documents

The following documents provide additional information relating to POPs and provide historic context relating to POPS:

- [Keeping the peace manual](#)
- [Adapting to protests](#)
- [Review of 2011 disorder](#)
- [HMICFRS thematic inspection to protest, 'Striking the balance'](#)
- [Public order APP](#)

About the College

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