



CUMBRIA
RESILIENCE

Cumbria Local Resilience Forum Debriefing Best Practice Guidance

1 Introduction

Cumbria Local Resilience Forum recognises that debriefing people when they have been involved in the response to, or recovery from a Major Incident or Exercise is an essential process that provides an opportunity for organisations to continually learn and strengthen their organisational resilience. This guide sets out best practice and recognised practices. The guide should be used to assist with planning debriefs for incidents and exercises.

Key Features of Debriefing:

- Should involve the same players / responders that were involved in the exercise / incident
- Should address the organisational / multiagency issues not personal or psychological issues
- Should look for key strengths and weaknesses as well as ideas for future learning
- Provides an opportunity to thank participants and provide positive feedback

Debriefing should:

- Be conducted openly and honestly
- Pursue personal, group or organisational understanding and learning
- Be consistent with professional responsibilities
- Respect the rights of individuals
- Value equally all those concerned
- Develops key recommendations which focus on potential for future learning and development

2 Types of Debriefing

Hot Debrief

To be conducted immediately / as soon as is practicable after the end of the exercise incident to capture the 'here and now' issues whilst they are still fresh, before reflection.

Agency or Multi Agency Debrief

Cold Debrief

To be conducted within 6 weeks of the incident or exercise. A structured format that captures learning from the whole event. Each organisation will be represented by a nominated individual to feed in the main points / findings from the internal debriefs held within each organisation. Example templates are provided in Annex B and D.

Interim Debrief

On a protracted incident there may be the need to have a Structured Debrief during opposed to at the end of an incident. This can be run in a similar manner to the cold debrief but paperwork and questions asked by need adapting.

Structured Debriefing

Structured Debriefing is a flexible model for learning through reflection by sharing experiences, gathering information and developing ideas for the future. There a number of models for structured debriefing with examples in Annex A and C.

3 Debrief Aim and Objectives

Suggested Aims and Objectives are set out below. These can be tailored to suit the nature of the incident/exercise, audience or type of debrief.

Debrief Aim:

For participants to communicate their experiences of an exercise/incident so that lessons can be identified.

Debrief Objectives:

For participants to reflect (either on their own behalf and / or the organisation they represent)

- To consider the actions taken; with focus on the basic questions of what went well and what didn't
- To identify personal experiences
- To identify the key lessons to be learnt
- To identify good practice
- To identify issues that require further review or follow up actions

4 Considerations for Organisation of a Debrief

Purpose

- What is the purpose (aim) of the debrief?
- What event is being reviewed?
- What period of time is to be covered?

Authority Issues

- Will anyone in a position of authority be taking part or wish to be present?
- Confirm the level of disclosure or confidentiality of debriefing material

Participants

- Has a Debrief Facilitator been identified?
- Who will take notes and prepare the Debrief Report
- Who is being invited to the debrief?
- Are they all the required participants willing to take part?
- What experience have they of debriefing (are individual briefings required)?
- Consider questions they may ask.

Numbers

- How many people were involved in the event?
- How many people are keen to take part in the debrief?

Time

- What is the minimum and maximum time available for the debrief?
- When does the debrief have to be completed?

Location

- Where is the best location and venue?

Leader

- Who will lead the debrief?
- What experience does the leader (person facilitating) have of debriefing?

Resources

- What maps, charts, photos, reports etc should the facilitator and/or participants have access to both before and during the debrief?

5 Debrief Facilitators

The Debrief Facilitator should be a trained¹ individual and ideally not been actively participating in the incident/exercise, however if they have they should remain neutral during, and not participate in, the debrief. Requests for a suitable facilitator should be made through the [LRF Secretariat](#).

6 Additional Considerations

Community Involvement

As well as providing organisational debriefing opportunities for the agencies involved, consider the community's need for debriefing.

For a large or protracted incident this may take the form of public meetings, focus groups or other community meetings to discuss what lessons community members have identified from an event. Feedback from community meetings should be factored into organisational or multi agency debriefs. Such a process may also highlight areas of further work to be done to resolve underlying recovery issues.

For some incidents, such as those that acutely affect a defined community, consider community representative/s being invited to participate in the Multi Agency Debrief. Communities should be consulted on selecting the suitable representatives as spaces are limited. Representatives should be briefed beforehand to ensure they understand the key principles of the debrief (as given in the Introduction of this document). It is also noted that in some circumstances it is not appropriate for community representatives to attend the multi-agency debriefs, therefore this should be clearly explained and alternative arrangements made.

Debriefing the Media

Where there has been a considerable amount of media attention with regards to the response to a particular incident then this may provide useful feedback that might inform future practices. With advances in digital media members of the public will also represent 'citizen journalism' and this will also need to be considered in order to take all opportunities to capture lessons identified or notable practice.

Protracted Incident

¹ Currently training is not identified within Cumbria Local Resilience Forum but it is anticipated that facilitators should have attended either a Structured Debrief Course, College of Policing Debrief Course or the EPC Debriefing Course.

For protracted incidents that may run for several weeks, months or years it is important to ensure that a continuous evaluation of the incident takes place and any issues that are identified are captured and actioned as necessary. Hot debriefs and interim Multi Agency Debriefs may need to be repeated on a number of occasions at key milestones during a protracted incident. Key milestones may be peaks in recovery activity, after an anniversary or after a certain time scale has elapsed. Implementing this policy as a tool to providing a continual process of learning during a protracted incident should be seen as good practice.

7 Templates

Annex A: Example Structure Debrief Plan

Annex B: Example Exercise Cold Debrief Forum

Annex C: College of Policing Structured Debrief Form

Annex D: College of Policing Questionnaire Template

Annex A: Example Structure Debrief

Structured Debrief of:		Debrief Facilitator:	
Event Description:			
Date:		Time:	Location:
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions by all present as to who they are, what organisations they represent and, briefly, what role they had in the exercise / incident • Structure of the debrief, the post debrief process and the aim, objectives and scope of the session • Any ground rules (confidentiality and anonymity) (i.e Chatham House Rule) • Overview of facts relevant to the event 		
Debrief aims	<p>1 To reflect on the experiences of staff involved in the (name of) incident / event / exercise on (date)</p> <p>2 Identify personal experiences</p> <p>3 Views shared and discussed to establish</p> <p>A. Personal learning and the future positive use of that learning, and</p> <p>B. Ideas for the future of your organisations involvement in the response and/or recovery</p>		
Review	Visual aids (prompt diagrams) while participants consider their responses to the first two questions. (linking to the pre defined learning categories)		
Ponder, Sharing and Discussion	What for me were the (3)negative / worst / bad / lowest / least successful aspects of the event		
	<i>Participants should write 3 answers to the first question on the three YELLOW post it notes</i>		
	What for me were the (3) most positive / good / best / most successful parts of the event?		
	<i>Participants should write 3 answers for the second question on the PINK post it notes</i>		
	Views shared during a facilitator led discussion		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once answers are written down ask for brief explanation (20 seconds) of their 3 answers to the first question and then to place the yellow post-its on the relevant places on the prompt diagram • A brief explanation (20 seconds) of the 3 answers to the second question and then to place the pink post-its on the relevant places on the prompt diagram • Are there any additional comments to raise before summarising the main points made as a group? Collate post it note themes 		
Summary	Facilitator summarises main points raised		
Closing	Give each of the participants one purple post-it note and ask them to take 2-3 minutes to consider the final 2 part question:		

	<p>A. The most significant thing I / my organisation have learnt during this exercise/event has been B. If I (or my organisation) was involved in the response and / or recovery of another incident I (or my organisation) would</p> <p>Once participants have finished writing their answers, ask for a brief explanation and then place the blue post it note on the prompt diagram</p> <p>Then ask if there are any additional comments to ask before summarising the main points made as a group.</p>
Closure	Facilitator reiterates that actions that will be taken following the completion of the debrief, that notes will be written up and used to establish the key lessons, recommendations and subsequent action plan.
Post Debrief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notes are typed up under the heading of each of the three questions raised • Comments are then grouped into the key areas raised within the 6 outcome categories • Develop into actions / activities / recommendations / outcomes for review for the post exercise report <p>Attendees should be given another colour post it for the entire exercise whereby all exercise issues should be recorded, i.e. Room, catering etc</p>

See over for Key Considerations

Key considerations when debriefing

Introduction

- Aims – write up and keep in view (this can be done on a whiteboard, butcher's paper etc)
- Explain overall approach (stages) and the time the debrief should finish
- Explain the presence of observers ie an initiator
- Explain ground rules of organisational debriefing
- Ask group to be as open and honest as they feel they can be
- Remind – all views will be valued – focus is future positive
- Not making group decisions or looking for consensus
- Say what you intend doing with the debrief output

Review

- Go for a clear visual outline – keep it simple
- Introduce and keep in view
- Its purpose is to stimulate thinking and provide hooks for their ideas

Ponder

- Write up your prompt questions if possible
- Check understanding and ask for the ponder to be in silence
- Possible use of 'Post it Notes' (not always necessary)
- Keep control of time, "A few seconds more..."

Sharing and Discussion

- Tell group "we now move on to the Sharing and Discussion Stage"
- Divide your time between the prompt questions used (usually two). Consider the following subjects for prompt questions:
 - Notification/activation
 - Deployment/mobilisation
 - Operational issues
 - Relationship management •
- Ask one person to speak at a time and control any side conversations
- Deal with the negative views first
- All to have an equal opportunity to share their thoughts
- Create picture by mapping 'Post it Notes' or key words
- Ask facilitative questions to bring out/develop points made
- Do not express your own views
- Difficulty in making notes – consider options such as 'Post it Notes', flip chart, a note taker
- Be aware of individuals wanting to speak – bring them in
- Encourage discussion between individuals
- Keep an eye on the time
- Move on to positive views for the second half of the period

- Remember to remain neutral during feedback and provide encouragement when someone comments eg “thanks for that”, head nod

Summary

- Be concise and do not try to evaluate what has been raised
- Refer the group to what is before them if visually displayed
- Remind the group that there will be no further structured opportunity for discussion

Ponder

- Tell group they are now starting the “closing stage” of the debrief
- Write up the final prompt question
- Consider using ‘Post it Notes’ to write answers on
- Check all understand – ask for this to be done without discussion
- Keep control of time

Sharing

- Remind – no further discussion – listen to each other
- Each to read out their known words in turn
- Do not let anyone expand on their views
- Collect ‘Post it Notes’ and display on the prompt diagram

Closure

- Thank all for their participation
- Say what you intend doing with their final views (the Report)

Annex B: Example Exercise Cold Debrief Forum

Exercise Debrief Form


Agency:

Name of Person Representing Agency:

Agency representatives please return the electronic response by xxxxxx at the latest.

- 1. Notification** – *operator, agency receipt/ cascade*
- 2. Set up of ECC** – *time of becoming operational, reception process, travel/parking, working environment*
- 3. Supply of information to ECC** – *operator – technical, agencies – technical, strategic - tactical*
- 4. Interpretation of information** – *timely analysis of technical data, countermeasure advice STAC information, requirement of STAC advice at Strategic/Tactical Level*
- 5. Information exchanges and team working** – *information sharing between agencies,*
- 6. Strategic and/or Tactical decision making** – *timely, clear and concise advice (tactical and/or strategic decision making) Commander, strategic co-ordinated decisions, discussion of operational decisions*
- 7. Communication and Public Information** - *Public information and strategies, issue of Public Warning Messages, Press Statements and Media Play*
- 8. Facilities and equipment.** – *Deficiencies which impact on performance (exception reporting), operation of Resilience Direct*
- 9. Participants** – *personnel trained, participants have relevant authority.*
- 10. Any other comments**

Annex C: College of Policing Structured Debrief Form

		<h1>STRUCTURED DEBRIEF REPORT</h1>	
Debrief commissioned by:			
Event:			
Date of Event:			
Date of Debrief:			
Debrief Location:			
Debrief Team:			
Debrief Participants:			
Debrief Summary:			
No.	RECOMMENDATIONS	OWNER	COMMENTS
1			
2			
3			

ITEM	IDENTIFIED BY	REC. No.	Comments
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ITEM	IDENTIFIED BY	REC. No.	Comments
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT			
Roles & Responsibilities			
Criminal Justice System			
Other issues			
Areas of Good Practice			

Annex D: College of Policing Questionnaire Template



**College of
Policing**

Debrief of (*operation / event*)

Date:

Location:



Operation ????? Debrief Questionnaire

(*Customer details*) in conjunction with the College of Policing are facilitating a structured debrief on Operation ??????. This operation was in response to ??????. The aim of the structured debrief is:

- To provide (*Customer details*) with a means by which they can review the planning and response to such an event. Following the results, (*Customer details*) will have the opportunity to consider process and performance improvement for future similar events.

You are asked to complete this questionnaire individually.

It is our intention to collate the results of this questionnaire. The information gathered, where appropriate, will be included in the final structured debrief report for the information of (*Customer details*). This is your opportunity to have your views on the effectiveness of our response during this event so that they can be included in the final report, and we can benefit from the lessons learned for future events.

A. Personal Details – for clarification purposes only

Name:	Role/Rank:
Station/Dept/Agency:	Contact number:

B. Deployment

Using the space below can you provide brief details of your role?

1. From your own role perspective, what aspects of operation ?????? did not go well

2. From your own role perspective, what aspects of operation ?????? went well and should be highlighted as good practice for future exercises?

3. What would be your key recommendations for future similar events

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire and participate in the debrief process.