



Home Office

Operational debriefings

Operational debriefings

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This guidance tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement why they must give an operational debriefing after an operational deployment.

This guidance is based on instructions in the arrest team guidance and relevant information from the customs enforcement manual. It tells you:

- what an operational debriefing is
- when and why you must give an operational debriefing
- the format and conduct of the debriefing
- what you must include in the debriefing, and
- the basic information about debriefing individuals.

For more information see related links:

- 31 Enforcement visits, and
- 61 Arrest teams – operational procedures.

Changes to this guidance – This page tells you what has changed since the previous version of this guidance.

Contacts – This page tells you who to contact for help if your senior caseworker or line manager can't answer your question.

Information owner – This page tells you about this version of the guidance and who owns it.

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Changes to this guidance

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Operational debriefings

What is an operational debriefing?

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This section tells criminal investigators in immigration enforcement criminal investigation teams about operational debriefings.

Definition

An operational debriefing is a gathering of the relevant people after an operation (deployment) has happened, when they can give feedback on, for example, the:

- planning
- organisation
- execution, and
- outcome.

The team will already have received an operational briefing from the officer in charge (often you, if you are holding the debriefing) before the operation happened. For more information on operational briefings, see related link: Operational briefings and planning.

Who carries out the operational debriefing

In the Home Office the teams carrying out operational work give the operational debriefings, for example:

- criminal investigation
- border crime teams
- arrest teams
- non arrest teams working with the police
- surveillance teams, or
- any other enforcement teams conducting operational visits, for example, specialist teams.

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Why and when you must hold a debriefing

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This page tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement when they must hold a debriefing and what the benefits are.

Benefits of holding a debriefing

There are many benefits to holding a debriefing after an operation (deployment). It:

- gives all team members the chance to give feedback
- identifies areas that worked well
- identifies areas where things need to be improved
- helps make changes to future operations
- helps future work to be conducted more efficiently and safely, and
- helps to identify any actions needed as a result of the operation.

Timing of the debriefing

It is best to hold a debriefing as soon as possible after the operation has finished so:

- events are still fresh in the minds of the officers who took part, and
- after a specific or evidential debriefing you can give the criminal investigation team early notification about:
 - relevant evidence, or
 - intelligence.

For more information on the types of debriefings see link on left.

When you must hold a debriefing

It is best practice for you to hold a debriefing after every operation but it is not always possible.

If you cannot arrange a debriefing you must make sure officers have some way to give you feedback. For example, you could distribute a debrief sheet by email.

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In some circumstances it is mandatory to hold a debriefing. Not all of the circumstances below relate to criminal investigation work. However, you may be assisting another team, so you need to be aware under what circumstances you must hold a debriefing.

It is mandatory to hold a debriefing:

- after a family detention visit
- when a critical incident has occurred during an operation
- after an arrest where newly trained staff have yet to complete their mentoring although, you do not necessarily have to include all staff who were on the operation, or
- an area of concern that needs a debrief to be held and recorded is identified by the officer in charge, or any other team member.

For more information on critical incidents and family procedures, see related links:

- 44 Critical incident management, and
- 45 Family cases.

Debriefing standards

There are national occupational standards you must meet when conducting a debriefing. These are laid down by Skills for Justice.

For more information on these standards, see related link: 18. Conduct operational briefings.

Operational debriefings

Types of debriefing

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This section tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement about the different types of debriefing they may be involved in during an investigation.

Depending on which team you are working on there are various types of debriefing you might hold or attend which are listed in the table below.

Operational debriefing	This is a debriefing of the whole operation once it has finished and you can extend it to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • events leading up to the operation, and • the trial process.
Specific debriefing	This concentrates on a particular area of the operation.
Evidential debriefing	This debriefing is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where you can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ discuss the gathered evidence ○ identify evidence still required ○ make sure the team have not overlooked any evidence, and • often the first chance to update silver and gold commanders in larger operations.
Surveillance log debriefing	This is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • held at the conclusion of a surveillance operation • done before the team have been 'stood down' (released from duty), or if it is not practical straight away, as soon as possible after the operation, and • when the team sign off the surveillance log.

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	<p>It makes sure you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• have recorded all observational evidence in the main log or an appendix, and• give out information to the whole surveillance team. <p>You must complete all of these actions and update the team requesting the surveillance as soon as possible after the operation.</p>
Intelligence debriefing	<p>This is used to feed any information gathered back to the intelligence units for them to assess.</p> <p>It is used mainly by port crime teams to provide information about, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• drugs seizures• firearms• other prohibited items, or• cash. <p>Other teams may also hold this type of briefing if they need to review a large amount of information they have gathered.</p>
Use of force debriefing	<p>If force was used during the operation, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• forced entry, or• use of handcuffs. <p>There are specific actions that you must take and forms you must complete as part of your debrief.</p> <p>For more information, see related link: Debriefing after</p>

	using force.	
Individual debriefing	During the operation you may identify an individual who needs to be debriefed. For more information, see related link: Debriefing an individual.	
<p>For more information about briefings, operational planning, the command structure and critical incidents, see related links:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operational briefings and planning, and• 31 Enforcement visits. <p>For general information about surveillance, see related link: Covert policy and procedures: RIPA legislation and guidance.</p> <p>For more information on evidence, see related link: Evidence in criminal investigations.</p>		

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Debriefing an individual

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This page tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement how to refer an individual for a specialist debriefing.

During your operation you may speak to an individual (not necessarily an offender or suspect) who can give you information. In most cases you will conduct some form of interview with them so you can gather and record this information.

How you interview them will depend on:

- What the current Home Office strategic intelligence requirements are.
- Which team you work on and the current processes your team are using, for example:
 - criminal investigation teams, or
 - certain areas within specialist teams.
- Whether the debriefing is linked to a wider operation. For example 'Operation Mayapple' was aimed at overstayers and officers from all teams were asked to use a specific debrief sheet.

If you think somebody needs to be debriefed, you may decide to:

- take a statement or make a notebook entry, which is appropriate for recording basic information, or
- refer them for a specialist debriefing if you think their information may be more significant, for example information about serious or organised crime.

If you are not sure what to do you can ask the officer in charge or your supervising officer for advice.

If you decide the case requires a more in-depth or specialist debriefing you can ask the following teams for help.

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National source unit (NSU)

If you think the individual you are talking to may be a covert human intelligence source (CHIS) you must follow the CHIS policy. CHIS are dealt with by the NSU. For more information, see related link: CHIS policy.

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Whatever you decide to do you must:

- keep a record

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• update your local intelligence unit, and• remember anything you ask or record could be disclosed if there is a prosecution. | |
|--|--|--|

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What to consider in a debriefing

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This section tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement about the things they need to consider when they hold a debriefing.

Planning a debriefing

When planning a debriefing you must consider the same things as when planning a briefing. For more information, see related link: Planning a briefing.

In addition you must:

- make sure everybody who was on the operation (deployment) is able to attend the debriefing or they are able to give their feedback separately if they are cannot attend, and
- consider:
 - using a minute taker to record what is said and to note any action points, and
 - if it was a very large operation, asking individual team leaders to hold separate debriefings and feed the results back to you.

Outcome of the debriefing

After you have conducted an effective debriefing you should be able to:

- confirm if the pre-operation planning and operational briefing were good enough
- show where things:
 - went well, and why
 - did not go well, and why
- identify:
 - better ways of doing things
 - learning points, and
 - changes you can make so identified issues do not happen again.

If you cannot show any of these things you must ask yourself why. It may be there was no issue or improvement to identify. It is more likely, however, that you did not ask the right

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questions in the debriefing. You may need to review and hold a further debriefing if appropriate.

Performance issues

You must not single out individuals for criticism during a debriefing. If the team identify performance issues, it is essential you hold a full and honest discussion of what happened. If you have concerns about how an individual has acted you must deal with this separately with the person concerned and their line manager, if appropriate.

For more information on poor performance and performance management, see related link: [Performance management](#).

Following the debriefing

Once the debriefing is finished you must make sure:

- you pass any relevant information on to the intelligence unit, using your office's procedures
- you update interested parties, for example case owners and criminal investigation teams, with results
- any action points are allocated
- there is a procedure in place to advise officers about learning points and any resulting changes, and
- the debriefing notes are stored with your case papers.

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This page tells criminal investigation officers in immigration enforcement how to conduct a debriefing and how they must set it out.

Conducting the debriefing

When holding the debriefing you must:

- remember the debriefing is to identify good points as well as bad ones
- introduce those present
- tell everyone:
 - the format of the debriefing, and
 - when they will be able to speak
- give an overview of the operation or visit at the beginning, and
- go through each of the briefing sections in detail.

If the press office or the media have been involved in your operation in any way you may also decide to invite them to the debriefing if it has been authorised.

Debriefing format

The debriefing must follow the same format as the operational briefing held before the operation (deployment) took place. This is the IIMARCH format:

- I – Information.
- I – Intention.
- M – Method.
- A – Administration.
- R – Risk.
- C – Communication.
- H – Human rights.

If you are attending a debriefing held by the police you may find they also add E (evaluate)

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and R (review) at the end. These cover a general evaluation and review of the operation.

To get the most from your debriefing try to identify as many areas as possible to discuss. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What went well?
- What didn't go well?
- How could you have changed things?
- What could you have done better?
- What lessons have you learnt?
- What changes can you make in future?

Things you can consider in each section are, for example:

Information:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if the information in the briefing was detailed enough, and• what other information you could have given to make things clearer.
Intention:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• whether everyone understood what you were trying to achieve and why, or• if they didn't, how you could have explained it better.
Method:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• did everyone know exactly what they had to do and when• whether there was any uncertainty• if you missed anything out• if there were any unforeseen problems, and• how could you have planned for any unseen issues in

	advance.
Administration:	Consider whether everything was covered.
Risks:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you identified all the risks before the operation • why you did not identify some of the risks in advance (if appropriate) • other checks you could have made in advance, and • how you could reduce any risks in future.
Communications:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if there were any difficulties in communicating between the team • if the team identified any technical issues, and • how you could resolve any issues in future.
Human rights:	Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if you identified any potential infringements • what they were, and • if you could you have done anything to reduce the impact.
<p>You may identify other questions as well as these suggestions. For more information on IIMARCH, see related link: Operational briefings and planning.</p>	

Operational debriefings

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This page explains who to contact for more help with a question about operational debriefings.

If you have read this guidance and still need more help, you must first ask your line manager.

If the question cannot be answered at that level, you may contact:

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This page tells you about this version of the operational debriefings guidance and who owns it.

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