



Community Tension Assessment Policy (579/2025)

Abstract

This policy details the criteria for instigating a Community Tension Assessment (CTA), and the clearly defined process to be followed from conception to completion.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy is required to standardise the processes when creating Community Tension Assessments (CTAs) which will make the implementation of recommendations and monitoring of assessments more efficient and effective due to the uniformity of procedures.

1.2 This policy introduces the 'Single Incident CTA', which, will either be managed as core business or converted into a full CTA. The CTA flow chart can help guide you through your decision making.

The 'National Community Tension Team (NCTT) Operation Element Report' must be used by forces to submit information to the NCTT in relation to incidents / events / forthcoming events in their area that will, or are likely, to affect national tension levels. The Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) run a weekly report on all new and modified CTAs and submit the return on behalf of the Force.

References within this policy to CTA will refer to an assessment in its broadest sense, i.e., 'Single Incident CTA' or full CTA.

All CTAs will need to be added to the relevant districts 'Community Engagement' NICHE for that year and uploaded under the NCTT NICHE Business Organisation to (joint inbox) SYP NATIONAL COMMUNITY TENSION TEAM in order to maintain a composite log of all community tensions and to provide the basis for the NCTT Operation Element weekly returns. This must be done as soon as practicable after the CTA is written.

Please use the following naming convention CTA_DATE OF INCIDENT_OP
NAME_SUMMARY OF INCIDENT.

For protests, unlicensed music events (UMEs) and large events a National Police Coordination Centre Operations (NPOCC) National Post Event Learning Review (NPELR) must be completed within 48 hours of the event.

2. Scope

2.1 This policy associated procedures and appendices cover all aspects of CTAs within Sussex Police. They include information on how to complete the risk assessment forms, when information and intelligence that forms part of a CTA should be considered for

submission to the NCTT and also the responsibilities for the implementation, monitoring and conclusion of the process.

3. Statement

3.1 Sussex Police will complete CTAs in a standardised format when dealing with any incident that could have a significant effect on the community. The CTA will then be utilised to reduce tensions and improve confidence in policing within the community whilst also dealing with the original incident.

Procedure

1. Introduction

1.1 CTAs are community focused risk assessments which concentrate on a specific incident or issue. CTAs can be both police and partner products and there will nearly always be a need to work jointly to produce and action CTAs.

1.2 The definition of Community Tension as defined by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) and the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is:

'Community Tension is a state of community dynamics which may potentially lead to disorder, threaten the peace and stability of communities, or raise the levels of fear and anxiety in the whole, or part of the community.' (Institute of Community Cohesion – June 2010)

1.3 Flexibility is advisable when creating CTAs because of the diversity of incidents or issues. However, standardisation will not only enhance the status of CTAs, but also allow greater comparison, understanding and application at strategic levels. This is particularly relevant for CTAs with cross-border implications.

2. CTA Criteria

2.1 CTAs must be considered in any of the following circumstances:

- Where there is evidence of, or significant potential for, raised community tensions or disorder.
- Where there is evidence of, or significant potential that, an individual or group are seriously endangered.
- Where there is evidence of, or significant potential for, a loss of confidence in policing.
- In every case of homicide, major crime or critical incident, the potential damage to community relations must be subject to the considerations of a CTA and any decision not to complete one must be rationalised and recorded.
- A major crime is defined as 'any murder, manslaughter, corporate homicide, kidnap and any series of rapes by a stranger, or any other series or serious crime that is deemed as such by the Heads of Crime (Specialist Crime Command (SCC) or Public Protection)'.

- 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'.

- Where there is a fatal and or serious Road Traffic Collision (RTC).

2.2 A CTA will always be considered in incidents involving members of minority or vulnerable communities including minority ethnic communities, asylum seekers, religious groups, Gypsies and travellers, disability and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTQ+) community etc. Please refer to the Hate Crime Policy (590) for guidance.

2.3 There will be occasions when there will be no community impact, and this must be reflected in the document.

2.4 The focus of this procedure is on major crime investigations and critical incidents. On occasions this will encompass targeted operations where the use of covert techniques against suspects from certain communities has a particular sensitivity in this regard.

2.5 For all these scenarios, the immediate police and/or partnership action required should also be beyond standard monitoring or additional Neighbourhood Policing Team (NPT) intervention.

2.6 These criteria can apply to an incident or scenario in the past, present, or future. CTAs can be completed in advance of an event or policing operation.

2.7 Judging 'significance' and 'potential' can be subjective, and this assessment is best managed at the appropriate level i.e., local CTA and management for a local issue, or a whole of Sussex CTA for a force-wide issue.

3. CTA Purpose

3.1 The purpose of a CTA is to:

- Assess and document the community tension of an incident or issue, which will vary dependent on local circumstances.

- Recommend policing actions (often in partnership with community and partners) to mitigate the negative community tension, promote stability within the community and increase confidence in Sussex Police.

3.2 CTAs primarily inform and direct police officers and police staff, particularly those with specific community responsibilities, and form part of local and force tasking processes. They can also inform and guide statutory partners, national police units and central government departments.

3.3 Each CTA must only relate to one specific incident or issue. If the incident changes substantially, a new CTA must be commissioned.

3.4 CTAs are primarily produced to inform and direct the following:

- Those making tactical and strategic policing decisions (usually the owner)
- Those who have responsibility for community safety
- Statutory Partners (e.g., Local Authorities (LAs) and non-statutory partners (e.g., voluntary agencies))
- Other police officers and police staff who may be impacted by the incident or issue.

3.5 CTAs should also be distributed to a wider police and partner audience if appropriate e.g., LAs, national policing units, neighbouring forces, divisional Independent Advisory Groups, Counter Terrorism Intelligence Units (CTIUs), Special Branch, FIB. If CTAs are at a Government Security Classification (GSC) higher than 'OFFICIAL', you should consider producing a version at a lower GSC as soon as possible to allow for wider circulation.

4. Timing for completion of CTAs

4.1 Before

If police have advance knowledge of an incident or emerging issue, a pre-emptive CTA must be completed e.g., when planning for protests or Counter Terrorism (CT) operations. This is particularly important when the tactics for mitigating community tension may involve messaging and community consultation.

Local policing should maintain effective engagement and regular dialogue with identity based local communities (LGBTQ+, Faith ethnicity, other communities of interest, etc. all of which can be co-ordinated through the Force Diversity and Inclusion Team or via the local Community Engagement Advisors (CEAs)) as a means of gathering information or intelligence around emerging issues, and CTA should be a standing agenda item at Divisional Independent Advisory Groups (IAG) meetings, to facilitate co-ordinated community feedback. The earlier a CTA is produced, the more effective it is likely to be. Even a basic initial CTA can be updated at a later point.

4.2 During

If a CTA cannot be produced before an incident or issue comes to police notice, a CTA must still be completed during the incident.

4.3 After

When a CTA has not been produced before or during an incident or issue, one must be produced afterwards if there will or could be significant community tensions.

4.4 Updates

CTAs should be updated during and after the incident or issue. During a critical incident, updates may be as frequent as 2-3 times a day. This captures evolving tensions and impact and records good practice learned for future assessments. The regularity of

updates will be dictated by the (potential) severity of the incident and set by the CTA owner.

4.5 A CTA must be considered at the earliest opportunity. The initial assessment must be made within four hours of the appointment of a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) or Gold Commander to the major crime or critical incident. To assess community tension later than this may result in missed opportunities for the investigation, the successful resolution of the incident and to ensure community needs are met.

5. CTA Ownership

5.1 CTAs are usually commissioned out of the Gold-Silver-Bronze command structure. The owner is the person who commissioned the CTA, and they will decide the Terms of Reference, author, production deadline and timing of updates. The owner is responsible for quality assuring the assessment and confirming that they agree with the judgements made. The owner must also ensure the recommendations are considered and, if agreed, are actioned.

5.2 The initiation of the CTA is the responsibility of the District Chief Inspector in consultation with the SIO, Deputy SIO, or Gold Commander. In all cases, the SIO must work closely with whoever is planning and preparing the CTA. The District Chief Inspector has responsibility for the preparation of the document and will nominate the most appropriate unit, team, or department to commence the CTA and become the author.

Although NPTs are keen consultees, it does not mean they must complete the document. This will ensure that the CTA reflects local need.

The author is responsible for preparing the document, reviewing and eventual closing the report in consultation with the owner.

5.3 The CTA may need to cover more than one Divisional area. In some such cases a lead Divisional Commander will be appointed to deal with the CTA. In others the head of Surrey and Sussex Operations Command (OC) or the Diversity and Inclusion Team will be more appropriate. An Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) will decide in cases of doubt.

5.4 Where the SIO and the District Chief Inspector cannot agree on the terms and action plan of the CTA, an ACC will arbitrate. In such cases, this will be noted in the policy file which in turn will be signed by the ACC.

5.5 Whilst the overall responsibility for the CTA rests with the Divisional Commander, the day to day running of the Divisional implementation of measures to manage tensions will rest with the District Commander(s).

5.6 As with any action plan, it is important to identify who is responsible for each activity, how this will be followed up and what mechanisms will be used to monitor the outcome. Sometimes these activities will be undertaken by outside agencies. In such cases, the follow up and monitoring may be less straightforward but require equal rigour.

6. Consultation by the Author

6.1 Many people may be involved in the production of CTAs; however, CTAs must be completed by someone with a clear understanding of the (potential) community tension and the appropriate level of knowledge – a CTA about a local incident with limited local tension should not be written in a regional or national police unit. Authors should also have the expertise to make recommendations for policing tactics and partner actions which are appropriate, practical, and legal (or direct access to police officers and/or police staff who can advise them).

6.2 CTAs should, as far as possible, be collaborative products. A consultation process should take place and, even if this is not possible when producing the initial CTA, the updates should include details of later consultation.

6.3 Every Divisional Commander has a fundamental responsibility for building and maintaining a wide range of community contacts in furtherance of the force's strategic aims. IAG are key groups with whom consultation must be made. It is crucial that wherever possible, structures and systems are already well established to enable effective communication to take place with key opinion formers and individuals in the community when major crimes and critical incidents occur. These key individuals will include as a minimum: Member of Parliament, Local and County Councillors. Consultation with CEAs within the NPTs can offer further assistance with specific communities.

6.4 Certain investigations and incidents may necessitate the setting up of an IAG specific to that case. In all cases the Divisional IAG will be consulted prior to the establishment of a specific IAG or engagement of an Independent Advisor. The Strategic IAG will be consulted as appropriate to the case. Where a case specific IAG is being established or advisor engaged, the Diversity and Inclusion Team need to be informed. The Diversity and Inclusion Team will be available to offer guidance and support in identifying when a case specific IAG may be needed and on setting up such an arrangements and access to identity-specific advisory groups.

6.5 It is important that the concerns of any bereaved family or close friends are adequately and sensitively addressed. They may represent a valuable influence within the community. Use of Family Liaison Officers (FLO) is a standard requirement in homicide and road death investigations. The SIO must ensure that FLOs are aware of the importance of their role in terms of the wider community. Refer to Family Liaison - Investigation of Major Crime, Road Death and Mass Fatalities Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (907)

6.6 Traffic Management Officers (TMO) covering East and West Sussex will assist Roads Policing Units (RPU), SIOs and District Commanders in preparing a CTA following road deaths which warrant it.

6.7 Consultation should include;

- Local police officers or police staff who may know about historical community issues, however, each new incident or issue can have a different impact. It is also important to get a true assessment rather than one individual's perspective.

- There should be formal and informal consultation e.g., IAGs, Key Individual Networks (KINs) and other local contacts, which the District Engagement Officers (DEOs) should be able to provide.
- As well as direct consultation, it is important to research other sources of community opinion, particularly online e.g., social media. Individuals and communities who do not engage directly with police may be expressing their opinion in other ways. Prompt and factual updates from an authoritative source, such as the police, can reduce community tension or prevent them from becoming an issue in the first place.
- Internal police departments, NPTs and Divisional Intelligence Units etc.
- Statutory Partners (e.g., LAs and non-statutory partners (e.g., voluntary agencies) can inform the tension picture and the recommended tactics. For example, the Fire and Rescue Service and Social Services conduct their own community surveys post significant incidents and often provide a wealth of information that people feel unsure about reporting to police directly.

7. CTA Content and Production

7.1 CTAs must be an assessment of the community tension and associated risks. CTAs are not a specific National Intelligence Model (NIM) intelligence product but should be based on intelligence. It is important to make professional judgements based on information and experience, rather than just relying on formally assessed intelligence. It is important to consider other information such as uncorroborated community reporting, hence the importance of choosing an informed author and undertaking wide consultation. If a CTA is pre-emptive, the author should use their professional judgement as well as historical or comparable intelligence and information contextualised to this situation. When a CTA is created during an incident or issue, current intelligence and information should be used along with relevant historical reporting.

7.2 CTAs are live documents designed to monitor tension in communities.

7.3 Before writing the CTA, the author must gather:

- Details of the incident or issue i.e., what is it? Why has it been assessed to warrant a CTA? This should include the date, time, magnitude, police activity etc. Where something is not 'normal', the author should explain what 'normal' is and how this is different.
- Details of who is involved and may be affected (individuals, community, police and partners). There should be some assessment of whether there is potential for any differential impact on people with a protected characteristic.
- Details of geographic parameters – both current and potential.
- District Engagement Plans, which can be a good source of information on the make-up of the local communities.

7.4 In the CTA the author must document the:

- Methodology. Details of which sources have been consulted (e.g., intelligence systems, individuals), the time period considered and other relevant information about how the CTA has been produced. Details of any internal and external consultation must be noted.

- Details of limitations to the CTA e.g., lack of consultation or time.

- Background information. The level of detail depends on timing and the audience. Where a CTA relates to a local issue, brief background details may be enough. However, for a wider or more strategic primary audience, background details can contextualise the assessment for decision-makers.

7.5 The author must document their assessment of the community tension using Threat, Harm, Risk, Investigations, Vulnerability, Engagement assessment (THRIVE).

- Details of the current tension, providing information about: 'Who', 'What', 'Where', 'When', 'Why' and 'How'; whether this is rumour or fact; whether the incident or issue is static or developing; details of potential retaliation and the likelihood of this happening; details of any assessment of potential for differential impact on people with a protected characteristic.

- Details of the community risks should the situation continue or develop, considering the short, medium, and long term.

7.6 Specific Risks relate to:

- Harm to People - Risk to witnesses, suspects, or offenders; particular risk may relate to high profile persons.

- Community Cohesion - Includes consideration of identity-based communities: ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability, faith, etc.

- Harm to Police - Consider safety of police officers, police staff and stress levels.

- Police Reputation - Reputational risks which may harm the trust and confidence of the community in policing.

- Replication to other communities - is this community tension likely to be repeated elsewhere?

Not all risks are negative; there may be positive risks and wherever possible these should be identified, and appropriate recommendations made to maximise the benefits.

7.7 The following is a (non-exhaustive) list of some potential community tension risks:

- Public disorder

- Crime

- Implications for health and safety

- Increased focus on specific communities
- Utilisation of resources (positive / negative)
- Increase in tension
- Reputation of police (positive / negative)
- Focus of media and/or politicians
- Opportunities for engagement (e.g., with hard to reach groups or communities)

7.8 The author must detail recommendations for policing responses. Recommendations may include options to identify and record community tensions, mitigate risks, ensure community safety, and ensure police meet their legal obligations. The author must detail which risks are addressed by each recommendation.

8. Communications

8.1 • Consult widely with affected communities to ensure the content and method / medium of communications is appropriate and responsive to community concerns.

- Prepare key messages and communications which provide information and reassurance about what has taken / is taking / will take place.
- Ensure the content and timing of communications will manage community expectations and control / respond to rumours.
- Create a proactive and reactive media plan. Consider specialist media (e.g., Religious, or ethnic groups) to reach the widest possible audience.
- Deliver messaging jointly with partners and/or community leaders to emphasise the credibility of the messages.
- Deliver messages directly to communities as well as via media e.g., via IAGs, community meetings, frontline police officers, police staff or community contacts.
- Ensure communication of positive post incident police action e.g., prosecutions.
- Monitor and where appropriate respond to any social media content in relation to the incident or issue. Prompt and factual updates from an authoritative source, such as the police, can reduce community tension or prevent them from becoming an issue in the first place.

9. Policing

9.1 • Consult widely with affected communities to ensure the policing response is appropriate and responsive to community concerns.

- Select an appropriate policing style to respond to community concerns / fears e.g., high visibility, robust, low key, flexible, locally-led ('friendly faces').
- Ensure all affected police officers and police staff (e.g., frontline as well as senior management) are regularly briefed on the latest intelligence, including community tensions.
- Take proactive measures to ensure hate crime reporting methods are in place. For more information on hate crime, please refer to the Hate Crime Policy (590).

10. Review

10.1 • Continuously monitor any community tensions throughout the incident / issue, and post event and documenting any updates within the CTA.

- Review communications and policing plans after new intelligence.
- Review the effectiveness of the policing and any partnership, and identify lessons learned.
- A CTA must remain active and open, as long as is necessary for the original threat to the peace and stability of the affected community to have sufficiently reduced that any raised levels of fear and anxiety in the whole, or part of the community can be managed as business as usual.
- A CTA that has been closed can be re-opened should the need arise – court case, funeral or similar.
- Each CTA must be reviewed at least every 14 days.

11. CTA Retention

11.1 During the lifetime of the CTA the form will be stored electronically under the relevant districts 'Community Engagement' NICHE for that year.

11.2 On conclusion:

- If commissioned due to a crime or RTC a copy of the CTA will be filed with case papers.
- If commissioned due to widespread disorder or multiple crime spree a copy of the CTA will be filed with master crime papers
- If commissioned due to disaster or death a copy of the CTA will be filed with the Coroner's papers
- All CTAs are to be stored as per this policy to allow the CTA to be shared as our duty under Operation Element by FIB.

Team: Local Policing Service Improvement and Engagement