



Operations Command Search Unit Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1153/2022)

Abstract

The policy details the management and deployment of Police Search Advisors, Licensed Search Officers and the provision of specialist search assets.

Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines the commitment and articulates the principles by which Surrey Police and Sussex Police Operations Command Search Unit will discharge its functions in relation to the management and deployment of Police Search Advisors (PoSAs) and Licensed Search Officers (LSOs) and the use of accredited volunteer search assets to ensure a consistent approach is adopted across both Forces in order to achieve best evidence in support of organisational objectives.

1.2 National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Practice Advice on Search Management and Procedures 2006.

2. Scope

2.1 The associated procedure and appendices to this policy detail the search levels and deployment structure of PoSAs and LSOs and defines the specific role profiles for each.

2.2 They also cover the provision of specialist search assets, including underwater searching, swift water rescue, wading search, working at heights and in a confined space. These skills by default include a marine capability and recovery of bodies in water and their accessibility is detailed within the Deployment Flowchart.

3. Policy Statement

3.1 Surrey Police and Sussex Police will maintain a minimum number of PoSAs and LSOs to meet the strategic demands of both Forces. This will be supported through a regularly reviewed strategic threat and risk assessment (STRA) and appropriate resource allocation formula (RAF). These officers will be appropriately selected, trained, qualified and equipped to ensure searches are conducted in a systematic, thorough and safe manner.

3.2 Surrey Police and Sussex Police will from time to time require specialist search assets which will be provided by external partners including Fire and Rescue Services, Specialist Group International (SGI) and accredited search volunteer organisations, using appropriate Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs).

Procedure

1. Overview

1.1 This procedure is for the management of the deployment of Police Search Advisors (PoSAs), Licensed Search Officers (LSOs) and the provision of specialist search assets.

1.2 The role of the Search Unit and PoSAs is to provide a 24-hour response to spontaneous and planned incidents across Surrey and Sussex.

1.3 PoSAs and LSOs are a Force resource and are drawn from across Surrey and Sussex, holding this as a secondary skill, in line with the RAF.

2. Distribution

2.1 This document has been produced for and is distributed to all Silver and Gold Commanders, Senior Investigating Officers (SIOs), Force Control Room (FCR) (Surrey) / Force Contact, Command and Control Department (FCCCD) (Sussex) the Search Unit and all PoSAs in order that a consistent and appropriate response can be provided to incidents involving the deployment of search trained officers, accredited search volunteers and specialist search assets.

2.2 The contents of this document will form the basis of information / briefings to Silver and Gold Commanders together with PoSAs and LSOs.

2.3 The document will be version controlled and regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains current and fit for purpose.

3. Purpose

3.1 To provide and maintain a 24-hour search and advising capability to Surrey Police and Sussex Police for the following:

- On Call licensed PoSA in each Force area to give advice on low-risk counter terrorist and other search related matters. Generally, this relates to:
 - Crime scene searching.
 - Missing Persons.
 - Proactive search operations.
 - High Profile Events / Very Important Persons (VIP) or Royal protection.
 - Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) or suspicious devices.
 - Regular munitions finds.
- Provide fast and slow-time advice on all search related matters.
 - Assist with the management and planning of search operations.

- Conduct searches which are over and above the capability of untrained staff.
- Provide specialist search assets to undertake the following activities:
 - Underwater search.
 - Carry out surface search within water environments.
 - Inland water boat capability.
 - Working in confined spaces as defined by Health and Safety Regulations.
 - Working at height as defined by Health and Safety Regulations.
 - Working in unstable buildings.
 - Marine capability including recovery of bodies from water.
- Provide trained and equipped teams in a mass fatality or disaster operation or where the circumstances dictate that suitably trained officers are deployed such as:
 - Victim recovery.
 - Mortuary operations.
 - Property recovery.
 - Evidence recovery.
- Provide and manage a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) search capability.

3.2 There are three different levels of search which are explained in detail within Levels of Search document.

4. Definitions

4.1 A spontaneous incident is defined as:

'Where the police have not had prior warning to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans'.

A planned incident is defined as:

'An operation where the police service has had the opportunity and time to develop strategies, tactics and contingency plans before an anticipated operation takes place'.

A Cross border / multi agency operations are described as:

'These are planned operations where the search team work closely with agencies from inside and outside of Surrey Police and Sussex Police'.

5. Deployment Profile

5.1 PoSAs operate a 24/7 on call rota. Their details can be obtained from the FCR / FCCCD.

5.2 The recommended search team structure and their minimum deployment are as follows:

1 x LSO team leader

1 x scribe / exhibits officer (not required to be an LSO)

6 x LSOs

5.3 Where PoSAs or LSOs are required for level 1 operations (refer to Appendix B: Levels of Search), they will be released from their primary role to support the need of the Forces.

6. Command and Deployment

6.1 The Search Unit will be the initial point of contact for all search team deployments and will co-ordinate the team response.

6.2 If the Search Unit is unavailable an on duty PoISA must be contacted.

6.3 If no on duty PoISA is available the on call PoISA from the relevant Force must be called on authority from the Force Incident Manager (FIM). There are reciprocal arrangements between Forces should a PoISA not be available in the home Force.

6.4 In the event of a large or protracted search operation the Search Unit may appoint a Search Co-ordinator who will decide on the number of PoSAs required, their roles and responsibilities.

7. Spontaneous Search Requests

7.1 The Officer in Charge (OIC) of the case will contact the Search Unit to obtain advice or guidance in relation to the search operation.

7.2 If the requirement is out of hours to contact an on duty PoISA. Out of hours is anything that is outside of Monday to Friday 0700 – 1600.

7.3 If no on duty PoISA is available the on call PoISA must be called on authority from the FIM in line with 6.3 above.

7.4 Under no circumstances should officers contact the on call PoISA out of hours without the FIM's authority.

7.5 The Search Unit or on call PoISA will then co-ordinate the resources in line with Search Levels document.

7.6 LSOs will not be called out independently of the PoISA.

7.7 Once the PoISA has decided that search resources are required the following must be actioned in order to acquire resources.

- Duties and Resourcing Team (within office hours) to identify appropriate officers in accordance with the Resourcing for Policing Operations Policy (Surrey and Sussex) (1167)
- Divisional / Force Critical Incident Manager to be contacted (out of hours) to oversee the identification and deployment of resources. It is acknowledged that the respective Duty Officer / Inspector is likely to be devolved this responsibility.
- Operations Planning may be called (out of hours) for more significant and protracted resourcing requirements, to assist in identifying appropriate officers.
- Where resources are required from other divisions or the other Force, the respective force Gold Authority must be sought.

The current list of PoISAs and LSOs can be found on the Search Intranet pages within Ops Command Teams.

7.8 There are numerous variables to consider when resourcing a search. Some of these are listed below:

Seriousness of operation

Speed of response required

Number of officers required

Geography of resources required, and time taken to transport

Cost

Resilience to Force

Length of deployment

Items sought

Assistance from non-search officers

Specialist search assets

Use of search volunteers

7.9 When attempting to obtain officers for a search, PoSAs will need to take the following into consideration:

Does the request require the deployment of LSOs?

Does the PoSA need to attend in person, or can it be dealt with remotely or by advice over the phone?

Is the response required instantly or is a planned response more appropriate?

Can the request be met within the necessary times using local resources only or will further resources be required from other areas?

Is the requesting officer authorising overtime?

Does the Force Gold commander need to be consulted to request movement across Divisions / Forces?

8. Planned Search Requests

8.1 Planned search requests must be approved by an officer from the requesting Division / Department of Inspector rank or above.

8.2 Where applicable the request for the allocation of these resources must be made to the Joint Force Tasking and Co-ordinating Group (JFTCG).

8.3 Upon approval, a nominated PoSA will confirm what resources are required and these will be requested via the Duties and Resourcing Manager.

9. Search Strategy

9.1 During the planning of any crime search, spontaneous or planned, the SIO or Deputy SIO and PoSA will agree the search strategy. If necessary, this will be prepared in a formal document and submitted for inclusion in the SIO's policy file.

9.2 Prior to any deployment the search team will receive a briefing which will include the parameters of the search, items sought and the power under which the search will be conducted.

9.3 The search teams will be responsible for seizing and controlling their own exhibits (unless specifically requested not to). The OIC will be responsible for securing appropriate storage of exhibits prior to the completion of the search.

10. Training and Accreditation

10.1 Each LSO and PoSA has a role profile which specifies their responsibilities for initial courses and on-going training requirements. These role profiles are found in Role Profile for Police Search Advisor (PoSA) and Role Profile for Police Search Team (Licensed Search Officer) both role profiles are maintained by the Search Unit.

10.2 The Search Unit is responsible for maintaining records of all searches undertaken by the search team.

10.3 There is a national requirement for all PoSAs and LSOs to undertake 4 PoSA led searches per year, with no period of inactivity greater than 6 months. It is the responsibility of individual PoSAs and LSOs to ensure that their log books are kept up to date and signed by an authorised person, for licensing purposes.

When officers are on maternity or extended sick leave the national search requirement is put on hold. When officers are on maternity leave, Keep in Touch (KIT) days can be used for face-to-face training / online training. On an officers return to work (either maternity or extended sick leave) a search requirement extension is requested from Police National Search Centre (PNSC). This extension can cover a period up to 18 months between searches and may come with conditions such as the 'the next two searches to be observed by a PoSA'.

10.4 Each member of the team is responsible for the maintenance of search Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) and uniform issued to them.

10.5 The on call PoSA rotas will be prepared by the Search Unit and published not less than 2 weeks prior to the requirement to be on call.

10.6 Each LSO is required to undergo a minimum of 2 days refresher training per year to maintain their Counter Terrorism (CT) search licence.

10.7 Arranging all annual refresher and continuation training for LSOs will be the responsibility of the Search Unit. This training is over and above any other form of search training such as CBRN or body recovery etc.

11. Use of Accredited Search Volunteers

11.1 Accredited search volunteer groups provide the police with a very valuable asset especially in the search for missing persons.

There are two trained and accredited groups available:

- Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (LR) consisting of:
 - Surrey Search & Rescue (SurSAR)
 - Sussex Search & Rescue (SusSAR)
 - Search Dogs Sussex (SDS)
 - Sussex Community Search Teams (SCST)

11.2 Both groups have a call out process, transport, radio communications and all members have been vetted by the police.

11.3 In basic terms the LR teams can be deployed any time day or night and can work in any weather conditions. They provide a search and some specialist search capability, such as searching in some water environments.

11.4 The Community Search Teams are normally deployed in daylight, but because of their large numbers are used to line search areas, providing a higher degree of assurance.

11.5 There are MoUs between Surrey Police, Sussex Police, SusSAR, SDS and SCST and an Operational Requirement is in place for SurSAR. For further information contact Ops Command Teams.

All Accredited Search Volunteers must only be deployed under the supervision and direction of a PolSA.

12. Untrained Community Search Volunteers (Members of the Public)

12.1 In the case of a high-risk missing person members of the local community, including extended families often volunteer to help the police in the search. Where the missing person is a young child numbers of such volunteers can be significant.

12.2 Experience has shown that such volunteers, whilst providing a valuable asset, do present various difficulties for the police, particularly in relation to health and safety issues, the possibility of an offender(s) taking part in the search, the potential for damaging evidence and diverting police resources in order to safely manage them.

12.3 In such cases the decision to use these volunteers will be made by the SIO or relevant Force Gold commander on advice from a PolSA.

12.4 If the decision is made to utilise these individuals, the Authorised Professional Practice (APP) Volunteer Registration Form must be used.

NB: Untrained community volunteers will also be required to complete a Non-Police Personnel Vetting Form in line with all other types of search volunteers. Contact the Joint Force Vetting Unit.

13. Specialist Search Assets

13.1 Arrangements are in place with colleagues in the Fire and Rescue Services to provide specialist search assets.

13.2 East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services (F&RS), West Sussex F&RS and Surrey F&RS are able to provide the following services:

- Carry out surface search within water environments.
- Inland water boat capability.
- Working in confined spaces as defined by Health and Safety Regulations.
- Working at height as defined by Health and Safety Regulations.

- Working in unstable buildings.

Team: Operations Command