

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The nature of policing is such that conflict is sometimes inevitable. This can range from verbal abuse or minor assault to serious public disorder or a possible assault with a lethal weapon. The appropriate police response in such situations will vary greatly. On some occasions a police presence alone may be sufficient, in other circumstances it may be necessary to resort to the deployment of large numbers of officers or even lethal force options.

With the number and variety of situations officers are called to deal with it is impractical to cover the differing circumstances they can be faced with. It would clearly therefore never be possible to document all the tactical options that could be deployed to deal with conflict.

However what is important is that the police response is lawful and proportionate in the specific circumstances and that, at all times, individual officers act within the law and the powers they are given. The primary aim in a situation will

always be to control and neutralise any threat in order to maintain the peace and uphold the law as safely as possible for all concerned.

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) has approved the adoption of a single National Decision Model (NDM) for the Police Service. The ACPO Ethics Portfolio and the National Risk Coordination Group have developed this values-based tool to provide a simple, logical and evidence-based approach to making policing decisions.

National Decision Model (NDM)

Police decision making is often complex; decisions are required in difficult circumstances, often in quick time and they are open to challenge.

Adopting the NDM is part of a concerted drive to ensure a greater focus on delivering the mission of policing, acting in accordance with our values, enhancing the use of discretion, reducing risk aversion and supporting the appropriate allocation of limited policing resources as the demand for them increases.

Understanding and practising the NDM will help police officers and staff to develop the professional judgement necessary to make effective policing decisions. It will also help them learn from decisions that have had a successful outcome, as well as from the small proportion that do not.

Decision makers will receive the support of their organisation in all instances where they can

demonstrate that their decisions were assessed and managed reasonably in the circumstances existing at the time. This applies even where harm results from their decisions and actions.

The NDM is suitable for all decisions. It can be applied to spontaneous incidents or planned operations, by an individual or a team of people, and to both operational and non-operational situations.

Decision makers can use it to structure a rationale of what they did during an incident and why.

Supervisors / managers and others can use it to review decisions and any actions taken.

The inherent flexibility of the NDM means that it can easily be used for specialist areas of policing.

In every case, the model stays the same, but users decide for themselves what questions and considerations they apply at each stage.

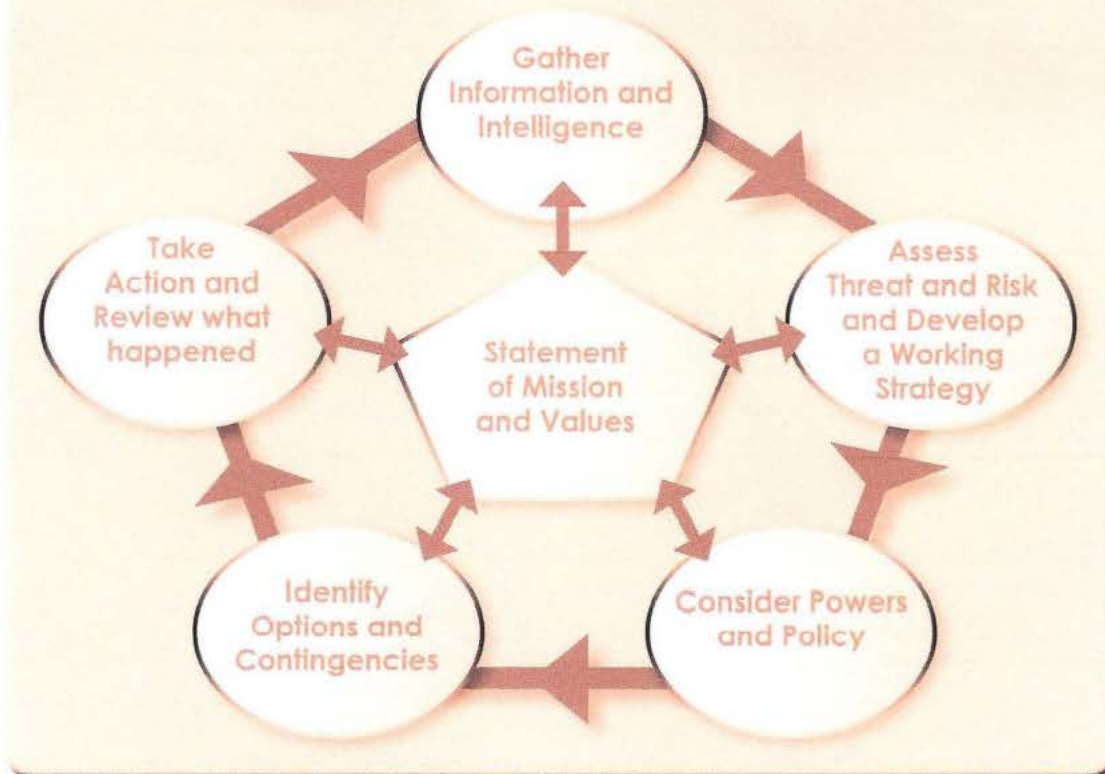
Adherence to the model will assist officers when writing reports after an incident and if they are subsequently called upon to justify their actions.

The National Decision Model (NDM) has been adopted to support and assist decision making as to the most appropriate response when dealing with a situation.

In a fast-moving incident, the Police Service recognises that it may not always be possible to segregate thinking or a response according to each phase of the model.

In such cases, the main priority of decision makers is to keep in mind their overarching mission and to ensure the safety of themselves, their colleagues and members of the public.

THE NATIONAL DECISION MODEL FOR POLICING



Applying the National Decision Model

The National Decision Model has six key elements. Each component provides the user with an area for focus and consideration.

The corners of the values pentagon connect to and support the five stages of the decision-making process. One step logically follows another, but the model allows for continual re-assessment of a situation and the return to former steps when necessary.

This allows the officer to use the model with a degree of flexibility assisting with their dynamic risk assessment and decision making.

An officer may apply the National Decision Model in any given situation both consciously and subconsciously. This may be before, during or after an incident or set of circumstances.

The 3P Principle

The 3P principle is a useful concept to consider when using the National Decision Model.

It should be noted that an officer may receive additional information at any point and therefore reassess the threat rather than continue around the model.

The 3P Principle

PRIOR: Anything that an officer may be involved with prior to an encounter, for example, briefings.

PRESENT: Anything that any officer may be involved with during an encounter. This may be subconscious depending on the situation and the officer.

POST: Post event examples include debriefing, statement writing, use of force reporting, etc. The officer would need to review and reflect on what happened in the previous areas.

Statement of Mission and Values

The pentagon at the centre of the NDM contains the Statement of Mission and Values for the Police Service (ACPO, July 2011).

It is the need to keep this statement of mission and values – with its integral recognition of the necessity to take risks and protect human rights – at the heart of every decision that differentiates the NDM from other decision-making models.

The mission of the police is to make communities safer by upholding the law fairly and firmly; preventing crime and antisocial behaviour; keeping the peace; protecting and reassuring communities; investigating crime and bringing offenders to justice.

We will act with integrity, compassion, courtesy and patience, showing neither fear nor favour in what we do. We will be sensitive to the needs and dignity of victims and demonstrate respect for the human rights of all.

We will use discretion, professional judgement and common sense to guide us and will be accountable for our decisions and actions. We will respond to well-founded criticism with a willingness to learn and change.

We will work with communities and partners, listening to their views, building their trust and confidence, making every effort to understand and meet their needs.

We will not be distracted from our mission through fear of being criticised. In identifying and managing risk, we will seek to achieve successful outcomes and to reduce the risk of harm to individuals and communities.

In the face of violence we will be professional, calm and restrained and will apply only that force which is necessary to accomplish our lawful duty.

Our commitment is to deliver a service that we and those we serve can be proud of and which keeps our communities safe.

The pentagon at the centre of the NDM reminds officers to keep the mission and values at the heart of the decision making process.

Throughout the situation, you could ask yourself:

- Is what I'm considering consistent with the Statement of Mission and Values?
(You are wanting to ensure that decisions reflect an understanding of the police duty to act with integrity, be willing to take risks and protect the human rights of all.)
- What would the Police Service expect of me in this situation?
- What would any victim(s), the affected community and the wider public expect of me in this situation?

Gather Information and Intelligence

A correct and defensible decision is more likely to result from consideration of all relevant information and intelligence.

Information and intelligence may be gathered in a number of different ways.

This may come from what the individual officer sees, smells, hears or even feels for themselves.

Information and intelligence may have been gathered from another person.

It may have been gathered from a local or force-wide intelligence systems, experience from previous encounters or data obtained from a use of force reporting system may also be relevant (this is not an exhaustive list).

The 'sixth sense' defined as 'grasping the inner nature of things intuitively' or more commonly as a 'gut feeling' will also have impact on the situation.

In processing this information it is important to try and identify what it is that has made the individual feel the way they did.

Feelings may also be important and it is worth noting here that it is not wrong for an officer to feel frightened. Indeed, an admission of this may help another person to understand more clearly why the officer reacted as they did.

Communications staff will be able to support this aspect by obtaining as much information as possible from persons requesting police attendance or other available sources.

While hearsay may only be admissible as evidence in court in

certain circumstances, it is likely to be very relevant if an officer has to explain or assist another person to understand why a particular course of action was taken.

The information or intelligence given to an officer will all be valuable, for example, information surrounding the reason for attending, any previous dealings with the person/suspect, and any information on the location or similar incidents. This will help the officer to assess the threat and risk forming a threat assessment and enable the development of a working strategy.

This process of gathering information and intelligence will be on-going.

During this stage the decision maker defines the situation and clarifies matters relating to any initial information and intelligence.

(ie, defines what is happening or has happened)

- What is happening?
- What do I know so far?
- What further information (or intelligence) do I want/need?

Information can be received from a variety of sources including:

- communications / control rooms
- colleagues
- members of the public.



Assess Threat and Risk and Develop a Working Strategy

On the basis of the gathered information and intelligence, an officer will be able to make an assessment of the threat they face and develop a working strategy.

An accurate threat and risk assessment is the cornerstone of personal safety. Threat assessment means accurately assessing any impact factors relating to the situation particularly to the officer, person, object or place which could put anyone at risk.

Profiled Subject Behaviour

Compliance

The subject offers no resistance and complies with requests. It is important that the officer understands that this could change rapidly.

Verbal resistance and gestures

The subject refuses to comply either verbally or, by their body language, non-verbally.

Passive resistance

The subject stands/sits/lies still and will not move.

Active resistance

The subject pulls away or pushes the officer but makes no attempt to strike them.

Aggressive resistance

The subject physically attacks the officer.

Serious or aggravated resistance

The subject commits an assault which presents the possibility of serious injury or death. This includes the use of weapons.

This identification enables the officer to develop a working strategy to ensure their safety, the safety of other colleagues and the safety of the public.

The threat to the officer is most likely to emanate from the person or persons they are dealing with or

even themselves, any objects that may be present, or the place where the encounter occurs. This can be simplified as follows, although the issues shown are by no means an exhaustive list.

Levels of Threat / Risk

The threat faced can generally be categorised as a high risk or unknown risk. This doesn't mean a situation will never present a low risk; such an assessment can however lead to complacency.

What is important is that where no immediate obvious risk or threat is identified, officers must still remain aware of the need to maintain safety.

• HIGH RISK

An obvious risk, e.g. a person waving a knife

• UNKNOWN RISK

Everything else

The assessment of a threat and risk is not something to be done once per incident. It is a fluid entity; threat and risk levels rise and fall throughout an incident. This should be a continuous process throughout any incident, for example, moving closer to a subject to conduct a search or make an arrest may trigger a reaction from the subject.

It is essential that those at an incident continuously reassess the threat and risk and develop a working strategy.

When approaching any incident, officers should be scanning the location to identify areas where danger may arise.

Having identified the number of potential risks officers will be able to make an assessment of possible high or unknown risks and develop a working strategy.

ACPO RISK PRINCIPLES

The Police Service upholds the following principles in relation to the taking and reviewing of risk. These principles are recognised by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) and Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

- PRINCIPLE 1:** The willingness to make decisions in conditions of uncertainty (ie, take risks) is a core professional requirement of all members of the Police Service.
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- PRINCIPLE 2:** Maintaining or achieving the safety and well-being of individuals and communities is the primary consideration in risk decision making.
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- PRINCIPLE 3:** Risk taking involves judgement and balance, with decision makers required to consider the value and likelihood of the possible benefits of a particular decision against the seriousness and likelihood, of the possible harms.
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- PRINCIPLE 4:** Harm can never be totally prevented. Risk decisions should, therefore, be judged by the quality of the decision making, not by the outcome.
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- PRINCIPLE 5:** Taking risk decisions, and reviewing others' risk decisions, is difficult so account should be taken of whether they involved dilemmas or emergencies, were part of a sequence of decisions or might appropriately have been taken by other agencies.
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- PRINCIPLE 6:** The standard expected and required of members of the Police is that their risk decisions should be consistent with those a body of officers of similar rank, specialism and experience would have taken in the same circumstances.
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- PRINCIPLE 7:** Whether to document a decision is a risk decision it itself which should, to a large extent, be left to professional judgement. Deciding whether or not to make a record, however, and the extent of that record, should be informed by consideration of the likelihood of harm occurring and its seriousness.
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- PRINCIPLE 8:** To reduce risk aversion and improve decision making, policing needs a culture that learns from successes as well as failures. Good risk-taking should be identified, celebrated and shared.
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- PRINCIPLE 9:** Since good risk taking depends upon quality information, the Police Service will work with partner agencies to share relevant information about those who pose risk or those who are vulnerable to the risk of harm.
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- PRINCIPLE 10:** Members of the Police Service who make decisions consistent with these principles should receive the encouragement, approval and support of their organisation.

Person, Object, Place

Each person, object or place may represent a separate problem.

P - PERSON

O - OBJECT

P - PLACE

Person

Officers should be aware of the subject's hands. For example, a hand going into a pocket could be reaching for a weapon and one hand open with the other closed could indicate a weapon is being held. Merely watching the hands is not enough, subjects should be asked to show their open hands to ensure they are not palming a weapon.

The officer should seek to make sure the subject's hands are kept away from their body thereby preventing easy access to a weapon and ensure they are always in view, even if only with peripheral vision. This can help to prevent a surprise attack.

Allowing subjects to keep their hands at a comfortable distance from the body, rather than outstretched, may help to prevent or reduce an aggressive response towards the officer as a result of their discomfort. People under the influence of alcohol, drugs or experiencing mental ill health may be unpredictable and behave irrationally.

The subject's actions can give an indication of threat, such as reaching for an object and, shouting threats and abuse. A subject who is agitated, angry or scared may present a higher threat to officers.

Also consideration should be given to whether there may be other persons or friends of the individual nearby. Crowds may form and become involved in an incident.

Other objects that may pose a further risk are:

- Sharp edges on furniture can cause injury during a struggle
- A door allowed to close may hinder a tactical withdrawal
- A bench outside a public house may hinder movement and could cause injury
- Passing vehicles pose an obvious danger to officers
- Subjects may leave dogs in a car to hinder searches.

Object

Apart from obvious objects like firearms, knives, needles and razors other items can be used as weapons, such as scissors, darts, screwdrivers, pens, pencils and keys. In fact just about anything, given the right circumstances, has the potential to cause injury. When such objects have been identified the officer should assess the likelihood of the object causing a problem and develop a working strategy to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Place

The place in which an incident happens can have an impact on a threat assessment. By being consciously aware of their surroundings officers will be better prepared for any situation.

- Buildings offer many places for a subject to hide and opportunities to find weapons.
- Dealing with a subject in the kitchen should be avoided if possible due to the availability of weapons.
- Building sites present many dangers to officers. Apart from obvious dangers like unsafe flooring and rooves, they provide access to a variety of weapons.
- Wooded areas provide similar problems for officers.

Officers should consider the dangers of initiating contact with a subject from within their own police vehicle.

Should the individual then produce a weapon and attack, the police car suddenly becomes a cage from which it is difficult to escape.

Approaching an individual on foot may allow more time to assess the situation and may provide the opportunity to consider more options and contingencies. For example, an option may be to tactically withdraw prior to any contact.

This stage involves assessing the situation, including any specific threat, the risk of harm and the potential for benefits.

- Do I need to take action immediately?
- Do I need to seek more information?
- What could go wrong? (and what could go well?)
- How probable is the risk of harm?
- How serious would it be?
- Is that level of risk acceptable?
- Is this a situation for the police alone to deal with?
- Am I the appropriate person to deal with this?

Develop a working strategy to guide subsequent stages by asking yourself:

- What am I trying to achieve?

(Amongst other things consider discrimination, good relations and equal opportunities.)

Consider Powers and Policy

As previously stated, officers must only act within the law. A sound knowledge of available legal powers is therefore essential.

Guidance on the legal aspects of the use of force is included in the Use of Force Module of this manual. In addition, local or force policies may determine what or how action should be taken. For example, local positive arrest policies have been developed in relation to domestic abuse.



GO TO:
MODULE 03:
USE OF
FORCE

Note: Personal Safety considerations should be made in conjunction with procedural ones.

For example Section 1 Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) requires that pre search information is given, this does not preclude asking suspects to show their hands, thereby ensuring that they are not holding a weapon. Remember the mnemonic GO WISELY:

- G** - Grounds for search
- O** - Object of search
- W** - Warrant card (if in plain clothes)
- I** - Identify yourself
- S** - Station based at
- E** - Entitlement to a copy of the search form
- L** - Lawful reason for stop
- Y** - You are not under arrest but detained for the duration of the search

This stage involves considering what powers, policies and legislation might be applicable in this particular situation.

- What police powers might be required?
- Is there any national guidance covering this type of situation?
- Do any local organisational policies or guidelines apply?
- What legislation might apply?

As long as there is a good rationale for doing so, it may be reasonable to act outside policy.





Reasonable Officer Response Options

The tactical option chosen must be proportionate to the threat faced in any set of circumstances.

Officer's presence

This includes the way the officer approaches the scene, their manner, appearance and professionalism. An officer may also decide, when appropriate, to tactically withdraw their presence from a situation.

Communication skills

The officer's ability to effectively communicate verbally and non-verbally.

Primary control skills

Use of empty hand skills (including hip check, shoulder tipping and release techniques), pressure points, arm-locks, wrist-locks, use of handcuffs and restraints and drawing a baton.

Secondary control skills

Use of incapacitants.

Defensive and offensive skills

Blocks, strikes, takedowns with unarmed skills, baton strikes or handcuffing.

Deadly force

Any action likely to cause serious injury or death. Use of unarmed skills, baton, firearms or by any other means.

Identify Options and Contingencies

It is not possible to list all the options and contingencies available to deal with a situation that an officer may have to deal with. Ultimately the aim should be to gain control of the situation and then retain that control so that officers are in a position to carry out their duty, whatever that may be.

Each of the techniques or tactics described in this manual represents a possible option. Remember all actions/options considered will have to be accounted for. It is vital that officers understand the medical implications of each option as this is likely to be very relevant in making the appropriate choice.

An option that carries a high risk of serious injury is less likely to be justified in circumstances where the threat posed carries a limited risk to others. The officer will need to consider the level and type of force to be used and any possible medical implications as this is likely to be very relevant in making the appropriate choice.

The option chosen must be proportionate to the perceived threat faced in the circumstances.

This stage involves considering the different ways to make a particular decision (or resolve a situation) with the least risk of harm.

OPTIONS

- What options are open to me? Consider the immediacy of any threat; the limits of information to hand; the amount of time available; available resources and support; your own knowledge, experience and skills; the impact of potential actions on the situation and the public.

If you have to account for your decision, will you be able to say it was:

- Proportionate, legitimate and necessary?
- Reasonable in the circumstances facing you at the time?

CONTINGENCIES

- What will I do if things do not happen as I anticipate?

Take Action and Review What Happened

Having considered all the aforementioned aspects an officer is more likely to make an appropriate decision in relation to the action they take and continuously assess the situation. Making an appropriate decision can have many benefits including increased confidence, reduced chance of litigation and reduced levels of injury.

Decision-makers are accountable for their decisions and must be prepared to provide a rationale for what they did and why. In some circumstances the need to document decisions is prescribed by statute, required by organisational strategies, policies or local practices, or left to the decision-maker's discretion.

Whatever the circumstances, the Police Service recognises that it is impossible to record every single decision and that not all decisions need to be recorded. In most instances professional judgement should guide whether or not to record the rationale, as well as the nature and extent of any explanation. The record should be proportionate to the seriousness of the situation or incident, particularly if this involves a risk of harm to a person.



For more information and a practical policing scenario applying the NDM please follow the link below:



GO TO:

[http://www.police.nhs.uk/ndm](#)

This stage requires decision makers to make and implement appropriate decisions. It also requires decision makers, once an incident is over, to review what happened.

In addition to using the NDM to determine their actions, decision makers may also find it useful for structuring the rationale behind their decisions.

ACTION

Respond:

- Implement the option you have selected;
- Does anyone else need to know what you have decided?

Record:

- If you think it appropriate, record what you did and why.

Monitor:

- What happened as a result of your decision?
- Was it what you wanted or expected to happen?

If the incident is continuing, go through the NDM again as necessary

REVIEW

If the incident is over, review your decisions, using the NDM

- What lessons can you take from how things turned out?
- What might you do differently next time?

The mnemonic VIAPOAR will help users remember the key elements of the NDM.

- V** - Values
- I** - Information
- A** - Assessment
- P** - Powers and policy
- O** - Options
- A** - Action
- R** - Review





Accounting for your Actions Aide Memoir

The following guide has been designed to assist officers to reflect on a situation in which they have been involved and identify those elements relevant to the circumstances they faced.

This will assist in report writing and help to justify actions as lawful and proportionate.

ACCOUNTING FOR YOUR ACTIONS

History	Call / suspect / venue / personal experience
Availability	Backup
Comparisons	Age / sex / height / weight / physical state
Suspect behaviour	Verbal / nonverbal / defensive / offensive / aggressive / resistant / passive
Proximity	Seen or unseen weapons / other suspects / hostile crowds
Scene description	Access / lighting / mood / weather
Exceptional circumstances	Not mentioned elsewhere
Imminent danger	To self / others / honestly held belief
Powers	Common law / S.3 Criminal Law Act 1967 / s117 PACE
Tactical options	Persuasion / advice / commands & responses / escort holds / restraints / take downs / strikes & kicks / Personal Protective Equipment
Injuries	Self / others / first aid administered / aftercare

Impact Factors Aid Memoir

Subject

- Gender, age, size of subject
- Strength of subject
- Skill level of subject
- Exhaustion of subject
- Injury of subject
- Number of subjects
- Special knowledge of subject
- Alcohol consumed by subject
- Drugs taken by subject
- State of subject's mental health
- Subject's physiology
- Subject's perception of the non-verbal behaviour of an officer
- Subject's perception of imminent danger
- Subject being in a position of perceived disadvantage
- Subject's perception of the officer's level of force.

Officer

- Gender, age, size of officer
- Strength of officer
- Skill level of officer
- Exhaustion of officer
- Injury of officer
- Number of officers
- Special knowledge of officer
- Officer's physiology
- Officer's perception of the non verbal behaviour of a subject
- Officer's perception of imminent danger
- Officer's perception of being in a position of disadvantage
- Officer's perception of the subject's level of resistance.

Object

- Weapons
- Vehicles
- Objects in the vicinity.

Place

- Environmental features
- Crowds or venues in the immediate vicinity
- Other dangers not directly associated with the incident.

Please note that these lists are not exhaustive.



Reviews/Debriefs Aid Memoir

The NDM is ideal for examining decisions made and action taken, whether by a supervisor, an informal investigation or a formal inquiry. Examples of questions and considerations are:

Values

- How were the police mission and values, risk, and the protection of human rights kept in mind during the situation?

Information

- What information/intelligence was available?

Assessment

- What factors (potential benefits and harms) were assessed?
- What threat assessment methods were used (if any)?
- Was a working strategy implemented? Was it appropriate?

Powers and policy

- Were there any powers, policies and legislation that should have been considered?
- If policy was not followed, was this reasonable in the circumstances?

Options

- How were feasible options identified and assessed?

Action and Review

- Were decisions proportionate, legitimate, necessary and ethical?
- Were decisions reasonable in the circumstances facing the decision maker?
- Were decisions communicated effectively?
- Were decisions and the rationale for them recorded as appropriate?
- Were decisions monitored and reassessed where necessary?
- What lessons can be taken from the outcomes and how the decisions were made?

For Supervisors

- Did you recognise and acknowledge instances of initiative or good decisions (were they passed to managers where appropriate)?
- Did you recognise and challenge instances of poor decisions?

Even where the outcome was not what was hoped for, if the decision taken by your staff was reasonable given the circumstances, they deserve your support and that of the organisation.