

# **Multi-Agency Debrief Protocol**

**April 2013**

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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the document**

This document is designed to provide members of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (NLRF) with a framework for undertaking a structured multi-agency debrief. It seeks to define the parameters within which multi-agency debriefing should take place and provide a single consistent process for debriefing:

- Incidents / operations
- Organised events
- Exercise and training events

The document also outlines the agreed process for taking forward actions and recommendations identified during the debrief and for managing / monitoring these within the agreed timescales.

### **Structured debriefing**

NLRF have adopted the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) debriefing process as an integral element of their debriefing protocol.

This provides a structured format in which to debrief incidents / events and allows each participant the opportunity to reflect upon their involvement in the incident / event. Key issues around what went well or what could be improved are brought out during the process.

Following each debrief, a report is prepared identifying areas for development and improvement, good practice to be shared and recommendations to be addressed.

The NLRF multi agency debrief protocol outlines the process for a multi-agency approach to debriefing and is not intended to infringe upon existing arrangements for individual agency debriefing. However agencies may wish to adopt these multi-agency principles for their own internal usage.

### **Aim of multi-agency debrief**

The aim of any multi agency debrief is to reflect upon an incident, operation, event or exercise and share experiences encountered so that areas of good practice and issues requiring further action

### **The objectives of a multi-agency debrief**

The objectives of a debrief are to:

- agree on the key actions taken
- identify key lessons
- identify positive points that should be established as good practice
- identify issues that may be required to be the subject of further review;
- determine an action plan identifying lead organisation(s) and relevant time-scales within which issues / recommendations are addressed

## **When is a multi-agency debrief required?**

A multi agency debrief should be considered following:

- The declaration of major incident standby or implement by two or more responders
- Any serious incident involving a number of agencies
- Multi agency exercises and training events
- Large scale, organised public events
- Any other relevant event / operation which requires a response by two or more partner agencies

## **Who determines when a multi agency debrief is required**

- Police as an extension of their overall co-ordination role;
- Other partner agency that determines need for a multi-agency debrief
- Organisation appointed to lead on an organised event or exercise;

## **How is a multi agency debrief requested**

- Request direct from identified lead agency
- An internal debrief identifies that a multi-agency debrief is required. Application should be made to those partners identified within the internal debrief
- A multi-agency debrief is identified within the planning process

The lead organisation will arrange an appropriate venue and manage administration.

*NB Lead organisation may also refer to the NLRf, a Theme Group or a designated Sub-Group.*

Appointment of the debrief facilitator is dependent on the circumstances of the incident/event/ exercise under consideration. Facilitation should not be conducted by an officer who was directly involved in the event unless agreed by partners.

## **When will a Multi-Agency Debrief take place?**

A multi-agency debrief should take place no later than six weeks following closure of an event.

The timing should be sufficient to allow participating agencies to undertake appropriate internal de-briefs prior to the multi-agency debrief. Critical lessons must be identified and acted upon expediently.

If an incident involves a prolonged period of recovery, the local authority co-ordinating this process must ensure that a further debrief is held on the conclusion of such actions. This will focus on relevant long-term issues related to recovery and restoration of normality.

Where a multi-agency response is required to emergencies that do not exhibit the normal characteristics of a Major Incident, i.e. Foot and Mouth Disease, Pandemic Influenza, it may be difficult to determine a specific point where the crisis is concluded. A series of multi agency debriefs may need to be considered by partners at intervals reflecting this protocol or as determined by events within a protracted period.

In respect of organised events and exercises it is recommended that single agency debriefs take place within 3 weeks and a multi-agency debrief within 6 weeks. (NLRf endorsed events/exercises)

## **How will a multi-agency debrief be conducted**

All multi agency debriefs will be conducted using the NPIA structured debriefing process and conducted where possible by officers trained in this process.

The focus of the multi agency debrief is to identify issues that need to be addressed in an expedient manner. Basic principles of conduct have been identified as follows:

- Open and frank discussion should be encouraged; it is not a finger-pointing exercise;
- A recording of the meeting should be made to assist with the production of minutes and reports, with copies made available to all attending organisations;
- Aim is to produce a detailed report and action plan for internal and multi-agency use but an appropriate version should be available for release to the media;
- Report will identify recommendations and/or actions to be taken. Responsibility for delivery of recommendations and/or actions will be the responsibility of the agency appointed in the report.
- A copy of the Report will be formally submitted to all agencies involved. However, it will remain the responsibility of the NLRF Business Management Group (BMG) to determine and implement the nature of multi-agency actions to be taken.
- The NLRF BMG will monitor delivery of recommendations and/or actions.
- The NLRF BMG will where appropriate act as Auditor of the delivery of recommendations and/or actions.

The identified lead agency is responsible for retaining the master copy of any relevant documentation as a matter of historical record. Once all involved agencies have agreed upon the content, copies should be circulated to all members of the NLRF.

## **Single agency debriefing**

Individual agencies have existing arrangements in place to facilitate the debriefing of incidents, exercise/training initiatives and organised events. The arrangements focus on internal procedures and actions specific to the agency involved. Mechanisms are in place to capture any lessons learned from an incident, etc, and recommendations/actions identified in the subsequent action plan are managed internally.

The single agency debrief will feed only those issues identified as effecting other agency responses into the multi agency debrief process.

*NB Agencies determine and conduct their own debrief procedures but a number of NLRF partners have adopted the National Police Improvements Agency (NPIA) Debriefing Process to facilitate all debrief requirements.*

## **Exceptions when holding the multi-agency debrief**

It is recognised that certain incidents (or aspects thereof) may be subject to subsequent legal process that renders full and frank discussion inappropriate in the timescales envisaged within this protocol.

It should be the objective, wherever possible, to proceed with the MA debrief as far as is reasonably practicable. Specific aspects which cannot be discussed at that time should be recorded as such. These issues should be revisited as or when circumstances permit.

In particular, it will be essential in situations involving fatalities to ensure that HM Coroner is consulted appropriately. HM Coroner should be invited to participate in the MA debrief and, as necessary, advise on the suitability of further discussion relating to fatalities.

Terrorist incidents or other threats to national security must be handled in accordance with appropriate procedures.

## **What issues should the multi-agency debrief address**

The multi agency debrief should focus on issues that impact directly or indirectly on more than one agency and follow the NPIA debrief process.

1. From an agency perspective what aspects did not go well and needs further development or improvement
2. From an agency perspective what aspects went well and should be highlighted as good practice
3. From an agency perspective what would you suggest to be the key areas that need development, particularly for your own role / agency

Recommendations/actions resulting from these issues will be agreed by the participating partners with assistance and guidance from the NLRF E&TG.

## **Production of multi-agency debrief report and action plan**

A report should be produced following a multi-agency debrief identifying key issues resulting from the process and agreed by partners.

The multi agency debrief report should include an executive summary outlining key learning points, which will be supported by a factual record of events that took place in response to the incident.

The debrief action plan may be included as an appendix to the report.

- Recommendation;
- Organisation(s) responsible for progressing action;
- Desired outcome of action;
- Time-scale within which action must be completed;
- Legal Implications.

Responders involved in the multi-agency debrief should 'sign off' the report to underline the partnership approach to the process. This should be undertaken by those representatives attending the debrief.

## **Multi agency debrief report / action plan**

The NLRF debrief protocol provides partner agencies with a consistent approach to monitoring recommendations/actions identified during/following incidents, organised events and exercise and training initiatives.

The process is divided into three distinct areas:

- Planning process\*
- Debrief process
- Review process

*NB Annex 1 of Part 2 provides a flow chart outlining the overall process.*

*\*The planning process applies to organised events and exercises.*

*With regard to incidents this part of the process would only be applicable if they refer to incidents occurring at pre-planned events.*

### **The aim of the debrief action plan**

To manage recommendations and actions identified from an incident, event or exercise.

### **The objectives of the debrief action plan**

The objectives of the action plan are to:

- provide a mechanism for processing lessons identified resulting from a structured debrief through to conclusion;
- ensure 'good practice' is recognised for incorporation into the response to other incidents, events or exercises;
- identify issues that may be required to be the subject of further review;
- provide agencies with an agreed action plan identifying lead organisation(s) and relevant time-scales under which identified items are dealt with;
- identify areas of concern and agree appropriate mitigation;
- create a NLRF register of lessons identified and good practice

## Planning process

Any application for a NLRF sponsored/endorsed event or exercise will only be accepted if the NLRF debrief protocol is adopted and appropriate measures put in place to prepare for and manage the debrief within the scoping, planning, delivery and review stages of that event.

An event for consideration may be put forward to the NLRF E&TG following authorisation from either:

- Theme Lead Chair;
- Lead organisation;

Following NLRF E&TG acceptance and agreement of a delivery date the event is included in the NLRF Exercise and Training Calendar.

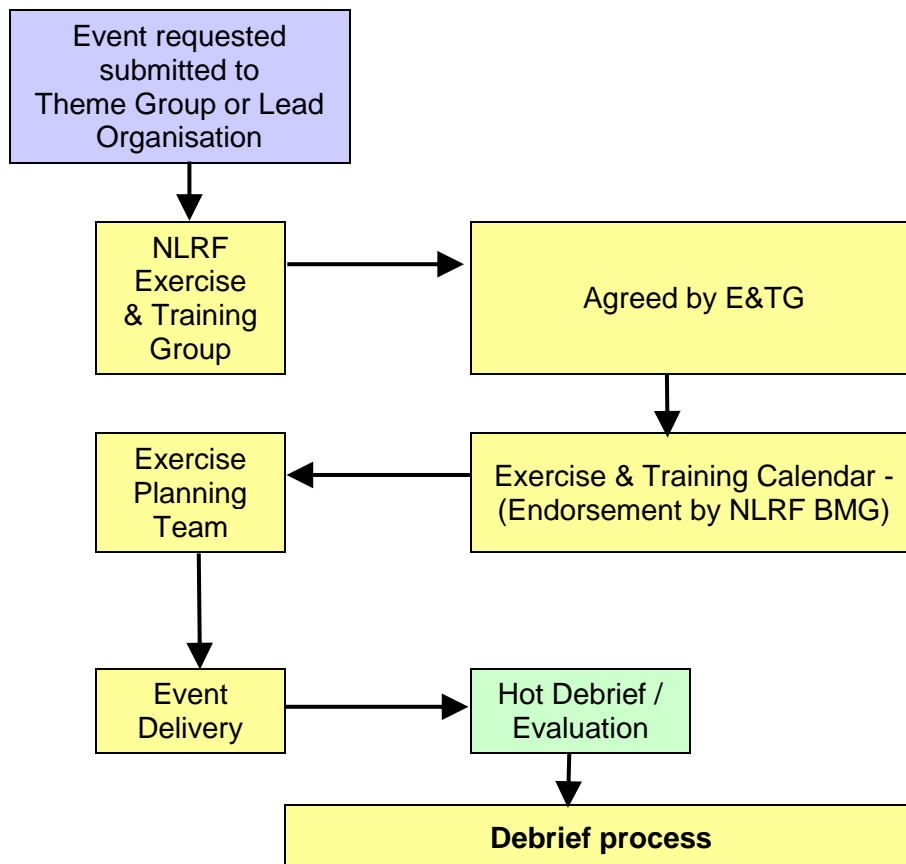
The lead organisation will establish an exercise working group to scope, plan, deliver and review the delivery of that event.

For exercises a multi-agency structured debrief will be set within the NLRF Exercise and Training Calendar and partners notified accordingly.

Application for a NLRF sponsored/endorsed event must include a commitment to include a review element. The event will be considered as uncompleted until a formal debrief has been undertaken and a report produced.

Continuous review throughout the planning stage will ensure improved delivery and highlight lessons learned from an early stage.

### Planning Process Flow Chart





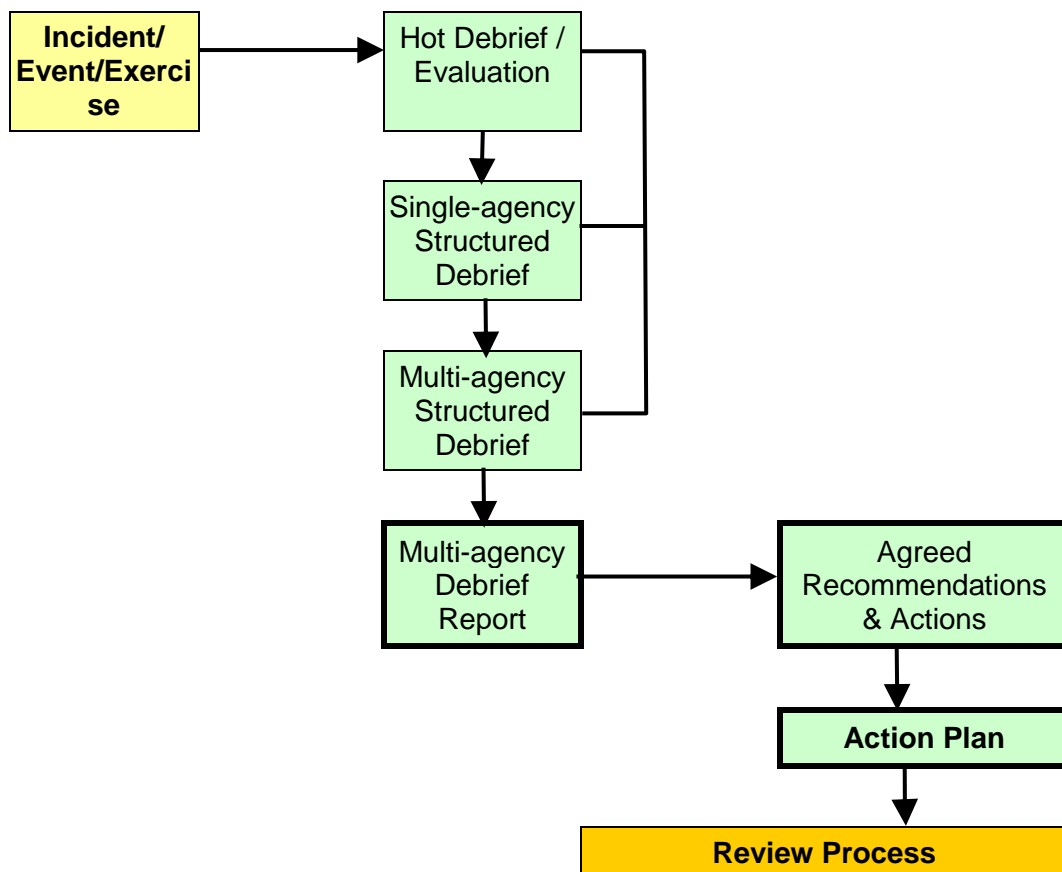
## Debrief process

Following an incident, organised event or exercise debriefing will follow the accepted process:

- Hot debrief;
- Single agency structured debrief;
- Multi-agency structured debrief;
- Multi-agency debrief report;
- Identification of agreed recommendations and actions
- Initial action plan

*NB See Part 1 Debrief protocol*

### Debrief Process Flow Chart

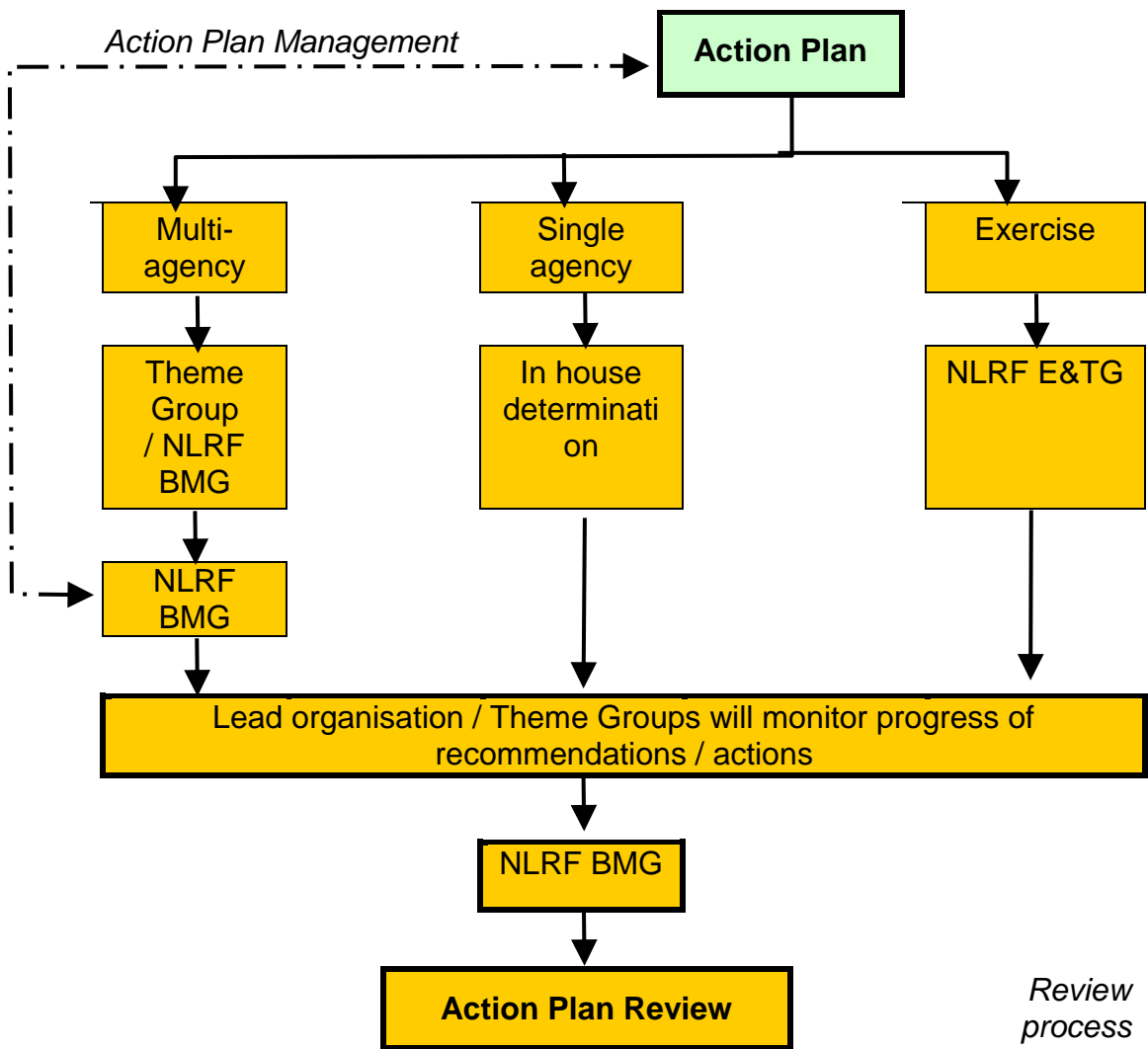


## **Review process**

Following the debrief process and the agreement of an action plan recommendations and actions will be categorised as:

- Single agency            Recommendations/actions identified specific to a single agency will be determined by implementation of an in-house Action Plan and managed by that agency. Delivery of outcomes will be shared with multi-agency partners on a 'need to know' basis.
- Multi agency;            Recommendations/actions identified affecting more than one agency will be determined by implementation of a multi-agency Action Plan and managed by the appropriate agency agreed at the Multi-agency structured debrief.
- Delivery of outcomes will be shared with multi-agency partners via appropriate NLRF forums.
- Outcomes will be reported to and monitored by the appropriate NLRF Forum.
- Event/Exercise;        Recommendations/actions identified affecting the format, conduct or management of an organised event or exercise and training event will be determined by implementation of an Action Plan managed by the relevant Event/exercise organiser/planning group.

# Debrief Process Flow Chart



## **Role of the NLRF Business Management Group**

The BMG will provide strategic management of the Northumbria LRF Multi-agency Debrief Procedures and the NLRF Lessons Learned Protocol. The BMG will act as:

- Overall auditor of process and performance;
- Facilitator for inter-agency liaison when appropriate;
- Arbiter during any disputes resulting from the review process;

## **Review process completion**

An incident, organised event or exercise will be determined as closed/complete following a structured debrief and subsequent review. This should include the release to appropriate partners of the relevant report which must include an agreed action plan for any recommendations/actions identified within the process.

## **Review of Protocol**

This protocol will be subject to annual review under the auspices of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Business Management Group and conducted by the NLRF Exercise and Training Group.

## **Release of relevant information to the public**

It is acknowledged that following any incident requiring a multi-agency debrief there may be a need to inform the public about the conduct of the response. This may include listing the lessons learnt and explaining the nature of subsequent actions to be taken to enhance performance on future occasions.

At the conclusion of the multi-agency debrief process it is expected that key findings will be made publicly available by means of a formal media briefing.

The content of the media briefing will be based on extracts of the findings of the MA debrief that focus on the organisational level of response rather than individuals. The full findings of the multi-agency debrief should remain designated for internal use of responders.

It is not within the scope of this protocol to determine the methodology by which the media are briefed but it is recommended that any formal briefing should include representatives of responders involved in the multi-agency debrief.

## **Review of the debrief protocol**

This protocol will be subject to annual review under the auspices of the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Business Management Group and conducted by the NLRF Exercise and Training Group.

**APPENDIX A: SUGGESTED FORMAT OF DEBRIEF ACTION PLAN**

No	Theme / Key issue (e.g. communications)	Action / Recommendation	Action owner	Completion Date	Progress
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					