



## FLO findings from joint inspectorate review of road death investigation and prosecution: RoadPeace summary

### Key findings

- FLOs were found to be dedicated but not resourced or valued by police force.
- Their training and role varied with some attending trials or inquests.
- Road death FLOs are volunteers and whilst work is part time, it is often additional work with no time allocated for it.
- Recommendations included police forces allocating time for FLOs, monitoring their welfare, and using the national FLO training standards recently introduced.
- RoadPeace calls for good practice standards for FLOs to be developed and monitored, with continued use of the survey of bereaved families.

### Introduction

In February 2015, the HM Inspectorate Constabulary (HMIC) and the HM CPSI Inspectorate (HMCPSI) published a landmark report of their joint inspection of road death investigation and prosecution. Whilst the HMCPSI had conducted two previous reviews of road death prosecution, the HMIC had never before reviewed road death investigation.

One of the stated objectives of the joint inspection was to:

*Measure the quality of service provided to bereaved families by the police and CPS.*

The review included a survey of bereaved families, as well as interviews with related personnel, and a review of a sample of case files in six areas, with most files involving a criminal prosecution. The six police/CPS areas visited included: Durham, Kent, Hampshire, Lancashire, and London.

With the case files, a set of 46 questions was applied. Several questions pertained to communication with the family, but these focused on charging or court proceedings and thus mainly involved the CPS. None of the questions asked about the investigation.

Quotes shown in italics below are from the joint inspectorate report.

### FLO related findings

*We were impressed overall with the dedication and commitment of family liaison officers (FLOs) but considered that their role was not always valued by the forces where they worked.*

So concluded the first ever joint inspectorate review of the investigation and prosecution of road deaths.

Additional findings included:

- The role is voluntary, undertaken by officers in addition to their normal duties. Workload is not always adjusted for additional FLO related work.
- None of the forces visited assigned officers to FLO roles on a full time basis.
- Road death FLOS have much less of an investigative function than “crime FLOs”.
- Training varied and in one area, road death FLOs were given same training as crime FLOs.
- All areas (visited) had a family liaison officer coordinator.
- Monitoring of the welfare of FLOs varied.
- National training standards published by the College of Policing in April 2015 included the role of FLOs.
- In some areas, FLOs are asked to deliver to the family the letter from the CPS explaining their charging decision, but in other areas, they are expected to tell the family without a letter from the CPS, which is in breach of the CPS guidance.

*The FLO can, and in most cases should, deliver the CPS communication to the family but however well-intentioned a third party's explanation of a decision made by another agency carries obvious risks of confusion or omission.*

- FLO often assumed to be responsible for ensuring family were aware of court dates and times. They also often attend court hearings with the family, and assist with any discussion with the CPS.

*The support of an FLO at court was also considered by the bereaved to be of great value.*

### **FLO related recommendations**

*Our recommendations are aimed at improving and standardising the training of all road death investigation officers and especially senior investigating officers and family liaison officers; recognising and supporting the family liaison officer role; and reassuring both victims' families and the public that a road death investigation was not treated as in any way less important than any other homicide.*

Of the four recommendations for the police and two for the College of Policing, three related to FLOs:

1. Police forces should ensure that police officers performing the role of family liaison officer have adequate time to perform their role effectively.
2. Police forces should ensure that family liaison officers involved in road death investigations have regular mandatory checks by occupational health departments.
3. The College of Policing should develop and promote.... national training standards for all road death investigation personnel (including FLOs).

### **FLO related good practice**

Of the five examples of good practice identified, one related to FLOs:

*Monitoring the welfare of police staff dealing with fatal road traffic incidents varied. In some police forces including Lancashire, Kent and Hampshire the family liaison officers had an annual mandatory referral to their force's occupational health department, and in one area they were unable to perform the role of FLO until they had attended this referral.*

### **RoadPeace conclusion**

This review covered six police areas, but still found much variation in practice. One area not mentioned was how FLO work was evaluated. Bereaved families deserve to be treated with consistency and sensitivity. Good practice guidelines for FLOs should be developed and monitored and include opportunity for families to provide feedback. The survey, conducted for this review, should be continued.

Source: HMCPSI and HMIC (2015), Joint Inspection of the Investigation and Prosecution of Fatal Road Traffic Incidents, February 2015, <http://www.justiceinspectores.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/the-investigation-and-prosecution-of-fatal-road-traffic-incidents.pdf>