

MANAGEMENT OF TRAUMATIC STRESS (TRiM)

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1. PURPOSE AND DEFINITION

Stress and the Law

Health and safety legislation requires an employer to provide safe systems of work and ensure that staff members' health, safety and welfare are maintained as far as is reasonably practicable. It also requires the employer to assess the nature and scale of risks to health and base control measures on that assessment.

Employers have duties to:

- Assess the risk of stress related ill health arising from work activities (Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999) and;
- Take measures to control that risk (Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974).

These provisions include traumatic stress.

Traumatic stress can affect anyone regardless of age, experience or apparent resilience. This can have profound consequences for any staff who are exposed to the risk hazards of psychological trauma due to their day to day work.

Exposure to a series of traumatic events during operational activity requires an ongoing management strategy, with a follow up process after the initial diffusing has taken place. Diffusing is considered to be a valuable stress management intervention and forms part of the Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) system.

Whilst the majority of operational staff who are exposed to traumatic events will not develop longer term conditions, the TRiM system aims to identify, through assessment, those individuals who may. Once identified, appropriate actions to mitigate the risk of staff developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or associated conditions can be successful if the need is identified at an early stage.

It is important to note that each person deals with events in different ways and it is not the intention of the Service that anyone is forced to receive a TRiM assessment. If, after being offered an assessment a person declines to take part a note of this will be made and kept with the log of the assessment for that incident. This is not kept for the purpose of judging any individual; it is simply a means by which the TRiM team can demonstrate that all members of staff are being served appropriately.

What is Traumatic Stress?

Traumatic stress is defined as “The development of characteristic symptoms following a psychologically distressing event outside the range of normal human experience” (Dr Atle Dyregrov) A traumatic event can be any event from a minor accident to a major disaster. It can affect survivors, victims, rescuers, onlookers, witnesses, colleagues, friends and family members.

Stress is a reaction to a traumatic event, for example, where feelings of threat, horror or loss predominate and are normal. However, where these reactions last for more than one month complications such as PTSD may present.

Acute reactions occur usually within one month of the event; chronic reaction is more long term. Intense acute reactions can signpost future psychological problems. Early assessment and identification enables close monitoring of individuals and, where appropriate, treatment if reactions persist.

In addition to acute traumatic stress reactions, the development of other psychological problems may be delayed or develop more slowly and insidiously.

There appears to be a marked difference in the response to natural events and those caused by a person or organisation. In cases of the latter there is often anger and attempts at apportioning blame for the event. This reaction is a significant risk factor in the development of a post traumatic illness. Often it is not the actual incident but the degree of perceived support and attitude of others over the next few weeks that are the determining factors.

What is TRiM?

TRiM is a system developed by The Royal Marines and widely adopted by British Military along with some Police Forces and Fire and Rescue Services. It is proven to be an effective form of stress management.

TRiM **is not** about the medical treatment of stress or Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. It **is** a system of common sense management that is carried out by trained assessors who will identify those in need of further expert assistance and ensure that they are aware of how to access that support. TRiM assessors will have a clear reporting mechanism that is consistent Service wide. The initial phase of dealing with a traumatic event is defusing and the individual will source their own coping mechanisms such as colleagues, friends or family. In order for this usually effective process to take place no TRiM assessment should take place until at least 72 hrs have elapsed from the time of the incident.

Because of the varying effect an incident can have on individuals it is important to keep the definition of a traumatic incident flexible. A traumatic event is any situation that creates an intensely strong emotional or physical reaction. These stress reactions have the potential to interfere with the individuals ability to function either at the scene or later.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES.

All Staff:

- To engage proactively with the TRiM process and support colleagues where this forms part of the initial diffusing process.
- To access ongoing support where there is an identified need following assessment.

NOTE: Following assessment and identification that further support is necessary any support provided will be provided by the Service's Occupational Health Department and will be entirely confidential in line with Service's [Data Protection Policy](#).

Line Managers:

- To identify those who may have been exposed to or affected by a traumatic event and to support the TRiM assessment process by ensuring that those in need of assessment are available.
- They may also initiate a TRiM assessment where the event or incident does not fall within the list identified later but is nevertheless traumatic in terms of the potential to affect them or colleagues.
- To support the TRiM system by allowing working time to be used for the assessment process.

Control:

- Will initiate a TRiM assessment if an incident falls into one of the categories identified later. This will be done by nominating a person from the pool of TRiM assessors. A database of trained staff will be maintained in Control for this purpose.

TRiM Co-ordinator:

- A member of the Occupational Health team, they will provide support to the pool of assessors by arranging regular (initially every six months) meetings for the development of assessors through sharing of experiences.
- They will provide data from SAP system as appropriate regarding the cost of TRiM assessments to the Service and the number of assessments carried out.
- They will also monitor, with Control staff, the use of assessors to ensure that overburdening or skills fade through lack of opportunity do not occur.

TRiM Assessors:

- Will carry out assessments when required to do so.
- They will follow Service guidelines in order to protect confidentiality where required to do so.
- They will provide support to those being assessed and other TRiM Assessors up to the limit of their ability and refer those in need of further assistance using agreed protocols.
- In order to ensure that TRiM assessment teams have a contextual knowledge of the incidents that those being assessed are referring to it is recommended that each team (pair) has at least one response or control member present.

Occupational Health:

- To identify and support the provision of appropriate care after assessment and identification that treatment is required and to liaise with other relevant departments, e.g Human Resources, subject to Service procedures.
- To ensure that all records of assessments are kept secure and disposed of appropriately.

3. MEASURING THE EFFECT OF TRiM.

Evidence suggests that TRiM may take two or three years to become fully embedded in the culture and routine of the Service but effectiveness may be apparent in a measurable reduction in absence figures. It is also likely that staff will feel better supported and valued with resulting positive effects on morale and wellbeing.

4. RECORDS AND RECORD KEEPING.

- TRiM Incident events log – recording dates of intervention.
- TRiM scoring sheet.

These will be completed as hard copy and maintained secure by the lead Assessor in each assessment team. Following the 28 day assessment these will be transferred to an electronic format and kept secure as password protected documents. Password protection will be agreed by the TRiM Assessors and Occupational Health (OH).

Occupational Health Management Referral.

This will be completed only where necessary by the lead TRiM Assessor for each assessment team. This will formally hand over responsibility for ongoing treatment to the OH department.

Overtime claim form/claim for payment/claims for travelling.

Where members of staff are called in to undertake an assessment payment will be claimed at the appropriate rate and the claim countersigned by a TRiM Assessor then processed in the normal way via the Area Command admin team. In order for monitoring of costs to be completed claims must clearly identify that TRiM has taken place. Claims for payment by TRiM Assessors will be made on the Pay 5 form and will also be processed in this way as this will allow analysis of the cost of TRiM to be monitored.

5. PROCEDURES.

All staff:

If you feel a colleague is exhibiting a stress reaction after an incident, please initiate the TRiM process by sending an e-mail to Control (xxxxxxx@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx) asking for the assistance of an assessment team. Contact details for the colleague will need to be provided.

Line Managers:

- Take action to maintain the welfare of colleagues by limiting as far as possible their exposure to traumatic events and also by conducting a defusing session following an incident, particularly those involving death or serious injury. Defusing should take place before members of staff are released from duty. This will often take the form of a hot or team debriefing providing mutual support to each member of the watch or team.

- Expect to be contacted by a TRiM Assessor and be required to set aside some time for an assessment session with identified staff 72 hrs (or the next duty period if this is a rota day for wholetime staff) from the time of the incident.
- Make any referrals for a TRiM assessment they feel necessary if the process has not been initiated automatically by Control.
- Request a TRiM awareness session if you feel that, though not required to address any stress related issues, this would assist you with the development of your watch or team in terms of trauma management or diffusing.

Control:

Initiate TRiM by contacting an assessor from the list of trained assessors in the event of an incident of the following types. (A note that TRiM has been initiated should be put onto the daily operations bulletin):

- Any fatality.
- Staff seriously injured on duty.
- Serious injury to a child.
- Hostage incident.
- Terrorist incident.
- Suicide.
- Major disaster.
- Where a firefighter has themselves had to be rescued.
- Calls of a stressful nature (usually Control only).
- At the discretion of Control staff if they feel that the incident merits a TRiM assessment.
- At the request of Occupational Health.
- At the request of any Service manager.

Criteria

The assessors chosen should be selected following the following criteria:

- Their availability to carry out the assessment. Where possible assessments should be conducted during working hours but the assessors must not be on call. Where this is not achievable payment can be claimed at the stated rate.
- Assessors should not have been involved in the incident response themselves.
- Each assessor should be given opportunities to maintain their skills by rotating those used.

TRiM Co-ordinator:

- Access the daily operations bulletin each day and ensure that those nominated to carry out TRiM are doing so with the correct resources.
- Monitor the frequency of TRiM and, if required by the Service, monitor the cost of providing the TRiM system.
- Monitor the number and type of TRiM assessments each assessor is conducting to ensure that assessors are not putting themselves at risk of being affected by their work. Control will complete a spreadsheet that will be kept in the TRiM folder on the G Drive; this will record which assessors are assigned to each incident.
- Monitor TRiM developments and communicate these to stakeholders as appropriate.

TRiM Team Leaders:

- Accept the role from Control if they are available and able to coordinate the assessments. It is the assessors responsibility to ensure that Control have correct contact details.
- Secure the services of a colleague to carry out the TRiM assessment with them.
- Liaise with the incident commander or line manager to ensure that all staff who may need an assessment are identified, including officers, Control and any affected support staff.
- Ensure that all of those identified members of staff are offered the opportunity of a TRiM assessment. Note the attendance or otherwise on an assessment score sheet.
- Confirm that an assessment is actually required. If it is not they should make a note of this on the TRiM incident events log.
- Ensure that all resources are available and that records are produced, kept and, for hard copies, disposed of appropriately. These records will include an incident events log and scoring sheets for as many staff are assessed.
- Agree all scores with their team partner.
- Where required after the 72hr assessment scoring process arrange for a 28-day follow up assessment to be completed.
- Provide guidance to colleagues where required, for example regarding the TRiM process, rationale and desired outcomes if staff may not be aware.
- Will be paid at competent firefighter overtime rate per hour to organise and conduct the assessments where these are conducted outside of working hours.
- Will have no more than four TRiM cases live at any one time.
- Will seek assistance if they are having difficulties with or becoming affected by their work.

TRiM Assessors:

- Will act as TRiM team leaders when nominated by Control if available.
- Will ensure that Control have the correct contact details for them.
- Will attend the assessment and assist the team leader in the assessment process.
- Will be paid at the rate identified above if the assessments are conducted in off duty/ off call time.
- Will have no more than four TRiM cases live at any one time.
- Will seek assistance if they are having difficulties with or becoming affected by their work.

Occupational Health:

- Source and provide appropriate support and treatment for those notified to them via a management referral or self presentation.
- Manage the electronic database that will have upload access for the TRiM team leads to populate databases with the results of assessments and incident event logs.
- Communicate any TRiM developments to relevant stakeholders, including the Risk Management Department.
- Monitor all claims for payment made in relation to the management of Trauma related stress.
- Monitor the effect of interventions made as a result of TRiM in order to provide a cost/benefit analysis.