



Home Office

Threat to life policy

This guidance is based on the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) guidelines.

Version 6.0

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About this guidance

The guidance tells you about:

- what a threat to life is
- what the Home Office's threat to life policy is
- the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) threat to life policy
- the legislation that identifies a threat to life
- what you must do if you receive a threat to life

For general information on the NPCC, College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) see: [NPCC College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#)

The Home Office must carry out its work in a way that takes into account the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK for more information see: [Safeguard and promote child welfare](#)

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email: CFI Operational Guidance team.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

Clearance and publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- version **6.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **12 January 2017**

Changes from last version of this guidance

New template

Related content

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What a threat to life is

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement about what the definition of a threat to life is.

A threat to life happens when, because of a deliberate intention or the criminal act of another, the Home Office, police or another law enforcement agency identifies a:

- real and immediate threat to a loss of life
- threat to cause serious harm
- threat of injury to another

A threat to life also includes:

- serious sexual assault
- rape

For the purposes of this policy 'real and immediate' means:

- a risk that is reasonably assessed to be real
- the potential assailant has the intention and current ability to carry out the threat

The Home Office has adopted [The National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\) College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\) national threat to life policy](#).

The Home Office threat to life policy is based on article 2 of the [Human Rights Act 1998](#), which enshrines the right to life in British law.

British and European legislation places an obligation on the Home Office, police and other law enforcement agencies, to take all reasonable steps to protect a person whose life is in 'real and immediate' danger from the criminal acts of another.

There is a public expectation for all law enforcement agencies to take all reasonable steps to protect life and if they fail to effectively take reasonable steps it may:

- lead to a loss of life
- cause serious injury to another
- undermine public confidence in them and in their ability to manage serious issues

The objectives for the Home Office threat to life policy are to:

- protect the life of any intended victim (s)
- preserve the lives of all others involved
- prevent serious injury
- make sure the public is safe
- maintain the safety of all those involved in attempting to reduce the risks
- protect intelligence sources

- provide a standardised national framework for dealing with these incidents with other law enforcement agencies and across police force boundaries

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The Human Rights Act and the threat to life

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement about how to identify a threat to life and applying article 2 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

When the ‘right to life’ applies

A threat to life is considered to be one that you could apply article 2 of the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) to.

It states:

‘Everyone’s right to life shall be protected by law. No one shall be deprived of his life intentionally save in the execution of a sentence of a court following his conviction of a crime for which the penalty is provided by law’.

Deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary:

- in defence of any person from unlawful violence
- to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained
- in action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection

When the ‘right to life’ does not apply

The ‘right to life’ is absolute, but there are situations when it does not apply.

A person’s right to life is not breached if they die when a public authority uses necessary force to:

- stop them carrying out unlawful violence
- make a lawful arrest
- stop them escaping lawful detainment
- stop a riot or uprising

The force used by a public authority must be absolutely necessary and strictly proportionate.

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What to do if you receive a threat to life

This page tells criminal investigators in Immigration Enforcement about what you must do if you receive a threat to life

If you receive either information or intelligence which suggests there is a threat to human life, you must:

- make a written record of a threat in either your:
 - daybook
 - official note book
- include the following details:
 - date and time you received the threat to life
 - who provided the information about the threat to life
 - how you received the information

You must be able to show you acted logically and considered what the next sequence of events might be. Below is a list of points you must consider in relation to a threat to life.

The victim(s)

You must consider whether:

- the victim can be identified by either:
 - their name
 - their description
 - membership of a group
- anyone else may be affected and does it depend on how close they are, such as:
 - family members
 - children
 - close associates living elsewhere
- the victim has the ability to retaliate

The potential assailant

You must consider if the potential assailant:

- can be identified by their:
 - name
 - description
 - membership of a group, or
 - method of attack
- is capable of carrying out the threat and if they have:
 - a history of violence
 - access to firearms or other weapons
 - access to the victim
 - the physical ability
- intends to carry out the threat, and whether:

- they have carried out any preparatory acts
- they have made previous threats
- you are meant to believe the threat
- has any motivation to carry out the attack, for example, whether:
 - there is financial incentive
 - they have a grudge against the victim
 - they have suffered loss or injury

Other factors

You must also consider:

- if the place for the attack can be identified by name or description or if you can deduce it
- what the timescale is for the potential attack or if it depends on an event
- if there are any conditional factors, for example, is the attack possible or does it depend on the victim or potential assailant doing, or not doing, something
- if the intelligence has been evaluated:
 - if so, check what the intelligence rating is, for more information about this rating, see: Intelligence report guidance and template
- what the risks are to the source of the intelligence
- if there is an evidential allegation of crime that can be openly investigated

This list is not exhaustive but if you consider these points it will help you make a realistic assessment of the threat.

Official – sensitive: Start of section

The information on this page has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

The criminal and financial investigations HMI will then decide the appropriate action to take in response to the threat.

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