CASE STUDIES YOUR PEOPLE | YOUR ORGANISATION

Beyond the investigation: recognising the people behind the work.

How Eleos provided specialist, clinically facilitated psychological reflection for personnel involved in major investigations.

POST-INCIDENT PSYCHOLOGICAL REFLECTION



The challenge

Some investigations leave a lasting impression on the people involved, not simply because of what they have witnessed or encountered, but because of the responsibility they have carried. The circumstances may be deeply distressing, the operational demands relentless and the consequences of getting something wrong considerable. There is responsibility to victims and their families, pressure to maintain the highest professional standards and, in high-profile cases, the added scrutiny of public and media attention.

For those involved, the work can demand an extraordinary degree of focus, yet the psychological demands are not experienced equally or in the same way. An officer attending the scene, a family liaison officer supporting relatives, an investigator examining distressing evidence and a member of staff transcribing interviews may each encounter very different aspects of the same investigation. Their proximity to events, professional responsibilities and personal experiences differ, but the significance of their contribution does not.

Often, those involved have little opportunity to appreciate the full extent of what colleagues have carried, and when an investigation reaches a significant milestone, whether the immediate operational response has ended or criminal proceedings have concluded, there is no guarantee that those involved will experience the same sense of completion.

Across multiple commissions involving nationally significant and exceptionally demanding investigations, Eleos has provided specialist psychological reflection for personnel whose work had exposed them to complex, distressing and highly scrutinised circumstances. The requirement was not to revisit the operational detail of the investigations; it was to recognise the people behind the work and provide an appropriate opportunity to consider what their involvement had meant.

“Their proximity to events, professional responsibilities and personal experiences differ, but the significance of their contribution does not”.



Our approach

Eleos brought senior clinical expertise to the collective experience of those involved, recognising that psychological reflection following demanding operational work requires more than simply bringing colleagues together to talk.

The provision was distinct from psychological debriefing. It did not require individuals to recount traumatic events or disclose personal reactions. Instead, it offered structured, clinically facilitated opportunities to reflect on the demands of the work, understand the different experiences of those involved and recognise the significance of their collective contribution.

An essential part of the approach was understanding the context in which people had been working: the nature of the investigations, the scrutiny surrounding them, the responsibilities carried by different roles and the importance of achieving the right outcomes for victims and families all shaped the psychological demands experienced by personnel. Eleos's clinicians brought an informed appreciation of those circumstances, enabling the reflection to be grounded in the realities of the work rather than generic assumptions about exposure to distressing events.

Across commissions, personnel came together at different points following significant operational and judicial milestones. The involvement extended across the full range of roles contributing to the investigations, from first responders, specialist operational personnel and family liaison officers to investigative teams, administrative staff and senior leaders.

This breadth mattered.

People who had worked towards the same outcome had not necessarily shared the same experiences. The opportunity to hear from colleagues whose contributions were often less visible helped create a fuller understanding of what the investigation had demanded of the team as a whole.

The purpose was not to establish whose experience had been most difficult, but to recognise that different experiences could be equally significant.

THE CLINICAL PERSPECTIVE

Structured, clinically facilitated psychological reflection, distinct from psychological debriefing.



The value of collective reflection

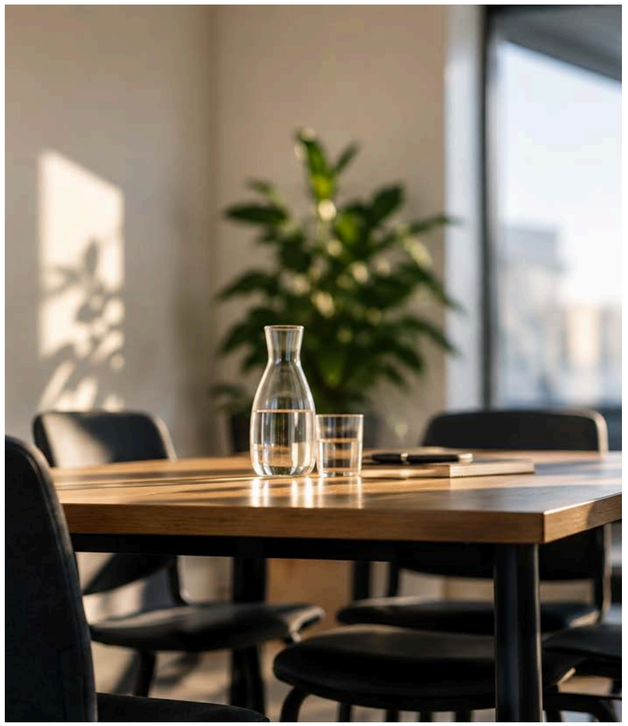
One of the most striking features across commissions was the value personnel placed on coming together. Staff described the importance of hearing about colleagues' experiences, recognising the different demands associated with their roles and understanding that their own reactions to the work were valid and understandable.

For some, the experience brought recognition of aspects of the investigation they had not previously appreciated. For others, it provided reassurance that their contribution mattered, even where their role had been less visible or removed from the immediate operational response.

The reflections consistently brought forward a strong sense of professionalism and pride in the work undertaken. Personnel recognised the expertise, commitment and judgement of their colleagues, often in circumstances where people had been required to act decisively amid considerable uncertainty and pressure.

These conversations were not simply about the difficulties of the work. They also created opportunities to acknowledge what had been done well, the trust placed in colleagues and the collective capability that had enabled teams to respond to extraordinary circumstances.

This recognition had significance beyond the investigations themselves. Understanding what colleagues had carried, and appreciating how different roles contributed to a shared outcome, strengthened a sense of belonging and connection across the teams. It reinforced confidence in one another and provided a foundation of trust that personnel could carry into future demanding work.



Recognition of individual contributions. A stronger sense of belonging, connection and trust.

Recognition from the organisation

The value of the provision was also reflected in what its availability communicated to staff.

Across the commissions, personnel described feeling recognised and valued by their organisations. The decision to commission independent, experienced psychological professionals conveyed that the demands of their work, and the people undertaking it, were being taken seriously.

The credibility of the clinicians was important. Specialist psychological expertise provided a level of professional assurance and independence that personnel valued, while the clinicians' understanding of the operational context helped establish the relevance of the support.

For staff, the opportunity was not experienced simply as another organisational wellbeing initiative. It represented a meaningful acknowledgement of the exceptional demands they had encountered and the contribution they had made.

Perhaps most significantly, personnel consistently described the reflection as helping them feel that their experience had been safely completed.

The end of an investigation or the conclusion of a trial provides an operational or judicial endpoint. It does not necessarily provide an equivalent psychological one. The opportunity to come together, recognise what had been undertaken, hear the experiences of others and acknowledge the collective achievement appeared to help bridge that gap.

This did not mean that difficult experiences were erased or that everyone responded in the same way. Rather, the reflection provided a meaningful opportunity to recognise the work, its impact and its conclusion within a professionally supported setting.

An operational or judicial conclusion does not necessarily provide a psychological sense of completion.



What this demonstrates

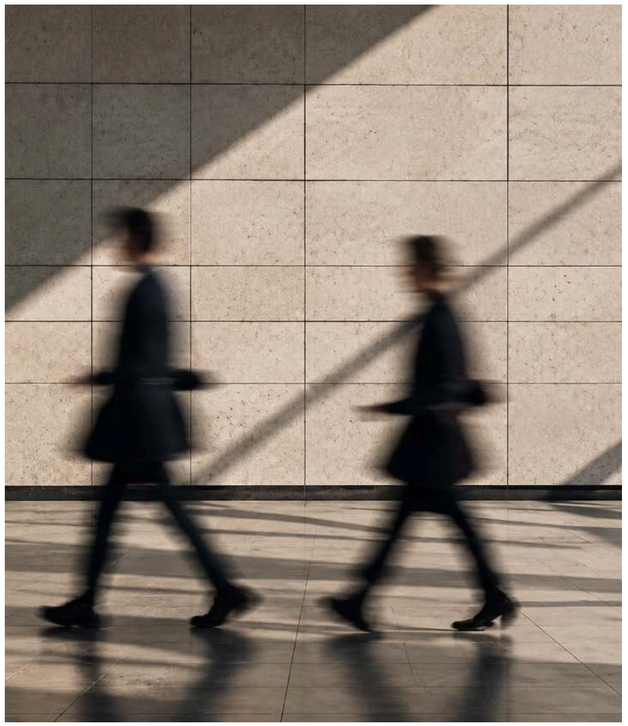
Major investigations demand much more from personnel than technical competence and operational capability. They require people to manage distressing circumstances, carry significant responsibility, maintain professional judgement under scrutiny and remain focused on the needs of victims, families and the wider investigation.

The psychological impact of those demands can extend across an entire team, including roles whose contribution may be less visible but no less significant. These commissions demonstrate the value of recognising that experience collectively.

Through specialist, clinically facilitated psychological reflection, Eleos provided opportunities for personnel to understand the demands of their work, recognise the contribution of colleagues and acknowledge both the difficulties and achievements associated with exceptionally challenging investigations. The provision also demonstrated the importance of credible, independent psychological expertise and the value personnel attach to an organisation making that expertise available.

When people are given an appropriate opportunity to recognise what they have experienced and achieved together, the value can extend beyond individual understanding. It can strengthen belonging, professional confidence, trust in colleagues and the sense that demanding work has been properly recognised and brought to a meaningful conclusion.

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Recognising the people behind the work, the contribution they have made and the significance of what they have experienced together.