

Detecting Deception and Managing Suspect Interviews
Seminar Abdn. University
Wednesday 18 February 2009

Good afternoon. I am delighted to be able to open this seminar into Detecting Deception and Managing Suspect Interviews.

The seminar is organised and hosted by the Scottish Institute For Policing Research – Evidence and Investigation Network and Aberdeen University. On your behalf I would like to thank both organisations for bringing this event together.

This is another excellent example of the practical value of the constructive collaboration between the Scottish Government, the Scottish Funding Council, ACPOS and our 12 leading Universities to form SIPR.

This is the second SIPR seminar I have had the chance to engage with and I am delighted to do so and to see so many have found time to attend today and take part.

On your behalf I would like to thank Tim Heilbronn and Professor Amina Memon as the organisers, and also Professor Par-Anders Granhag and Dr Coral Dando who have travelled from Sweden and Leicester to speak to us. The importance of not making assumptions and carrying out research is shown by the fact I was going to make a joke about travelling to the frozen north or balmy south at this point until I checked that Professor Granhag probably did neither but travelled (albeit a long way) simply 'left' - as the map indicates a very similar degree of latitude for Goteburg and Aberdeen – perhaps only a surprise to me but not to those in the audience with a more advanced knowledge of Sweden.

The reason I was so pleased to come and support this event is I think such research and discussion are vital in maintaining and developing our understanding and capability. Having worked in the Police for over 24 years I am well aware of two things:

Firstly, *never* be surprised about what a human being does next.

Secondly, expect demand to constantly expand. This latter point relates not necessarily

to a numerical increase in incidents and enquiries, but to new areas of work and the developing complexity of our working landscape created by frequently overlapping matrices of vulnerability, criminality, opportunity, expectation, priorities and scrutiny.

To meet this developing scenario, we need to ensure performance is constantly developed, honed and improved – frequently in ways that even a few years ago we would not have even recognised, let alone consciously thought about.

Unsurprisingly for the Police, key to a strong performance is the ability to successfully conclude enquiries, often around a suspect interview.

I currently head up Crime Management for Grampian Police and in the past have conducted many interviews of suspects as a uniformed and detective officer. As such I am well aware that such interviews are not relaxed chats, but can be strained settings - sometimes for both the interviewee and interviewer – both can be under intense scrutiny.

Both parties may well be masking thoughts, one to perhaps hide criminal behaviour or intent, the other to use an interview strategy to best effect.

I do not care what is found out an interview – be it guilt, innocence or simply information. What I care about is justice being served by fairly finding out what the situation is i.e. the truth. It is important therefore that the best quality outcome from this potentially difficult setting is achieved.

To do this, officers' professionalism can be assisted by ensuring we are informed by developments such as the research to be outlined today – to help us remain informed, to develop practice to ensure we gain maximum information from the opportunity an interviews provides. In short, I am interested to see what I can learn here to ensure we produce excellent 'interviews of suspects' as opposed to what could be deemed 'suspect interviews'.