

# **Children and Young People**

## **Coping with Crises: a Guide for Schools and Services for Children & Young People within the Local Authority**

Approved by – Education Board

Published – January 2017

Review Date – January 2019

## **CONSULTATION**

The following people have been consulted on this policy:

- Head of Service School Planning and Resources
- Principal Educational Psychologist
- Education Leadership Team
- Children & Young People Management Team
- Education Board

This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up to date Policy. This system is used on all Wolverhampton City Council Children & Young People Policies and Procedures.

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## 1.0 **INTRODUCTION**

This document outlines good practice for partnership working between schools and Services for Children & Young People within the local authority.

It is good practice for schools to develop a contingency plan in advance of responding to a crisis. Advice on developing such an individual school plan is available on the government website 'Teachernet'

(<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/emergencyplan/index.html>). Schools may also need to consider the input/involvement of various council departments in the event of a serious incident (eg. Emergency Planning Department, Police, Press Office etc).

These guidelines are intended to help schools to minimise emotional distress and reduce long-term mental health problems for members of the school community following a crisis affecting a school.

This document is advised by the evidence-informed approach suggested by Hobfall et al (2007). The five guiding principles emerging from this study are those of promoting safety, calming, self and collective-efficacy, connectedness and hope.

The term 'school' is used within this document to refer to all educational settings including special schools, nurseries and pupil referral units.

This document uses a three level model to consider crises in school which affect the emotional wellbeing of members of the school community:

- Level 1 – Bereavement and Loss
- Level 2 – Critical Incidents
- Level 3 – Major Disaster

Schools are expected to follow the Pathway as outlined in Section 2.0 where an incident occurs.

## 2.0 CRITICAL INCIDENTS NOTIFICATION PATHWAY

Level of Incident	Examples of Incident	Notification Process	Local Authority Response	Does this require a commissioned service
<p><b>Level 1 Bereavement and Loss</b> There will be incidents that occur within the school community that involve bereavement and loss for one or just a small number of individuals. In these circumstances school may well be able to cope with their own resources or minimal support from outside agencies. This would not be considered a critical incident but further advice can be sought on supporting young people with bereavement and loss by contacting the Inclusion Support Service.</p>	<p><b>Examples might include:</b></p> <p>Death or serious injury for a member of a student or staff member's close family.</p>	<p>The Local Authority are not required to be notified.</p>	<p><b>The following commissioned services can be provided via contact with the relevant Service Manager (Educational Psychology/Counselling &amp; Behaviour Support).</b></p>	<p>Yes - where Schools require support this will be on a commissioned basis.</p>
<p><b>Level 2 Critical Incidents</b> A critical incident for a school can cover a range of events. The key element being that members of the school community (including pupils, teachers, non-teaching staff and any other adults) have experienced the event as being traumatic and that it presents a challenge to a school's usual procedures and coping strategies. Therefore school will need to call on specialist involvement from outside agencies including the Local Authority as appropriate.</p>	<p><b>Examples might include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sudden death of a member of staff or student</li> <li>• Violent attack within the school</li> <li>• School fire</li> <li>• Death or serious injuries on a school trip.</li> </ul>	<p><b>The Director of Education must be notified in the first instance by telephone and then followed up by completing using Appendix B Part A (Critical Incidents Notification Form)</b> The Director of Education will then notify the following: - Strategic Director</p>	<p>The Local Authority will provide a coordinated response via the Educational Psychology Service, if necessary supported by the Partnership Delivery Manager for the locality.</p> <p>This will be based on the nature of the incident and will be outlined in an immediate/medium and long term plan.</p>	<p><b>No</b></p>

		(People) - Service Director Children & Young People ( who will notify the Head of Service –Inclusion Support) -Head of Service School, Planning & Resources -Assistant Director (School Standards)		
<b>Level 3 Major Disaster</b> A large-scale incident with extensive impact on members of the school and the wider community. Specialist involvement will be required and may be co-ordinated by the Local Authority's Emergency Planning Department. Support from Strengthening Families Hubs, including members of the Psychology Service, is likely to be a part of this larger scale response.	Examples might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural disaster, such as a landslide, earthquake or flood which threatens lives and homes in the local community.</li> <li>• Terrorist or other violent attack which affects the local community, probably in significant numbers.</li> </ul>	<b>See City of Wolverhampton's Emergency Plan</b>  <a href="http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/article/3155/What-to-do-in-an-emergency">http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/article/3155/What-to-do-in-an-emergency</a>	The Local Authority will by invitation provide a coordinated response. The Assistant Director will support the Head Teacher where the delivery of Education is provided. The Partnership Delivery Manager and Senior Educational Psychologist for the locality will provide a front line operational response.  This will be based on the nature of the incident and will be outlined in an immediate/medium and long term plan.	<b>No</b>

### **3.0 PREPARATION AND RESPONDING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

1. Schools are advised to develop an Individualised Emergency Management Plan to meet the needs of their own establishment and community. Special schools may wish to consult with their Lead Educational Psychologist to ensure that their own plan caters for the needs of their school and young people. Further guidance on drawing up such a plan can be found at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/emergencyplan/index.html](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/emergencyplan/index.html)  
By their nature, critical incidents cause a high level of stress and devising a plan in advance can help to reduce this stress and will enable staff to focus on dealing with the presenting specific issues in hand. It also provides a rationale for the actions that are taken as an incident occurs.
2. All staff need to have knowledge of the plan as it is not possible to determine in advance who might be affected or called into action. It would be beneficial if staff are involved in drawing up the plan so that there is a collective understanding and commitment to support it. Schools will need to decide on their own definition of what they consider to constitute a 'critical incident' or 'crisis'. They also need to decide on proformas of how information will be shared e.g. letters.
3. There needs to be consideration of the actions that will be taken by staff in the immediate, medium and long terms.
4. An up-to-date list of significant contacts and their telephone numbers will need to be collated and maintained (see Appendix A).
5. The school's plan will need to be reviewed and updated on a regular basis by a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
6. Sections 4.0, 5.0 & 6.0 shows examples of immediate, medium and long term plans detailing the actions that will need to be taken:

#### 4.0 RESPONSE – to a critical incident

<b>Immediate Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Head Teacher to obtain accurate information</li><li>2. Inform Director of Education (by using Notification Form)</li><li>3. School to nominate team, identify incident room and dedicated phone line</li><li>4. School to nominate spokesperson to liaise with press office</li><li>5. School to brief all relevant services required. LA identified Coordinator to circulate Notification Form with parts A&amp;B completed.</li><li>6. Reunite those involved with families</li><li>7. Maintain normal school routines as far as possible</li><li>8. Review Meeting</li></ol>
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#### (The First Hours – Day 1)

1. Head Teacher/ SLT to obtain accurate information from a reliable source.
2. Complete Part 1 of the Notification Form and send to Director for Education. The Director of Education will then notify the following:
  - Strategic Director People, Service Director Children & Young People (who will notify the Principal Educational Psychologist)
  - Head of Service School, Planning & Resources
  - Assistant Director (School Standards)
3. Head Teacher/SLT to inform chair of governors and then nominate a team within the school who will deal with the immediate aftermath of a critical incident.
4. Head Teacher briefs school team and relevant LA Services/Coordinator. Agree on how to co-ordinate the rest of the day and identify appropriate professionals. Part B of notification Form completed and circulated to all relevant parties by Coordinator.
5. Identify incident management room with a dedicated phone line.
6. Disseminate accurate information in a timely fashion to:
  - a. Families whose children/next of kin are involved
  - b. Teaching and non-teaching staff
  - c. Pupils
  - d. Parents of children who were not involved
7. In order to promote a sense of connectedness the school should make every effort to reunite those directly involved in the

incident with their families as soon as possible.

8. Attempt to maintain a normal school routine for those not directly involved so that they feel as safe and calm as possible.
9. Nominate a spokesperson to liaise with the Council's Press Office before make a statement to the media (as appropriate).
10. Give consideration to cultural and religious practices e.g. with regard to different time periods for burials to take place.
11. Conduct a review meeting to evaluate the day's events and plan for the following day (as appropriate).

## **5.0 MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS**

<b>Medium Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Head Teacher to obtain any new information</li><li>2. Meeting of School team and Local Authority Coordinator (relevant services)</li><li>3. Develop a plan (support)</li><li>4. Consider dealing with personal effects</li></ol>
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### **Medium Term Actions (2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> day)**

1. Head teacher/SLT to ascertain if there is any new information.
2. Meeting of school team and relevant LA Coordinator to update/ organise and disseminate any new information.
3. Develop a plan for meeting the emotional needs of the school community including:-
  - a. Support for everyone involved in the incident
  - b. Identify individuals (pupils and staff) experiencing severe reactions.
4. Consider how to deal with personal effects of any pupils or staff who may not be returning to the school. Specific consideration should be given to supporting siblings, relatives and close friends etc following a bereavement.

## **6.0 LONG TERM ACTIONS**

<b>Longer Term Actions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Implement medium term actions</li><li>2. Return to school routines.</li><li>3. Continue to monitor and discuss individuals with LA Coordinator for possible appropriate therapeutic intervention.</li><li>4. It is important for the whole school community to consider issues of memorials and anniversaries.</li></ol>
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## APPENDIX A

### IMPORTANT CONTACT NUMBERS

<b>CONTACT</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
Strategic Director - Education	01902 554100
Service Director for Children & Young People	01902 551449
Principal Educational Psychologist	01902 550539
LOCAL AUTHORITY PRESS OFFICE	01902 554076
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub	01902 555392
NEW CROSS EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT	01902 307999
<b>Strengthening Families Hubs</b>	
East Park, Eastfield and Portobello	(01902) 558331
Bilston, Bradley and Ettingshall	(01902) 556416
Blakenhall, Springvale and All Saints	(01902) 551917
Penn, Merry Hill & Penn Fields	(01902) 551979
Tettenhall, Whitmore Reans & Dunstall	(01902) 556585
Bushbury, Oxley and Pendeford	(01902) 550887
Low Hill & The Scotlands	(01902) 553285
Wednesfield, Heath Town & Ashmore Park	(01902) 553945

**APPENDIX B**

**CRITICAL INCIDENT INFORMATION NOTIFICATION FORM**

This form is to be completed and sent to the Director of Education where a Level 2 critical incident occurs

**Part A (to be completed by the Educational Establishment)**

<b>Name of School:</b>	
<b>Details of the Incident (factual information only):</b>	
<b>Critical Incident Team Leader:</b>	

**Part B (to be completed by the Coordinator – either Partnership Delivery Manager or Educational Psychologist for the area on the day of the incident)**

**Below is a list/responsibilities of the involvement of services from the Local Authority as a short/medium term response:**

<b>Name/Role</b>	<b>Is this notification for Information or Action?</b>	<b>Action required</b>

*(This should then be circulated to all listed above)*

**Part C (to be completed by the Coordinator – either Partnership Delivery Manager or Educational Psychologist for the area after the short term response has been delivered)**

**Below is a list/responsibilities of the involvement of services from the Local Authority as a short term response:**

Name/Role	Is this notification for Information or Action?

**A fully completed version of this form should then be saved on the Corporate Network and a copy sent to the School and all Services involved.**

## APPENDIX C

### INFORMATION TO SUPPORT THE CRITICAL INCIDENT PLANNING PROCESS

#### **Immediate – The First Few Hours/Day 1**

##### **1. Obtaining accurate information**

The school will need to obtain accurate information regarding what has happened. There are a number of possible sources for this depending on the nature of the incident. This could include first hand information from people within the school or community, reports from emergency services or even the British Embassy if an incident occurred abroad. It must be borne in mind that information gained from the media may be inaccurate or biased.

##### **2. Informing Council Officials via the Notification Form (Appendix B)**

##### **3. The School Team**

As soon as the incident has been confirmed it is advisable to contact the chair of governors and establish a team of school staff to manage the school's response over the next few hours. This may include key members of the school's Senior Leadership Team, pastoral and administrative staff although other staff or governors could play a role. A basic team can be included in the emergency management plan however, the exact members of the team may need to be established depending on the particular nature and circumstances of the event.

##### **4. Working in Partnership**

The local authority will identify a coordinator who will be responsible for coordinating the local authorities response.

The Strengthening Families Delivery Manager(where appropriate), Lead EP and any other key LA professionals will work in partnership with the school team and all will need to be briefed with the most accurate and up to date information. Decisions can then be made on how to co-ordinate the rest of the day and identify appropriate professionals to be involved, taking into account the physical, psychological, emotional and environmental wellbeing and needs of all concerned.

- Lead EP and Delivery Manager will jointly coordinate Services. In the event of a critical incident occurring, LA professionals will prioritise it above planned work and respond appropriately according to the nature of the incident. Types of support available in the immediate phase could include:

- Advice on sharing information with pupils (taking into consideration their particular needs), parents and staff.
- Advice on appropriate activities for teachers to undertake with children.
- Information on bereavement
- Setting up a 'listening drop –in' for adults or pupils who feel the need for this immediate support.

Therapy would not be appropriate to occur in this immediate phase.

## **5. Incident management room and phone**

It is likely that the school's main phone line will become extremely busy with enquiries. Therefore, a designated phone line on which the school team can be contacted would be beneficial. This number would need to be communicated to key professionals and agencies so that information can be easily exchanged.

- All staff who make and receive calls in a critical incident situation should ensure that they keep notes of who has called and the information given or received so that no-one is omitted when disseminating information.
- In the event of an incident occurring on a school visit, the educational visit leader would need to have contact numbers for school senior managers in and out of school hours in order to report the incident.

## **6. Disseminating accurate information beyond the school team**

In the aftermath of a critical incident unsubstantiated rumours can spread very quickly and cause unnecessary anxiety. Giving accurate information updates can help to maintain a sense of perspective and foster a feeling of safety. Staff and parents should be advised to limit and monitor exposure to news media for themselves and their children as this can cause heightened levels of anxiety.

a) The nature and speed of parents being contacted by school will very much depend on the nature of the incident. The sharing of information may be done in person or may need to be done by telephone. In some circumstances parents may need to come into school to receive information. Exactly how potentially distressing information is passed on will depend on the circumstances. However, below there are some suggestions on how this can be done sensitively and effectively:

- Prepare what needs to be said and how it will be said. Staff may need to rehearse this in advance.

- The member of staff to impart the information needs to be chosen carefully and it may be advisable to have another member of staff during discussions. Clarity, sensitivity and empathy will all be important.
  - Keep a note of who has been contacted and what information has been given to avoid duplication or omission.
  - Suggest that parents or next of kin seek support from friends, neighbours or relatives if they feel distressed.
  - Have useful phone numbers to hand so that parents can seek further information as necessary (eg. hospital numbers)
- b) Schools routinely keep up to date information about the contact details for children's next of kin and this information is vital in the event of a critical incident. The same information for staff is also necessary in case of emergency.
- c) Parents of children who are not directly involved will also need to be told that a serious incident has occurred and how their own children might be affected. This could take place in the form of a letter or a larger meeting depending on the circumstances.
- Similarly, all staff (teaching, non-teaching and associate) within school will need to be informed of the situation preferably through a specially convened meeting so that the same information is shared with everyone at the same time.
  - Pupils should be told what has happened in a clear and simple way taking into account their specific needs where appropriate. Dependent on the age and developmental level of the young people it may be best to do this in a forum where they have the opportunity to ask questions as well as hear information e.g. in class groups. In order to preserve uniformity it would be advisable for teachers to have a prepared information sheet with the latest information on the critical incident A question box may be appropriate for children who do not feel confident or ready to ask questions orally. Teachers should impart facts only, not speculation or opinion.

## **7. Dealing with the Media**

Schools will need to liaise with the Local Authority's Press Office before making any statement to the media. Parents, pupils and staff should be advised not to talk to the media.

## **8. Reviewing the first day**

During the first day the school team should meet to review the situation and actions taken. At this point a plan can start to be

formulated for the medium term response.

## Medium Term (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Day)

### 1. Meeting the emotional needs of school community

Best practice in meeting the emotional needs of the school community is to promote the five guiding principles of safety, calming, self and collective efficacy, connectedness and hope. Exactly how this can be done depends on the nature of the critical incident but the school may offer the following types of support:

#### a. Safety

- Providing a safe place for people to meet.
- Giving opportunities for appropriate discussion of individuals' experiences, reactions and feelings but limiting the amount of talk about the incident if it makes people more anxious or depressed.
- Limiting exposure to news media.

#### b. Calming

- Involvement with uplifting activities not associated with the trauma.
- Continue with normal daily routine as far as possible.
- Continue to give accurate and up-to-date on the safety and health of those directly involved.
- Encourage individuals to use any anxiety reducing or relaxation techniques they might find helpful eg. listening to calming music.
- Staff to model positive thinking and self talk.
- Reassuring those affected that they are responding in a normal way to a difficult situation.
- Foster positive emotions that include joy, humour, interest, contentment and love to develop coping skills.
- Provide opportunities to be with friends and family.
- Encourage physical activity and exercise (this has an anxiety reducing effect).

**c. Self and collective efficacy**

- Involve those affected in decisions about the support offered to them and the ways they want to remember others.

**d. Connectedness**

- Help individuals to connect with loved ones.
- Ensure that there are frequent opportunities for those affected to engage in supportive interactions with each other and with their social support networks.
- Offer a listening ear to anyone affected.
- Check that all individuals have an appropriate support network.
- Signpost to external support where necessary.

**e. Hope**

- Staff to model positive thinking and self talk.
- Reassure those affected that they are responding in a normal way to a difficult situation.
- Emphasise the strength of the community and school in pulling together in a difficult time.
- It is important to remember that staff need appropriate support for their own well-being and in their role of supporting pupils in the school.

The Head Teacher has a legal responsibility for what happens to the pupils in his or her school and has the right to decide who has access to the children in school. This remains the case regardless of who else may be offering support to pupils and staff in the school. The Head Teacher may choose to seek more specialist support for the school community from the Inclusion Support Service and Strengthening Families Hub in consultation with the Lead EP and/or Strengthening Families Delivery Manager. This may involve these services working alongside members of school staff in the first instance or providing therapeutic input for individuals or groups in the longer term. In some more severe incidents the Local Authority may recommend seeking additional support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CaMHS).

There are a number of local and voluntary organisations that offer a variety of support to individuals and families. Please see Appendix D.

### **1. Meeting the Emotional Needs of The School Community**

Following close monitoring of how pupils and staff are coping with the aftermath of a critical incident, schools may need to seek additional, specialist support via the Lead EP. The support offered may include individual or group therapeutic interventions. In some circumstances, seeking support from NHS Mental Health Services may be considered appropriate. For children, referrals should be made in consultation with the Lead EP. For adults this may need to be accessed via General Practitioners. The Local Authority's Counselling Service may also be useful.

### **2. Memorials and Anniversaries**

The school community will need to consider if and how it wishes to mark anniversaries and establish memorials. When doing this it will be important to consult with those affected and liaise with family members to ensure they are in agreement with arrangements and included if they wish to be. Adequate time needs to be put aside for this consultation to be done properly. It is important to ensure that any future building works are dealt with sensitively in conjunction with the family.

## APPENDIX D

### CONTACT DETAILS FOR VOLUNTARY SECTOR ORGANISATIONS

ORGANISATIONS	WEBSITE/EMAIL/	NUMBER
Child Death Helpline	<a href="http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk">www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk</a>	0800 282986
Child Line	<a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>	0800 1111
Cruse Bereavement Centre	<a href="http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk">www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk</a>	01384 635599
Wolverhampton Bereavement Centre	<a href="mailto:bereavement.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk">bereavement.services@wolverhampton.gov.uk</a>	01902 554992
Base 25	<a href="http://www.base25.org.uk">www.base25.org.uk</a> <a href="mailto:info@base25.info">info@base25.info</a>	01902 572044
The Dove Service	The Dudson Centre Hope Street Stoke-On-Trent ST1 5DD <a href="http://www.thedoveservice.org.uk">www.thedoveservice.org.uk</a>	01782 683155
CAMHS	<a href="http://www.CAMHS4U.org.uk">www.CAMHS4U.org.uk</a> General information and booklets available e.g 'CAMHS Inside Out'	
Samaritans	<a href="http://www.samaritans.org.uk">www.samaritans.org.uk</a>	08457909090