

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

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Foreword

The reality of life in the 21st Century is that we are all too acutely aware of the many real and perceived dangers in our society. Our schools and young people are not immune from such threats as events in Cumbria, Virginia and Beslan in the last few years so graphically demonstrate. Fortunately, such incidents, however shocking, are still mercifully rare. The 'Critical Incident Management – Guidance for Schools' has been once again been revised to take account of recent incidents which have occurred in and around our school communities in the UK and overseas.

We have learned from these, and from incidents in other local authorities. The intention is to provide information which will be of use to schools in carrying out preventive work but also to prepare to some extent for what are always unexpected eventualities. The presence of a Critical Incident Management Plan, as suggested in this guidance, will go some considerable way to prepare as far as possible for responding to a critical incident and help all concerned to feel more secure in the knowledge that we have a plan of action to guide us at such times.

I whole-heartedly hope that you will never have to respond to a critical incident but trust that the advice contained herein will stand you in good stead should the need arise. We will keep the guidance under regular review and will publish updated advice in the light of any future experience and your feedback to us. I commend this guidance to you.

Peter Hay
Strategic Director
Directorate for People
Birmingham City Council

IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT (during school hours)

First point of contact:

**Joyce Rawlinson, School Support Manager, Central
Tel: 303 2193 Mobile: 07775 407332**

**Dave Yardley, School Support Manager, North
Tel: 464 3174 Mobile: 07881 617187**

**David Bridgman, School Support Manager, South
Tel: 303 8394 Mobile: 07771 339061**

If not available, contact:

**Amanda Daniels, Head of Educational Psychology
Tel: 464 1364 Mobile: 07766 925152**

For all critical incidents outside of normal school hours please phone the Press Office out of hours number: 303 3287. The Press Officer on duty at the time will contact relevant People Directorate personnel.

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Section 1: Introduction

A 'Critical Incident' can be defined as:

An event or sequence of events affecting pupils and/or teachers which creates significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and coping strategies and which is likely to have serious emotional and organisational consequences.

Regrettably, in recent times a number of very serious incidents have occurred in British schools which, in the worst cases, have resulted in death and serious injury both to pupils and teachers.

In other incidents, while no casualties resulted, pupils and teachers have been severely traumatised as a consequence of the random actions of individuals causing disruption on school premises. There have also been a number of 'natural' disasters, such as the Hagley minibus accident, which have caused intense distress and sadness to staff, pupils and families, and which have interrupted the normal functioning of the school. There are also less dramatic and more common occurrences, such as the death of a pupil from a terminal illness or traffic accident, which can have profound effects on individuals, groups and sometimes the school as a whole.

In some instances, schools have managed *critical incidents* extremely well from their own resources but help is available from City Council services such as Educational Psychology and from the wider community. Some schools have given thought to preventive measures they might take including drawing up **critical incident management plans**. Following a number of local incidents, head teachers have suggested there is a need for co-ordination of a number of services, which can provide help and support. The Directorate therefore has an agreed city-wide support framework described in this document. Head teachers have further suggested that the City Council should provide some general guidance for schools in developing critical incident management plans and the steps schools could take should a critical incident occur. The guidance in this document is provided following wide consultation with teachers in all school phases and with officers.

This document is in two further sections:

- **Section 2** consists of Action Sheets which will help to guide head teachers and senior managers through the steps they should take in the event of a critical incident.
- **Section 3** consists of Information Sheets which are provided for reference and cover a wide range of issues related to critical incident management.

Section 2: Action Sheets

A1 Action Sheet: Critical Incident Log

1. Obtain factual information.

What has happened? **Who** is involved? **Where** and **when** has this taken place?

If incident is away from school, what is the location and what is the name and contact number of an appropriate adult at the site.

Any injuries - children/staff?

2. Contact Emergency Services required.

Time.....

Police	[]
Fire	[]
Ambulance	[]

3. Evacuate school, if safe and necessary.

4. Arrange staff to look after pupils.

5. Allocate an incident management room with a dedicated phone line if possible.

6. Contact City Council Officers (during school hours):

- Joyce Rawlinson, School Support Manager, Central
Tel: 303 2193 Mobile: 07775 407332
- Dave Yardley, North Area, School Support Manager, North
Tel: 464 3174 Mobile: 07881 617187
- David Bridgman, School Support Manager, South
Tel: 303 8394 Mobile: 07771 339061

If not available then:

- Amanda Daniels, Head of Educational Psychology
Tel: 464 1364 Mobile: 07766 925152

Out of hours, please phone the Press Office on 303 3287. The Press Officer on duty at the time will contact relevant People Directorate personnel.

7. Contact families of those involved. Give emergency contact numbers as necessary.

8. Complete incident log proforma.

When time permits, complete the following log:

INCIDENT LOG

Date

Time commenced.....

What happened:

Where:

Who was involved:

Casualties (if any) / pupils or staff in need of support:

Action Taken (*including City Council officers contacted*):

Print name of officer reporting incident

Signed.....

Position.....

A2 Action Sheet: Subsequent Actions (Hours/Next Day/Within One Week)

Within hours:

Contact Chair of Governors.
Chair to establish cascade to inform other governors as appropriate.



Head/Deputy meet with emergency services and support service personnel.



Decide which staff are going to do what tasks and when.



Prepare written statement and letters for parents covering the following points:

- Factual information about the incident;
- What the school has already done;
- What the school intends to do in the next few days (e.g. meeting for parents);
- Where parents can find out more information (e.g. helpline);
- Practical information (e.g. closure / re-opening of school);
- Promise of further information in the near future (e.g. special assembly).

Consult the press office for advice. The statement can be used for informing the media and general public.

Within 1 day

Call a meeting for staff to give detailed factual information about the incident.



Phone parents of children directly involved and send letter to all parents giving a statement about the incident.



Inform pupils appropriately about incident in small groups in consultation with EPS and other involved support services [if police allow]. *Groups should be small if possible, ideally no more than 10 pupils.*



If any child has died in the incident – see Section 32 of the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board (BSCB) child protection procedures which can be found at www.lscbbirmingham.org.uk

Within 1 week

Arrange further meeting for involved staff to explore lessons learned [when police allow]



Consult EPS and other involved support services concerning care and support for pupils involved in the incident in consultation with support service [when police allow]



Promote some discussion in classes (with support services if required). *Try to achieve a balance between responding to children's emotional needs while aiming to get things back to normal.*



Identify high risk pupils and staff (i.e. those who appear to be profoundly affected by the incident) in conjunction with support services



Identify any other needs for group or individual intervention / support



Organise intervention / support as appropriate, in conjunction with support services

A3 Action Sheet: Incidents Occurring Away From School During Term Time, eg School Trips.

STAFF ON TRIPS OUTSIDE SCHOOL SHOULD REFER TO EXISTING SCHOOL POLICY IN AN EMERGENCY. 'Head' refers to head teacher or person nominated to deputise.

Head obtains factual information	Date logged	Time logged about the incident
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Head establishes communication link with emergency services	Time logged
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Establish phone/ fax lines to be used <i>Ensure these are likely to be free</i>
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If school closure is to be considered, inform pupils and parents via the media if outside school hours
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NB: Please note: Section 7.2 ("Emergency Procedures") on page 99 of the Policy and Guidance for Educational Visits ("Learning Beyond the Classroom") details the action to be taken at the scene in the event of any accident or emergency away from school/centre.

A4 Action Sheet: Incidents Occurring Away From School During Vacation (Home Or Abroad)

N.B. 'Head' refers to head teacher or person nominated to deputise.

Head to decide role school should play following an incident (e.g. Information point for parents; centre where parents can meet etc.)



Consider opening the school in order to facilitate information flow to families and pupils and to organise support for them



Head to consider whether incident serious enough to warrant his/her travel to the scene



Head to liaise with City Council contact officers (See Action Sheet A1)



Head to consider management of pupils returning to school after the vacation in terms of first assembly, memorial services etc. with advice from support staff as required

Note: Section 7.2 ("Emergency Procedures") on page 99 of the Policy and Guidance for Educational Visits ("Learning Beyond the Classroom") details the action to be taken at the scene in the event of any accident or emergency away from school/centre.

A6 Useful Contacts

(NB: Insert Local Numbers, Update Contacts Regularly, Recording Date last Updated)

CONTACT	NAME	TELEPHONE
<i>First point of contact (during school hours)</i>	Joyce Rawlinson	303 2193 / 07775 407332
<i>Other City Council (during school hours)</i>	David Bridgman	303 8394 / 07771 339061
<i>City Council Press Office (during normal office hours)</i>	Sarah Kirby, Press Officer	303 3885 / 07920 088571
<i>Emergency Duty for out of hours</i>	Emergency Duty Press Officer on duty at the time	303 3287
<i>Corporate Health and Safety</i>	John Gavin (North) Rob Whiskens (Central) Carl Bust (South)	07766 923269 07500 125378 07766 924283
<i>Communications Team</i>	Dawn Wise, Head of Corporate Communications	303 4302
<i>Chair of Governors</i>		
<i>Police</i>		0845 113 5000
<i>School Doctor</i>		
<i>School Nurse</i>		
<i>Educational Psychology Service</i>	Amanda Daniels, or any Senior Educational Psychologist	464 1364 07766 925152
<i>Local 'Casualty' (A&E) Dept.</i>		
<i>Integrated Access Teams</i>	North 464 8022 West and Central 303 4362 East 303 6541 South 303 1888	Emergency Duty Team can be contacted on 675 4806
<i>Local Religious Groups</i>		
<i>Voluntary Agencies and Any Other Additional Contacts</i>		

Section 3: Information Sheets

Role of Emergency Services and Other Support Services

In any critical incident, the involvement of the emergency or 'blue-light' services is crucial and their role is of paramount importance. Police, fire, ambulance and coastguard have priority over all other outside agencies.

In the event of a **major emergency**, which are thankfully extremely rare, affecting a proportion of the city (e.g. an air crash), the **Birmingham Resilience Team (BRT)** which is made up of officers from the City Council, the Police, Fire Services and the NHS will co-ordinate responses in conjunction with the emergency services.

The Home Office Publication 'Dealing with Disaster' Revised Third Edition ¹ details the following responsibilities of the emergency services:

Police:

The police will normally co-ordinate all the activities of those responding at and around the scene of a land-based emergency. The saving and protection of life is the priority, but as far as possible the scene must be preserved to provide evidence for subsequent enquiries and possibly criminal proceedings. Once life saving is complete, the area will be preserved as a scene of crime until it is established as otherwise (unless the emergency results from severe weather or other natural phenomena and no element of human culpability is involved). Where practicable the police, in consultation with other emergency services and specialists, establish and maintain cordons at appropriate distances. Cordons are established to facilitate the work of the other emergency services and support organisations in the saving of life, the protection of the public and the care of survivors.

Fire:

The primary role of the fire service in a major emergency is the rescue of people trapped by fire, wreckage or debris. They will prevent further escalation of an incident by controlling or extinguishing fires, by rescuing people and by undertaking other protective measures.

They will deal with released chemicals or other contaminants in order to render the incident site safe or recommend exclusion zones. They will also assist the ambulance service with casualty handling and the police with recovery of bodies.

The fire service is likely to take the lead on health and safety issues for personnel of all agencies working within the inner cordon. However, in the event of any situation which is, or which is suspected to be, the result of terrorism, police will assume overall control and take initial responsibility for safety management, but the main responsibility for rescuing people and saving lives remains with the fire service.

¹ "Dealing with disaster, Revised Third Edition", Cabinet Office, 2003, ISBN 1-874447-42-X

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20050523205851/ukresilience.info/contingencies/dwd/index.htm>

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Ambulance:

Ambulance services have responsibility for co-ordinating the on-site National Health Service response and determining the hospital(s) to which injured persons should be taken, which may depend on the types of injuries received. The officer of the ambulance service with overall responsibility for the work of the ambulance service at the scene of a major incident is the Ambulance Incident Officer (AIO).

The ambulance service, in conjunction with the Medical Incident Officer and medical teams, endeavours to sustain life through effective emergency treatment at the scene, to determine the priority for release of trapped casualties and decontamination in conjunction with the fire service, and to transport the injured in order of priority to receiving hospitals. The ambulance service may seek support from Voluntary Aid Societies (British Red Cross, St John Ambulance and St Andrew's Ambulance) in managing and transporting casualties.

Coroner:

Coroners have responsibilities in relation to bodies lying within their district who have met a violent or unnatural death, or a sudden death of unknown cause. They have to determine who has died, how, and when and where the death came about. This function is regardless of whether or not the cause of death arose within their district. They normally undertake this duty at a formal inquest (though if the incident results in a public inquiry chaired by a judge, a full inquest).

In a few tragic cases, it has been known for the Coroner's Office to contact schools or other establishments and services for information. This has usually been where identification of children has proven difficult or impossible, particularly after a fire. It might be the case that the coroner is sparing the parents' feelings by obtaining information that might help identify children from another source but staff and managers are not immune from the effects of realising the full horror of a tragedy and have sometimes found such enquiries very distressing. It is particularly important that colleagues talk through their feelings about this either with a trusted colleague or a trained counsellor.

Health Services:

Clearly, medical and para-medical personnel are present at major emergencies involving death, injury or trauma and provide follow up treatment and care. The clinical psychology service also can provide counselling for people suffering trauma in the aftermath of critical incidents in the community.

People Directorate - Key Roles:

In the event of a major emergency, declared as such by the Chief Executive, the People Directorate's role is to provide short term practical support and assistance to victims, relatives and friends in rest centres and elsewhere. This includes emergency housing, feeding, transport as well as listening and giving emotional support. Should the emergency take place in a school, staff who primarily deal with adults would work closely with children's services to co-ordinate their input and draw on their specialised skills and abilities. In the longer term, the Directorate may provide specialised counselling services to victims.

The Strategic Director - Directorate for People will link directly with the City Council Emergency Planning Officer in the event of a major emergency affecting the city.

Of key importance are the following:

- to ensure that the social and psychological support services include staff who have a special understanding of the needs of children, and are able to work with them and with those who are in daily contact with them, including parents, teachers and youth workers;
- to ensure that staff in schools directly affected by disasters are given adequate support in order to help the children and their families;
- to organise appropriate support for all staff members.

The School and Governor Support Co-ordinator will...

- co-ordinate the input of the children's services to schools following a critical incident. **Schools should contact this officer as soon as possible following a critical incident;**
- inform all services of their respective roles in helping schools following critical incidents;
- ensure all support services receive appropriate training and that this is regularly updated;
- be responsible for informing schools about disruption to normal services from support services while these are responding to a critical incident;
- liaise with the relevant School Support Manager with respect to communication with the media, governors and parents.

The lead officer for Educational Psychology will...

- ensure consultation is provided on the management of the aftermath of the critical incident for the head teacher and senior staff;
 - assist the head teacher to decide what information to provide to staff, pupils and parents and how this could be communicated;
- ensure staff are advised and supported in managing distressed pupils, colleagues and parents;
- liaise closely with other support services working within the school;
- provide advice on such issues as *'getting things back to normal'* and commemorating the event;
- arrange for appropriate support for staff and pupils affected on a group or individual basis as considered appropriate;
- in consultation with the social care colleagues and health service officers, arrange for direct crisis counselling for pupils and staff if appropriate;
- arrange for direct psychological advice to staff on the management of children following a critical incident if considered appropriate by the school;
- where required, ensure a recording system is in place to log work being done by support services in school and indicate outstanding tasks for them to complete;
- consult with psychiatric and other health services as appropriate;

- negotiate with the head teacher the extent of Educational Psychology involvement following a critical incident and, where needed, ensure long term help is arranged for pupils and staff affected.

Integrated Access Teams will...

- provide a single contact of contact for professionals and members of the public who want to seek support or raise concerns about a child.

The Press Office will...

- deal with all enquiries from the news media;
- attend the school if necessary and deal directly with reporters.

Birmingham City Council Health and Safety Team will...

- undertake accident Investigation;
- support you in undertaking post incident risk assessments;
- review site security;
- liaise with and provide support in dealings with Enforcement Authorities (Police, HSE, Fire).

Possible Effects of Critical Incidents: Pupils and Teachers

The effects of critical incidents vary considerably depending both on the nature of the incident and on the age, background and personality of the individual. Effects can range from mild through to severe, may be immediate or delayed and may last a very short time or persist for many years. The following are the main effects commonly reported by people who have experienced a traumatic event (Yule & Gold, 1993):

- i) Recurring intrusive recollections of the traumatic event such as in dreams and flashbacks. Some people simply cannot 'get it off their minds' but others describe sensations of actually reliving the event including sights, sounds and smells associated with it, together with a 'replay' of the emotions they experienced at the time.
- ii) Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma. This might be avoidance of a classroom where an event took place or of objects that were a key feature during the event, particularly weapons such as knives. This apparent fear can generalise to relatively harmless objects such as table knives.
- iii) Symptoms of increased arousal, characterised by hyper-vigilance, increased startle reactions, sleep difficulties, irritability, anxiety and hyperactivity.

It should be stressed that the above are natural human responses to extraordinary events and are part of our survival mechanism whereby our bodies are in a state of preparedness for 'fight or flight'. Because of the bewildering emotions generated which are outside the usual pattern of experience, individuals may need a lot of reassurance that they are not 'going mad' and about the likelihood that these extreme emotions will subside. While not conclusive, there is a body of evidence which suggests that psychological debriefing and skilled counselling substantially helps the process of adjustment (Dyregrov, 1999). However, some individuals experience profound effects which are relatively long lasting and these are sometimes described by doctors as suffering from *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*. While the majority respond to treatment, it has to be said that some who witness horrific events continue to suffer symptoms for the remainder of their lives.

The effects of a traumatic event are very similar for children and adults. The main difference noted is that for young children, periods during which intense grief reactions are displayed can be shorter than for adults, tears turning to laughter within a few moments but just as quickly back to tears again (Wells, 1995). While children can be more easily distracted from their grief, the total period of adjustment or grieving may be just as long and in some cases much longer than for adults who will at least have some experience to which they can relate or compare their sense of loss.

Very young children (Nursery through Key Stage 1) may have difficulty with the very concept of death, for example, and some writers have observed children searching for their 'lost' friend (Wells, Op. Cit.). They may also have difficulty expressing their feelings verbally but may benefit from being allowed to express themselves in drawing, painting or modelling with plasticine. Some children may become aggressive towards peers or adults, giving vent to feelings of anger in physical ways.

For many young people (and adults for that matter) there are likely to be feelings that are altogether difficult to express in any way. For example, some girls who were subject to a hostage-taking incident at a Birmingham school hinted at a sense of loss of innocence and childhood in phrases

such as 'Life will never be the same again', 'I'll never feel as safe as I was before', 'I can't trust people any more' and 'The world seems much more dangerous now'.

School staff have the additional difficulty of having to balance the need for sensitivity to avoid upsetting children while dealing with their own emotions and fulfilling their normal roles. There can be a difficulty of getting a proper balance between responding to individual needs with sensitivity on the one hand and restoring a sense of normality in the school on the other. It is particularly important that teachers are able to get support from each other, from senior management and from outside agencies to help them through difficult periods.

Possible Effects of Critical Incidents: The Organisation of the School

In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident in a school, the normal functioning of the school may be severely disrupted. If there have been casualties, the emergency services will need to administer first aid and to ensure seriously injured people are taken to hospital. The police will then wish to protect the evidence available to ensure culprits are tracked down and prosecuted. Pupils and staff who were witnesses may need to be questioned. The remaining pupils in the school will need to be briefed as to what has occurred and parents will need to be contacted if pupils are to go home.

The head teacher may need to make a decision on closure of the school and re-opening. This will depend on the particular circumstances but there are many arguments for keeping schools open following a critical incident if this is practicable. Pupils, staff and parents may benefit from the mutual emotional support of being together. Also if people are together, debriefing can be offered. Head teachers may also need to consult Legal Services personnel for guidance in the event of possible allegations of negligence. Media interest will also need to be managed.

Even when the incident has taken place away from school such as a traffic accident involving a school bus, there will be much for senior staff to manage. Pupils (and staff) may be in a distressed state and unable to settle to work. At an organisational level, consideration needs to be given to responding to the needs of upset pupils and staff but in such a way that the school returns to something resembling normality as soon as possible. Where a critical incident management plan has been drawn up in advance of a disturbing event, many of these issues will have been considered and staff will be clear about procedures and about the roles to be played by all concerned. However, it is impossible to plan for all eventualities and senior staff may need to call on outside help and advice.

Similarly, in preparing for supporting schools faced with such an incident, City Council services should be clear about their respective roles and there should be a high level of co-ordination of support. The framework for this support and the roles of the various services is described on the useful contacts list (see Action Sheet A6).

Developing a Critical Incident Management Plan

In order to make an appropriate response to any critical incident, it is of vital importance that head teachers involve all staff and governors in developing a plan which will outline the following:

1. Definitions: how to define a critical incident and appropriate intervention.
2. Preventative measures.
3. Role clarification for all staff: who will do what, where and when.
4. Review: arrangements for annual review of plan.
5. Training: on-going requirements for staff training.

1. Definitions

A 'Critical Incident' can be defined as ...

An event or sequence of events affecting pupils and / or teachers which creates significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and coping strategies and which is likely to have serious emotional and organisational consequences.

Additionally, a critical incident may...

- happen inside or outside school;
- involve severe injury or death to pupils, staff, parents or members of the local community;
- involve no physical injury but emotional trauma;
- involve one pupil, one member of staff, or, at the other end of the scale, hundreds.

A critical incident will almost inevitably disrupt school functioning. This guidance, while precipitated by very serious incidents, includes advice about appropriate levels of response to incidents which are less dramatic and arguably of lower priority.

Several head teachers, during the consultation period, maintained that such lower level incidents could nevertheless have a marked effect both on the efficient functioning of the school and upon individuals and groups involved.

Suggested definitions of a critical incident will help the head teacher to put any action plan into operation.

The following **Type 1** critical incidents could be seen as high priority in that they would require a detailed action plan including all or most of the elements summarised on Action Sheet A1.

Type 1. High Priority - Action Plan Immediately Put Into Operation (See Action Sheet A1)

A large scale or major incident which impacts on the whole school and local community and which results in major involvement of one or more emergency services.

Examples of this include:

- US shootings at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Newtown, Connecticut (2012)
- The shootings in Whitehaven, Cumbria (2010).
- The shootings at secondary school in Winnenden, Germany (2009).
- US shootings in Virginia Tech University (2007).
- The shootings in Pennsylvania at an Amish School (October 2006).
- The shootings in Beslan, Russia (2004).
- The stabbing to death of a parent outside Holte School (2004).
- The Soham murders (2003).
- The shootings in Dunblane Primary School (1996).
- The machete attack on nursery pupils and staff in Wolverhampton (1996).
- The murder of Philip Lawrence, Head Teacher, outside his school in London (1995).
- The Hagley school minibus crash (1993).

Community critical incidents such as the Lockerbie air crash (1986), the Hillsborough football stadium disaster (1989), or a disturbance such as the civil unrest in Lozells (2005) and the riots in Birmingham city centre (2011). Tragedies which happen abroad can impact on whole communities in this country, such as 9/11 (2001) and the Asian/Boxing Day Tsunami (2004).

The following Type 2 critical incidents may be seen as lower priority but may nevertheless severely disrupt school organisation and functionality, may result in severe distress to pupils and/or staff and may require some elements of the action plan such as the involvement of the emergency services and support agencies.

Type 2. Medium Priority Action (Could Also Be Level 1 Dependent on Severity). *Head teacher to plan action as appropriate.*

A sudden or traumatic incident which impacts on a significant number of staff or pupils.

Examples of this include:

- The death of a pupil or adult on the school premises or on a school trip.
- A road traffic accident involving a pupil or member of staff.
- A fire at the school or at home where there is loss of life or serious injury.
- A serious accident in a school laboratory.
- The murder or severe injury of a pupil, parent or member of staff outside school.
- The death of a pupil following accident or illness outside school.

2. Advance Measures

Whilst schools cannot prepare for every eventuality, there are steps which can be taken in order to provide reasonably smooth responses to an incident.

- Senior staff should familiarise themselves with the School Security Strategy document, in particular such aspects as public access to the school and the provision of identification badges to all visitors, together with their own assessment of risk.
- Consider a general risk assessment of potential hazards in and around the school and what steps might be taken to minimise those risks.
- Each school should outline their own Critical Incident Management Plan which is communicated to all staff and governors. This will detail procedures for responding to incidents inside and outside school.
- Schools should maintain and regularly update a list of the next of kin of all pupils and staff and where to make contact with them in the event of a critical incident. Where pupils and staff are off the school site, a duplicate list should remain on the school premises. The importance of accurate information should be reinforced in communication from schools to parents and carers.
- A **Critical Incident Management Team** might be established with members having key roles to play in a critical incident. This might be made up of senior managers but might also include any staff with the requisite personal and practical skills which could be useful in an emergency. If such a team is established the school should consider undertaking a trial exercise to test the effectiveness of its planning.
- A senior member of staff should be designated as spokesperson. Support and advice will be provided by the Council's Press Office.

A list of any pupils out from school on visits or placements on any day should be kept on the school premises.

- Head teachers may consider a reciprocal 'buddying' system, where, in the event of a critical incident, each is paired with another head teacher who will give support and carry out some operational functions within the school.
- Basic information such as contained in this resource should be updated regularly, retained in an accessible place and key staff should familiarise themselves with its contents.
- The school should ensure that any specialist outdoor facilities used are appropriately registered.

- Plan for school evacuation if required. In particular consider...
 - Where will staff and pupils assemble?
 - Who is responsible for collecting registers?
 - Who will check the registers?
 - What other items should designated members of staff take with them if possible? (e.g. contact lists of pupils, school plan showing entrances/exits for emergency services)
 - What will be the 'all clear' signal?
 - If required, what could function as an incident room?

3. Role Clarification for School Staff

Distress occurs both to individuals involved in any traumatic incidents and to those involved in a helping capacity, whether school staff or outside agencies. For the best humanitarian reasons people often rush to situations where they feel they are needed but working within any traumatic situation is not easy and should be treated with caution. Ideally, it should be carried out by those who are personally robust enough to cope with the pressures and who have received further training. Access to professional colleagues for 'debriefing' or other appropriate forms of support can be very helpful if further 'casualties' are to be avoided. Head teachers and managers of support services must take responsibility for ensuring this is provided. Schools should ensure all staff are aware of and trained around their critical incident policy and procedures.

The head teacher or designate will be required to:

- Inform other staff that the action plan is being carried out
- Contact involved parents
- Inform pupils of what has happened in as small groupings as possible
- Inform other parents by letter
- Contact and liaise with support services
- Handle enquiries
- Liaise with City Council Press Office
- Talk to the media, if necessary
- Organise meetings with other staff
- Ensure safety and security of the school building
- Establish priorities for counselling
- Manage system for recording who has been seen and in what order

4. Review

Any critical incident plan will need to be reviewed annually with all staff, in conjunction with the support services as necessary, taking account of any direct experiences of critical incidents. The City Council will endeavour to provide feedback to schools based upon accumulated experiences across the city as a whole.

5. Training

Head teachers may need to consider appropriate training for staff who have expressed a wish to be involved in this type of work: such training could include full First Aid courses, aspects of bereavement, group debriefing etc. Educational Psychologists, Welfare Officers and Health and Safety Advisors may be consulted about the training needs of the school.

Bereavement and Loss

Children, like adults, can respond very differently to death or loss. Below are some of the possible reactions to loss but it is important to stress that some children may not show any of these at all while others display many. Age, development and personality are important factors but the quality of support they receive from family, friends and significant adults such as teachers may also affect the extent or duration of any reactions.

Possible Reaction to Loss

Behavioural effects:

Any sudden change in behaviour including clinging, regression to younger behaviour patterns, obsessive or repetitive talking, lack of compliance, drug or alcohol abuse, avoidance of others and school refusal.

Cognitive Effects:

Confusion about the event, difficulty in sequencing events, indecisiveness, poor concentration, loss of memory, loss of judgment and reasoning skills, decline in intellectual and academic functioning.

Physical Effects:

Headaches, shock, shivering, constriction of the throat, disturbed sleep, tiredness, loss of appetite and loss of physical control.

Emotional effects:

Depression, anxiety, anger, guilt, irritability, increased dreams/nightmares, fear of recurrence of the event, hyper-vigilance and over-concern for others

Socio-Cultural Issues

The culture, spiritual beliefs and life experiences of children determine in part their attitude to death or loss, which may be very different from the Western European view. It is important to be sensitive to these issues and avoid advice or suggestions which could conflict with views of the family or community as a whole. Building up a store of knowledge about these beliefs of pupils in the school will help to ensure sensitivity of staff at times of a critical incident.

If a school requires advice on the cultural, religious or language needs of pupils and families in the aftermath of a critical incident, please raise this with the first point of contact who will be able to advise on appropriate resources.

Patterns of Grief and Mourning

Once again, it is important to recognise that people differ greatly in how they grieve or mourn for a lost friend or family member. There are no hard and fast stages that individuals inevitably go through and while some come to terms with loss relatively quickly, for others the process can take several years. However, below are some of the **possible** feelings which children and adults may experience.

Immediate after effects:

May include shock, numbness or denial.

First few weeks and months:

Anxiety, guilt, anger, loneliness and yearning.

Anger may be directed at anything or anyone, including oneself, for perceived failure to act in some way that might have prevented what happened. There may be regret that there will no longer be an opportunity to say or do something with the lost friend or classmate. There are often feelings of guilt that one did or did not do something that might have made a difference in their final days. Some people may acknowledge at one level how irrational such feelings are but cannot help them occurring.

Subsequent months:

Depression, sadness, apathy but also for many the start of acceptance, particularly if support is available.

Longer term:

Acceptance and adaptation. This is when the feelings are no longer so intense and the individual is reconciled to new circumstances. It is characterised by being able to think of the deceased person without pain.

Responding to Bereaved Children

The age and level of cognitive development of the child can determine the length and form of response to a traumatic incident in their life. A 7 year old child may take longer to come to terms with loss than an adolescent if she/he does not have an appropriate level of understanding to appreciate the significance of the loss.

With young children (Foundation and KS1), it can be extremely helpful for someone with whom the child feels comfortable and safe to provide reassurance and explanations of the loss in terms they can understand. By around the ages of 5 - 6 years, most children are beginning to understand that death is irreversible and involves permanent separation. Due to their lack of experience however, some may find it hard to understand what has happened and may misconstrue events. In these early years, children may be very ego-centric and feel personally responsible for the event (e.g. 'If I hadn't been naughty, Auntie wouldn't have died'). Honest answers to questions are helpful to all ages but it is particularly important here to correct misunderstandings or false, exaggerated perceptions of what happened.

In general, research suggests that people come to an acceptance of loss if they are able to talk about their feelings and express their emotions in some way. Some children may need help in expressing their feelings and teachers can be very helpful in providing them with appropriate outlets through, for example, writing, playing music, art, sport or drama. Older children can benefit greatly from someone who is simply prepared to listen, understand and reflect on their expressions of emotion. This may be an adult but peers can be equally if not more important supporters for adolescents. It is important for adults to be guided by the child, being available when they wish to talk but respecting their right to silence. Letting the child know you are available and are there to help can be very reassuring.

References

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Capewell, E. (1992) **Disaster: The Role of Education. Home and School**. March 3-12.

Johnson, K. (1989) **Trauma in the Lives of Children**. Alameda, Hunter House

Resources for Schools

BOOKS FOR STAFF:

- **'The Critical Incident Management Handbook for Schools'**. (2011) By Rae.T. Pub. Optimus
ISBN- 978-1-906517-47-2
- **'Wise before the Event'** (2006) Yule W. and Gold A.
Pub: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.
ISBN 978 0 903319 66 9
- **'Grief in Children. A Handbook for Adults.'** (1992) Dyregrov, A.
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 185302-113-X
- **'Supporting young people coping with grief, loss and death.'** (2006) Weymont D. & Rae, T.
Pub: Sage
ISBN 1904315429
- **'The Forgotten Mourners'** (1991) Smith, S.
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 1853027588
- **'Loss, change and grief: An educational perspective.'** (1999) Brown, E.
Pub: David Fulton
ISBN 1853464651
- **'Good Grief - 1: over 11s and adults'**. (1995) Ward, B.
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 9781853023248
- **'Good Grief - 2: under 11s'**. (1996) Ward, B
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 9781853023408
- **'How to cope with childhood stress. A practical guide for teachers'**. (1993) Eds. Alsop P. & McCaffrey. T.
Pub: Longman
ISBN 0582219531
- **'Bibliotherapy for bereaved children'**. (2001)
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 1843100045
- **'How it feels when a parent dies'**. (1988) Kremetz, J.
Pub: Gollancz
ISBN 0394758544

- **'Helping children cope with grief'**. (1998) Wells, R.
Pub: Abingdon Press
ISBN 0687854709
- **'A teacher's handbook of death'**. (2002) Jackson, M. & Colwell, J.
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 1843100150
- **'Home-made books to help kids cope: an easy to learn technique for parents and professionals'**. (1992) Zeigler, R.
Pub: Magination Press
ISBN 0945354509
- **'Helping Children to manage loss'**. (1998) Mallon, B.
Pub: Jessica Kingsley
ISBN 1853026050
- **'Helping Children Cope with Separation and Loss'**. (1994) Jewett, C.
Pub: Free Association Books.
ISBN 0713477660
- **'Giving Sorrow Words; Managing Bereavement in Schools'**. (1999) Killick, S. & Lindeman, S.
Pub: Lucky Duck. (Includes video).
ISBN 1873942729
- **'Grief in school communities'** (2003) Rowling, L.
Pub: Open University
ISBN 033521116X

BOOKS FOR PRIMARY CHILDREN

- **'What Happens when Someone Dies?'** (2008) by Yarborough.T. Pub. Authorhouse
ISBN - 13:978-1434396679
- **'Samantha Jane's Missing Smile: A Story about coping with the loss of a parent'** (2007) by Kaplow.J., Pincus.D. & Spiegel.B. Pub. Magination Press
ISBN- 13:978-1591472089
- **'When Uncle Bob died – Talking it through'** (2001) Althea
Pub: Happy Cat Books; New Ed edition
ISBN-10: 1903285089 ISBN-13: 978-1903285084
- **'Badger's parting gifts'** (1992) Varley, S.
Pub: Harper Trophy
ISBN-10: 0688115187 ISBN-13: 978-0688115180

- **'Remembering Mum'** (1996) Perkins, G. & Morris, L.
Pub: A & C Black
ISBN 0-7136-4432-X
- **'Remembering my brother'** (1996) Perkins, G.
Pub: A & C Black
ISBN 0-7136-4541-5
- **'Am I still a sister?'** (1986) Sims, A.
Pub: Big A & Co.
ISBN-10: 0961899506 ISBN-13: 978-0961899509
- **'Waterbugs and dragonflies'** (1997) Stickney, D.
Pub: Pilgrim Press
ISBN-10: 082981180X ISBN-13: 978-0829811803
- **'How it feels when a parent dies'** (1991) Krementz, J.
Pub: Knopf
ISBN-10: 0394758544 ISBN-13: 978-0394758541
- **'Can Anyone Be as Gloomy as Me?: Poems About Being Sad'** (2005) Toczek, N.
Pub: Hodder Children's Books
ISBN-10: 0340911166 ISBN-13: 978-0340911167
- **'A Taste of Blackberries'** (2004) Buchanan Smith, D.
Pub: HarperTrophy
ISBN-10: 006440238X ISBN-13: 978-0064402385

BOOKS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

- **'The Grieving Teen - A guide for teenagers and their friends'** (2000) by Fitzgerald.H.
Pub. Simon & Schuster
ISBN - 13:978-0684868042
- **'Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers: How to cope with losing someone you love'**
(1993) by Grollman.A.
Pub. Beacon Press
ISBN - 13:978-0807025017
- **'Facing Grief - Bereavement and the Young Adult'** (1991) by Wallbank.S.
Pub. Lutterworth Press
ISBN - 13:978-0718828073
- **'Your friend, Rebecca'** (1990) Hoy, L.
Pub: Red Fox
ISBN-10: 0099312808 ISBN-13: 978-0099312802

- **'Charlotte's Web'** (1993) White, E. B.
Pub: Penguin
ISBN 014 036 4498
- **'My Brother Joey Died'** (1982) Houston, G. & McLendon, G.
Pub: Messner
ISBN-10: 0671424017 ISBN-13: 978-0671424015
- **'In the Springtime of the Year'** (1977) Hill, S.
Pub: Penguin. (*Suitable 15+*)
ISBN-10: 0140041109 ISBN-13: 978-0140041101

WEBSITES:

- Childhood Bereavement Network
<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>
- Beyond the Horizon
<http://www.beyondthehorizon.org.uk/>
- Edward's Trust
<http://www.edwardstrust.org.uk/>
- Winston's Wish
<http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/>
- Cruse Bereavement Care
<http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/>
- Teacher Support
<http://www.teachersupport.info/get-support/practical-guides/leadership/critical-incidents>

Helplines, Counselling and Support

STAFFCARE (Counselling, Support Service & Counselling Helpline)

Tel: 464 2292 / 464 5480

- Schools can subscribe to StaffCare, which includes an Emergency Action Plan service, providing telephone and online counselling. This includes immediate post-trauma support, and some financial and legal advice. Face to face counselling will only be available for staff who meet set criteria.
- Schools who do not subscribe are still able to purchase the services on an ad-hoc chargeable basis.
- Please contact StaffCare on 0121 464 5480 for the per capita charge and all the additional service charges, and to discuss your school's particular needs.

Edward's Trust 'SUNRISE'

43a Calthorpe Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 1TS

Tel: 454 1705

Email: admin@edwardstrust.org

Offers support and counselling for children aged 4-18 years who are bereaved of a sibling, parent or significant carer.

BEYOND THE HORIZON

138 Priory Road, Hall Green, Birmingham B28 0TB

Tel: 430 7529

Supports bereaved children, young people and families through a range of interventions such as counselling, information and resources.

THE CHILD DEATH HELPLINE

(Based at Great Ormond Street Hospital, London and Alder Hey Children's Hospital, Liverpool)

Tel: 0800 282 986 / 0808 800 6019 (additional freephone number for all mobiles)

Email: contact@childdeathhelpline.org

The helpline is open every day throughout the year:

Every evening 7.00 pm-10.00 pm

Monday to Friday mornings 10.00am-1.00 pm

Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons 1.00 pm-4.00 pm

CHILDLINE

Tel: 0800 1111

Online chat: <http://www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Chat/Pages/OnlineChat.aspx>

24-hour helpline for children and young people in the UK.

Children and young people can call about any problem, at any time - day or night. ChildLine's counsellors are there to help you find ways to sort things out.

ACORNS CHILDREN'S HOSPICE TRUST

103 Oak Tree Lane, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6HZ

Tel: 248 4850

Acorns provides specialist care and support to children and young people who have life limiting or life threatening conditions, and their families. Services are offered through a Community Team who offer support at home which covers emotional, practical and bereavement support.

CRUSE BEREAVEMENT CARE

King Edward Building, 205 Corporation Street, Birmingham B4 6SE

Tel: 687 8010

Tel: 0844 477 9400 (Bereavement Day by Day Helpline)

Email: birmingham@cruse.org.uk

Aims to offer bereavement support to children, young people and families through one to one support, telephone support, home visits and family support groups.

OPEN DOOR YOUTH COUNSELLING LTD

2 Greenfield Crescent, Birmingham B15 3BE

Tel: 454 1102 / 454 1116

Open Door provides a confidential counselling and information service for young people.

THE COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS

Tel: 0845 123 2304

Email: info@tcf.org.uk

Helpline is always answered by a bereaved parent and is available 365 days from 10.00 am-16.00 pm and 19.00 pm-22.00 pm.

A nationwide organisation of bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents dedicated to the support and care of other bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who have suffered the death of a child/children.

RELATE

111 Bishopsgate Street, Birmingham B15 1ET
Tel: 643 1638

Relationship Counselling, Sex Therapy, Relationship Education & Training, Counselling for Young People, Family Counselling

THE SAMARITANS

13 Bow Street, Birmingham B1 1DW
Tel: 666 6644
Helpline: 08457 909090
Email: jo@samaritans.org

Providing 24-hour support to people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair, including those which many lead to suicide.

SANELINE

Tel: 08457 678000
Email: http://www.sane.org.uk/resources/contact_us

Support and information about mental health problems. The helpline is available 1pm-11pm 365 days a year.

SURVIVORS OF BEREAVEMENT BY SUICIDE (SoBS)

Tel: National Helpline: 0844 561 6855 (Available 9am - 9pm every day)

A self-help, voluntary organisation that aims to meet the needs and break the isolation of those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

Section 4: Comments and Feedback

Contacting Us

We value your comments and feedback to improve the guidance which will be kept under regular review. All comments can be sent to the author, preferably by email.

Steve Cullen, Information Governance Manager

Tel: 464 4591

Email: steve.cullen@birmingham.gov.uk

Any correspondence should also be copied to:

Tracey Robinson, Information Governance Officer

Tel: 464 0085

Email: tracey.robinson@birmingham.gov.uk