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Responding to a Critical Incident in School: Framework for Support and Intervention for Management and Staff

July 2018

Acknowledgements

East Dunbartonshire Council Critical Incidents Pack was written by Kate Spalding, East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service and revised by Gail Hendry, East Dunbartonshire Council Educational Psychology Service in July 2018 in collaboration and consultation with Gillian Dury, Principal Psychologist, Senior Management and staff at Douglas Academy, Child Bereavement UK and Police Scotland.

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Section One: Introduction

1.1 Definition of a Critical Incident

A Critical Incident is defined as ‘any sudden, unexpected incident involving grief, loss or shock which has the potential to interfere with an individual’s ability to function either at the time or later’ (**Rowling, 2003**). Critical Incidents are wide ranging, and the repercussions and levels of distress within a school, community or local authority will vary depending on the nature and circumstances of the event. The way in which incidents are dealt with in the short, medium and longer term can have a significant impact on the coping process of those involved or affected by the situation. East Dunbartonshire Council guidance document ‘*Responding to a Critical Incident: Framework for Support and Intervention*’ is intended to support individual schools and their respective communities when responding to an unexpected event. Examples of the types of Critical Incident which a school community may have to respond to are:

- Death of a member of the school community
- Serious assault
- Significant damage to school property causing risk
- Abduction

A Critical Incident is likely to overtake a school or organisation at an unexpected time, potentially overwhelming the community with practical and emotional consequences. A fast, flexible and supportive response is required, and this is most readily achieved when the school has policy, procedures and resources in readiness for the unexpected. Schools can prepare themselves by referring to this document to support practice when responding to unexpected events.

1.2 Key Aims of Critical Incident Guidance

The key aims are to:

- Provide a framework to support school management when responding to a critical incident.
- Provide support to school staff to respond to the needs of individuals/groups/classes effectively.
- Provide guidance to enable school staff to identify the most appropriate support to meet individual circumstance and context.

1.3. Staged Response to a Critical Incident: Summary Overview

Stage 1: Immediate Response: The Role of the First Responder(s)

Stage 2: Immediate Response: Planning and Support Through the First 24 Hours

Stage 3: Short Term Response: The Next 24 – 48 Hours

Stage 4: Medium to Long Term Response to Support Planning

The procedures are intended to provide an accessible, practical and summative guide to schools dealing with a Critical Incident. The guidance is broken into a number of steps, and can be implemented immediately and without the need for staff training or prior experience. The guidance is intended to be used as a flexible framework which can be adapted to meet the needs of the individual circumstance and context.

Section Two: All Staff

Immediate Response: The Role of the First Responder

2.1: Stage One: Role of the First Responder(s):

Information regarding a Critical Incident may be received from a number of different sources (e.g. member of staff, pupil, parent/carer, member of the public, emergency services, education personnel within the authority etc.). The role of the first responder is to ask for, and record, as much relevant information as possible. There are two main categories of Critical Incident which schools may have to respond to:

One: A Critical Incident which occurs within the community.

or

Two: A Critical Incident which occurs within school and during school hours.

Clearly, the initial response will be qualitatively different depending on the context. The guidance is intended to provide a clear outline to support effective information gathering in both circumstances.

2.2: Stage One: Response to a Critical Incident which has occurred within the community and out with school hours:

When a Critical Incident is reported to school, the person taking the call/message should:

1. Gather factual information to obtain a clear overview of the situation (see Figure One, prompt response).
2. Maintain a written record of action undertaken (See Appendix One: Recording a Critical Incident).

Figure One is a vertical stack of eight colored buttons, each containing a label for a piece of information to be gathered during a prompt response. The buttons are: 1. Red button: Name of Informant: 2. Green button: Date and Time of Call: 3. Purple button: Contact Details of Informant: 4. Blue button: Date and Time of Incident: 5. Red button: Location of Incident: 6. Orange button: Details of Incident: 7. Green button: Who has been informed: 8. Purple button: Agreed Next Steps:

Figure One: Prompt Response

3. Offer reassurance and support. Be aware that the person may be heightened emotionally. Following the prompt response detailed in Figure One can help to extract reliable information which is required to respond effectively and efficiently.

4. Contact the Head Teacher or, if unavailable, a designated member of the Senior Management Team (See Appendix Two: telephone contact sheet, internal and external).

2.3: Response to a Critical Incident which has occurred within school grounds and during school hours

When a Critical Incident is witnessed in school, the witness or person the witness has reported the incident to should:

1. **Immediately** inform the Head Teacher or nominated emergency contact. If neither is able to respond (they may be involved in the incident) the next most appropriate person should follow the instructions below.
2. **Assess** the situation and establish a basic overview of the incident.
3. **Take immediate action to safeguard** pupils, staff and visitors if required.

If appropriate, dial 999 for emergency services and provide the responder with an overview of the situation. Figure Two provides an overview of prompt statements and questions which the emergency services may use to extract the information required to assess an appropriate response.

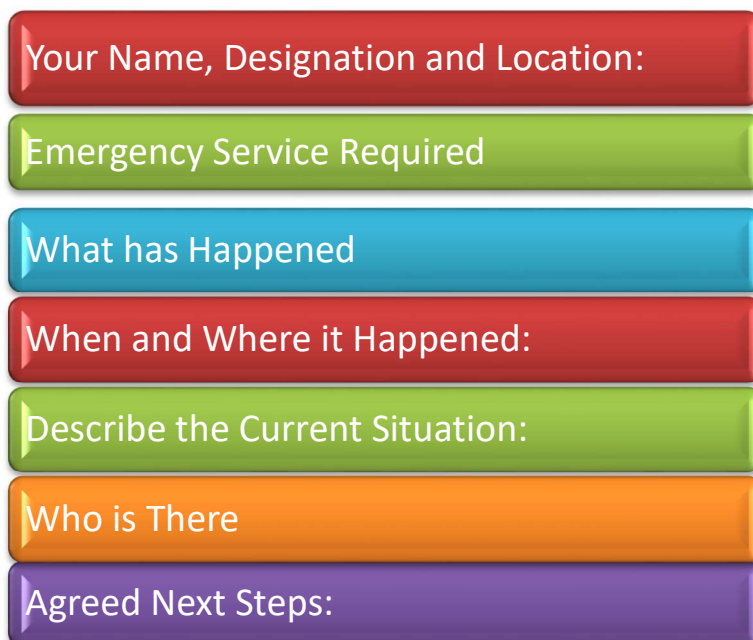


Figure Two: Emergency Service Contact Prompt Response

The emergency services do notify each other of an incident, however if multiple services are needed, consider speaking with each service independently, prioritising contact in response to the incident. This will ensure that each service has the information they need to respond appropriately.

2.4: Stage One: Senior Management Team: Immediate Response to a Critical Incident

- 1.** Meet with the first responder to clarify and collate information. Consider use of prompt documents detailed in Figure 1 and 2 to check and clarify information.
- 2.** Contact the Chief Education Officer or if unavailable, an Education Officer. Provide collated information and seek advice and clarification of next steps. (Appendix Two provides additional external telephone contact details as required).
- 3.** If the emergency services have been contacted, liaise with the relevant services as directed by them.
- 4.** Do not respond to any requests from the press. In the event of an incident or situation that attracts media attention, East Dunbartonshire Council's Corporate Communication Team should be contacted on 07768 033166. Schools are advised not to speak directly to the media until a statement has been prepared. Access to the scene of any incident should be restricted and photographs should not be taken without the approval of a designated member of the Senior Management Team.
- 5. Proceed to Stage 2 of the Critical Incident Framework: *Planning and Support Through The First 24 Hours.***

Section Two: Appendices

Appendix One: Recording a Critical Incident

Appendix One: Recording a Critical Incident (Outwith and Within School)

First Contact Form: Critical Incident Occurring Outwith School	
Message Taken By:	
Date:	
Time:	
Name of Informant:	
Contact Details of Informant:	
Date and Time of Incident:	
Location of Incident:	
Details of Incident:	
Who Else Has Been Informed:	
Agreed Next Steps:	

First Contact Form: Critical Incident Occurring Within School	
Name:	
Job Description:	
Date:	
Time of Incident:	
Location of Incident:	
Who is involved:	
Details of Incident:	
Measures taken:	
Emergency Services Contacted	Yes/No
Police	Yes/No
Fire	Yes/No
Ambulance	Yes/No
Senior Management Informed (Note Name, Date and Time)	

Part Three: Senior Management Guidance

3.1: Stage 2: Planning and Support: First 24 hours

- 3.1.1: Contact
- 3.1.2: Create
- 3.1.3: Inform
- 3.1.4: Support

3.2: At the End of Day One

- 3.2.1: Critical Incident Review
- 3.2.2: Critical Incident De-Brief

3.3: Stage 3: Planning and Support: Short Term Response: The Next 24 to 48 Hours

3.4: Stage 4: Planning and Support: Longer Term Response

- 3.4.1: Response to Bereavement

3.5: Appendices:

- Appendix One: Critical Incident Planning Framework
- Appendix Two Telephone Contact Sheet Internal and External
- Appendix Three: Telephone Trees (Primary and Secondary)
- Appendix Four: Response Statement Exemplar
- Appendix Five: Sample Letters to Parents/Carers
- Appendix Six: Critical Incident Review

3.1: Stage 2: Planning and Support: The First 24 hours

(Refer to Appendix One, Critical Incident Planning Framework to Support School Planning)

3.1.1: Contact

1. Affected family or families
2. Contact the Principal Educational Psychologist
3. East Dunbartonshire Council Employees relative to the incident (See Appendix Two: Telephone Contact List)

3.1.2: Create

1. A Critical Incident Response Team. Depending on the size of the school and nature of the incident, either one or two members of promoted staff should be delegated as liaison officers to co-ordinate communication and support. They would typically be relieved of normal duties to concentrate on co-ordinating support across the school.
2. A dedicated incoming phone line. This number should only be given to key people e.g. Chief Education Officer, Education Officer(s), Corporate Communications Team, Police and Parents/Carers directly involved (See Appendix Three, Telephone Trees).
3. A response statement for staff (See Appendix Four). It is important that the same information is shared with all staff including support staff in order that communication is consistent and misunderstandings/rumours do not circulate.
4. A plan for resource deployment for the day e.g. re-organisation of class timetables/cover for staff directly involved. Consider the need to rearrange any activities planned for that day which could be rescheduled e.g. assessments/school trips/school visitors.

5. Designated areas for pupils/Internal and external staff/multi-agency professionals
6. (If the Critical Incident has involved a bereavement) **A condolence book for pupils.**

This should be supported and monitored by a member of the Critical Incident Co-ordinating Team following consultation and agreement with family.

3.1.3: Inform

Staff

1. Convene a meeting with all staff (teachers, support staff, clerical and ancillary) or if this is not possible, a series of meetings with all staff. For smaller incidents, only relevant staff would be involved.
2. Share the agreed response statement with all relevant staff. Brief staff on what they should tell pupils, and what their role should be. Emphasise the importance of maintaining consistent communication.
3. Advise all staff that if approached by a member of press that they respond with 'no comment' and advise Senior Management.
4. Brief staff on potential reaction from pupils and how to support. Provide either a copy or link to Section Four of the Critical Incident Guidance, *Guidance for Staff following a Critical Incident*.
5. Make staff aware of the supports available to pupils in school, e.g. time-out or quiet areas for pupils, availability of adults to talk to.
6. Ensure sensitivity to cultural and religious diversity amongst pupils.
7. Advise on the need for confidentiality.

Pupils

1. Inform pupils most affected first and separately from their peers using the agreed response statement to guide this interaction.

2. Inform all pupils. This should be done on a class basis rather than a full assembly and should be done by the class teacher who knows them best e.g. form/guidance teacher. Remind staff to use the prompt response you have completed.

Parents/Wider Community

1. **Individual Response:** Telephone other families directly involved, families of witnesses, schools where pupil's siblings attend.
2. **Collective Response:** Seek clarification from the Chief Education Officer, or if unavailable, an Education Officer. If a collective response is agreed, release a letter to parents/carers (See Appendix 5 Sample Letters for Parent/Carers). It is important parents/carers receive information in a timely manner. This helps maintain the consistent communication established in school and enables parents/carers to discuss the facts with their children at home to dispel possible rumours.

3.1.4: Support:

Staff

1. Provide opportunity and a place/forum where staff can ask questions: collate themes and liaise with support agencies accordingly.
2. Encourage staff to gather information and dispel rumours by reinforcing the response statement. Share information with the Critical Incident response team timeously.
3. Create time and space for staff to meet informally.
4. Provide a Critical Incident de-brief and review for all staff (voluntary attendance).

Pupils

1. Maintain **typical** school routines but be flexible. The decision to send some or all pupils home would only be considered in exceptional circumstances and would be made by the Head Teacher in consultation with the Chief Education Officer.
2. Use the agreed response statement across school. Respond to pupils questions which may arise from response statement. Refer to *Guidance for Staff following a Critical Incident for further support as and when required.*
3. Identify key adults who will provide support for pupils that day
4. Create quiet areas/space for reflection which should be manned by a key adult. Focus on providing opportunities for discussion only. Be aware that providing drinks and snacks has the potential to create an environment where young people may find it difficult to move from. Assessment of individual needs should determine the most appropriate course of action.
5. Provide opportunity and space for face to face contact for pupils when required.

6. Provide a copy or link to section four, *Guidance for Staff Following a Critical Incident*.

Management

1. Provide opportunities throughout the day for management to seek support and clarification from personnel within the Local Authority. Ensure that time is also set aside for full debrief and review for all members of the Senior Management Team at the end of the school day. Consultation can be requested from your link Educational Psychologist as and when required.

3.2: At the End of Day One

3.2.1: Critical Incident Review:

As part of good practice, a Critical Incident review process should be offered to all staff who witnessed, were involved or were affected by the incident. The review process should take place on the day of the incident prior to staff leaving the workplace (See Appendix Six Critical Incident Review for further information).

The review process can be facilitated by a member of the Critical Incident coordinating team. Attendance is **voluntary** and the process should be conducted in groups of up to 8 people, or individually dependent on the assessment of the circumstances. The main aim of the review process is to:

1. Allow staff to share experiences.
2. Review facts surrounding the incident.
3. Identify self-care strategies.
4. Reduce the likelihood of prolonged adverse stress reactions through provision of a sense of closure on the day's events.
5. Provide signposting to available support both in the short and longer term.

3.2.2: Critical Incident De-brief

Debriefing should involve the Critical Incident Co-ordinating Team, and any member of staff who has been involved. A de-brief should occur before the end of the school day and should serve the following functions:

- To reflect on any learning arising from the Critical Incident.
- To review the facts of the event.

- To analyse the effect and initial impact of the incident on the school community.
- To review the actions which have been taken and analyse the initial impact of the actions.
- To modify the plan based on the assessment of the day and identify next steps.

Following de-briefing, review the plan for day 2 and proceed to;

Stage 3: The Next 24 to 48 Hours

Critical Incident Procedure Stage 3: The Next 24-48 Hours

3.3: Critical Incident Procedure Stage 3: The Next 24-48 hours

It is important to try to maintain the normal structure of the school day for all staff and pupils whilst recognising that staff may need to be supported on an on-going basis. Providing emotional containment and reassurance for distressed pupils can be challenging and potentially draining. It may also trigger repressed emotional responses from previous adverse experiences. Continuing to provide time and space for staff to talk is important.

If the Critical Incident has involved a bereavement, be guided by parental wishes regarding funeral attendance. Make arrangements for staff and affected pupils to attend the funeral as necessary and liaise with the Chief Education Officer and/or the Education Officer(s) regarding cover arrangements for funeral. Requests to close part or all of the school should be passed to the Chief Education Officer for consideration.

Begin Day 2 and Day 3 by:

1. Providing a short check-in with key staff to review the prompt sheet and action plan.
2. Re-emphasise that staff should be alert to pupils who indicate a desire to talk. The importance of 'being there' and actively listening cannot be overestimated.
3. Communicate updated information to key staff as soon as it is made available.
4. Clarify and coordinate the role of external agencies. Plan for provision of short and long term consultation with the Educational Psychology Service as circumstances dictate.

5. If general advice relating to the Critical Incident was not circulated to parents/carers, consider if this may still be required. Consult with the Chief Education Officer/Education Officers prior to the release of any letter. See Appendix 6: Sample Letters for further information.
6. Arrange a staff de-brief and review at the end of day two and three.
7. Review the Action Plan.

Once the De-brief has been completed and the action plan for day 3 has been agreed;

1. Review the process again at the end of Day 3.
2. Proceed to Critical Incident Stage 4: Longer Term Planning at the end of Day Three.

Stage 4: Longer Term Planning

3.4: Stage 4: Longer Term Planning

1. Review Section Four with all staff: *Guidance for Staff to Support pupils following a Critical Incident*. Ensure teachers monitor and assess pupils who have been distressed, and alert senior management/guidance staff of potential changes in behaviours timeously.
2. Raise the Critical Incident as part of the agenda at Pupil Support Group until it is agreed by the Pupil Support Group that it is no longer required.
3. Review risk management procedures/pupil management plans as necessary.
4. Monitor attendance, particularly of pupils assessed as most at risk. If a young person has not attended school since the incident, consider what further supports and intervention may be required.

3.4.1: Longer Term Response to Bereavement:

1. Check mailing lists and remove name(s) from databases to avoid the distress of sending mail to the bereaved.
2. Inform any contact services which may have had involvement with the young person e.g. careers service, school nurse, UCAS, multi-agency professionals to avoid the distress of sending mail to bereaved families.
3. Make a home visit to the bereaved/affected family/families. The timing and personnel attending is left to management discretion following consent of the family/families involved. It is recommended that two members of staff make the visit to provide mutual support.
4. Consult with parents on the appropriateness of a school memorial e.g. garden memorial, fund raising, school award, book of memories etc.

5. Advise staff not to remove the pupil's displayed work or make changes to the pupil's desk/workspace until there is a natural break in the academic session, typically at the end of a term.

Section Three: Appendices

Appendix One: Telephone Contact Sheet Internal and External

Appendix Two: Telephone Trees (Primary and Secondary)

Appendix Three: Critical Incident Planning Framework

Appendix Four: Response Prompt Sheet Exemplar

Appendix Five: Sample Letters to Parents

Appendix Six: Critical Incident Review

Appendix One: Telephone Contact Details – Internal/External

Internal Contacts

Title	Name(s)	Telephone
Head Teacher		
Depute Head Teacher		
Principal Teacher/Named Contact(s)		

External Contacts: Education People and Business (Schools should contact personnel directly)

Title	Name	Telephone
Chief Education Officer:	Jacqui MacDonald	0300 123 4510
Education Officers: Primary Secondary	Greg Bremner Jan Pollok	0300 123 4510
Educational Psychology Service Principal Educational Psychologist:	Gillian Dury	0300 123 4510
Corporate Communications Team		07768 033166

Social Work

Title	Name	Telephone
Head of Social Work	Paulo Mazzoncini	0300 123 4510
East Dunbartonshire Advice and Response team		0141 777 3000

Emergency Services

Emergency Service	Emergency Contact	General Contact
Police Scotland	999	101
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service	999	101
Scottish Ambulance Service	999	101

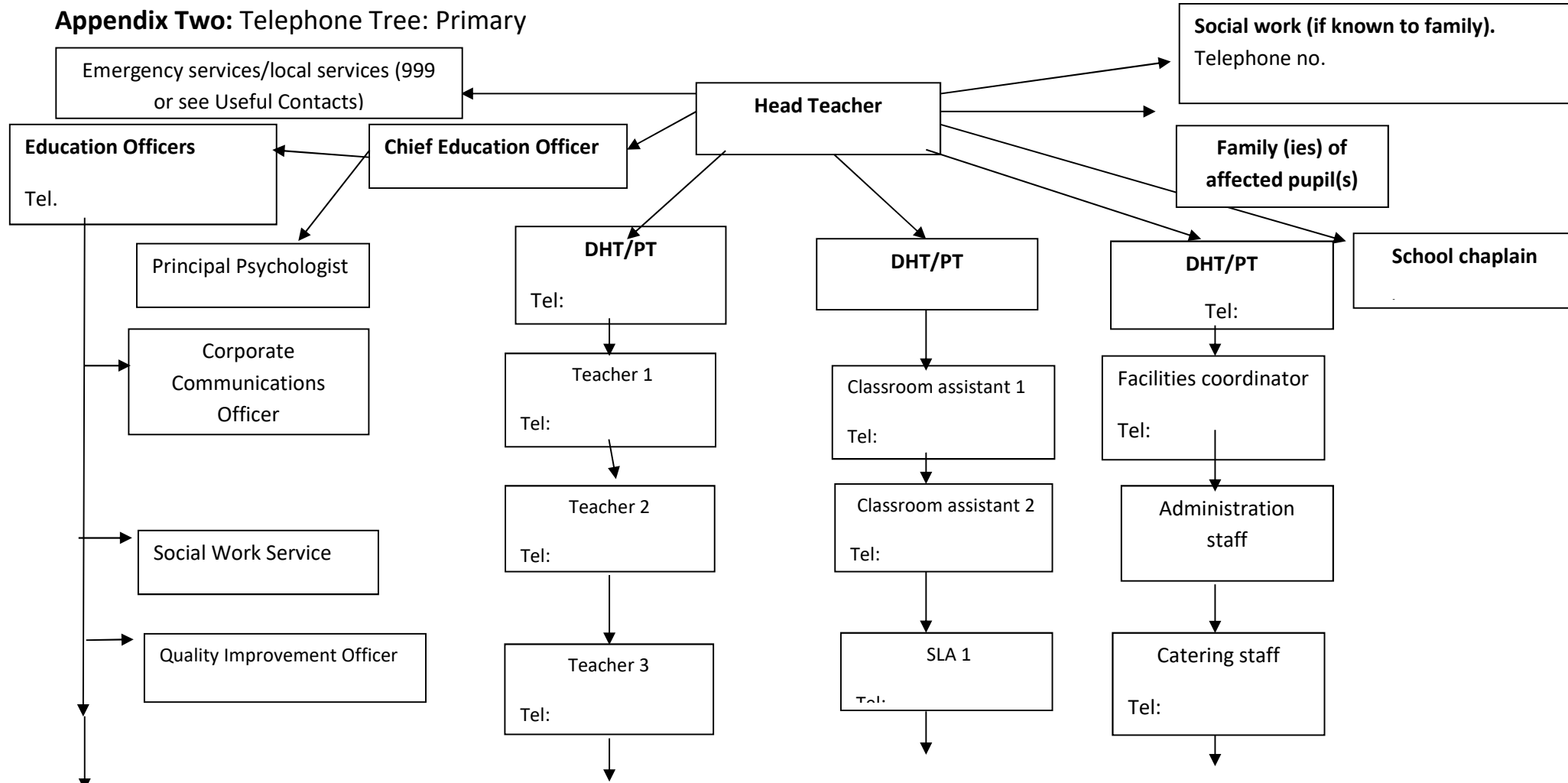
Health

Name of Hospital	Telephone Number
Queen Elizabeth Hospital for Children	0141 201 0000
Glasgow Royal Infirmary	0141 211 4000
Stobhill Hospital	0141 201 3000
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) North Glasgow	0141 232 9010

External Supports

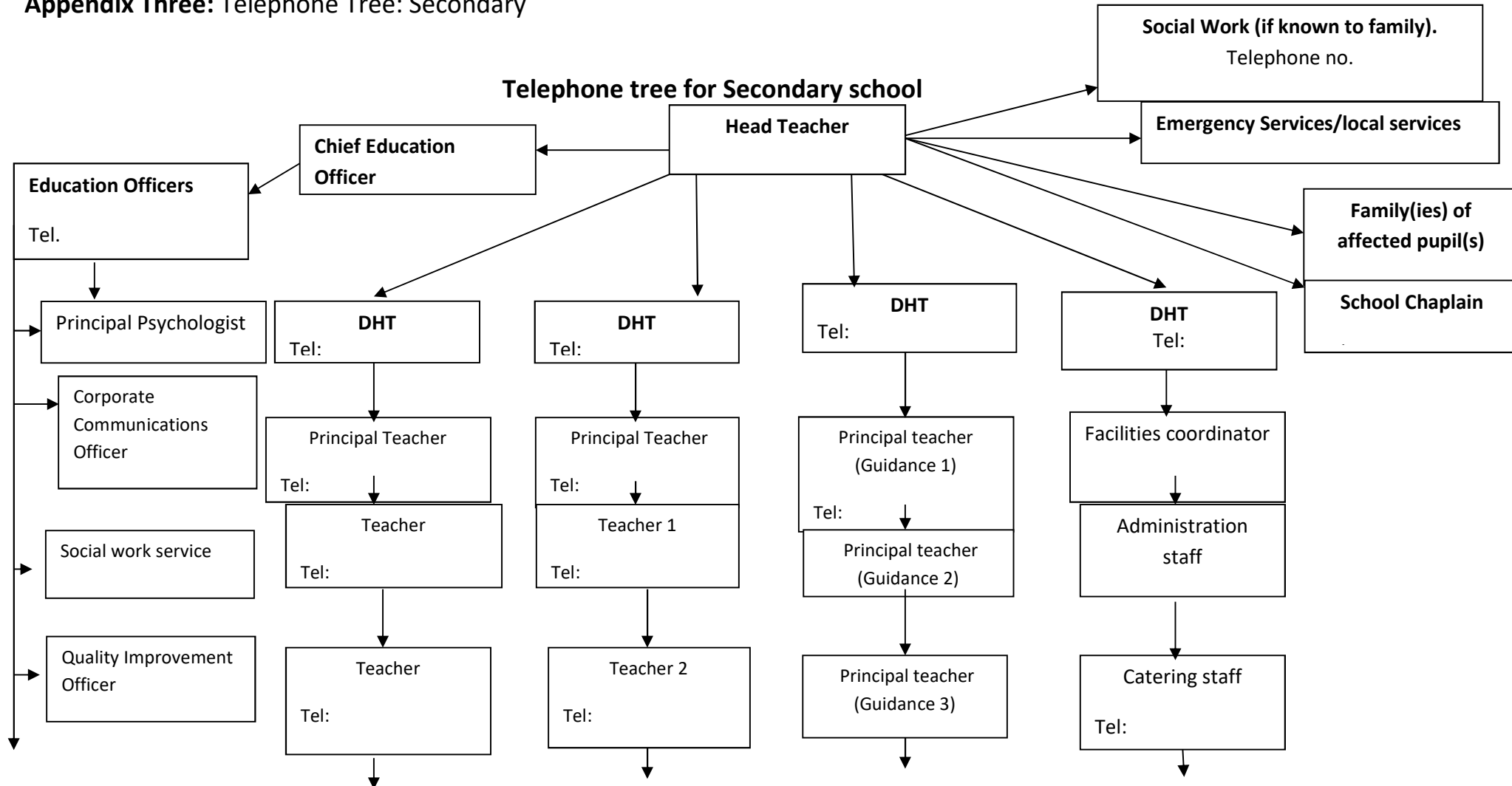
Support Agencies/Helplines	Website	Telephone Number
Cruse Bereavement Care	https://www.cruse.org.uk/	0845 600 2227
Child Bereavement UK	https://childbereavementuk.org/	01413 529 995
Childline	https://childbereavementuk.org/	0800 1111
Winston's Wish	www.winstonswish.org.uk	08088 020 021
Richmond Fellowship	www.https://trfs.org.uk/	0141 777 7471

Appendix Two: Telephone Tree: Primary



N.B. this tree should be modified to represent the network of calls to be made by each member of staff, and expanded to include all staff members. Word of mouth could be used rather than the telephone network, as long as the message was passed in a timely manner.

Appendix Three: Telephone Tree: Secondary



N.B. this tree should be modified to represent the network of calls to be made by each member of staff, and expanded to include all staff members. Word of mouth could be used rather than the telephone network, as long as the message was passed in a timely manner

Appendix Three: Critical Incident Planning Framework: Immediate Response

Contact	Person(s) responsible	Completed/comment
First Responder		
Collate Information - Refer to Response Sheet: Appendix One		
Contact Head of Education/Education Officer		
Affected Family or Families		
Principal Educational Psychologist		
East Dunbartonshire Council Employees relative to the Incident (see Appendix Two Telephone Contact List		
Create		
A Critical Incident Response Team		
A Dedicated Incoming Phone Line		
A Response Sheet for Staff (See Appendix Three)		
A Plan for Resource Deployment for the Day		
Designated Areas for Pupils and Staff		
A book of condolence for pupils subject to parental consent		
Inform: Staff		
Convene a meeting with all staff		
Share Response Sheet with all Relevant Staff		
Brief Staff on Role: Advise on the Importance of consistent communication		

Advise staff to respond to any press requests with no comment and to alert SMT		
Provide a link to Guidance Document and give copy of leaflet.		
Make staff aware of supports in school e.g. where the time out/quiet areas are – access to staff support		
Advise of the need for confidentiality		
Advise staff to be sensitive to cultural and religious diversity		
Inform: Pupils		
Inform most affected pupils first and separately from peers		
Inform all pupils on a class basis to be done by class teacher		
Inform: Parents/Carers/Wider Community		
Telephone other families directly involved		
Telephone families of witnesses if required		
Telephone schools where pupil's siblings attend		
Seek clarification from Head of Education if a collective response is needed.		
Forward letter to clerical team for circulation based on information used in school prompt response.		
Support: Staff		
Provide opportunity and a place/space where staff can ask questions, collate themes and liaise with support agencies accordingly		
Highlight behaviours to be alert to Re-emphasise importance of providing pupils with a safe place to talk within the classroom if possible.		
Plan availability of Educational Psychologist/Employee Welfare Advisor		

Draw attention to Staff Guidelines: Self Care for Staff		
Complete a Critical Incident Review		
Complete a Staff De-brief		
Support: Pupils		
Provide copy of leaflets as and when required		
Identify key adults who will support		
Key adults to be available at designated support areas		
Provide opportunities for individual support as and when required.		
Management Support		
Liaise with Education Officers/QIO/Educational Psychology Service as appropriate to support the following developments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Incident Response Team • Prompt Response Sheet Exemplars (See Appendix Five) • Planning • Critical Incident Review/De-brief and plan for next day • Any other tasks/support 		

Appendix Four: Critical Incident Planning Framework: Next 24 – 48 Hours

Management Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Review plan		
Plan for short term consultation with the link Educational Psychologist		
Staff: Inform and Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Provide short check in with key staff Review prompt response sheet and action plan		
Review behaviours to be alert to Re-emphasise importance of providing pupils with a safe place to talk within the classroom if possible		
Continue to provide opportunity and a place/space where staff can ask questions, collate themes and liaise with support agencies accordingly		
Continue to refer staff to Section Four: Guidance for staff following a Critical Incident		
Offer a Critical Incident Review and Staff De-brief		
Parents: Inform		
If general advice letter was not circulated on day one or two, consider if this is required.		
Pupil: Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Continue to provide copy of leaflets as and when required		
Continue to have key adults available at designated areas		

Appendix Four: Planning Framework: Longer Term Planning

Management Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Review plan. Consider, over time, if training or support needs arise following the incident.		
Include the Critical Incident as a standing item at the Pupil Support Group until it is assessed as no longer required.		
Seek consultation with the link Educational Psychologist as and when required		
Review Risk Assessment procedures if circumstances dictate.		
Monitor attendance of pupils who have been identified as requiring support following the Critical Incident.		
Management: Administration tasks if Critical Incident has involved a bereavement	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Check mailing lists and remove name(s) from databases		
Inform any contact services who may have had involvement with the pupil.		
Make a home visit to bereaved/affected family(ies)		
Staff: Inform and Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Review staff guidance and the plan and provide support as necessary		
Re-emphasise importance of providing pupils with a safe place to talk within the classroom if possible		

If the Critical Incident has resulted in a bereavement, advise staff not to remove displayed work or make changes to the pupil's workspace until a natural break in the academic session.		
Continue to draw attention to Staff Guidelines: Self Care for Staff		
Pupil: Support	Person(s) Responsible	Completed/Comment
Continue to offer support to identified pupils		

Appendix Five: Prompt Statement Exemplars

Example One:

This morning we heard the extremely sad news that INSERT NAME died last night in an accident. This is the only information we have at this time. This news is very upsetting for everyone in the school. Support will be provided by your class teacher(s). If you need, or would like to speak to someone individually, the following staff will be available INSERT NAMES OF STAFF AND LOCATIONS. Today is a sad day for our school. We encourage you to talk about *INSERT NAME's* death with your friends, your family, and whoever will help you.

Example One: Next Day

We know that INSERT NAME's death has been as a result of a road traffic accident. INSERT NAME was crossing a road when a car hit him/her. We felt it was important to tell everyone the facts that we have been given. Support will continue to be provided by your class teacher(s). Today staff will be available again if you wish to speak to someone individually. INSERT NAMES OF STAFF AND LOCATIONS. We encourage you to talk about INSERT NAME and, if you need support to speak to whoever you feel will help you.

Example Two:

This afternoon someone took unwell in the school playground. I know that this upset a lot of you who saw the incident. The ambulance staff who came to the playground helped INSERT NAME and have taken him/her to hospital. INSERT NAME Mum and Dad are with him/her now and he/she is getting the help that he needs at this time. Support will be provided by

your class teacher(s). If you need, or would like to speak to someone individually, the following staff will be available INSERT NAMES OF STAFF AND LOCATIONS.

Example Two Next Day:

We have been told this morning that INSERT NAME will make a full recovery. We felt it was important to share this good news with you all. INSERT NAME has been talking to his/her Mum and Dad and wants you to know that he/she feels a little better.

I understand that some people who saw what happened yesterday may still feel upset and/or a bit anxious. Your class teacher is there to support and help you. If you want to speak to anyone individually, please let me know. It is important for us all to talk about our feelings. Remember you can speak to your class teacher. The following staff will also be available to talk to INSERT NAMES OF STAFF AND LOCATIONS.

Appendix Six: Sample Parent/Carer Letters

The following letters are included to provide ideas and a structure for letters that schools may wish to send to parents and carers to inform them of a Critical Incident.

Letter 1

School letter head

Contact phone number

Date

Dear Parents/Carers,

Introduce with brief statement of the facts e.g.

- Yesterday....
- The event.....
- The child/children/staff – death, injuries

WHAT THE SCHOOL HAS DONE

I have visited/met with the parents/families of.....and we have made plans to provide support to them in school if needed. The family have indicated that classmates and all school staff are welcome to attend the funeral on at (*time*).

HOW CHILDREN MAY REACT

It would be best for the children's school routine to continue as normally as possible and they should attend school as usual. Children's reactions will vary and may include crying, not wanting to talk or wanting to talk about the event, wanting to be alone, anger, lack of concentration and temporary sleep and eating problems.

I enclose a leaflet that gives more information and advice on how children can react to such stressful situations and how you can help your son/daughter. Leaflets written for children are also available at the school office.

HOW TO GET HELP

School staff will be looking out for children who may be distressed by these events and will be providing them with support. I have made arrangements for (*e.g. name of staff/a quiet room*) to be available to provide extra help to any child who needs it.

If you or your children feel the need for professional help, please contact me and I will be able to advise you on procedures and services that could be of help to you. There are also contact details of support groups on the leaflet enclosed.

Yours sincerely

Letter 2

School letter head

Contact phone number

Date

Dear Parents and Carers,

We regret to inform you about an unfortunate event affecting our school. Yesterday/this morning (*brief factual statement about event*).

An investigation is underway, and until it is complete we will not have all the details about this tragedy.

We have a Critical Incident team composed of teachers, the Educational Psychology Service, and employees of the Education Service working within the school to support pupils and staff.

We anticipate that some pupils may need continuing support for a while to help them deal with the emotional upset that such an event produces.

To support you and your child(ren), enclosed are some leaflets that you may find helpful in talking about the matter at home. If you have any questions or concerns that you think we could help address, please contact me at the school (*number*) or ask for any of the following staff:.....

The following services are also available to help anyone who is very distressed by the event:

- Your own GP
- Young Minds: parent's information service on 0800 802 5544
- Child Bereavement UK on 0800 028 3840
- Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children) 01242 515157

We are aware that events such as this have the potential to create a sense of anxiety. We are taking every step we can to be responsive to the needs of the pupils and their families.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix Seven: Critical Incident Review and De-Brief

As part of good practice, a Critical Incident review process should be offered to all staff who witnessed, were involved or were affected by the incident. The review process should take place on the day of the incident prior to staff leaving the workplace.

The review process should be facilitated by a member of the **Critical Incident Co-ordinating Team**. Attendance is **voluntary** and the process should be conducted in groups of up to 8 people, or individually if circumstances are assessed as most appropriate. The main aim of the review process is to:

1. Allow staff to share experiences
2. Review facts surrounding the incident
3. Identify self-care strategies
4. Reduce the likelihood of prolonged adverse stress reactions through provision of a sense of closure on the events of the day.
5. Provide signposting to available supports both in the short and longer term.

There are 5 defined stages of the Critical Incident review process. The following stages are based on the model used by Campbell and Lowe, North Lanarkshire Council:

- Introduction
- The review phase
- The response phase
- The remind phase
- Conclusion

Introduction

Explain the main aims of the Critical Incident review process. Reassurance should be given that the views of all group members will be respected and there is no obligation on individuals to participate. Confidentiality within the group is requested and expected. Ensure that equal opportunity for participation is given to all members of the group.

The Review Phase

The review phase helps group members reflect and centre their thoughts and actions to the circumstances surrounding the incident. The following questions can be asked to help group members reflect. It is also an opportunity for management to gather further information.

1. Where were you when you heard about the incident?
2. How did you hear about it? What were you told?
3. What did you do?
4. What were others doing?

The Response Phase

The response phase helps group members to consider their emotions both past and present. This process can assist group members in their assessment of their emotional state and ability to recognise strengths and resilience. The following questions can help to provide a framework in which to support reflection.

1. How did you feel physically/emotionally?
2. What were your thoughts/impressions?
3. How did you react and what did you do?
4. How do you feel now?
5. What are you going to do next?

6. How are you going to feel when you go back?

Reassure staff that all feelings and reactions experienced are natural given the situation.

Sensitively challenge any expressions of harsh self-judgement or concerning feelings/reactions. Identify staff for whom further support may be required.

The Remind Phase

The remind phase enables staff to self-monitor their emotions and reactions to the incident.

It also helps to identify solutions and next steps. The following questions can support staff in this process.

1. Is there any follow up to be done?
2. What support do you feel you will need over the next few days?
3. Where will you get this from?
4. Who can you talk to about what has happened and how you are feeling?
5. How can the group help you?
6. What are you going to do to take care of yourself over the next 24-48 hours?

Encourage staff to monitor their own symptoms/longer term reactions to the incident and seek support if required.

Inform staff of the supports available to them within the workplace, from the authority and beyond as appropriate. Refer them to Section Four of this guidance: *Guidance for Staff Following a Critical Incident* to provide support with professional tasks and personal support.

Conclusion

Summarise the session and reassure staff with regard to provision of on-going support.

Follow up action points generated from the session.

Section Four: Guidance for Staff following a Critical Incident

4.1: Guidance for Staff: **Introduction**

4.2: Guidance for Staff: Supporting Pupils: **Assessment**

4.2.1: Indicators of Trauma

4.2.2: Five Stages of Grief/Response to Bereavement

4.2.3: Behavioural Response to Trauma

4.2.4: Table Three: Possible Behavioural Changes within the School Context

4.2.5: Possible Behavioural Changes in Home/Community Contexts

4.3: Guidance for Staff: Supporting Pupils: **Intervention**

4.3.1: What You Can Do To Help

4.3.2: At the Level of the Individual

4.3.3: Supporting Individual Conversations Whilst Maintaining Confidentiality:

4.3.4: Structuring a Confidential Conversation

4.3.5: Critical Incident Review with Pupils

4.3.6: Group Support

4.3.7: At the Level of the Class: General Information

4.3.8: Self-Help Guidance and Support

4.4: Further Reading and External Support

4.4.1: Recommended Books to support Children/Young People

4.4.2: Recommended Books to Support Continued Professional Development

4.4.3: Recommended Training to Support Continued Professional Development

4.5: External Support Information

4.6: Self-Care – Support for Staff

4.7: Appendices

Appendix One: To Me...What Can I Do?

Appendix Two: To My Friend...What You Can Do?

Appendix Three: To My Teacher: What You Can Do?

Appendix Four: A Guide for Children Who Have Been Affected by a Critical Incident

Appendix Five: A Guide for Teenagers Who Have Been Affected by a Critical Incident

4.1: Guidance for Staff: Introduction

A Critical Incident, is by definition, beyond the range of normal experiences with which we would typically be expected to cope with. If a Critical Incident has occurred, your Senior Management Team/Critical Incident Team should already have provided you with the following:

- A clear plan.
- Prompt statement to support communications with pupils.
- Depending on the nature of the incident, an offer of a Critical Incident review and debrief at the end of each school day over the first 72 hours.
- Access to staff support from the Critical Incident Co-ordinating Team as and when required.
- Advice of external supports if required.

As a member of school staff, it is recognised that you will have practical duties in relation to the Critical Incident which will run in parallel to your emotional responses to the incident.

The following information is provided to guide your responses and to recognise when further support may be required.

Please read the following statements answering true or false for each one.

1. Unlike adults, the effect of a Critical Incident on children will be short lived.
2. Children are, by nature more resilient than adults and will naturally recover by forgetting, getting over it, or growing out of it.
3. A lack of observable change in behaviours means that the critical incident has not negatively impacted on the child.
4. In times of stress, younger children lack awareness or fully appreciate what is going on around them.

5. Teachers are better equipped to cope with a range of emotional responses due to their training and daily role.

4.2: Guidance for Staff: Supporting Pupils: Assessment

All of the answers to the preceding five questions on page 31 were **false**. The effects of a traumatic event on pupils and staff will vary considerably as a result of a number of factors e.g. previous adverse experiences, age, developmental stage, understanding of the tragedy, closeness to the person who has died or to the event, availability of a support network etc. You and the school's priority will be to enable the majority of pupils to return to a normal routine as quickly as possible, while providing appropriate support to those affected. During this time, you have a responsibility to assess your own needs and seek appropriate support if required.

4.2.1: Indicators of Trauma

Three main groups of pupils can be identified which are detailed in Table 1: Possible Indicators of Previous Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)

Table 1: Possible Indicators of Previous Adverse Childhood Experience

Group	Possible Indicators
Group One	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatives or close friends of the person who has died or been injured.• Witness to the incident.• Directly involved in incident.
Group Two	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Friends of the pupil who has died or been injured.• Pupils who are close friends of a witness or someone directly involved in incident.• Pupils who have experienced previous trauma (unrelated to this incident).• Vulnerable pupils (e.g. Looked after and Accommodated/Pupils with Additional Support Needs).
Group Three	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pupils unsettled by the incident and the impact to the school.• Pupils excited by the incident and the impact to the school.

Generally, the intensity, level and frequency of support will be highest for Group 1 pupils and decrease for Group 2 and Group 3 pupils. However, it is important to be alert to those pupils who, due to the complexities in their own lives and/or previous adverse/traumatic

experiences, may become overwhelmed by yet another emotional event and as a result, may require more intensive support. In addition, some pupils who initially appear to be unaffected or 'coping' may, over time, may display signs of distress.

It may be helpful to categorise your pupils into one of the three main groups to support your assessment of the possible impact of the Critical Incident on pupil(s). Your contextual assessment is important to ensure that the pupil(s) social and emotional needs are identified timeously and met. Unresolved trauma has the potential to impact on social relationships, emotional regulation and academic achievement.

4.2.2: Five Stages of Grief/Response to Bereavement (Kubler-Ross, 2015)

The undernoted cycle detailed in Figure 3 is a framework which helps to assess a range of stages and emotions in response to loss and change which we may experience ourselves or identify in others. It is important to state that we may not experience all of the stages or indeed recognise each stage in another. Some stages may be revisited by the individual and some may not be experienced at all.

Our reactions to a traumatic event are not time-limited. They are highly individualised and variable. **Figure 4** identifies each stage as a guide to support assessment.



Source: Elisabeth Kübler-Ross 'Grief Cycle' and Alan Chapman for Businessballs.com

Visual Interpretation by Garrick Gibson // v1.0 // February 8, 2011 // JourneytoGenius.net - The path to a personal calling

Figure 4: Five Stages of Grief

Table Two: Behavioural Responses to Bereavement

Stages	Response
One: Denial	May include shock, disbelief e.g. 'If I don't think about it, he she will come back.' Confusion e.g. 'I don't understand.'
Two: Anger/Guilt	Self-Regulatory Difficulties Anger e.g. 'I hate him for doing what he did.' Guilt e.g. 'If only I had called yesterday.'
Three: Bargaining	Projection of anxiety and distinct need to control events and people.
Four: Depression/Detachment	Numbness e.g. 'I can't feel anything at all'. Intrusive thoughts/images Powerless e.g. 'What can I do?' Despair e.g. 'There is no point in anything anymore.' Worthlessness e.g. It should have been me who died.' Fear (No one's safe, everyone dies)
Stage Five: Acceptance	'I can't change what has happened'. 'I can learn from it and adapt'. 'I am in control'.

4.2.3: Behavioural Response to Trauma

Children and young people may display signs of distress through their reactions. The individual's personality and the way they usually present should be taken into consideration e.g. it would be concerning if a child who is usually calm and self-controlled became boisterous, or a child who is usually sociable became withdrawn. Changes in mood or behaviour over time are important to note, regardless of whether the change is an increase or decrease. If the outcome of your assessment indicates changes of behaviour(s) consider the impact this may be having on the young person, social, emotionally and cognitively.

4.2.4: Table Three: Possible Behavioural Changes within the School Context

Categories to consider	Behaviours which may be exhibited
Attentional Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deterioration in concentration and attention • Inability to relax • Difficulty following instructions
Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased visits to the toilet during class • Avoidance in work and in extra-curricular activities
Social interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear of being left alone • Social withdrawal from adults and peers/ Reluctance to take part in discussions • Expressions of guilt • Reluctance to accept praise or rewards • Difficulty in making needs known to adults in school
Regulatory Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tearfulness/Irritability/Impulsivity • Refusal to follow instructions • May shout out or talk over others
Self-organisation and self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change to eating patterns or to amounts which the young person previously ate (can be increase or decrease). • Changes to appearance/apparent lack of care in presentation • Appearing tired and restless • Changes to self-organisational skills

Mood and symptomology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to mood/lethargy/loss of sense of humour/ /deep sadness not necessarily shown in crying. • Physical symptoms e.g. sore stomach/dizzy/feeling sick • Domination of incident in written, artistic or creative work. • Self-harm
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty remembering previously learned facts. • Difficulty coping with new learning/may start to cry/ be angry or give up. • May find it more challenging to engage in co-operative group work. May talk over others/try to control activity/avoid activity. • Noticeable decline in quantity and quality of work completed. • May self-assess work through a negative frame of reference. • May not accept or recognise strengths in work.

It is important that we gain a holistic understanding of the young person's functioning across multiple contexts. Information received from home should be noted and collated along with school assessment to ensure that needs are highlighted and appropriate support is put in place.

4.2.5: Possible Behavioural Changes in Home/Community Contexts

Possible changes in behaviours which parents may be observing and reporting to school in addition to behaviours detailed in Table Three:

- Sleep patterns (including bedwetting, nightmare or night terrors)
- Eating patterns (loss of appetite or comfort eating)
- Lack of care about appearance.
- Changes to sibling and parent interaction.
- Clinging/fear of being left at home or alone.

- Significant changes in social activities e.g. increase in risk taking/ alcohol/drug taking and sexual activity etc.

Many of the behaviours noted can be a short-term reaction to a traumatic event; however some reactions may persist for months, perhaps with decreasing regularity. Any concerns should be raised with the Senior Management Team timeously.

It is important to try to identify a pattern to identified behaviours which would indicate both frequency and duration. Tracking and monitoring behavioural responses using observational tick sheets are one way of determining behavioural patterns and the impact of targeted support and/or intervention over time.

4.3: Guidance for Staff: Supporting Pupils: Intervention

4.3.1: What you can do to help

- ❖ **Create** a sense of normality within your class.
- ❖ **Provide** reassurance and opportunities for emotional check in.
- ❖ **Recognise** any difficulties and support.

4.3.2: At the Level of the Individual

The main support that a teacher or other trusted adult can provide to a child or young person is to actively listen and encourage the pupil to talk to you or another trusted person. You may find that if you asked the pupil the following question ... Would you like to speak to someone? The pupil would disagree. Typically asking a closed question will result in a negative response and leave you with little room to open or extend the conversation further. If a young person is looking for individual support, it is important to retain confidentiality but clearly set boundaries around this.

4.3.3: Supporting Individual Conversations Whilst Maintaining Confidentiality:

Create a space where the young person feels safe. Be clear that we cannot offer absolute confidentiality. In most cases the extent of the conversation would not need to be shared. However, it is important to communicate to the pupil that it may be helpful to share some aspects with someone else e.g. parent, member of guidance staff, support assistant etc. In these circumstances the content of the conversation would be discussed with the pupil and an agreement would be made with the pupil what information they would be comfortable with sharing.

If the information being shared has the potential to impact on the pupil's safety or well-being or the safety or well-being of another, we are duty bound to share that information. It is important that these parameters are explained to the pupil before the start of the conversation.

4.3.4: Structuring a Confidential Conversation

The following conversation starter may be helpful to consider.

'I will listen to you and we can work together to find a solution. Sometimes it can be helpful to ask others for help but we can decide that together. I will not share anything you discuss with me unless what you tell me might make me worry about your safety or the safety of others. I would tell you if I felt worried and let you know who we would share the information with to get you the right help'.

Provide concrete examples on safety and well-being based on the child's age and stage of development.

Example One: Personal Safety

If you told me that you there is no adult in your home tonight. Is that information we can keep to ourselves? No, because I would be worried about your safety when you left school. We would need to tell someone to get the right help and support.

Example Two: Safety of Others

'If you told me that you were going to hit someone during break, is that information that we can keep to ourselves? No, because I would be worried about the safety of others and we would need to tell someone else.'

4.3.5: Critical Incident Review with Pupils (adapted from *Good Grief*)

1. Acknowledge the pupil's grief, sadness or distress. Reflect back thoughts and feelings e.g. 'you are very sad that your friend has died, and you are also confused and angry.' Empathise with the pupil and reassure them that feelings and thoughts that they are having are normal and natural.

2. Ask constructive questions about the way the pupil is **thinking** and **feeling**. Give the pupil time to process and think about your questions. Use mainly open-ended questions with closed questions when a definite response is needed. Be honest with the pupil. If you are asked difficult questions that you cannot answer, let the pupil know that you do not have all the answers (See Appendix 6 for further information on Solution Focussed Questioning Techniques to support individual discussions with pupils).

3. Avoid euphemisms as these can cause confusion and anxiety e.g. 'he has gone to sleep' 'she is on a journey now.' Consider the child's culture and religious beliefs e.g. belief in heaven, angels, an afterlife. Be calm and understanding. Try not to get visibly upset during the conversation

3. Provide hope and reassurance for the future without dismissing the distress, feelings and worries. Let the pupil know that you and others care. Share memories with the pupil. Drawings, stories and the use of role play/drama can all help pupils to express themselves

more easily and share their feelings, emotions and worries. Provide a notebook for the pupil to use in class and/or at home in which they can write their memories, thoughts, feelings or worries.

4. Plan the transition back into class/playground. Ask the pupil the following information:

- What they are going to do straight after the meeting?
- Which class are they going to next?
- Who their teacher is?
- Who they are going to sit beside?
- Will they go into the playground?
- How do they think they will feel?
- Do they need further support? Provide a plan for access to support.

Planning Supports with the Pupil

Explore potential options for support with the pupil e.g. family, friends and professionals

Support the pupil in planning what is going to happen next and identify short and longer term goals:

- When will they return to school (if they have not already done so)?
- What will they say when people ask questions about the incident?
- What will happen if they become too upset to attend class?
- How will they cope with intrusive thoughts, memories or feelings in school?

Try to avoid

- Being sworn to secrecy.
- Talking too much or interrupting with stories of your own.
- Giving too much advice or providing simple solutions.
- Offering your analysis or interpretation of the situation.
- Becoming angry or patronising.
- Avoiding pupils who are distressed.
- Changing the subject if a pupil wants to talk about the incident.
- Saying 'you ought to feel better by now' or 'you'll feel better after the funeral.'

Involve others

If you feel the support requires is beyond your expertise, or you feel uncomfortable with the issues raised by the pupil, seek support from colleagues within the school or from external agencies e.g. Educational Psychologist, Social Worker.

4.3.6: Group Support

Pupils affected by a Critical Incident could meet in planned group sessions supported by a trusted adult or adults, to discuss their thoughts and feelings. A Circle Time approach is one type of group intervention which could be considered to support. Mosley (1993) argues that use of a Circle Time approach fosters skills in group problem solving. Kelly (1999) reports that the use of a Circle Time approach supports positive behavioural change in children presenting with emotional difficulties. Practical tasks could also be carried out during group sessions e.g. design a card, develop a support plan etc.

4.3.7: At the Level of the Class: General Information

- Use the prompt response statement to ensure consistent communication across the class.
- If the Critical Incident has involved a bereavement, avoid euphemisms as these can cause confusion and anxiety e.g. 'he has gone to sleep' 'he has passed away.' Instead be concrete and factual. 'He has died'. The prompt statement should support you as it should contain concrete facts about the Critical Incident. Consider individual culture and religious beliefs e.g. heaven, angels, an afterlife etc.
- Provide differentiation and support for those who need it.

4.3.8: Self-Help Guidance and Support

East Dunbartonshire Educational Psychology Service have developed the following leaflets to support problem solving and reflection when coping with loss and change (see appendices at the end of section 4)

- *To Me...What I Can Do*
- *To My Friend...What You Can Do*
- *To My Teacher...What You Can Do*

General Guidance Leaflets have also been developed for Young People and Teenagers following a Critical Incident.

- *A Guide for Children who have been affected by a Critical Incident*
- *A Guide for Teenagers who have been affected by a Critical Incident*

4.4: Further Reading and External Support

There have been many books written about trauma, grief and bereavement. Fiction and non-fiction books are available to meet the needs of all ages and stages of development.

A selection of fiction and non-fiction texts are recommended below for your information. The resources have been categorised in age ranges, however access to suitable text will be based on the assessment of the child/young person's age and stage of development. The list is not exhaustive. Further advice and recommendations can be sought from your link Educational Psychologist who will be able to advise you on specific support based on the individualised nature of the Critical Incident.

4.4.1: Recommended Books to support Children/Young People

Title	Author	Recommended age
When Dinosaurs Die	L K Brown	Under 8 years
Saying Goodbye	J Boulder	
The Big Bag of Worries		
What on Earth do you do When Someone Dies?	Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick	8 – 11 years
A Taste of Blackberries	A & C Black Smith	
What to do When You Worry too Much	Dawn Huebner	
Straight Talk about Death for Teenagers	Earl Grollman	Aged 11 to 18 years
Fire in My Heart, Ice in my Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing a Loss	Enid Samuel	

4.4.2: Recommended Books to Support Continued Professional Development

Title	Author
Interventions with Bereaved children	S.C. Smith and M Pennells
Talking with Children and Young People about Death and Dying	M Turner
Remembering: Practical ideas and resources for supporting children aged 7 to 13 who have experienced loss and bereavement	by T Rae and L Nelson

4.4.3: Recommended Training to Support Continued Professional Development

Intervention	Rationale	Contact Details
Seasons for Growth	A Grief Education Programme	0141 339 2366
Rainbows	A peer support programme facilitated by adults	01582 724 106
Nurture Training		Psychological Service Well- Being Support

Schools may consider holding a selection of books on the subjects of trauma and bereavement in their own libraries. In addition, books can be borrowed from East Dunbartonshire's library service. The library service can provide an Educational Worker's Membership which provides extra borrowing privileges.

Please contact Library Services for further information.

Email: libraries@eastdunbarton.gov.uk Telephone: 0300 123 4510

In addition, East Dunbartonshire Educational Psychology Service holds a number of books and resources on bereavement and response to trauma. These may be loaned to schools for an agreed period of time/short period of time. Contact East Dunbartonshire Educational Psychology Service on 0300 123 4510 for more information.

4.5: External Support Information

A list of external support providers is undernoted which may be useful as an additional point of contact.

Brake Care: The Road Safety Charity. Provides help and support for people bereaved or injured in road traffic accidents

Telephone: 01484 559909

Website: www.brake.org.uk

Child Bereavement UK. Information and advice for schools, pupils and parents/carers. Downloadable resources available about bereavement.

Telephone 0800 028 3840

Website: www.childbereavement.org.uk.

Cruse Bereavement Care (Scotland)

Telephone: 0845 600 2227

<http://www.crusescotland.org.uk/> -

PAPYRUS Offers resources and support to those (particularly teenagers and young adults) dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress.

Telephone: 01925 572444

Website: www.papyrus-uk.org)

Richmond Fellowship Offers support for young people with mental health difficulties.

Telephone: 0141 777 7471

Website: <https://www.trfs.org.uk>

RIPRAP Offers resources and support for children and young people when a parent has cancer or has died from cancer. The site includes stories from other young people, information, contacts and a forum.

Website: www.riprap.org.uk)

SAMM (Support after Murder or Manslaughter). Offers support to families who have been bereaved as a result of murder and manslaughter.

Website: www.samm.org.uk)

Telephone: 0845 872 3440

SOBS (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide). Offers support to those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend.

Website: www.uk-sobs.org.uk)

Telephone: 0300 111 5065

Winston's Wish (The Charity for Bereaved Children) Offers support to children and their families after the death of a parent or sibling.

Website: <https://www.winstonswish.org>

Telephone: 01242 515157

Young Minds. Offers support for young people with mental health difficulties.

Website: www.youngminds.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 55 44 (parent advice line)

4.6: Self-Care: Support for Staff

This section, *Guidance for Staff Following a Critical Incident*, began with outlining the additional demands a Critical Incident can place on staff. Focus has been placed in this section in how to support assessment and intervention following a Critical Incident alongside guidance on how to respond to pupils who are finding it more challenging to cope. It is only fitting that the section ends with placing the focus back on you, the members of staff who are responding and supporting potentially emotionally charged situations.

Dealing with the direct consequences of a Critical Incident may place demand on you both physically and psychologically. It may also act as a trigger for previously repressed adverse experiences. We are all individuals and as such, everyone will deal with their emotions in an individual way. Some may require more support than others, both in the immediate and longer term. In the same way as we are attuned to behavioural changes in our pupils, it is important that we equally provide the same level of assessment and support to our colleagues during and after a Critical Incident. Mutual support, time and space to talk is highly beneficial. In order to support pupils, it is intuitive that you need to take care and support yourself first

- Anticipate that you may experience emotional reactions if you are supporting pupils in grief or crisis.
- Ensure that you are taking appropriate breaks. It is too easy to miss your break to support others.
- Seek support from your family, friend or trusted colleague.
- Be cautious about taking on too much at the same time. Be realistic in terms of what you can achieve.

- Share responsibility for supporting the pupil(s) with someone else. If the pupil(s) has/have asked that discussions with you remain confidential, ensure that you are following protocol for confidential conversations (see section 4.3.4).
- If you are containing others emotions, ensure (within the boundaries of confidentiality) that you are able to talk to others as this will help you to offload emotions and more effectively support others.
- If you feel that you are becoming overwhelmed and are beginning to recognise changes in your own behavioural presentation (see section on assessing behavioural changes) then you have a duty to speak with a member of the Senior Management Team/Critical Incident Response Team. More often or not, the opportunity to clarify work priorities with management and discuss the impact of dealing with the incident can be enough to support us.

If you feel that further support is required, you may to consider the following:

- Arrange a meeting with the link Educational Psychologist in your school to discuss support and approaches when dealing with a Critical Incident in school.
- Seek information or training on grief education programmes such as Seasons for Growth or Rainbows which can be implemented within school to support vulnerable pupils.
- Seek support within your own network e.g. partner, friend or trusted colleague
- Seek support from your GP
- East Dunbartonshire Well-Being at Work Policy provides further support. Please liaise with your line manager for further information.

Remember, if you feel the support you are required to provide is beyond your expertise or your ability to cope, please seek support from your Senior Management Team within the school.

4.7: Appendices

Appendix One: To Me...What I Can Do?

Appendix Two: To My Friend...What You Can Do?

Appendix Three: To My Teacher...What You Can Do?

Appendix Four: A Guide for Children Who Have Been Affected by a Critical Incident

Appendix Five: A Guide for Teenagers Who Have Been Affected by a Critical Incident


Appendix Six: Solution Focussed Techniques

Appendix One: To Me...What I Can Do

Someone close to me has died and many things have changed. Here are some ideas of things I can do. I have ticked the ones I think will help me just now as a reminder to myself.

To me...	What I can do...
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask questions about what happened. I need the facts to help me understand and talking about it will help	<input type="checkbox"/> Tell a trusted adult if anyone is giving me a hard time or hurting me. I will carry on telling adults until things change for the better.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tell people what helps me feel better and keeps me feeling safe.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask to be included in planning the funeral and in important decisions that are going to affect me.
<input type="checkbox"/> Share with others that at times I think I am to blame, even if it doesn't make sense.	<input type="checkbox"/> Keep something that belonged to the person and start a memory box or book to help remember them.
<input type="checkbox"/> Remind myself that, like the seasons, things will change.	<input type="checkbox"/> Do something special on anniversaries that will help me remember and cope with what has happened.
<input type="checkbox"/> Tell an adult if I feel helpless and hopeless about the future. They can talk to me about what might help.	<input type="checkbox"/> Imagine talking to the person who has died. This may help me say the things I never got to say and stay connected to them in some way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Think about what "I can do" and then "just do it" rather than thinking "if only..."	<input type="checkbox"/> Look after myself and allow time for sleeping, eating, resting, thinking and relaxing.
<input type="checkbox"/> Find out about groups for children or young people coping with loss and change- and go along.	<input type="checkbox"/> Laugh and have fun without feeling guilty or bad about it. This does not mean I am "over it", have "forgotten" or "couldn't care".
<input type="checkbox"/> Remind myself I'm not going crazy. My sleeping, eating, thinking, memory and concentration will all be affected.	<input type="checkbox"/> Express my feelings by writing, drawing, listening to music and carry on with my interests
<input type="checkbox"/> Ask for whatever extra help I may need in school. Talk to my teachers about my hopes for the future.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ask _____ for support and help whenever I need it.
<p>I will remind myself that this is for now and my needs will change. I know that these things do help me although it might not always appear so. It may take a long time. If nothing is helping I will talk to someone to get more ideas that will help.</p>	

Appendix Two: To My Friend...What You Can Do



To my friend...

What you can do...

Someone close to me has died and so many things have changed.


Here are some ideas of things you can do.

I have ticked the ones I think will help just now.

So please...

- Be yourself and be my friend- even if you don't know what to do or say. Just knowing you are there helps.
 - Ask me how I am feeling- even though I may not always be able to tell you.
 - Talk to me about getting back into school. Meeting me somewhere each day might help.
 - Ask me if I want to talk about what has happened- and don't worry if I get upset, it helps knowing you care.
 - Give me a break if I'm acting a bit strangely. I'm feeling very confused right now.
 - Sometimes I may feel lonely. If you phone, text or visit me I'll know you are thinking about me even though I may also need time alone.
 - Carry on talking to me about what you are doing- even if I don't seem to be listening.
 - Give me a hug if you think I need one.
 - Listen to me if you can- it helps me to get stuff off my chest and makes me feel better.
 - Help me to have fun and laugh sometimes. This does not mean I am "over it" or have forgotten my feelings for the person.
 - Try to understand if I may not always feel like joining in just now- but please don't stop asking me.
 - Talk to me about getting help from an adult if you are really worried about me.
 - Stand up for me if I'm having a hard time.
 - Ask me if there is anything you can do if you notice I'm having a bad day.
 -
- Please understand that this is for now and my needs will change. Please check up on this as time moves on. Thanks for reading and trying these. They do help me although it may not always appear so.

Appendix Three: To My Teacher...What You Can Do


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Pupil's name _____

To my teacher... What you can do...

Someone close to me has died and many things have changed in my life. This may affect my feeling and behaviour.
Here are some ideas that other young people have found helpful.

I have ticked the ones I think will help me just now.

So please...

<input type="checkbox"/>	Inform other teachers, especially supply teachers, about my loss although I may not wish to talk to them about it. Keep this on record.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Talk to me about what has happened. I may need more information, advice and education about loss.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange for me to get extra help with my work so I don't get behind, especially before exams.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Realise that I have a lot on my plate. Try not to put the spotlight on me too much. I will participate when I can.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand that it is hard for me to feel motivated. I may have difficulty meeting deadlines.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help me to cope by treating me the same as everyone else.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Let me know about groups for children and young people who are also coping with loss and change.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ask me how I am feeling. It may not be obvious.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give me a note that allows me permission to leave class briefly, without having to explain myself, if I feel overwhelmed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Understand that I will not "get over it" or be able to "put it behind me" but with time will learn to cope with all the changes.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Give me extra encouragement for all the things I am managing to do and keep me in mind.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find a way of getting my attention back in class, without others noticing and making me feel embarrassed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wait until I am ready to talk.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Remember that I am still me, just feeling a bit lost at the moment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Help me find new dreams of the future and make plans.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Please _____
Please understand that this is for now and my needs will change. Please check up on this as time moves on. Thanks for reading and trying these. They do help me although it may not always appear so.	

Appendix Four: A Guide for Children Who Have Been Affected by a Critical Incident

It might help to...

- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust. This might be your mum, dad, carer, an aunt, uncle, grandparent, cousin, teacher or friend
- As questions about things that you are not sure about or don't understand
- Remember all the good times before the upsetting thing happened. It can be good to talk about these memories too
- Draw a picture, write a story, a letter or a poem about your happy memories or about the upsetting thing or about your feelings
- Make a memory box to keep special things in it that remind you of being happy e.g. a perfume, a piece of clothing, a photograph, a birthday card



Remember....

You are very special. A lot of people care about you and want to help you.

It is important to think of the nice things that will happen in the future

It is okay to enjoy the rest of your life

Helpful phone numbers and websites

- Cruse Bereavement Care (children's helpline) 0808 808 1677
Website www.rd4u.org.uk
- Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children) 08452 03 04 05
Website www.winstonswish.org.uk
- Childline 0800 1111

A guide for children

Who have been
affected by a critical
incident

Introduction

Good things happen to people all the time. Good things might include having a fun birthday party, winning 1st place in sports day or making a new friend.

Sometimes upsetting or sad things can also happen....

Someone special dies



Someone special gets very ill



Mum and dad split up



Feelings

When something setting happens you might feel:

Sad:



You might cry, or want to cry but not be able to. You might not want to cry. All these feelings are normal.

Scared:



You might be scared about what has happened, and scared to be away from the people you love in case something else happens. This is normal.

Angry:



You might feel angry that the bad thing has happened. Sometimes, you might feel angry at people you love for no reason at all. This is normal.

Worried



You might worry or feel guilty that you did something to make the bad thing happen. These are normal feelings.

It is not your fault

Nothing that you said, did, thought or even wished made the upsetting thing happen. You might feel very mixed up and confused about how you feel and sometimes you may feel nothing - numb just like your fingers go numb when it is very cold.

Everyone is different

Everyone feels things differently, even within the same family. At first you might feel very sad, while your sister feels very angry. The next day you might feel angry while your sister feels scared. The next day you might feel quite happy then sad again.

This is okay. These are all normal feelings. In a few weeks or months, you should start to feel happy most of the time although you may still feel sad when you think about the sad thing that happened.



Appendix Five: A Guide for Teenagers who have been affected by a Critical Incident

Some do's and don'ts

Do share your experiences and feelings with someone else

Do ask for support and help wherever you need it, especially from your family, teachers and friends

Do allow time to sleep, eat, rest, think and be with our family and close friends

Do make sure that your teacher or teachers know what is happening

Don't bottle up your feelings. If you don't want to talk about them, try writing them down.

Don't expect your feelings and memories to go away quickly. It will take time to sort these out and to feel like you are coping well with them

Time – how long till I feel better?

It can sometimes take weeks or months before you begin to feel better but you will gradually do so and have happy times again. The anniversary of the event may be an upsetting time, and other things will remind you of the event e.g. funerals, TV programmes, songs; however some of these memories might make you feel happy as well as sad.

Booklist



Straight talk about death for teenagers by Earl Grollman

Vicky Angel by Jacqueline Wilson

Tiger eyes by Judy Blume

Two weeks with the Queen by M Gleitzman

How it feels when a parent dies by J Kremenz

Fire in My Heart, Ice in My Veins: A Journal for Teenagers Experiencing a Loss by Enid Samuel

You Are Not Alone: Teens Talk About Life After The Loss Of A Parent by Lynne Hughes

A guide for teenagers

Who have been affected by a critical incident

Introduction

From time to time we may have a bad or upsetting experience that is difficult to deal with. It may be that someone we know and love dies, or gets very ill, or someone hurts us, or we witness an accident or are involved in one.

Examples

- You are involved in a car accident
- Someone in your school dies
- Dad dies suddenly
- Gran is very ill
- Mum and dad separate or divorce

Your feelings

Everyone deals with experiences differently. There is no 'right' or 'wrong' way to feel. You may feel:

sad	angry	helpless
afraid	guilty	shocked
numb	nervous	relief

Reactions to an upsetting event

You may

- not believe what has happened
- be in a state of shock and feel numb
- feel really tired and sleep a lot
- have difficulty eating or sleeping
- find it hard to talk about your feeling or the event
- have nightmares
- feel angry and aggressive
- relive the event over and over
- have 'flashbacks'

Friends and family

- You may feel like you only want to see your family and close friends
- You may feel like you do not care about your family or friends or that they do not care about you.
- You may want to be by yourself.
- You may want to blame someone for what has happened

At school

- You may lose interest in school or struggle in class
- You may be frightened, worried or embarrassed about going to school
- You may feel agitated or restless
- You may find it hard to concentrate and remember things
- You may have mood swings

What might help?

When you are feeling ready to talk, you should choose someone that you feel comfortable talking to....

- a parent
- a friend
- a teacher
- a relative

Sharing with others who are trained to listen and support can help. You could contact:

- Cruse Bereavement Care (children's helpline) 0808 808 1677
Website www.rd4u.org.uk
- Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children) 08452 03 04 05
Website www.winstonswish.org.uk
- Childline 0800 111
- Breathing space 0800 83 85 87

Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can also help.

Appendix Six: Solution Focussed Techniques

Using solution focussed questioning to engage a young person in dialogue can provide them with opportunities to discuss their feelings without the young person feeling threatened or exposed. The purpose of solution focussed questioning is to empower the individual. It is also designed to shift the focus from the pupil taking responsibility and being stuck with the ‘problem’ to the pupil taking responsibility for the solution(s).

Table Four: Difference between Problem Solving and Solution Focussed Intervention

Problem Solving	Solution Focussed
Why did you do that?	How did you do that?
Emphasis is placed on the past event	Focus is placed on the future. What can be done differently?
Interactions focus on problem talk	Interactions focus on solution talk
Attention is placed on what is wrong	Attention is placed on what is working (however small, it is still significant)
Problem is located within the pupil. They are incapable of fixing it themselves.	Solution is focussed on what adaptations and changes can be made. The student is capable of finding the solutions.

It is important to accept the current situation as valid. This can be difficult for us to do as naturally we can tend to focus on the problem and want to fix it quickly. The following example questions and techniques incorporated in Table 5: Solution Focussed Techniques may be helpful when supporting a young person to share their thoughts and feelings and consider solutions:

Table 5: Solution Focussed Techniques

Area	Questioning Techniques
Focus on an alternative future (<i>The Miracle Question</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Imagine that tonight as you sleep a miracle occurs in your life. A magical momentous happening that has completely solved this problem and perhaps rippled out to improve other areas of your life too...

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think for a moment and tell me... how is life going to be different now? Describe it in detail. • What's the first thing you'll notice as you wake up in the morning?
Focus on current reality place emphasis on strengths/what is going well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the individual to recognise strengths. What made that better/easier? Tell me more about that.
Focus on individual future change Introspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What would you do differently? • How would you know things were better? • What would you notice? • How would that make you feel? • If you were feeling and looking like that, who would notice • What do you think they would notice? • How do you think they would feel? • If they were feeling like that, how would you then feel <p>(Use <i>'Tell me more about that'</i> to expand individual thoughts.)</p>
Rating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate how young person is currently feeling between 0 - 10. • Challenge each score with focus on positive. • Ok so you have scored how you are feeling as a 2. Why not a 0 or a 1. What helped you to get to 2? What would you need to do to get to a 3? What would that look like? • Review previous questions on future change to help young person clarify their thinking.
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the process with the young person to ascertain if there has been a positive shift in thinking over time. • Recognise any difficulties/liase with SMT and differentiate as appropriate.

Section Five: Guidance to Support Parents/Carers following a Critical Incident

5.1: Introduction

5.2: Cycle of Anxiety

5.3: Behavioural Changes to be Alert to

5.4: General Advice for Parents/Carers

5.5: Support Groups for Parents/Carers

5.6: Appendices

Appendix One: To My Parents/Carers: What You Can Do.'

Appendix Two: Supporting your Child Following a Critical Incident.'

5.1: Introduction

Families most affected should be given the opportunity to have regular meetings with teachers in order to share concern and identify solutions. Regular contact is essential in the days, months and possibly years following the event. The type and frequency of contact will be individualised to the event and the contextual assessment.

Parents/carers should be encouraged to be alert to changes in their child's behaviour and be encouraged to discuss changes with their child before sharing these with school. You will already be assessing any change(s) in behaviour and will be communicating potential changes to SMT and providing support as necessary. Open lines of communication are important to ensure that needs are well met in a timeous manner.

The school can provide the following resources to parents/carers who are supporting upset or bereaved children (please see appendices at the end of section five).

1. Parental/Carer Leaflet: 'To My Parents/Carers: What You Can Do' provides guidance to parents to support their child through a bereavement.
2. Parental/Carer Handout: 'Supporting your Child following a Traumatic Event' can also be provided should more targeted support be required.

5.2: Cycle of Anxiety

It is important for parents/carers to recognise possible avoidance behaviours to reduce the risk of school refusal/avoidance in activities outside of school. Figure One details the Cycle of Anxiety which highlights the potential impact of negative thoughts into negative feelings and avoidance.

To counteract avoidance, it is important to gradually expose the child/young person to activities and tasks following a Critical Incident. Providing reassurance and supporting the child/young person to gradually access tasks will help to reduce the possibility of avoidance behaviours. If parents/carers notice their child is beginning to avoid situations particularly ones which were previously motivating and enjoyable, it is important to encourage reconnection and seek support as and when necessary.

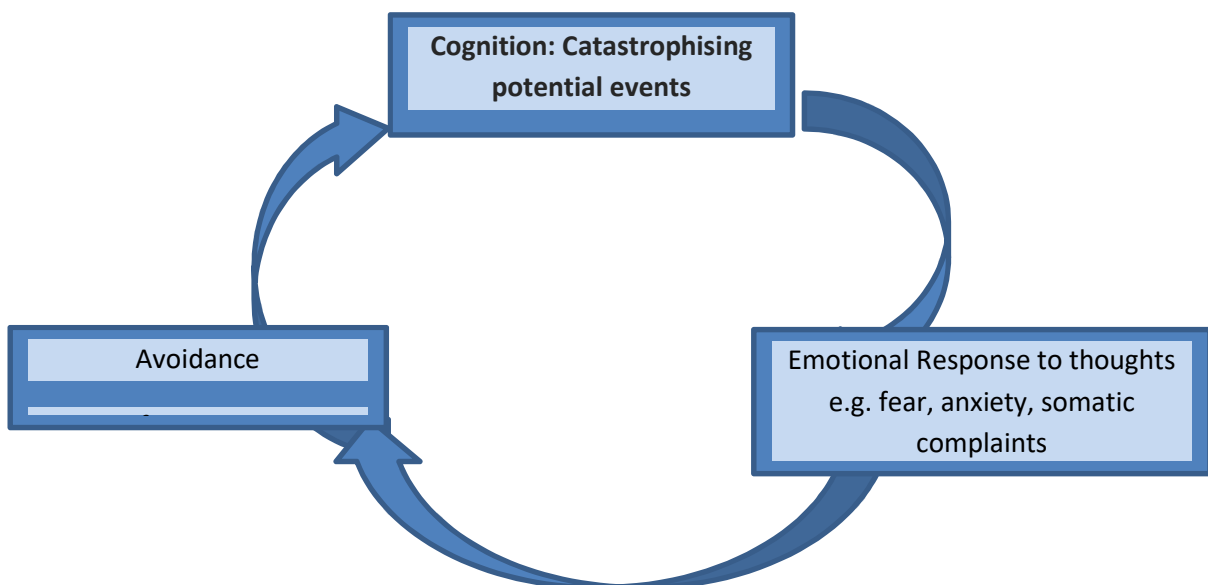


Figure One: Cycle of Anxiety

5.3: Behavioural changes parents should be alert to:

- Refusal to return to school and clinging behaviour.
- Persistent fears related to the event.
- Sleep disturbance which persists for more than several days after the event e.g. screaming during sleep, bedwetting.
- Loss of concentration and irritability which persists over time.
- Behavioural concerns e.g. misbehaving in school or at home in ways that are not typical of the child.
- Eating patterns (loss of appetite or comfort eating).
- Lack of care about appearance.
- Changes to sibling and parent interaction.
- Clinging/fear of being left at home or alone.
- Significant changes in social activities e.g. increase in risk taking/ alcohol/drug taking and sexual activity etc.
- Behaviours in school or at home that are not typical of the child.

If there are changes to the child's behaviours over time which are causing concern, advice may be sought from your General Practitioner and/or school, whichever is most appropriate. Further information on external supports for Parents and Carers can be found in sub-section 5.5 Support Groups for Parents and Carers.

5.4: General Advice for Parents and Carers (*adapted from 'Winston's Wish: the charity for bereaved children.'*)

- Remember that 'super parents' don't exist. Just do what you can, when you can. Be gentle on yourself. Show children how you are feeling. It helps them to know that it is OK to show their feelings too. Trust yourself and your instincts and accept that some things can't be 'made better' in a short space of time.
- Talk to your children using words that they understand and ask questions to check if they have understood you. Give information a bit at a time if your children are young. Pieces of the 'jigsaw puzzle' can be put together over time to make the complete picture.
- Encourage children to ask questions and keep answering them, even if it is for the 100th time. Answer questions honestly and simply and be willing to say 'I don't know.' Try to find ways in which children can be involved.

If there has been a Bereavement:

- Consider allowing your child to attend the funeral. It is important he or she is given concrete opportunities to begin to say goodbye and to begin to accept the reality and finality of death. You will need to prepare your child/children for these events by letting them know what will be involved.
- Create alternative goodbyes e.g. visit the grave, visit a place with special memories, create a special place e.g. in the garden, hold a small ceremony with music, poems and tributes, plant flowers or a tree, release helium balloons with special messages attached to the labels, create a memory box or memory scrapbook.

5.5 Support groups for Parents/Carers

A list of external support providers is undernoted which may be useful as an additional point of contact.

Brake care (provides help and support for people bereaved or injured in road traffic accidents)

Telephone: 01484 559909, website www.brake.org.uk

Child Bereavement Charity (www.childbereavement.org.uk) offers support and information to families and professionals when a child has died or when a child has been bereaved. Telephone: 01494 568900

Child Death Helpline (www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk) is run by Great Ormond Street Hospital but is open to all, and is staffed by bereaved parents supervised by trained counsellors. Telephone: 0800 282 986 and 0808 800 6019

Compassionate Friends (www.tcf.org.uk) offers support to bereaved parents, including local groups, and befriending. They also offer support when a child has taken his or her own life.

Telephone: 08451 232304 **Compassionate Friends Sibling Support**

www.tcfsiblingsupport.org.uk Telephone: 0345 123 2304

PAPYRUS (Prevention of suicide)(www.papyrus-uk.org) offers resources and support to those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress – particularly teenagers and young adults. Telephone: 0870 170 4000

RIPRAP (www.riprap.org.uk) is a website for children and young people when a parent has cancer or has died from cancer. The site includes stories from other young people, information, contacts and a forum. Contact via on-line request form.

SAMM – Support After Murder or Manslaughter (www.samm.org.uk) offers support to families and friends who have been bereaved as a result of murder and manslaughter.


Telephone: 020 7735 3838

SOBS – Survivors Of Bereavement By Suicide (www.uk-sobs.org.uk) offers support to those bereaved by the suicide of a close relative or friend. Telephone: 0870 241 3337

Young Minds (www.youngminds.org.uk) is a charity that aims to provide support for young people with a mental health problem. Parent's information service. Telephone: 0800 802

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Appendix One: To my Parents and Carers: What You Can Do.

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**To my parents
 and carers....**

What you can do...

Someone close to me/us has died and many things have changed in my life. This may affect my feeling and behaviour.

Here are some ideas that other young people have found helpful. I have ticked the ones I think will help me just now.

So please...

- Talk to me honestly and explain about what has happened in a way I can understand. I may need more information and reassurance.
 - Talk to me about the funeral and how I can be included. It will help me to remember and say goodbye. Try to include me in decisions and give me choices.
 - Inform the school about my loss and find out who I can talk to in school if I need some help.
 - Help me get back into school by talking to me about what additional support I may need. It may be difficult for me to leave home.
 - Notice if I am feeling lonely and find out about groups for children and young people coping with loss and change.
 - Remind me that I am not to blame and that it's not my fault although I may need to talk about this.
 - Help me keep memories alive by talking and remembering, especially on anniversaries. There will be things I need to remember and others that I will want to forget.
 - Let me keep something that belonged to _____
 - Give me a hug.
 - Help me to have fun and laugh sometimes. This does not mean I am "over it", have "forgotten" or "couldn't care".
 - Give me space but talk to me if you are worried that I am not eating properly or having sleep or other problems, so we can do something about it together.
 - Arrange for me/us to get extra help if I am feeling stuck and overwhelmed.
- Please understand that this is for now and my needs will change. Please check up on this as time moves on. Thanks for reading and trying these. They do help me although it may not always appear so.

Appendix Two: A Guide for Parents Supporting Children Following a Critical Incident

Booklist

4-7 years

- **I Had a Friend Named Peter** by Miriam Cohen
- **Badger's Parting Gifts** by Susan Varley
- **I'll always love you** by Hans Wilhelm

7 to 11 years

- **What on earth do you do when someone dies?** by Trevor Romain and Elizabeth Verdick
- **When people die** by Sarah Leveté

11 to 18 years

- **Straight talk about death for teenagers** by Earl Grollman
- **Vicky Angel** by Jacqueline Wilson

Family

- **Talking about Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Child** by Earl A. Grollman
- **Remembering mum** by L Morris and G Perkins

Books for parents

- **The scared child: helping kids overcome traumatic events** by B Brooks
- **Children and trauma: a parent guide to helping children heal** by C Monaghan
- **More than surviving: caring for yourself while you grieve** by K Osmont

Longer term support

Each child will respond to a bereavement and trauma in their own way. You can gauge how a child is doing as the days and weeks pass by observing and talking to them. In most instances, your child will not require expert help and will draw support from within their social and family network.

In exceptional case, where your child's distress appears extreme and prolonged, or where you have observed concerning behaviours, then professional advice may be sought. The Head Teacher of your child's school could contact:

- East Dunbartonshire Educational Psychology Service 0300 123 4510
- You could contact your GP
- Contact 'Young Minds: parent's information service' on 0800 802 5544
- Contact Cruse Bereavement Care (children's helpline) 0808 808 1677
- Contact Winston's Wish (the charity for bereaved children) 08452 03 04 05

Looking after yourself

You may also have been affected directly by the event, and will certainly be affected indirectly if your child is upset. Therefore you too may benefit from seeking support from your network of friends or family, or from an external source e.g. Cruse Bereavement Care. If you feel supported and listened to you will be better equipped to support your child.



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A guide for parents and carers

Supporting children affected by a critical incident

Introduction

The following advice is to help you, as parents and carers, to support your child in coping with a stressful event or 'critical incident'. This might be the death, illness or injury of a teacher, friend, classmate, relative or pet, a divorce or other separation, a house fire or flood, or a direct trauma such as a physical or sexual attack.

When something terrible happens

You may notice your child's behaviour changing. Grief and trauma commonly cause emotional and behavioural reactions, and in most cases these are temporary. These reactions are all normal.

- Deep sadness
- Denial that anything has happened
- Withdrawal, passivity
- Increased aggression and anger
- Regression e.g. bedwetting
- Fear
- Separation anxiety
- Guilt or shame
- Self blame and denigration
- A sense of responsibility
- Relief

Making sense of grief

The way in which children make sense of death and grief is related to their stage of development.

4-7 years

Children may think the incident was their fault. Death is still seen as reversible. Reactions can include nightmares, sleeping and/or eating disturbances and violent play.

7-11 years

Children may want to see death as reversible but are beginning to understand that it is final. Death and other traumas may still be viewed as a punishment. Behaviour may include immature reactions or outwardly difficult behaviour.

11-18 years

Young people at this stage usually have an adult concept of death. Reactions may include anger, depression and non-compliance.

Ways to support your child

You are the most important source of support and comfort to your child. You are his or her role model.

You can support your child by:

- **Maintain usual routines** as far as possible, including an early return to school. This can be planned with the school.
- **Listen** to your child and try to understand what they are saying, and also what they are not saying. Help them to identify and label their feelings.
- **Be honest** and answer questions as truthfully as you can. Try to find brief and simple answers that your child can understand.
- **Avoid euphemisms** such as 'He is sleeping' 'resting' 'gone away' as these can create confusion and anxiety e.g. your child may worry about going to sleep in case she too wont awaken.
- **Hug** your child as physical contact is important at this time.
- **Allow children to be silent** if this is what they need
- **Encourage expressions of emotion** and let them know it is ok to cry and it is also ok to laugh and have fun

Section 6: The Role of Partner Agencies

Education

6.1: Educational Psychology Service

6.1.1 Support during the First 24 Hours

6.1.2: Support during the Next 24 – 48 Hours

6.1.3: Longer Term Response

6.2: Wellbeing Support Service

Other

6.4: Strathclyde Police

6.5: Emergency planning (Civil Contingencies) (EDC)

6.5.1: The Response from East Dunbartonshire Council

6.6: Social Work Service

6.6.1: Initial Response

6.6.2: The Next Few Days

6.6.3: Longer Term Response

6.7: Chaplaincy Team

6.8: School Nursing Service

6.8.1: Longer Term Response

6.1: Educational Psychology Service

East Dunbartonshire Educational Psychology Service is part of the Education, People and Business Service.

We are a team of Educational Psychologists who work across East Dunbartonshire in a range of settings including early years, mainstream, specialist primaries and secondary schools, and post-secondary provisions.

We work with teachers and parents/carers as well as other professionals to support positive change for children and young people from birth to 24 years.

Educational Psychologists are trained and have the skill and expertise to support management, staff, children and young people in the event of a Critical Incident. In most cases, the link psychologist would provide support to the school and would be part of the Critical Incident Response Team in school.

The approach of the Service would be, in the first instance, to support staff to enable them to provide support for pupils. Research shows that the needs of young people affected by grief or trauma are best met by adults with whom they have an established relationship (Monahan, 1993., James et al, 2002).

6.1.1 Support during the First 24 Hours

The service would endeavour to send one or preferably two members of the team to the school on the day of the incident. The psychologist would meet with the head teacher to define their role. This could include:

- Participation in co-ordinating support.
- Supporting the Head Teacher, particularly at the end of the school day once staff and pupils have left.
- Providing consultation and advice with regard to evidence based intervention and support.

- Participating in staff meetings during which information and resources from the Critical Incidents handbook could be shared and discussed.
- Support the Senior Management Team in undertaking the review process with staff.
- If appropriate, meet with affected pupil/pupils to offer direct support (subject to consent).

6.1.2: Support over the next 24 – 48 hours

- Daily visit from the school's link EP if required.
- Plan availability to meet with staff to support their use of the resources and strategies within the handbook
- Continue to support the Senior Management Team.
- Plan availability to meet with groups of affected pupils/individual pupils (with parental agreement).
- If appropriate, meet with affected pupil/pupils to offer direct support.

6.1.3: Longer Term Response

The long term aim of the Educational Psychology Service would be to build capacity within the school in preparing for and dealing with Critical Incidents. Building capacity can be achieved through consultation with management, staff and pupils and through the analysis of the impact of the school response to a Critical Incident.

Staff Training may also be provided by the Educational Psychology Service to support staff (following consultation and analysis of need). The following are highlighted as examples of support which could be offered:

- Effective response to Trauma

- PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies)
- Managing Difficult Conversations
- Solution Focussed Practice
- Critical Review and Debrief
- Supporting Pupils and Staff following a Critical Incident

It is important to highlight that support during and following a Critical Incident will be individualised to both the incident and context in which it has occurred. As such, any response will be planned in consultation with the school and Educational Psychology Service and will be agreed in response to need.

For further information contact:

Gillian Dury Principal Educational Psychologist

0300 123 4510

6.2: Education: Wellbeing Support Services

Following a Critical Incident it may be appropriate to consider involvement from the Wellbeing Service.

Access to Tier 2 support will be determined by assessment and considered through appropriate referral processes (See East Dunbartonshire Policy: Including Every Learner). Any referral would be made collaboratively and with the agreement of parents/carers and, where appropriate, the pupil.

For further Information, please contact:

Gaynor Hale
Wellbeing Support Service (Primary)
Lammermuir Road
Kirkintilloch
G66 2AB
Telephone Number: 0141 955 2313

Paul Quinn
Wellbeing Support Service (Secondary)
15 Donaldson Street
Kirkintilloch
G66 1XD
Telephone Number: 0141 955 2342

Other:

6.3: Police Scotland

The response from Police Scotland to Critical Incidents within schools will be dependant on the circumstances of the particular incident. The responsibility for dealing with the Critical Incident would be held by Police Scotland in the event of a potential criminal matter e.g. serious assault, murder, abduction, wilful fire-raising etc. Any such incident would be coordinated by the Police and the relevant school(s) would follow any advice and recommendations.

If a major incident were to occur, the decision may be made by Police Scotland to invoke a Casualty Bureau. The purpose of a Casualty Bureau is to provide a central contact and information point for all records and data relating to person or persons who have, or are believed to have been, involved in the incident.

There would be a dedicated telephone line for families to contact to establish if their child was involved in the incident and Family Liaison Officers (FLO) would be deployed to the families of those involved in incidents where there is a police investigation. The role of the FLO is to be the link between the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) in charge of the incident and the victim/causalities and/or their families. The main role of the FLO is as an investigator to facilitate the investigation, and will liaise with the victim or their families representatives of the family and other parties connected to the family, providing them with relevant information. FLOs also identify support organisations for families, explain legal procedures and provide them with a bereavement pack (if the incident requires this). Depending on the incident there would be liaison with Police Scotland, Corporate Communications Team. Social media could also be utilised depending on the incident which would only be actioned on advice from Police Scotland and the Corporate Communications Team.

6.4: Emergency planning (Civil Contingencies) (EDC)

In the event of a serious incident. The Civil Contingencies Officer would establish relations with appropriate Police Command levels, including the deployment of Liaison Officers where necessary. A Council Incident Officer may be deployed to attend multi-agency co-ordination meeting(s). In the event of serious incident, the civil contingencies officer would initiate and co-ordinate the necessary Council response by providing:

- Appropriate support to the Emergency Services.
- Provision of care and support to affected individuals.
- Co-ordination of advice to the general public/voluntary organisations.
- Collection, collation and dissemination of information relevant to Local Authority involvement.
- Co-ordination of information to the Chief Executive who would then liaise with Elected Members.
- Taking control of the restoration phase once Police and Other emergency services have handed over responsibility.

If assessed and deemed necessary, EDC civil contingencies may also consider:

- Opening a media briefing centre at an appropriate venue with relevant officers.
- Setting up of a Civil Contingencies Management team.
- Provision of temporary accommodation.

6.4.1: The Response from East Dunbartonshire Council

Police Scotland and/or the Fire and Rescue Service would notify the Civil Contingencies Officer (via the Council Emergency Response Centre if out with Council hours). The Civil Contingencies Officer would telephone designated Officers on the Council's Emergency Contacts Directory to place on alert.

The Civil Contingencies Officer will contact the appropriate Services to prepare the Council's Emergency Response Centre (ERC) and any other Council Offices designated for possible operational use. If required, the designated Council Officer will visit the incident scene or Police Headquarters to liaise with the Incident Commander and Emergency Services Incident Officers in respect of any actions required by East Dunbartonshire Council.

In the event of major actions being required by East Dunbartonshire Council, designated officers will form an Emergency Management Team. This Emergency Management Team will implement any actions required by East Dunbartonshire council and all help will be given where practical, either in expertise or practical assistance.

6.5: Social Work Service

The role of Social Work is to ensure vulnerable children and young people are protected from harm and that their assessed needs are met. This input embodies the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and ranges from providing low level support and guidance to families, to the protection of the most vulnerable children and young people within East Dunbartonshire Council.

Extremely vulnerable children and young people include:

- Victims of child abuse including domestic abuse
- Children or young people affected by parental substance misuse
- Children or young people whose parents/carers have mental health difficulties

Examples of Critical Incidents which may involve input from Social Work include:

- A teacher being accused of abusing children within the school community
- A pupil bringing a knife into school and engaging in threatening behaviour and/or actual harm
- A pupil being abducted

6.5.1: Initial Response

Social Work Advice and Response Team contact details are included in Section Three, Appendix One, Telephone Contact Sheet (Internal and External). The Social Work Department would be contacted by either the Chief Education Officer or Education Officer(s) in the event of a Critical Incident.

If a child or young person involved or affected directly by the Critical Incident was known to Social Work, the allocated social worker would be contacted and would respond accordingly.

If the child or young person involved or directly affected by the Critical Incident was not known to Social Work, then the **Advice and Response Team** may, depending on individual circumstances, allocate a worker to conduct an initial assessment to determine whether there would be a role for Social Work. This assessment would involve linking with partner agencies including Education and Health, and where relevant, Police, the Children's Reporter, and voluntary organisations such as Barnardos and Action for Children.

If further work was required, this would be allocated to the relevant team. The duty manager would decide on the timescale of the Social Worker's response – a member of the team could be in school on day 1 of the Critical Incident if circumstances require this.

If it was decided that no further action was required, advice and guidance could be given to the school or families e.g. useful contact numbers, and the case would be closed.

In the event of a large scale tragedy or natural disaster, Social Work would assess needs and ensure that children and families got the help they needed at the time.

6.5.2: The Next Few Days

If a Critical Incident resulted in the need for a Child Protection Investigation, the National Child Protection Guidance would be followed. The child may be interviewed by Social Work staff or a Joint Investigative Interview (JII) with the Police may take place.

Other pupils who may have been affected by the Critical Incident may require support and they would have their needs assessed under GIRFEC principles by a teacher or social worker.

6.5.3: Longer Term Response

Pupils experiencing ongoing difficulties following a Critical Incident may require support and they would have their needs assessed under the GIRFEC principles by a teacher or social worker.

For further information contact:

East Dunbartonshire Council Social Work Advice and Response Team

Telephone number: 0141 777 3000

6.6: Chaplaincy Team

In the event of a Critical Incident, the Chaplaincy Team may provide additional support to help the school community. A Chaplaincy Team already has knowledge and understanding of the local context and an existing set of relationships which promotes trust in difficult circumstances.

The involvement of the Chaplaincy Team in a Critical Incident may provide a bridge between the School and the wider community which may help both parties come together as they seek to cope. Chaplains have substantial experience in supporting individuals and families in difficult circumstances and are well used to operating to the highest standards of professionalism, confidentiality and sensitivity. In the event of being called upon in regard to a Critical Incident, this sensitivity would extend to discerning situations where the support of Chaplain might not be appropriate, for whatever reason.

The input of the Chaplaincy Team in the event of a Critical Incident would depend upon the size, composition and experience of the team, which will vary from school to school. It may be helpful for Senior Management to plan for the unexpected to ascertain what resources may be available if a Critical Incident was to occur and what support could be made available in the initial and longer term following a Critical Incident.

6.7: School Nursing Service

In the event of a Critical Incident, if the school nurse was present at the affected school and medical intervention was required, support would be provided until the most appropriate agency arrived. In the event of a Critical Incident where a member of the School Nursing Service was not on site, the Service would not be routinely involved.

6.7.1: Longer Term Response

The School Nursing Service work within all East Dunbartonshire Council schools, and the school nurses are core members of the Secondary Schools' multiagency Pupil Support Groups, which meet regularly throughout the school year. If an individual pupil or a group of pupils was adversely affected by the Critical Incident in the longer term, this could be discussed at the Pupil Support Group and individual work planned to support the young person or people could include input provided by the school nurse, if appropriate.

For further information contact:

Kirkintilloch Health & Care Centre

10 Saramago Street
Kirkintilloch
G66 3BF
0141 304 7447

East Dunbartonshire HSCP

300 Balgrayhill Road
Glasgow
G21 3UR
Tel. 0141 201 3489

Milngavie Clinic

North Campbell Avenue
Milngavie
G62 7AA
Tel. 0141 282 4853

7: References

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- Kelly Monahon, C. (1993). *Children and trauma: A guide for parents and professionals*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
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