**Preparation (pre-impact)**

Sound preparation prior to an event can have a significant effect upon lessening the negative impacts of it. The use of school **crisis management groups** is highlighted in most of the major texts and it is emphasised that these groups be established in preparation for such events, not after the fact. It is recommended that small schools form a group within a cluster. The group will take responsibility for ensuring that:

* policies, procedures and responsibilities for responding to such events are kept up to date and are accessible to all staff members
* contact details for use during the initial response to the event are kept up to date
* materials for use in the recovery stage of the event are available

# The Contingency Planning Process

### Prerequisites

Personnel involved will depend on the size and nature of the establishment but could include members of the senior management team, a representative from the clerical staff, school nurse and educational psychologist. The group should meet initially to consider and develop the areas set out below, and thereafter every six months to review and update.

The group should be familiar with the information and resources held within the relevant section of the HUB, under the section Critical Incident Management. The responsibilities should be prepared for in light of the information contained therein.

It has to be recognised that on the day of any critical event one or more of a crisis management group may not be available. Substitute personnel should always be considered, and involved in planning and rehearsing.

It is well known that crises are better handled when there is a division of labour among members of the crisis management team.

**Appropriate roles for a Crisis Management Team.**

In a school situation, common roles and tasks assigned to members of the team will include:

* Obtaining factual information – initial decisions, emergency contacts
* Assembling Crisis Management team - assign roles, responsibilities and resources
* communicating with appropriate authority personnel
* Deciding on the scale of incident, scale of response and draft timetable – and which support agencies to involve
* managing resources
* caring for staff
* ensuring the appropriate care for children
* contacting parents

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A liaison role with the emergency services is also crucial, but will vary depending on the nature of the crisis. Finally, there is a need for someone to hold a ‘maintenance’ role, i.e. to ensure that whatever aspects of normal school functioning are possible, continue to happen. After an incident the need to re-establish school routines is important for many children.

### Availability of information

An essential element in managing a crisis is the availability of reliable information. Whilst the most difficult aspect of this is information about the impact of the event itself, the situation can be helped massively by having accurate school information - up to date class lists; registers and timetables; up to date home addresses and contact numbers; and up to date contact lists for the emergency services, education management, and other relevant Council services. Because an incident might impede access to any particular part of a school, duplicate lists should be held in different, prominent locations around a school and copies also held at education headquarters**.**