

Critical Incidents

Procedures and Protocols



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Checklist for Heads of Establishment

Actions will depend on the nature of the incident

- Ensure all staff and pupils are accounted for and are in a place of safety and security
- Have emergency services been called, if appropriate? fire - police - ambulance
- Inform Senior Officer at Education and Families HQ

(Education and Families Manager, Chief Officer and Child Protection Officer) with initial telephone call followed up with submitting the proforma in Appendix 1 to Child Protection Officer - namedpersonservice@northlan.gov.uk. This must be done without delay in all cases where an incident causes a threat to life or other serious injury, or where there is increased concern in the local community and/or from elected members and/or media.

If required, contact support services for example Cluster Support Team staff, Educational Psychology Service, Social Work etc. Consider use of GIRFEC Pathway, Child Protection processes and/or Contextual Safeguarding where appropriate.

- Following discussion with Senior Managers, inform Corporate Communications Team at Education and Families HQ

The Corporate Communications Team should be contacted **as soon as possible**

No communications should be released without speaking to the Corporate Communications Team in the first instance on: corporatecommunications@northlan.gov.uk

If the critical incident occurs outwith normal office hours, Corporate Communications have a 24hr emergency on-call number – **07939 280155**

- Set up a Core Team from staff in school

This team will focus on the establishment's response, operational plans, practical and procedural plan of support and recovery steps.

Potential priorities may include:

- Liaising with corporate communications and providing media updates
- Making all staff aware of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information
- Providing information and maintaining open communication with the school community
 - o Pupils and families directly affected
 - o All School staff - both teaching and non-teaching
 - o All pupils and parents within the school
 - o Links with community and religious leaders as appropriate
 - o Wider school cluster - for example to establish possible family links in other establishments
- Planning for recovering as near 'normal' routine in school as soon as possible.

Foreword

In recent years, there have sadly been a number of distressing critical incidents involving children and young people in North Lanarkshire. We have experienced road traffic accidents, suicides, deaths due to illness and children and young people with life limiting conditions. Each of these tragedies has had a traumatic effect on the establishment, school community and local community.

The purpose of this resource is to provide staff in establishments and schools with a set of guidelines and advice on how best to respond to such incidents, how best to support the children, young people, their families and themselves and other members of staff.

This resource is based on the previous School Procedures and Protocols (2003) and has been updated in line with recent policy developments and local needs that have arisen.

This is part of Education and Families contribution to supporting staff in establishments and schools and sits alongside the updated Lifelines Lanarkshire resource. It is intended that it will be a key element within a programme of Continuous Learning and Professional Learning for staff.



How to use this resource

This Critical Incidents Procedures and Protocols document is intended to support and guide helpful responses to critical incidents. It is important to remember that each incident is unique and as such will require an individualised response. Guidelines are therefore intended to be applied flexibly.

When schools are mentioned in this resource, this also refers to early years establishments and children's houses.

The resource is designed to support the period immediately following and in the weeks after a critical incident. The checklist on page 2 highlights initial key considerations.

The Critical Incident Response Table on pages 7 - 10 outlines key priorities split into three sections offering guidance for initial stages through to the first few days and then the first few weeks following an incident. The information in each of these sections provides a practical and supportive framework to help guide your response at each stage. The table aims to provide a visual overview and can be printed out and displayed as a reminder and reference for staff.

Appendices offer more detailed information and rationale for the suggestions made in the table. They can also be used to support particular issues which may arise.

A copy of this resource will be helpful for all members of the Core Team.

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1. Introduction

What is 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”*. As such the critical nature of the event is determined by the impact of the event on an individual or (school) community.

Responses to critical incidents

Schools and Early Years Establishments are at the heart of our communities. When an unexpected event happens, the establishment in many circumstances will lead the response to the critical incident. Supporting pupils, families, colleagues and the entire school community will require a coordinated effort from school staff. Every critical incident will have different challenges, the needs of the community will differ, and the expectations of the educational establishment will also be different.

Responses to critical incidents are as differing and unique as the individuals experiencing them.

Particularly in the early stages of a critical incident most reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Commonly there is a great need to talk about feelings and experiences.

The table below summaries some principles which underlie support needed following a critical incident and can help focus any supports for the recovery period.

Principles of recovery following a disaster or serious incident (Hobfoll et al. 2007)

A sense of safety	It is important that adults, children and young people feel safe upon their return to school or setting.
A sense of calm	Children and young people are likely to experience a range of big feelings including both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. It is important that these feelings are normalised and that support is provided to help them manage their emotions and return to a state of calm.
A sense of self- and collective- efficacy	Children need to feel they have some control over what is happening to them, and a belief that their actions are likely to lead to generally positive outcomes (Bandura, 1997). They need to feel they belong to a group that is likely to experience positive outcomes and this is known as collective efficacy (Antonovsky, 1979; Benight, 2004).
Social connectedness	It is important that adults, children and young people feel they belong and have a social network which can support them within their school or other educational setting.
Promoting hope	Whilst life may be difficult at the moment, it is important that adults, children and young people feel the situation will improve in the future. Staff and pupils need to be provided with reassurance and understand that in the longer term they will feel positive again.

Aim of support

Distressed adults and children benefit most from being supported by those with whom they are familiar and have existing positive relationships. The aim of a support plan, particularly in the initial stages, should therefore be to mobilise naturally occurring supports at the level of the family, friends and wider community, rather than to seek external therapeutic intervention. The importance of just being there and listen compassionately cannot be over emphasised.

Familiar routines provide an invaluable sense of safety and security during difficult times for the vast majority of people. While any support plans that are developed should aim to maintain or return to normal routines as soon as possible, plans also need to be flexible to accommodate the small number of people who will need additional time to be ready to engage in this way.

Ethos of support

Senior Managers in school will be responsible for leading the response. There are a significant number of sensitive issues across a range of contexts which need to be considered at an emotive time and so it is important no one individual feels the burden of this task. Partner agencies (Educational Psychology Service, Social Work, clergy, CAMHS, home school partnership officer) are available to support and should be contacted as appropriate.

It is absolutely crucial that families directly affected by the incident are central to any plans and are also consulted appropriately at all stages in the process.



2. Critical Incident Response Table – Stages of Support for Staff and Pupils

The following table provides guidelines to support staff and pupils at different stages of the critical incident i.e.

- **Stage 1 - Immediate** – This stage refers to the initial response to the critical incident in the first day. This time period may vary depending on the nature of the critical incident and when it occurs however, it is intended for the initial stages of an establishment response.
- **Stage 2 - First few days (during first week)** – This stage refers to the ongoing response to the critical incident in the first few days/over the initial week.
- **Stage 3 – Following few weeks** – This stage refers to the support for staff and pupils in the medium term, over the next few weeks following the critical incident.

The guidelines in this table include general principles and approaches that should be used when supporting staff and pupils following a critical incident.

The table is intended to be used as a visual guide and could be printed out and displayed to provide a reminder and reference for staff. A blank Critical Incident Support Plan can be found in Appendix 2 which can be used to record plans at each stage for staff and/or pupils.

Critical Incident Response Table - Stages of Support for Staff and Pupils

Stage 1 - Immediate First day	
Supporting staff (See Appendix 3)	Supporting Pupils (See Appendix 4)
A team approach is important: Encourage responsibility for planning and responding to the incident across the school community. Inform Senior Officer at Education and Families i.e. Education Manager, Chief Officer. This should trigger HQ services including Corporate Communications, cluster support team, Educational Psychology Service, etc. Set up a Core Team from staff in school This team will focus on the establishment's response, operational plans - practical and procedural plan of support and recovery steps. Potential priorities may include: • Liaising with corporate communications and providing media updates • Making all staff aware of the Importance of maintaining confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information • Providing information and maintaining open communication with the school community - o Pupils and families directly affected - o All School staff - both teaching and non-teaching - o All pupils and parents within the school - o Links with community and religious leaders as appropriate - o Wider school cluster - for example to establish possible family links in other establishments • Creating a timetable outlining key roles and responsibilities over the next few days will be helpful. • Planning for recovering as near 'normal' routine in school as soon as possible.	Sharing consistent and accurate information In the early stage following a critical incident it is important that consistent and accurate information is shared with pupils. Some questions to consider: • How will information be shared with pupils? E.g. year groups, assemblies, classroom discussions, awareness raising sessions. • Are there individual pupils or groups of pupils who will need/benefit from time and space outwith the classroom setting? As part of the process of identifying vulnerable pupils it is important to consider the following: • Pupils who are particularly unsettled and affected by incident. • Those most directly affected (e.g. relatives, close friends, witnesses). • Vulnerable pupils and/or those who have had previous loss and trauma. For pupils requiring more support: • Where can these pupils access a quiet, calm environment? • Which adult(s) can provide calm, reassuring support in this environment? • Consider use of natural transition points in the day e.g. interval or lunch to sensitively encourage return to familiar routines such as going to class.

Stage 1 - Immediate First day (cont.)	
Supporting staff (See Appendix 3)	Supporting Pupils (See Appendix 4)
Sharing consistent and accurate information: Establish the facts and consider how to share information across the school community. Areas to consider: - Identify who within you staff team is best to share information with others. - In order to dispel misinformation, myths and rumours and support and reassure staff a script or brief can be a helpful way of ensuring consistency. - Informing whole staff team including part time staff, non-teaching staff and any other visiting staff. Who needs to know? What? How much? Key information might include: - What has happened? - What will happen next? - What roles staff will play? - What supports are available? Providing space and support to staff most affected will be important: For this it will be helpful to identify and note: - those most affected - those most able to support others (young people) Providing roles for individual staff members across the school team will help to support Core Team working and will give people a sense of purpose. Consider any practical issues - e.g. creating time and space for staff to plan and implement supports for those involved - What does that involve; who and when? Break out spaces and check-ins for staff - Promoting nurturing spaces and approaches during this time will help to provide reassurance across the school team. - Protect time for pastoral team to meet and identify any concerns regarding particular pupils considered to be at risk. Provide opportunities for staff to plan for next few days - For example before staff leave building at the end of day, gather them together for check-in, any questions and plans for following day. Consider using the Critical Incident review structure as a framework for this (see Appendix 6).	

Stage 2 - during first few days (during first week)	
Supporting staff (See Appendix 3)	Supporting Pupils (See Appendix 4)
In the first few days following a critical incident, there are some important things to consider: Core Team - Arrange for Core Team to meet at beginning and at end of day for check-ins and planning as required - Undertake Operational planning and updating of the Recovery/Support timetable - Remind all staff of the Importance of maintaining confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information Consider how best to support staff who are supporting pupils In Nursery and Primary this may include key staff (such as ASN and classroom assistants) as well as the Senior Management team. In a Secondary school this may include pupil support staff, the Additional support for learning team and SMT. Such groups of staff will benefit from regular check-ins as a group to talk through some of the issues which arise. This group of staff may experience emotional fatigue and you may need to consider flexibility around workload and duties for staff as required. Consider how to support the Wider School staff - In the days and weeks following an incident, you will need to consider how to continue to communicate key messages with wider school staff. Information may include facts about events, available supports for staff. - Are there any staff members who need additional support before returning to familiar routines? How can this be accommodated? For example: peer support, within school support, Staff Welfare Officer, Educational Psychology Service. - Share information with staff about support agencies coming into the school as appropriate. - At this stage, reminding staff about the importance of self-care and peer support. - Arrange further Critical Incident Staff Review Meeting (SMT/ Core staff) as appropriate.	In the first few days following a critical incident, there are some important questions to consider: - Are there any individuals who may need additional support before returning to familiar routines? - How can this be accommodated? - Are staff members aware of the ongoing needs for some pupils to discuss the critical incident? - Do these adults feel confident to respond sensitively and flexibly to the pupil's needs? It may be appropriate to convene a Critical Incident Multiagency meeting with representatives from key agencies, as appropriate e.g. Social Work, Health, CAMHS, Educational Psychology. The format of this meeting can be similar to a HART meeting and would focus on vulnerable pupils identified by staff who may be at increased risk following the critical incident. <i>E.g.</i> - Pupils who are particularly unsettled and affected by incident. - Those most directly affected (e.g. relatives, close friends, witnesses). - Vulnerable pupils and/or those who have had previous loss and trauma. Some questions to consider for the CI Multiagency Meeting: - How will we gather the young person voice in any plans? - How will we involve parents and carers in any plans? - Have we built in review and update as part of the plans for vulnerable pupils? Whole school plans following a critical incident Being involved in whole class/year/school plans can be helpful for pupils as they come to terms with a critical incident. This could include memorials or fund raising activities. To support pupils, it is important to consider: - How will these plans be shared with wider school community? - How can the school community be supported to plan memorial or fund raising activities as appropriate?

Stage 3 - Following few weeks	
Supporting staff (See Appendix 3)	Supporting Pupils (See Appendix 4)
Continue to promote a team approach In the weeks following a critical incident, you may need to consider: - How to support staff who continue to need opportunities to check in and plan? - How to remind all staff of the importance of maintaining confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information. - The most appropriate way to remind staff to be aware and sensitive to the different ways in which people deal with things. Some staff may experience a delayed or prolonged reaction. - Continuing to highlight and promote self-care even after things have settled down. In the longer term you may need to consider If there are there tasks that need to be sorted now which couldn't be done at the time of the CI? For example: - Sorting out any personal belongings - Reorganisation of classroom or learning areas - Remembering the person It may be helpful to look to natural breaks in the school term to provide the opportunity to get some of these things sorted.	In the following few weeks after a critical incident it will be helpful to consider: - If there are any pupils who have been unable to return to, or maintain familiar school routines? - The most appropriate way to engage with parents, pupils and other agencies to support the process of re-engagement. - How should plans for more vulnerable pupils identified as part of the process of stage 2 above be reviewed? - Consider convening a Critical incident multiagency meeting review to take place between 6-8 weeks or earlier if required.

Appendix 1 - Critical Incident Record

Name of Establishment	
Contact Person Designation	
Date of Incident	
Description of Incident	
Other Relevant Information	

Please return to: namedpersonservice@northlan.gov.uk

Appendix 2 - Critical Incident Critical Incident Support Plan template

Task	By whom	Issues to be considered	Next steps	By when

Appendix 3 - Supporting Staff

Individual staff members' responses to a critical incident will be unique to them and dependent on a range of factors. Most people will have some sort of short-term reaction such as shock and grief, possibly followed by distress and perhaps anxiety about the future. While a small minority may exhibit more extreme reactions in the short, medium or long term it is important to remember that the majority of responses can be effectively managed with naturally occurring support from family, friends and the wider community. Even an apparently severe reaction in the initial stages does not mean there will be enduring problems.

It is important to remember that these situations can raise difficult emotions for people due to their own life experiences which may mirror what has occurred. Therefore, consideration regarding how best to support them at this time may be a priority.

People are also more likely to share personal experiences of loss and trauma during periods of crisis. Therefore, sensitivity will be an important feature of any support that needs to put in place.

Compassion Fatigue

Supporting distressed children and young people is emotionally draining and can have a significant impact on our ability to function psychologically, socially and emotionally. The negative impact of caring varies and can affect individuals in different ways:

- **Physically** - lack of energy, difficulties falling asleep, illness
- **Cognitively** - difficulties remembering and coping with demands of workplace/home
- **Emotionally** - feelings of anxiety, depression and being overwhelmed
- **Socially** - avoidance of social situations, and changes in levels of sociability

It is important to be mindful that often staff who are offering support to children, young people and colleagues have also been affected by the event.

Helping ourselves

It can be difficult to think about self-care when we are actively supporting children and young people who are at risk; we may automatically put our own wellbeing 'on hold'. However, without caring for ourselves and considering our own wellbeing, it can be very difficult to continue to offer an appropriate and high level of support to others.

There is a significant amount of research into the factors which are thought to promote or strengthen mental wellbeing. One model developed to encourage individuals and communities to build mental wellbeing is Five Ways to Wellbeing (New

Economics Foundation, 2008). The premise of this model is to think about following the 'five ways' for mental health in the same way as we consider eating five portions of fruit/vegetables a day for physical health.

NHS Scotland has adapted this model into the Five Steps to Wellbeing, as shown below:

Five Steps to Mental Wellbeing	
CONNECT	Connect with the people around you: your family, friends, colleagues and neighbours. Spend time developing these relationships.
BE ACTIVE	You don't have to go to the gym. Take a walk, go cycling or play a game of football. Find an activity that you enjoy and make it a part of your life.
KEEP LEARNING	Learning new skills can give you a sense of achievement and a new confidence. So why not sign up for that cooking course, start learning to play a musical instrument, or figure out how to fix your bike?
GIVE TO OTHERS	Even the smallest act can count, whether it's a smile, a thank you or a kind word. Larger acts, such as volunteering at your local community centre, can improve your mental wellbeing and help you build new social networks.
BE MINDFUL	Be more aware of the present moment, including your thoughts and feelings, your body and the world around you. Some people call this awareness "mindfulness". It can positively change the way you feel about life and how you approach challenges.

Connect with others

Talk to those around you, e.g. your partner, good friend or colleague, about the impact of the event and how you are feeling. Talking about an emotional event bit by bit is usually helpful. It helps us to process events, recognise our thoughts and feelings and make more sense of the situation. Remember it's ok to also talk about things not related to the event and do things that you enjoy.

Look after yourself physically

Be aware it is highly likely that you will have experienced extra levels of cortisol, the stress hormone during this time. This will have helped you in the initial stages but as it dissipates, it can leave you feeling exhausted. Take care of yourself physically by considering diet, sleep, exercise and the careful use of alcohol.

Ensure a positive work life balance

Be careful not to take on too much at the same time - in work or at home. Be mindful of additional pressure at this time, even things you would usually enjoy have the potential to feel stressful. Don't be afraid to say "sorry no/not now" to some requests and to ask for support from your staff network.

Focus on being with others rather than trying to fix things

Recognise that being an emotional support for another person and listening may not take away their distress or fix their situation. Listening and hearing their story is very supportive. Being there "with someone" instead of "for someone" can help focus the type of support you can offer. Share your concerns with colleagues if it begins to feel too much.

Don't be afraid to seek wider support

If you begin to feel overwhelmed and have a sense that additional support may be valuable, don't be afraid to reach out further. Contact details for some potential supports can be found in the section 'when something extra is needed' below.

Helping each other

Offering emotional support

Making time to check in with colleagues for peer support and reaching out to peers who you think might be finding things difficult helps promote a valuable sense of connectedness amongst colleagues. Listen and acknowledge their thoughts and feelings. Individuals will respond in very different ways in their initial reactions, ability to cope and preferences for receiving support. Respecting individual differences and responses will help to promote a caring ethos in which people feel supported.

Offering practical support

Staff supporting pupils may need additional time to do this effectively. Existing plans and workloads may need to be renegotiated. Offers of support to ease their workload are likely to be very welcome (where you can do this without overwhelming yourself).

Formally or informally buddying up colleagues or creating temporary supportive teams may help increase confidence in individuals and groups in their abilities to successfully achieve their goals i.e. give that sense of security that we are doing everything we can.

Organisational support

Responding to a critical incident is incredibly demanding both emotionally and practically. Encouraging a team approach in which everyone works together can be an effective way of 'sharing the load'. For example, the offer of class cover to allow a Pupil Support Teacher to spend time with a vulnerable young person or make contact with a family can make a world of difference to a number of people.

Recognising and valuing all contributions can be a powerful way of enhancing an ethos of inclusion and protecting staff wellbeing. Formal and informal support networks or coaching and mentoring structures can effectively facilitate the development and maintenance of such an approach. Such networks can also encourage open and honest communication about how people are feeling and create an ethos where staff feel they can seek support when required.

It is extremely helpful for school leadership teams to structure and facilitate such support for all staff, either individually, in small groups or across faculties. A supportive ethos in which pastoral support is seen as everyone's role will be particularly important. Such a whole school approach will effectively support the wellbeing of staff during difficult times.

Practical considerations would include:

- Workloads and timetable commitments
- Within Department/Faculty arrangements for cover for staff
- Bus duties
- Extra-curricular activities.

When something extra is needed

'In a digital world of uploading and downloading, it's important to remember that we need to offload too.'

Within North Lanarkshire support is available from:

- Staff Welfare Officer (see Key Contacts page 2)
- MyNL - Health and Wellbeing Support for Employees

Support and advice in relation to mental health and wellbeing is also available from:

- Breathing Space: Helpline 0800 83 85 87
Breathing Space is a free, confidential phone and web-based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety.
- Elament: www.elament.org.uk
Lanarkshire's first stop for online mental health and wellbeing, providing information for people seeking assistance with mental health problems.
- Local staff association/trade union representative

Self-care cards for staff

SELF CARE:

To be of help
to others, you
need to take
good care of
yourself

- Be aware you will experience emotional reactions if you are supporting staff or children after a critical incident. This is normal
- Remember to talk with those around you, e.g. your partner, good friend or colleague, about the impact of the event
- Remember it's ok to also talk about things not related to the event and do things that you enjoy
- Be careful not to take on too much at the same time - in work or at home
- Remember you can help support someone in distress but you cannot carry their distress for them
- Use a team approach to supporting staff or children
- Do not be afraid to contact other professionals if you need support

OFFERING PEER SUPPORT

Emotional

- By being patient and sensitive to colleagues
- By actively contacting peers and being willing to listen and acknowledge their feelings and thoughts
- By being present without being intrusive

Practical

- By offering support to ease workloads
- By offering team working approaches where you can

Appendix 4 - Supporting Children and Young People

The effect of a traumatic event on children and young people varies considerably and will depend on a range of factors including their age, level of maturity, previous traumatic experiences, understanding of the tragedy and closeness to the people involved in the event.

The priority will be to enable as many pupils and staff to return to a normal routine as quickly as possible. Returning to familiar routines provides stability, safety and security for pupils and staff in terms of what is known and comfortable. There may be some pupils who need additional support and it is helpful to consider the following changes that may occur in pupils.

Changes in pupils to look out for:

- Social withdrawal
- Depressed mood
- Irritability
- Lethargy
- Tearfulness
- Increased impulsivity
- Loss of sense of humour or interest in previously pleasurable activities
- Expressions of guilt

In school/class, pupils may:

- Have problems concentrating on their class work and attending to teacher instructions

- Have problems remembering old acts and knowledge
- Have difficulty in coping with new learning
- Be more excitable, restless and fidgety
- Be more withdrawn and reluctant to take part in class activities and discussions
- Be more irritable, even belligerent and confrontational
- Be jumpy, reacting to e.g. sudden noises
- Be prone to unexpected distress, even tears

While many of these behaviours can be a short-term reaction to the traumatic event, some reactions can persist for some months, perhaps with decreasing regularity. Memory problems and intrusive thoughts and images are the most common reactions which could persist for many months, even years.



Active Listening

Staff who work closely with children/young people will already be highly skilled in engaging and supporting children/young people and colleagues. However, it is worth remembering key active listening skills:



Active listening is important to support children and young people as they respond and recover following a critical incident. Active listening involves:

- Truly listening, being fully present and engaged, and show this verbally and non-verbally.
- Being genuine – demonstrate warmth, friendliness and acceptance of the child/young person and what they are saying and complement them on their strengths.
- Trying not to make assumptions or disagree/argue with them.
- Be patient: allow the pupil time to respond.
- Trying to give the pupil a sense of control where possible and appropriate.
- Acknowledging their grief, sadness or distress. Reflect back their thoughts and feelings.
- Helping them feel that they are not alone.
- Being calm and understanding – don't appear upset or shocked by anything the pupil tells you.
- Not using jargon.
- Use mainly open-ended questions with closed questions when a definite response is needed.
- Ask constructive questions about the way the person is thinking and feeling.
- Providing reassurance and hope for the future without dismissing the distress, feelings and worries.
- Telling the pupil you care and trying to convey a message of hope.
- Believing in them – take their claims seriously and show willingness to try to help.

Try to avoid:

- Allowing yourself to be sworn to secrecy.
- Talking too much or interrupting with stories of your own.
- Giving too much advice or feeling obligated to find simple solutions.
- Offering your diagnosis, analysis and interpretation of the situation.
- Becoming angry.
- Being patronising.
- Avoiding pupils who are distressed by the incident.
- Changing the subject if they want to talk about the critical incident, e.g. an accident, death or suicide attempt.
- Saying "You ought to feel better by now..."

Networks of support and support strategies for children and young people

Children and young people will benefit from being connected to a wider network of support as they respond and recover following a critical incident.

There are a number of key areas that we can help to ensure that networks of support and support strategies are in place. These include:

- ✓ Explore potential options for support e.g. family, friends and professionals.
- ✓ Help the pupil to plan for what is to happen next e.g.:
 - When will they return to school?
 - What help do they want if they become too distressed to attend classes?
 - How will they cope with intrusive thoughts, memories or feelings?
 - Can they pass the place where the accident happened?
 - What will they do if others talk about the incident?
- ✓ What aspects of their situation do they feel they can cope with best?
- ✓ What do they feel they can change?
- ✓ How can they realise these goals?
- ✓ How can we support that process?
- ✓ Help them identify achievable short-term targets and desirable longer-term goals.

If you are uncomfortable with the issues raised by the pupil, ask for help from a colleagues within your school or from external agencies, e.g. educational psychologist, staff welfare officer or social worker.



Appendix 5 - Supporting Parents and Carers

Guidelines for communicating with parents

These guidelines provide ideas and a structure for some of the communication that schools may wish to send to parents to inform them of a critical incident and the arrangements that the school has put in place.

It should be emphasised that schools should contact Corporate Communications as soon as possible after a critical incident has occurred. Any communication that is being sent out to parents should be initially shared and agreed with Education and Families Senior Officers and the Corporate Communications team before distribution.

Possible structure

- Outline brief statement of the facts (i.e. when, what happened, who has been involved)
- What the school has done (e.g. met with parents, are liaising with any investigation, provide overview of plans to support individual/families in school)
- Emphasise the value of continuity of school routines as much as possible
- Share examples of anticipated reactions from children and young people and include information leaflet
- Encourage partnership with parents

Sample Letter

Dear Parent

We regret to inform you about an unfortunate event affecting our school. Yesterday, (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 visited/are in close contact with the parents. Please be assured we have made arrangements to support those children most directly affected by the incident and will continue to do so.

Familiar/normal routines provide an invaluable sense of safety and security during difficult times for the vast majority of people. We would therefore encourage you to send your children to school as normal.

Children's reactions will vary and may include crying, not wanting to talk or wanting to talk, wanting to be alone, anger, lack of concentration and changes to sleeping or eating patterns. The enclosed leaflet/link to leaflet provides some information on how children can react to stressful situations and how you can help your son/daughter.

School staff will be looking out for children who may be upset and will offer support accordingly. Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any concerns about your son/daughter and we will do whatever we can to help.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 6 - Critical Incident Review Process



It can be helpful to conduct a Critical Incident Review with all staff who have been most affected by the incident. The process provides an opportunity for invited staff to engage and share their experiences of the incident. This can help with the integration of the experience and reduces the likelihood of prolonged adverse stress reactions. It is neither a psychological debriefing nor a counselling session rather an opportunity to reflect on what has happened, connect with and understand individual reactions and consider appropriate supports available.

The general aims of the Critical Incident Review Process are as follows:

- To provide an environment in which people are encouraged to share experiences.
- To give a wider picture and understanding of the facts of the event.
- To 'normalise' emotions and reactions thus reducing the effects of negative self-judgement.
- To identify appropriate self-care strategies.
- To provide information about available support.
- To provide a sense of closure on the day's events.

Practical Arrangements

- The Critical Incident Review Process should begin on the day of the incident prior to staff leaving the workplace.
- The meeting could be facilitated by a member of the senior leadership team, other nominated member of school staff or the link Educational Psychologist.
- It is helpful to allow between 30 and 45 minutes for the review to take place.
- Ideally group size should be approximately 8 people depending on staff numbers.
- Attendance is voluntary although those affected by the incident should be encouraged to attend

In addition to any operational debriefing which takes place to address practical and procedural issues it should be considered a matter of standard practice that a member of the senior management team or other nominated individual(s) conduct a Critical Incident Review Process with all staff who witnessed or were involved in the incident.

The process is not intended to be a psychological debriefing and/or a counselling session. Instead, the Critical Incident Review Process provides an opportunity for staff to engage in a structured review of their experience of the incident which assists in the integration of the experience and reduces the likelihood of prolonged adverse stress reactions.

Critical Incident Review Process		
	Structure to guide review	Guidelines for facilitation
1: Introduction	Outlines the aims and procedures to staff	• Introduce purpose and structure of meeting, highlighting three main stages of process (stage 2 – 4 below). • Acknowledge the sensitivity and difficulty of discussing the incident. • Reassure participants that all thoughts and feelings will be respected and that there is no obligation upon individuals to participate. • Seek agreement on confidentiality.
2: Review	Focuses on the facts of the incident from the perspective of individual members of staff.	• Encourage staff to focus on the facts of the incident at this stage. Possible prompts might be: - Where were you when you heard about the incident? - How did you hear about it? What were you told? - What did you do? - What were others doing? • Ensure all group members who wish to participate actively are given equal opportunity to do so.
3: Response	Focuses on normalising the emotions and reactions attached to the incident. This phase will generally take longer than the other phases.	• Encourage a personal response from all participants. Possible prompts might be: - How did you feel physically? Emotionally? - What were your thoughts/impressions? - How did you react? - What did you do well? - How do you feel now? • Reassure staff that all feelings and reactions experienced are natural given the situation; 'people having normal reactions to abnormal circumstances'. • Mention the possibility of subsequent reactions as a natural response to the situation which could happen over the next couple of days such as: - An increased sense of vulnerability - Increased irritability - Guilt - Anger - Unable to show emotion - Troubled by intrusive thoughts or images • Sensitively challenge any expressions of harsh self-judgement concerning feelings or reactions. • Identify staff for whom further support may be required.
4: Remind	Focuses on identifying support available to staff and highlighting the importance of taking appropriate self-care measures.	• Encourage staff to monitor their own reactions to the incident and seek support if required. Possible prompts: - What help do you feel you will need over the next few days? - Where will you get this from? - Who can you talk about what has happened and how you are feeling? - How can the group help you? - What are you going to do to take care of yourself over the next 24 hours/couple of days? • Signpost suggestions for self-care and peer support highlighted in Appendix 3 - Supporting Staff. • Inform staff of the range of support available to them within the workplace, from the authority and beyond as detailed in Appendix 3 - Supporting staff. • Note staff requesting additional support at this point in time and arrange accordingly.
5: Conclusion	Summarises the session and gives reassurance to staff about provision of ongoing support for staff.	• Summarise key themes discussed during review. • Ask participants if they would like to continue the review process and set date accordingly. • Facilitator to access appropriate support for themselves on completion of the Critical Incident Review Process.

Appendix 7 - Media Policy

This policy outlines the council's practice and procedures for communication with the media and through social media. Please see [Guidance on the use of Social Media for work purposes v2.7 March 2023](#)

General guidelines:

- The Corporate Communications Team are here to support schools in the event of a critical incident and act as a resource to help to lessen the pressure on staff.
- Schools must contact the Corporate Communications Team as soon as possible and should not release any communications without speaking to the Corporate Communications Team in the first instance : corporatecommunications@northlan.gov.uk.
- Schools should not speak to the media and should refer any requests for comments etc to the Corporate Communications Team.
- As an open and accountable public service, we will not, as a rule, give “no comment” as a response. We should explain why we cannot respond, for example, if information is confidential and advise who can be contacted for further information.
- If the critical incident occurs outwith normal office hours Corporate Communications have a 24hr emergency on-call number – 07939 280155.



Appendix 8 - Resources

Helpful Resources

Child Bereavement UK and Winston's Wish are both excellent websites which offer a wealth of information and guidance, some of which is outlined below.

www.childbereavementuk.org

www.winstonswish.org

Training for schools

Child Bereavement UK provide specialised training, resources and information for schools and have a dedicated schools section on their website. This includes a step-by-step training guide plus resource bank to empower education professionals supporting bereaved pupils in school. The guide includes:

- Children's understanding of death including
- Managing grief – emotions http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section_B3_a.html
- Managing grief - behaviours http://sabp.lgfl.org.uk/section_B3_b.html
- The role of the school
- Death and grief in the curriculum

Winston's Wish offers free online bereavement training courses which will help teachers and school staff to understand how grief affects a child or young person and how you can help them cope with their grief. There are two courses aimed at both primary and secondary schools. The first course is an introduction to childhood bereavement and the second course explains some of the ways you can help grieving children and young people. <https://www.winstonswish.org/bereavement-training-courses-schools/>

Responding to a death in the school community

Child Bereavement UK offers guidance on responding to a death in the school community or if the school is facing an expected death.

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=4b13d694-2038-4918-90b3-13c06100aafb> as well as guidance on developing a bereavement policy. <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/developing-a-bereavement-policy>

Winston's Wish also provide guidance on whole school responses including:

- Guidance on developing a bereavement policy
- Guidance on supporting bereaved children in schools
- Guidance on developing a strategy for responding to a death in the community
- A charter for bereaved children

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/support-for-schools/>

Supporting bereaved children and young people

Winston's Wish offers practical ideas for supporting a bereaved child <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/supporting-a-bereaved-child/>

Specialist advice is available in relation to

- Death as a result of serious illness or accident <https://www.winstonswish.org/serious-illness/>
- Death by homicide <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-homicide>
- Death by suicide <https://www.winstonswish.org/death-through-suicide>
- Military families
- Children of emergency services workers
- Children and young people with ASN <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-children-with-send/>

Seasons for Growth

Longer-term, some children and young people who have experienced significant loss or bereavement may benefit from more targeted support. Seasons for Growth is an educational peer-group programme to support young people aged 6-18 years old. You can find more information out about this from North Lanarkshire's Educational Psychology Service or the following website. <http://www.seasonsforgrowth.org.uk/>

Support for Staff

Within North Lanarkshire support is available from:

- Staff Welfare Officer
- Time for Talking Employee Counselling Service 0800 970 3980
- Local staff association/trade union representative

Support in relation to mental health and wellbeing can also be accessed from:

- Breathing Space www.breathingspace.scot
Breathing Space is a free, confidential phone and web based service for people in Scotland experiencing low mood, depression or anxiety. 0800 83 85 87
- Elament: www.elament.org.uk
Lanarkshire's first stop for online mental health and wellbeing, providing information for people seeking assistance with mental health problems.

Well Informed

Address - 64 Windmillhill St, Motherwell ML1 1TA, UK

Telephone - Freephone: 0800 073 0918

Email well-informed@samh.org.uk

Well-informed, provides a relaxed and informal resource for people who are enquiring about mental health and/or well-being issues at a local level. The resource is for anyone living/working in the North Lanarkshire area and can be accessed via the freephone information line, face-to-face, e-mail, post, and at outreach stands in libraries, health centres and hospitals across North Lanarkshire.

Publications and Resources

Books and resources to help support bereaved children

Information on a range of helpful and practical resources, memory boxes and specialist publications for families and professionals supporting bereaved children is available. <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/publications-resources/>

List of books and resources for bereaved children and young people, including those with additional support needs are available at www.childbereavementuk.org

Helplines

Winston's Wish Freephone National Helpline

National Helpline is free to call on 08088 020 021 and offers therapeutic advice following a bereavement.

Live chat is available via the website. ASK email service is free to contact for advice and support following a bereavement. <https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you>

Child Bereavement UK

Helpline and live chat is available via the website to support families with child bereavement/when a child has been bereaved.

Opening Hours: Helpline open as normal Tuesday – Friday, 9am – 5pm (except Bank Holidays) there are more limited times on Monday.

Telephone numbers: **0141 352 9995**

Email address: support@childbereavementuk.org

Address: Child Bereavement UK, First Floor, 16 Fitzroy Place, Glasgow G3 7RW

www.childbereavementuk.org

Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland

Information and telephone/website support for loss and bereavement.

Opening Hours: Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm (excluding bank holidays), with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, they are now open until 8pm.

Telephone numbers: 0808 808 1677

Email address: helpline@cruse.org.uk

Address: Central Office Address (administration only): Cruse Bereavement Care, PO Box 800, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1RG.

www.cruse.org.uk

Grief Encounter

Child bereavement charity offering virtual support to CYP and families through their email address and web chat.

Opening Hours: 9am-9pm Monday to Friday

Telephone numbers: 0808 802 0111

Email address: grieffalk@griefencounter.org.uk

Address: Grief Encounter, The Lodge, 17 East End Road, London N3 3QE.

Website for webchat: www.griefencounter.org.uk

Samaritans:

www.samaritans.org

Samaritans is a unique charity dedicated to reducing feelings of isolation and disconnection that can lead to suicide throughout the UK and Ireland.

They can be contacted by:

Phone: 116123 (24 hour a day 365 days a year)

By email: jo@samaritans.org (response time 24 hrs)

By letter: Chris

Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, PO Box 9090, Stirling FK8 2SA

Self help app: Use our self-help app to track your mood and find practical tips and techniques to look after your emotional health.

PETAL (People Experiencing Trauma and Loss)

Offering counselling services via phone and online for people affected by homicide or suicide. The service is also maintaining our Referral and Practical Information telephone support line

Opening Hours: Mon-Thurs 9am - 5pm, Friday 9am - 4pm

Telephone number: 01698 324502

Email address: info@petalsupport.com

Address: Petal Support Limited, 8 Barrack Street, Hamilton, ML3 0DG

www.petalsupport.com

SAMM (Support after Murder and Manslaughter)

Email support still available for families who have been bereaved by murder or manslaughter.

Opening Hours: Office not opened need to email for a response

Telephone number: 0121 472 2912

Email address: samm.national@gmail.com

Address: L&DC, Tally Ho! Pershore Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B5 7RN

www.samm.org.uk

Support targeted specifically towards young people

Young.scot (Information and opportunities for young people 11-26 in Scotland)

@YoungScot

Their aim is to make young people informed, incentivised and active citizens through the information they provide.

You can contact them by:

Twitter Instagram Facebook You tube

Web site has a lot of information about health and wellbeing, relationships including Apps and links to campaigns such as

Aye Feel,

Anxietyuk.org/coronaphobia,

SAMH,

Beat (eating disorder),

MIND,

See Me Scotland,

Young Scot activity pack,

Young carers

Money and me

Consent

LGBT+

Discount and rewards with young scot card

tips on how to promote a positive mindset and much more information....

Distress Brief Intervention 16 +

Referral via Police Scotland

A Distress Brief Intervention is a time - limited and supportive problem solving contact with an individual in distress. It is a two-level approach. DBI level 1 is provided by front line staff and involves a compassionate response, signposting and offer of referral to a DBI level 2 service

SAMH Peer support 16+

Experience Counts – Motherwell

Offers a peer support service for anyone in North Lanarkshire experiencing or recovering from a mental health problem. Peer support workers have personal experience of mental ill health and are trained and employed to help others.

Phone: 01698 265659 (Motherwell Office) or 01236 439418 (Airdrie office)

Email: ExperienceCounts@samhservices.org.uk

Barnados:

www.barnardos.org.uk

Phone: 0131 446 7000

Barnardo's aim is to provide the best outcome for every child, no matter who they are or what they have been through.

They help children through the trauma of sexual abuse and exploitation and provide support for young people in care – and they don't forget about them when they leave the care system.

Their specialist workers support families through domestic abuse, mental health problems, prison sentences, asylum seeking and much more.

Barnardo's also amplify the voices of young people to influence Government on the issues that affect their lives, fighting their corner and making sure their voices are heard.

