



Hillingdon Critical Incident Policy

February 2024

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Foreword

In order to meet legal requirements, appropriate standards and to assist in the management of events and incidents all services are required to have in place contingency plans which evidence compliance with the Critical Incident Guide.

Over the past few years, there has been increasing concerns within schools about critical or traumatic incidents which have affected children or members of staff and the school community. Several reported atrocities and incidents nationally have nurtured these concerns. Such events can have a profound impact upon the whole school community, not just those directly affected, and the impact can be considerable and long lasting.

When a critical incident occurs, there is little time for reflective and inclusive decision making. Just as schools have plans for fire drills and flooding etc., schools should also develop generic plans for responding to other types of crisis events. Emergency procedures need to be practised by staff and students to ensure that school staffs are ready to deal effectively with a critical incident.

While very few schools will experience a major crisis, most schools at some time or other experience traumatic situations. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the impact on students and staff is limited. The plans need to be sufficiently flexible and creative to allow for appropriate responses and to accommodate alterations as events unfold.

Each critical incident is unique, and it is not possible to plan for every eventuality, but similarly each critical incident can be shocking and traumatic, so a prepared procedure is essential to ensure that the schools' reaction is effective and efficient.

This guidance is intended to inform and prepare schools for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation, it is essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken. Support will be available to all schools from the Local Authority, and it would be practical to contact them immediately.

Updates to this Guide will be made when necessary (including the contact list) and placed on [Hillingdon LEAP](#) and notified to schools.

Abi Preston
Director of Education & SEND

1. Purpose

“There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full”.

Henry Kissinger

“Every little thing counts in a crisis”.

Jawaharal Nehru

Experience has shown that critical incidents happen when least expected. It is vital to ensure that your contingency plans and procedures are up to date and in place. Although it is increasingly difficult to make time for all the tasks that demand your attention, this is one that cannot be left until you know you need it!

The aims of the Critical Incident Policy are as follows:

- setting out how to support staff, children and young people following a critical incident
- seeking to best enable their psychological recovery
- enabling your school/college/setting to function effectively

It will ensure that you are clear about the Children’s Services response to a crisis at a school and will have:

- Clear guidance on who to notify in the Children’s Service with contact numbers readily available
- Guidance on the kind of help the Children’s Service is able to offer
- Guidance on dealing with the media
- Guidance on funeral rites across different cultures
- Lists of useful resources.

2. Definition of Critical Incident

A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which cause trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.

Infrequently, a serious crisis may affect your school. It can happen on the premises or may involve pupils and or staff when they are away. Sometimes, a disaster affecting the wider community may have a significant effect on your school. Examples of some of the critical incidents that could take place are:

- A fatal stabbing of a pupil

- Suicide of a pupil
- Deaths of pupils in both mainstream and special schools as a result of long- term illness
- The sudden, unexpected death of pupils or staff
- The murder of a parent
- Severe injury to pupil or staff member as a result of road traffic accident
- A bomb threat made against a school
- Violent intruder on school premises during the school day

For these reasons, it is vital that schools are prepared for the unexpected and can put in place appropriate responses to potential incidents they may be faced with.

3. Dealing With Critical Incidents

To help, the UK Trauma Council has completed research on the best practice for responding. There are five guiding principles:

- Safe
- Calm
- Connected to, and supported by, others
- In control
- Hopeful

In the event of a crisis like this there can be three aspects to deal with at once:

- the critical incident itself
- the impact on your school as a community
- the public impact of the incident, including how it is reported in the media

Due to the unpredictability and possible impact of these events, schools and other education settings should be prepared to cope with an incident. Therefore, settings should develop plans and procedures so that staff can act quickly and appropriately following an incident. This can ensure clear routes of support in the event of a critical incident and mitigate against the possible impact.

It is strongly recommended that schools produce a plan which represents best practice in managing and coordinating an emergency response. The DfE have written [guidance on emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings](#). This encourages all settings to plan for and deal with emergencies, including significant public health incidents and severe weather.

The UK Trauma Council has developed a helpful [resource for writing a critical incidents policy](#).

4. Dealing with Other Serious Incidents

There is another level of incident that may not be “critical” but is nevertheless traumatic and serious and may lead to a “critical” situation. Such events include:

- Child abuse allegations
- Loss of use of part of the school
- Significant drop in school standards
- Chronic or acute negative media attention

Advice and guidance in this manual will support such situations but the highly varied nature of these events means that action will be agreed in accordance with the needs identified at the time and with advice from appropriate professionals.

5. Critical Incident Rapid Check List for Headteachers

CRITICAL INCIDENT RAPID CHECK LIST FOR HEADTEACHERS

(action will depend on the nature of the incident)

ENSURE THAT A FULL LOG IS KEPT OF ALL ACTIONS TAKEN AS THEY HAPPEN AS WELL AS ALL INFORMATION RECEIVED

- Ensure that all staff and pupils are in a place of safety and security.
- Have emergency services been called?
 - fire
 - police
 - ambulance
- Inform the LA using the contact list.
- Ensure that all staff and pupils are accounted for.
- Inform the Chair of Governors and other governors as soon as possible.
- Set up a CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM
- Seek urgent advice from Hillingdon Council Communications unit and arrange who will deal with the media, give interviews and prepare press statements.
- Arrange how parents will be contacted.
- Ensure that there are suitable phones available for outgoing calls e.g. ex- directory or mobile.
- Decide if there is a need to contact community or religious leaders.
- Decide if counselling support is needed.
- Consider, as soon as possible, a schedule for recovery.
- Ensure that there is constant and consistent communication with staff.
- Consider if information is already out on social media.
- Consider arrangements for school meals.
- Consider whether transport arrangements need to be altered.

- If appropriate, determine the funeral arrangements and decide which staff and pupils will attend.

6. School-Based Crisis Management

STAGE 1 INITIAL RESPONSE

Open and continue to maintain a personal log of all factual information received, actions taken and the time and date of these events. This is good practice but is essential for many reasons, including the need to give parents, pupils, staff and the media accurate information and to have an accurate record for further investigations that might take place.

Immediately after a critical incident the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher should gather as much information as possible. This should include:

- Clear details of exactly what happened
- Where and when (date and time the incident occurred)
- Which emergency services have been contacted and, if this has not happened, whether they need to be. Clearly, if the emergency services have not been contact but are required this is an absolute priority
- Whether there is continuing danger and, if the incident occurred off site, what help is required from the school / LA
- The names of those injured and the extent of the injuries
- The current location of those injured with the names and contact numbers of the adults present
- The names and location of any pupils who were involved but not injured with the names and contact numbers of the adults present.

STAGE 2 ASSESS CONTINUING RISK

If there is any continuing risk, the priority must be to safeguard the welfare of the children and adults. It is important to ensure that any immediate action to protect people or property does not give rise to any further risk.

STAGE 3 THE CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT TEAM

It is likely that the Headteacher will wish to take charge of events, forming a special Critical Incident Support Team. It is anticipated that schools will have considered the possible

composition of such a team in discussions with staff and governors in advance of any critical incident occurring. The composition of the team is open to different permutations depending on the circumstances. The team will not necessarily comprise the senior management team in the school, but might usefully involve representatives of the wider school community, such as office staff and the caretaker.

SUPPORT

Support is available from various sources. In some sorts of emergencies, police specialists may become centrally involved with the school. In addition to management support, Hillingdon Council is able to offer advice on a range of issues including dealing with the media. Support may also be offered from local community and religious groups

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Information released from the school should be accurate and consistent. It will be helpful if a policy is already in place covering joint arrangements between the Headteacher and the governors for the release of information to parents, general enquiries and the media.

SENSITIVE ISSUES

Special steps may be appropriate for dealing with affected parents. In view of the obvious stress for all parties involved, written notes prepared in advance are helpful. A member of staff who is knowledgeable about the family/ies concerned should ideally undertake the task. Offers of help should be made where possible. A religious leader may be asked to lend support in particular cases. If a large number of families are involved, other sources of assistance should be considered.

TELEPHONE HELP LINE

It may be appropriate to publicly announce a telephone help line. Handling such calls is labour intensive and slow but may be necessary. An alternative is to use a multi-access answer-phone. In this event, messages need to be concise and informative, and not seek to minimise or exaggerate the tragedy.

COUNSELLING

The emergency may bring about long-term trauma for those involved, either directly or indirectly. Council staff can advise on appropriate agencies and procedures if counselling for pupils and/or staff is considered necessary. The Educational Psychology Service can provide critical incident debriefing and can offer guidance to staff on handling pupils under stress.

RECOVERY SCHEDULE

It will be helpful in most cases for a recovery schedule to be agreed at an early stage by the Headteacher with the Critical Incident Support Team. So far as possible, this will establish dates and times of key events. For obvious reasons, it should be as realistic as possible. Included may be times of media briefings, decisions on school closure, a schedule for re-opening, parents' meetings, and times of future conferences by the Critical Incident Support Team. Even though some items may initially be tentative, it will be good for the morale of all involved to feel that recovery is in hand and assured.

7. Notification of Critical Incident and Contact List

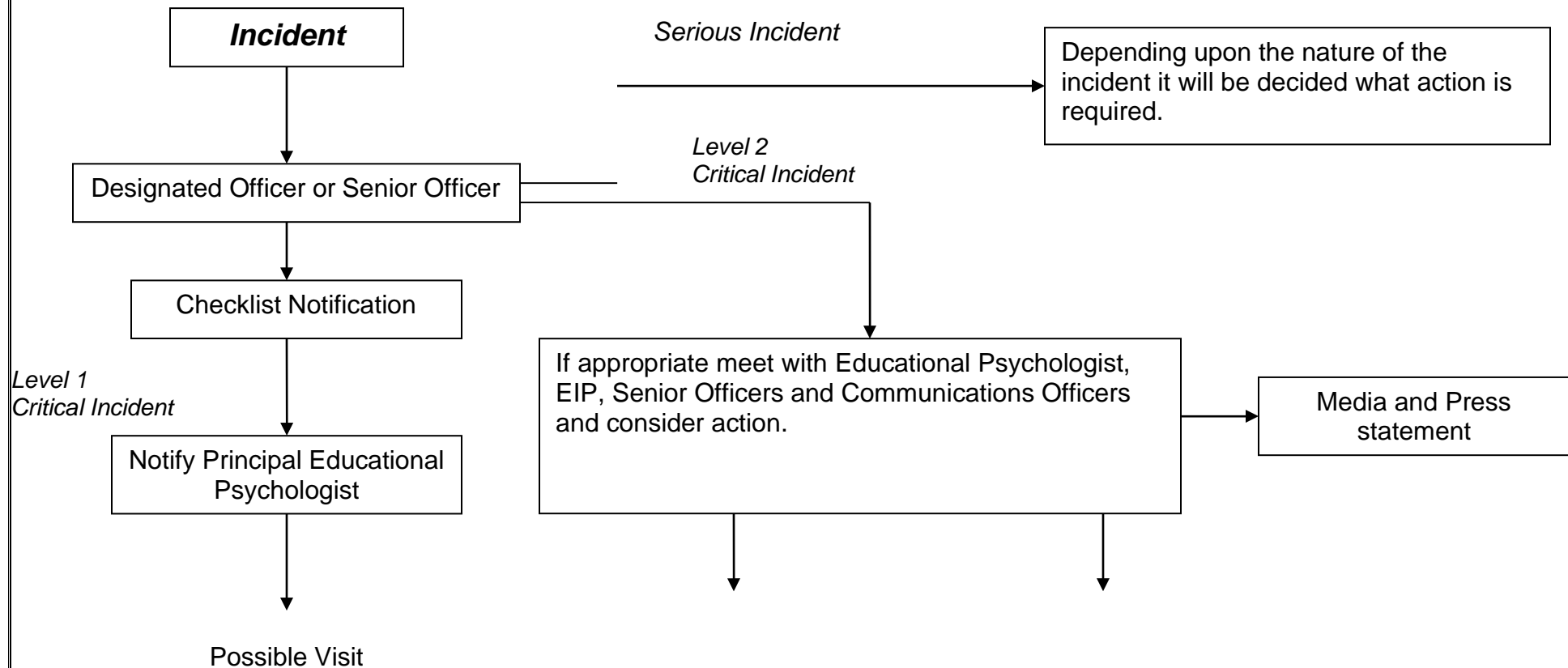
Dial 999 and request the relevant emergency service, making sure to provide the exact nature of the incident and the location as a priority (if appropriate).

Job title	Name	Contact details
Officer Contacts:		
Director of Education & SEND	Abi Preston	apreston@hillingdon.gov.uk 07596 044119
Principal Educational Psychologist	Ingrida Stankeviciene	istankeviciene@hillingdon.gov.uk Tel: 01895 558101 Mob: 07850 064 547
Head of Education	Michael Hawkins	mhawkins@hillingdon.gov.uk Tel: 01895 556 084 07542 855595
Stronger Families Hub	Stronger Families Hub	lbhmesh@hillingdon.gov.uk strongerfamilieshub@hillingdon.gov.uk 01895 556006
Head of first response and out of hours	Anthony Madden	amadden@hillingdon.gov.uk Tel: 01895 556 006
Lead Child Protection Schools & Deputy LADO	Nicole Diamond	ndiamond@hillingdon.gov.uk Tel: 07943 097366
Assistant Director Ed and Vulnerable Children	Kathryn Angelini	Kangelini@hillingdon.gov.uk Tel: 07850 075034
Communications Support		
Hillingdon Communications Team	corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk or call 01895 250403 (9am-5.30pm) or 01895 250111 (out of hours)	
Met Police Comms Bureau	DMC-Mailbox-.PressBureau-DMC@met.police.uk - 0207 2302171 (do not use tel unless critical). If live police investigation, contact the Bureau instead of LBH comms but please 'cc' LBH Comms (above)	

Signposting for Schools

- **Safehaven** - *Chargeable* service for critical incident counselling <https://safehaven.co.uk> - 0161 635 1010
- **School Resources on Traumatic Death of a Child:** [For schools | Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- **Cruse** – support for grief - 0808 8081677
- **Kooth Website:** kooth.com Free, safe and anonymous online counselling support for young people aged between 10 and 25. Available Monday to Friday 12pm-10pm and Saturday to Sunday 6pm-10pm.
- **Young Minds Crisis Messenger Text:** Text SHOUT to 85258 24-hour text support for young people experiencing a mental health crisis.

8. Children's Service Response to Critical Incident



LEVEL 1 CRITICALINCIDENT

A critical incident, which may include a fatality (but not to a member of the school community) and where the incident is not the responsibility of LA/school (e.g. incident related to another school group at the same centre).

LEVEL 2 CRITICAL INCIDENT

A critical incident, which may include fatality or serious injury to one or more members or the school community or where the actions of a member or members of the school community have caused a serious incident and / or fatality.

9. Media Support

The Need

As most recent disasters have shown, the response of the news media is likely to be quick with a large number of personnel and equipment. It is usually the police who are responsible for coordination of the emergency service response to a major incident and managing facilities for dealing with the media. However, not all emergency scenarios will involve the police to any great degree.

Support

Communication Officers from Hillingdon Council should be asked to advise and support all major media events at the school. Please ensure you liaise with the Communications Team **before** sharing any information with the media.

Hillingdon Communications Team	corporatecommunications@hillington.gov.uk Call 01895 250403 (9am-5.30pm) or 01895 250111 (out of hours)
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Social Media

Sadly, where there have been critical incidents, it is now very common that information about the incident has been released on social media by individuals. The information is not always helpful, nor accurate. In many cases, the posts are designed to create upset and harm. The Hillingdon Communications Team can give some advice on this. It may affect your decision making regarding when to share information in school to students and parents, as students may already be seeing information about the incident.

10. The Role of The Educational Psychology Service

Training of Educational Psychologists

All Educational Psychologists (EPs) have an honours degree in Psychology, are qualified and experienced teachers and have a Masters degree in Educational Psychology. They are thus in a unique position to understand and help with both the institutional and the individual effects of a critical incident.

How To Access Help from The Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

Once an officer is notified of a critical incident taking place, they will notify the Principal EP who will then make arrangements for one of the team to make contact with the Headteacher to discuss how he/she may help.

If a school suffers a critical incident, the PEP may decide to direct additional EP time (in addition to the time already allocated), on a temporary basis. The Educational Psychology Service does not have access to additional staff who can be called on at a time of crisis and so it may be necessary to postpone some of the Service's appointments at other schools. This would be exceptional. It is anticipated that Headteachers would be very sympathetic to a neighbouring school undergoing a crisis and the need to focus resources there for a brief period. Fortunately, severe traumatic incidents are rare but plans have to be in place as any school in the borough could be affected at any time.

Ways of Helping

There are a range of ways in which an EP can help a school to cope with a critical incident:

Short Term Help (as soon as possible after the critical incident)

- Advice to pupils, parents and staff in response to trauma and the management of grief.
- Conducting group debriefing sessions.
- Conducting individual debriefing interviews with pupils.
- Acting as group facilitators to pupils who were present at the time of the incident to provide opportunities for them to share their concerns and feelings.

Longer Term Help

- Supporting members of staff in helping pupils in their class to cope with the effects of the critical incident on a longer-term basis.
- There is the possibility that a member of staff or pupil will need ongoing counselling. The EP can advise on how to access such help.

11. Stages Of Grief

SHOCK AND DISBELIEF

When someone dies, whether it is sudden or expected, the initial reaction is one of shock and disbelief. Shock may be immediate, but it can also be delayed and its effects need to be acknowledged and recognised.

DENIAL

The period of shock is often followed by a period of denial. During this time there is difficulty in accepting that the dead person will not return.

GROWING AWARENESS

This gives way to a growing awareness of the loss. It may be experienced as yearning and pining, anger, depression, guilt and anxiety.

ACCEPTANCE

Often it is only after the first round of anniversaries – major holidays, birthdays etc – that acceptance of the death really begins. This process of ‘letting go’ may take much longer.

The shock of sudden death e.g. a road accident or heart attack, brings a sense of unreality. There can be a whole range of reactions to shock: shaking, crying, headaches to name a few. These may occur immediately, but they can also be delayed and appear months later. Some families have to cope with the experience of terminal illness with its emotional seesaws of hope and despair. Even when someone has been ill for a long time there is still a sense of shock when death occurs. Suicide can leave people with a sense of guilt and failure and needs very sensitive handling.

GRIEF AND CHILDREN

Children, like adults are individuals. They go through the stages of physical, mental, emotional and social development at different rates. Grief and the variety of ways in which it can be expressed needs to be acknowledged. It helps if we are aware of the closeness of the relationship, previous experience of loss, type of death, and the level of understanding before the death takes place.

There are particular aspects about children’s perceptions of death that need special consideration:

Fear

Young children’s lives revolve completely around the immediate family. If one of these family members dies, fear for the rest can become of paramount importance.

Lack of experience of death

In our society children, and sometimes adults, may well have had no first hand experience of death. The media, especially TV, can give an unreal picture. The age of the bereaved child should be taken into account:

1 to 3 years

Very young children do not understand that death is permanent. They may constantly ask when the dead person is coming back. They may become insecure and become frightened when separated from a parent. They may regress and behave like a baby.

3 to 7 years

Children of this age are very egocentric. They believe that they are responsible for what ever happens. Those who are bereaved may therefore believe that they are to blame for the death. If

this feeling is not explained, they may carry the guilt for the rest of their lives. Children of this age can react casually to the news of the death but may ask about it at a later stage. Some children may believe that the dead person will return. Some will believe that they might die as well.

8 to 12 years

At this age, children begin to realise that death is permanent. They also recognise that they will die one day. They can ask questions that adults may be surprised at, such as “where did the body go?” or “what does the body look like – is it like he’s sleeping?” They simply express their curiosity as it may be their first experience of death and they are trying to gain an understanding of the process.

12 years to adult

Teenagers understand the impact of loss and death but may not be emotionally prepared for it. Young people of this age are already experiencing a mixture of emotions and their response to death may be more extreme and variable than an adults would be.

Children who have experienced a death may show changes in behaviour. They may become clingy. They may be afraid to go to sleep at night for fear that they will not wake up again. Bed-wetting may be a sign of grief. They may show aggressive or withdrawn behaviour. Any change in behaviour needs to be noted and the child given extra care and support. This can happen weeks and months after the actual death.

You may also find it useful to also use the resource <https://www.thegoodgrieftrust.org/>

12. Suggestions For Coping with Particular Situations

The Death of a Member of Staff

The immediate issue is to break the news to the other staff (some of whom may have worked with the person for many years), to the parents and to the children. When the news is announced the language used is very important. It is not enough to say that someone has passed away or passed over. It needs to be stated that they have died. Further explanation may be required for younger children who will want to know when the person is coming back even though they have been told quite clearly that they have died. A primary school in this situation recently sent a letter home in a sealed envelope asking the parents to explain again to their child what had happened and asking them to observe their child’s reactions and to let the school know of any unusual behaviour. It may be necessary to translate the letter into different languages so that all parents have access to it.

Attending a funeral can be a helpful part of the grieving process. If some of the pupils are to attend the funeral, then it is a good idea to explain what happens at a funeral service and/or cremation and some of the beliefs expressed. Circumstances vary enormously but one secondary school closed early so that staff could attend the funeral of a colleague. Each year group in the school was invited to send two pupil representatives. Attendance at a funeral service should be encouraged, not forced. Time for discussion of this choice needs to be given.

A special assembly is a way of celebrating the life and achievements of the dead person and gives the school a corporate means of thanksgiving and farewell.

Letters of sympathy and support, however inadequate we may feel they sound, are usually of enormous comfort to the relatives.

Schools might wish to consider having a small resource of books and addresses, which could be used and loaned to staff and parents (see book list)

The Death of a Child

When a child dies we feel the sadness of a young life cut short. For the relatives there is always the sense of what might have been. The quality of support offered by a school in these circumstances can be of tremendous help to all.

Again, the immediate issue is to tell the staff and decide how to tell the pupils. Where possible, it is best to do this in the familiar surroundings of the class group. The teacher, any assistants and the children in the class(es) concerned will need support from the rest of the school. The adults in this situation will inevitably be modelling ways of coping with grief whether they wish it or not. Remember that the pupils need to see that the adults too are sad and upset.

Staff need to have some understanding of coming to terms with losses in their own lives and not to be in the process of grieving themselves because of a recent major loss. They need a good support network and be used to teaching sensitive issues. They will know not to assume that children are all right because they show no visible signs of distress. They will make positive approaches to offer help and support, not waiting for the children to make the first move.

Some schools have found it helpful to display pictures of the child in a prominent place. The photos can come from other children, school outing albums or the bereaved family.

Bereaved siblings will need special care and their classes need help to know what to do and say to help them. Close friends will also suffer an enormous loss and it is all too easy to overlook the effects that this traumatic event may have on them.

Visiting the family is important immediately but so is keeping in touch if this is welcomed. Extra care needs to be taken of any siblings; decisions will need to be made about the child's personal things.

Holding a special assembly at which the life of the pupil is celebrated can be of considerable benefit. It requires careful planning and consultation with the family concerned. It can be an occasion to invite all parents and people of the community. Very often a whole community will be affected by the death of a child and parents will be coping with the shock and the fear that this could happen to their child too.

The family might wish to make a gift to the school – such as a tree, rosebush, table and seat for

the play area, etc. The children in the class may find comfort for themselves and give comfort to the family by making a scrapbook of the class activities, topics, etc in which the child was involved.

In one school, where a pupil was killed in a road accident whilst on holiday, her class were asked what she enjoyed doing most. They decided that the answer was 'play' so they were given an extra period of play in her memory.

Coping with death is not easy. It is a whole school issue, which can do much to bring a school, and the community it serves closer together.

Some children, particularly the special friend(s) of the dead child, can be particularly distressed. Schools could perhaps provide one particular person (maybe the child could say whom they would like) to be close to that child and help them through the coming days and weeks. Are there any other children or adults in the school, who have faced similar circumstances, who would be willing to form a support group?

Part of the help schools can give is to put people in touch with the relevant agencies – CRUSE, The Samaritans, Child Death Helpline etc. (see section on Useful Organisations)

The Death of a Parent

In all circumstances children need:

- Information and honesty about what has happened and what is likely to happen. This may need to be given more than once,
- The recognition that their concept of time is often very different from that of an adult. 'Today' is now, 'soon' is hours away and 'tomorrow' may not mean anything at all.
- Help to find the right words to talk about death. The surviving grieving parent often looks to the school for help and support too. Partnership with the parent is vital at this time. Encourage the parent to ring CRUSE Bereavement Care Helpline
- Reassurance. The child needs to know what will change and what won't. A world which seemed safe, secure and reliable suddenly appears just the opposite. School may provide the only seemingly secure environment.
- Understanding that they often have a sense of guilt. They feel that they have somehow caused the death.
- Safe ways of expressing their grief other than in words, e.g. drawing, music.
- To accept that life goes on and that it is all right to relax and have fun.
- The understanding that 'treasures' which may seem unimportant to adults are an important way for a child to cope with bereavement.

If the death occurs at a time of school transfer, please inform the new school.

Supporting Colleagues Who Have Been Bereaved

We can support them by:

- Offering the opportunity to talk about their feelings and the person who has died even though it is upsetting for them and for us.
- Offering support in the classroom if it is needed.
- Being aware of signs of stress, a change in behaviour for example.
- Sending cards, letters, flowers. But choose the time carefully, not when a major professional task is imminent, and tears might overwhelm them.

Religious Beliefs

We need to be aware of and sensitive to the religious beliefs of the people concerned and what the symbols and rituals mean for them. We live in a society in which all the major faiths are represented as well as humanist viewpoints. Incorporating work about the ways in which the important stages of life are marked by the different religions in the school's Religious Education programme can be a non-threatening way of preparing all pupils for some of the experiences they are going to meet (see Section on Funeral Rites Across Different Cultures).

13. List of Useful Organisations

<p>Child Bereavement Trust This charity offers training and support for professionals coping with grieving children. It also offers courses for teenagers in grief. This is not an emergency service and if does not offer counselling. Brindley House 4 Burkes Road Beaconsfield Bucks HP9 1PB Tel: 0845 357 1000</p>	<p>Childline They offer a 24 hour free phone help line for children who need someone to talk to in confidence. Tel: 0800 11 11</p>
<p>Child Death Help line This telephone support service is offered by adults who have themselves experienced the loss of child. They offer a befriending service to anyone of any age who has lost a child, grandchild or sibling. Tel: 0800 282 986 Every evening and 10am – 1pm. Monday, Wednesday, Friday.</p>	<p>Hillingdon MIND We are Hillingdon’s most experienced, community based, mental health charity, providing services in the area since 1984. We work within our communities, providing support, advice and information to empower anyone who may be experiencing a mental health problem. Our diverse services provide high quality, individually tailored services so people can live full lives and be connected to other people in their communities. We work in partnership – from grassroots organisations such as The Carers Trust, Age UK Hillingdon, Harlington Hospice, Dash to statutory authorities such as Hillingdon Council, Central and North West London NHS Trust and the ICB. We also work with a number of corporate organisations and local Schools and Universities.</p> <p>Uxbridge Wellbeing Hub 40 New Windsor Street Uxbridge, UB8 2TU Tel: 01895 271559 Crisis hub - +44 (0) 20 7378 3100 Crisis email - info@hestia.org</p>

<p>CRUSE Bereavement Care They provide 1 to 1 counselling for bereaved adults and children. They also run a drop-in centre once a week at which people can receive support and information. 126 Sheen Road Richmond Surrey TW1 1UR Tel: 0870 1671 677 Fax: 020 8940 7638 Email: helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk</p>	<p>National Association of Bereavement Services They offer a telephone support service, which can provide information about other relevant agencies. They can also offer a limited amount of telephone support from a trained counsellor. 20 Norton Folgate London E1 6DB Tel: 020 7247 0617 <i>Open 10.am to 4.pm Monday-Friday. Administration office for information on training and materials</i></p>
<p>The Single Point of Access is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. You can them on 0800 0234 650 or email cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net The Single Point of Access provides one number and one email address for referrals to secondary mental health services and support in a mental health crisis in the Boroughs of Brent, Harrow, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster, and also Milton Keynes (out of hours).</p>	<p>Samaritans Whatever you're going through, a Samaritan will face it with you. We're here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year Call 116 123 for free</p>
<p>DA impact on children To book a place on the programme please contact us by email: info.care2talk@gmail.com or call 07564 016066 www.Care-2talk.co.uk</p>	<p>Domestic Abuse support for victims HDAAS@hillingdon.gov.uk 07874 620954 National DA line: 0808 2000 247</p>

14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Funeral Rites across Different Cultures

Appendix 2: Case Studies

Appendix 3: Assisting Statutory Investigations

Appendix 1: Funeral Rites across Different Cultures

Responses to death and the rituals and beliefs surrounding it tend to vary widely across the world. In all societies, however, the issue of death brings into focus certain fundamental cultural values. The various rituals and ceremonies that are performed are primarily concerned with the explanation, validation and integration of a peoples' view of the world.

In this section, the significance of various symbolic forms of behaviour and practices associated with death are examined before going on to describe the richness and variety of funeral rituals performed according to the tenets of some of the major religions of the world.

THE SYMBOLS OF DEATH

Social scientists have noted that of all the rites of passage, death is most strongly associated with symbols that express the core life values sacred to a society. Some of the uniformities underlying funeral practices and the symbolic representations of death and mourning in different cultures are examined below:

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF COLOUR

When viewed from a cross-cultural perspective, colour has been used almost universally to symbolise both the grief and trauma related to death as well as the notion of 'eternal life' and 'vitality'.

Black, with its traditional association with gloom and darkness, has been the customary colour of mourning for men and women in Britain since the fourteenth century. However, it is important to note that though there is widespread use of black to represent death, it is not the universal colour of mourning; neither has it always provided the funeral hue even in Western societies.

White is considered appropriate in many cultures to symbolise purity, as well as, in some religions, oneness with God, or eternal life in others. Sikh women generally wear white clothes for mourning, although sometimes they wear black. Though there are variations within the Hindu traditions, women generally wear white or black. Even though there is sorrow in death, if the deceased person is elderly, black or white may not be worn as they have lived a long and fulfilled life. White has also been a popular colour of mourning at Christian funerals at different periods in history, a notable example being Queen Victoria's funeral.

The colours and clothes in which the deceased are dressed are often indicative of age, marital status and caste. Amongst Hindus, if the deceased is an elderly male, the clothing tends to be simple and is normally white. Married women are dressed in new saris in shades of red and pink, as these are considered to be auspicious colours. Some items of jewellery, especially the *mangal sutra* (tied around the brides neck at the time of marriage by her husband), are left on the body and red *kumkum* powder is placed in the parting of the hair. In stark contrast, deceased widows are generally dressed in sombre shades.

Sikh families choose the clothes the deceased is to wear. For men, these may either be a western suit and turban (white, black or coloured) or a Punjabi suit and turban. Women will be dressed in a Punjabi suit, younger women in bright colours and older women in paler colours. The deceased is wrapped in a white shroud and a *rumalla* (a special silk cloth, of the same type used to cover the Guru Granth Sahib, (often in a bright colour), is placed over the top.

THE SYMBOLISM OF HAIR

Another widespread feature of funeral and mourning customs and one that is closely allied to clothing and styles of endowment, relates to the mourners' hair.

Jews, for instance, observe strict mourning for seven days. During this period, male relatives of the deceased are forbidden to shave their beards.

Among Hindus, the ceremonies following a death usually last for thirteen days. However, on the eleventh day closer male family members of the deceased shave their beards and heads.

THE RITUAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FOOD

In many cultures, an important aspect of funeral rites is concerned with ensuring the safe and comfortable passage of the soul from life into death.

Amongst Hindus, relatives of the deceased traditionally eat only simple vegetarian food for thirteen days following a death. Funeral ceremonies culminate in a feast, its grandeur varying according to the age and social status of the deceased.

The tradition of feeding the mourners after the funeral is quite widespread, signifying the continuity of life and of communal solidarity. The food that is served at such ceremonial gatherings tends to be highly symbolic. For example, Jewish mourners returning home from a funeral are normally given a hard boiled egg as a symbol of life.

Among Chinese in Hong Kong an all-night memorial mass may be said, in which both Taoist priests and Buddhist nuns may play a role. Part of the ritual involves calling out the dead person's favourite foods in order to tempt the departed soul to return. At daybreak a paper house, banknotes and paper clothing are burnt for the soul's use in the

next life. All mourners present at the ceremony eat baked meats. Later the death room is thoroughly cleansed and purified.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO DEATH

Death evokes a variety of emotional responses, but the range of acceptable emotions and the extent to which the grief and sorrow experienced by mourners are allowed free expression are tied up with the unique institutions and values of each society.

The emotional tenor at funerals in England and other Western European societies tends, on the whole, to be rather low-key. While it is quite permissible for female relatives and other mourners to cry at funerals, the excessive display of grief in public is generally an embarrassment for both the bereaved and the comforter. In contrast, in some other cultures crying at funerals is not merely tolerated, it is required by custom, and at predetermined moments during the ceremony, the entire group of mourners may burst into loud and piercing cries.

In Ireland, close relatives of the deceased usually wept over the body during the wake. Although the practice of 'keening' or loud lamenting is rather less widespread than it used to be, it is still quite common to hire professional mourners to compose eulogies over the dead. The eulogy is accompanied by loud wailing. To Orthodox Jews, being properly lamented over is almost as important as being correctly buried.

Among Hindus and Sikhs, families gather to share the mourning. On the day the person dies, the family living room is turned into a mourning room: white sheets are placed on the floor and friends and family will visit. Other family members will bring food for the mourners to eat. After the cremation, people begin to return to their usual daily routine. In Sikh families, a sehaj path (a broken reading of the Guru Granth Sahib) is held either in the home or the gurdwara.

FUNERAL CUSTOMS AND DEATH-RELATED RITUALS

The funeral customs and death-related rituals of some of the major religions will now be discussed in more detail.

BUDDHIST BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

There are about 200,000 Buddhists in the UK. Many are born into the faith as members of immigrant families from Sri Lanka, Thailand, Myanmar, Tibet, China or Japan, but some are British-born converts from other religions. There are three main schools of Buddhism – Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana – and all are found in the UK.

Buddhists believe that they live a succession of lives; samsara is the word used to describe the endless cycle of birth, death and rebirth in various states (e.g. human, divine, animal, etc.) and in many different planes (e.g. happy, unhappy). Life in samsara continues until the believer attains an enlightened state of permanent, lasting happiness called nirvana: the ultimate goal of all Buddhist practice. Death is seen as a prelude to existence in

another state. According to Buddha's teaching, no state lasts forever. The plane of rebirth is determined by a person's karma, which is the sum total of wholesome and unwholesome actions performed in previous existences. In order to reach enlightenment the Buddha's teachings, called the Noble Eightfold Path, should be followed. Until this state is reached we continue circling on in samsara.

Buddhists place great importance on the state of mind at the moment of death. When death is imminent a monk is called to chant from religious texts, or relatives may introduce some religious objects to generate wholesome thoughts into the person's mind, because the last thought before death will condition the first thought of the next life.

One, two or three days after death, the body is either buried or cremated. At the funeral monks lead the congregation in the traditional Buddhist manner, offering respect to Buddha, the Dhamma (his teaching), and the Sangha (the community of enlightened beings). Following this, the congregation accepts the Five Precepts, which are guidelines for – and commitment to – the leading of a moral life.

If a cremation takes place, it is traditional for a nephew of the deceased to press the button that draws the curtain on the coffin and consigns it to the furnace. Sometimes the ashes are kept in an urn, which may be stored in a monument built specifically for this purpose; alternatively they may be scattered.

Immediately after the death, friends and relatives observe a period of mourning. This is done symbolically by observing a certain amount of austerity and frugality in the house of the dead person. Mourners may, for example, wear plain white clothes, abstain from wearing jewellery, eat simple food and not indulge in entertainment.

Relatives and friends direct their efforts above all to assisting the deceased in his or her journey through samsara. By performing good actions such as unselfish generosity, they generate 'merit', which can be transferred to benefit the deceased. This is the primary way of showing one's gratitude and paying respect to the dead. This act may be repeated three months later and then annually thereafter. In addition to benefiting the deceased it also brings comfort to the bereaved.

Before the end of the first week after death, a member of a monastic community may be invited to the house to talk to the surviving members of the family. They will usually remind the bereaved that everything is impermanent, that nobody can live forever and death is inevitable. Buddha, however, cautioned his followers that expressions of grief may be damaging to one's mental well being, causing pain and suffering. He said that grief does not benefit the departed one, nor does this benefit the griever.

SUMMARY

- Buddhists believe in an endless cycle of existence until and unless Enlightenment is attained.

- Death is merely a prelude to existence in another state.
- Everything is impermanent and no state lasts forever, apart from Enlightenment.
- The main efforts of mourners are directed towards smoothing the passage of the deceased in the subsequent existence.
- Merit transferring ceremonies may be held regularly, such as on the anniversary of the death.

CHRISTIAN BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

There are over six million Christians in the UK who regularly attend church. They are divided into denominations that are distinguished by various differences in doctrine and worship.

Christians believe in one God who has revealed himself as the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is described as the Holy Trinity. Central to Christian belief is Jesus of Nazareth in whom God assumed human form. The sacred text for Christians is the New Testament, which contains a code for living based on the life and teaching of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus- when he returned to life after being crucified – is integral to the belief in Jesus’ claim and offer of a life after death in heaven. Depending on the aspect of the central mysteries stressed by a particular Christian tradition, death can produce feelings of fear, resignation or hope.

After death the body of the dead person may be moved to the undertaker’s Chapel of Rest. The word ‘chapel’ does not necessarily indicate a place of worship, though in the case of believers the Funeral Director often arranges candles round the coffin and displays a cross.

Some Roman Catholics or High Church Anglicans transfer the corpse to their church on the evening before the funeral; following the ritual reception of the body into the church, it remains there overnight. In some parts of the country, however, the coffin is brought to the house the evening before the funeral and transported from there to the church. The next morning a funeral service or requiem mass is celebrated during which the priest or minister wears black vestments.

The final ritual in Christian burial is the graveside committal where the minister leads the mourners in prayer as the body is lowered into the grave.

Instead of burial, some Christians may choose cremation. The ashes of the deceased may be scattered in a Garden of Remembrance or elsewhere. Alternatively, they may be placed in an urn and interred in a cemetery. Some families keep the ashes at home. If the ashes are to be scattered in the Garden of Remembrance, the family may choose the garden and the precise place of dispersal, and if they wish, they may return a few days later to witness the scattering of the ashes.

SUMMARY

- Christian belief and practice is based on the mysteries of incarnation and resurrection.
- Belief is in one God and Jesus of Nazareth in whom God assumed human form.
- Personal identity is retained after death.
- Human beings are in continuing fellowship with God throughout life and death.
- Some Christians maintain a clear belief in heaven and hell.
- Roman Catholics believe in a state called purgatory – a place where a soul is purified in preparation for entry into heaven.
- A person lives only one physical life.
- The body is placed in a coffin by an undertaker and subsequently taken to a church or crematorium. Following a memorial service, the body is buried or cremated.
- Flowers may be used in the form of wreaths. These are traditionally rounded to symbolise continuity and eternity.

HINDU CREMATION CUSTOMS AND RITES

There are an estimated 800,000 to one million Hindus in the UK, the majority of who are from India, East Africa, Malawi and Zambia.

Hindus believe in the law of karma which states that each individual passes through a series of lives until, depending on the actions of previous existences, the state of moksha, or liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth, is attained. Consequently, death is not understood to be the end of a process, but is merely a stage in the long chain of transition. It is this continuity, extending beyond the limits of any single lifetime, which is enhanced and focused during the elaborate mortuary rituals performed by Hindus. The funeral ceremonies involve not only the immediate family members of the deceased, but also those of the extended kin network. Particular categories of kin have special ritual and economic duties to perform on this occasion. There are many regional and sub-cultural variations in the content and duration of mourning practices; the following is limited to describing the ceremonies in the broadest terms.

When death is imminent, the person is lifted from the bed to the floor so that the soul's free passage into the next life is not obstructed. Water from the holy River Ganges is given to the dying person and a tulsi (basil) leaf is placed in the deceased person's mouth. The tulsi leaf has a dual significance. Firstly, it is associated with Lord Vishnu, one of the three gods who are collectively known as the Hindu Trinity of gods; Vishnu is also known as the preserver of the universe. Secondly, the tulsi leaf is believed to have many medical properties.

After death, the body is washed and dressed, preferably in new clothes. Married women

are clothed in a pink or red sari and adorned with jewellery. Kumkum red powder is placed in the parting of the hair and a red spot or tilak is applied on the forehead. The woman's father or brother usually provides the clothes, and when a man dies, the clothes are again provided by the wife's father or brother.

In India, the hot climate necessitates that the funeral is held as soon after death as possible. However, in Britain the need to fulfil various legal and bureaucratic formalities may lead to a delay for a few days.

Except for young children under one year of age who may be buried, the customary mode of disposal of a dead body amongst Hindus is by cremation. In the villages in India, the body is placed on a bier made of bamboo poles and carried on the shoulders of close male relatives to the burning grounds. In most cases, all the relatives in the village attend the cremation. The actual size of the gathering of mourners varies with the age and importance of the deceased. Thus, when an elderly and highly respected man dies, even his genealogically and geographically distant family would make it a point to attend the cremation.

The nearest male relatives of the deceased, such as the father, husband, brother or son, are generally forbidden to shave or cut their nails for eleven days following the death. This custom, however, varies in different parts of India; in Gujarat and some other parts of Western India, the nearest male relatives of the deceased are required to shave their heads on the actual day of the death.

There are now electric crematoria in many cities in India, including one near the bank of the River Ganges in Varanasi. At cremation grounds, or ghats, the body is placed on a pyre of wood with the head pointing north in the direction of Mount Kailasha in the Himalayas. In the case of affluent families, the wood of the pyre may be an expensive variety such as sandalwood. 'Ghee', or clarified butter, is poured on the pyre to help it burn, and the pyre is then set alight by a son, brother, or brother's son (in this order of priority). Other mourners will then throw fruit, flowers, incense and fragrant spices into the fire. Mourners traditionally attend the entire cremation, i.e. until the body has been totally consumed by the fire. In the final stages of this long process, the chief mourner (i.e. the male relative who first lit the pyre) breaks the skull with a long pole in order to allow the soul to escape, a rite known as '*kapol kriya*'. On the fourth day (in certain parts of India this may take place on the third day) the ashes are collected by the chief mourner and the place of cremation cleared. The ashes are then traditionally immersed in a river, preferably the Ganges. Any items of jewellery that have not melted in the fire are collected and distributed among the mourners, along with a simple meal, usually a food called kitcheree, a mixture of boiled rice and lentils.

In Britain, the dead body is transported in a coffin to the local crematorium. The Funeral Director can arrange to have the ashes collected and scattered in the crematorium's Garden of Remembrance or stored in an urn until the relatives of the deceased arranged

to have it transported to India.

Among Hindus, both in India as well as in Britain, the ceremonies following a death normally last for thirteen days, but the ritual pollution incurred by the close family members is terminated on the eleventh day. The chief mourner performs a rite, aided by a Brahmin (priest), and the male relatives present their hair and beards. On the thirteenth day the mourners offer a blessing to the deceased to show gratitude for acts of kindness they received during their lifetime. Throughout the thirteen-day official mourning period, relatives are required to eat only simple vegetarian food and generally to lead a secluded life. The custom of friends and relatives visiting to mourn is also practised.

Even after death, the deceased person is still regarded as part of the family and their names will often be included, for example on invitations to the wedding of children or grandchildren. The death anniversary is usually observed with a special meal. Within a family, a picture of the deceased parents may be kept in the home shrine and it is usual to garland the picture.

SUMMARY

(please note that there is tremendous diversity within Hinduism, and there are many regional variations.)

- Hindus believe in reincarnation and that at death the soul sheds its body and 'puts on' another body (not necessarily human) in a cycle of re-birth until it reaches God.
- In India the body is usually cremated within 24 hours of death. It is wrapped in a cloth and placed in a coffin. The coffin is covered in flowers.
- By tradition, the eldest son should set the funeral pyre alight, or press the button if a crematorium is used.
- The eldest son and other close male relatives have their heads shaved as a sign of bereavement and cleansing.
- Friends and relatives keep the bereaved company, share grief and offer support.
- On the eleventh or thirteenth day all will gather to offer a blessing to the deceased in order to show gratitude for acts of kindness that they received during his/her lifetime.
- Memory is preserved in the family's daily prayers (puja).

HUMANIST BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Humanists believe that we only have one life and that we should make the best of it. We should try to live happy and fulfilled lives and help others to do so and the best way to achieve this is by living responsibly, thinking rationally about right and wrong, considering the consequences of our actions and trying to do the right thing. Humanists are concerned with making the world a better place in which to live, not only for people alive today, but also for future generations – especially as the lives of their descendants represent the

only sort of immortality in which humanists believe.

Humanists ask themselves the same questions as everyone else: Why am I here? What's the purpose of life? How did life begin? What will happen to me when I die? They look for evidence before they take on a belief, and so are more likely to believe the results of scientific research or what their own experiences tell them – or remain open-minded about questions – rather than to believe what someone else says. Humanists tend to think about these big questions for themselves. Some questions may not have answers, or we might not like the most probable answers.

Humanists experience the same feeling of loss and sadness at the death of a loved one as anyone else does. But they accept death as the natural and inevitable end to life. They do not believe in any kind of life after death, but believe that we live on in other people's memories of us, in the work we have done while we are alive, and in our children.

HUMANIST FUNERAL CEREMONIES

There are no specific or obligatory rituals to be followed either by the bereaved or by those who wish to express their condolences. An expression of sympathy, an acknowledgement of the bereaved person's feeling of grief and the offer of a listening ear are more likely to be appreciated than any suggestion that the deceased has gone 'to a better place' (which may contradict what the family believe). Humanists may choose to be cremated or buried and the ceremony can take place anywhere, though it is most commonly held at a crematorium where, if possible, any religious symbols will be removed or covered up.

At a humanist funeral there will be no suggestion that the deceased has gone on to another life: the ceremony is intended to celebrate the life that was lived. The humanist funeral officiate will have spent time with the bereaved relatives and together they will have planned a ceremony that properly honours the person's life and, hopefully, brings some comfort to everyone who attends as they are reminded of how their lives have been enriched through knowing the deceased. At the funeral, the officiate will talk about the person's life and what they achieved and it is usual for family members or friends to read personal tributes. The ceremony may also involve suitable readings, poetry or music, and there may be a brief period of silence to allow people attending the ceremony time for their own private reflection or – if they are religious – for prayer.

SUMMARY

- Humanists believe that there is one life and that we should make the best of it by living happy and fulfilled lives and helping others to do so.
- They look for evidence or draw on their own experience – rather than believe what someone else says – in order to form their beliefs and answer questions.
- They accept death as the natural and inevitable end to life. They do not believe in life after death, but rather that people 'live on' in other people's memories of them.

- There are no specific or obligatory rituals to follow at deaths or funerals; however expressions of sympathy and the acknowledgement of the bereaved person's feelings of grief are appreciated.
- Humanist may choose to be cremated or buried, and the ceremony can take place anywhere. If possible, all religious symbols (e.g. at a crematorium) are removed or covered.
- The funeral ceremony is intended to celebrate the life that was lived and properly honour that person's life. Through readings, poetry, music and personal tributes from family and friends, attendants are reminded of how their lives have been enriched through knowing the deceased.

JEWISH FUNERAL CUSTOMS AND BELIEFS ABOUT DEATH

Jews believe in one God who created the universe. The Jewish Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday and ends an hour after sunset on Saturday and commemorates the seventh day when God rested after the Creation. During this time religious Jews do not travel, write, cook, or use electrical equipment.

Unless death occurs after sunset on Friday, in which case the burial is postponed until Sunday, the Orthodox Jewish tradition prescribes that funerals should take place within twenty-four hours. Professional undertakers are involved since all arrangements are made through the Synagogue. The body is dressed in a white shroud (kittel), which is then placed in a plain wooden coffin. Men are buried with a prayer shawl (tallith) with its tassels cut off.

While the body is in the house, Jews believe that it should not be left unattended. Candles are placed at the head and the foot of the coffin and sons or other near relatives of the deceased maintain a constant vigil. If no relatives are present, professional mourners are called in.

The rabbi is sent for as soon as death occurs. He or she returns to the house of mourning an hour or so before the funeral is due to start to offer special prayers for the deceased. Close relatives of the dead person usually gather at the house of mourning, dressed in old clothes from which a piece is ritually cut as a mark of grief. Traditionally this torn garment is worn throughout the seven days of intensive mourning (shiveh).

After prayers offered by the rabbi at the house, the coffin is carried out and mourners usually follow on foot to the cemetery. If the cemetery is not within walking distance, transport is permitted, but many Orthodox Jew insist on covering at least part of the way on foot.

Progressive liberal Jews permit cremation. However, according to the orthodox tradition, cremation is forbidden, as human beings are created in the image of God and it would therefore be wrong to deliberately destroy a body.

At the cemetery the dead body is taken to a special room. Mourners usually wait outside until the coffin is placed in the centre of the room. Then the men stand on the left and the women stand on the right of the coffin. There are no flowers or music at the funeral ceremony, ensuring that there is no distinction made between rich and poor. Prayers and psalms are recited and the rabbi makes a special mention of the virtues of the person who has died.

The coffin is then carried to the grave followed by the mourners. The sons and brothers of the deceased shovel some earth on the coffin. After the burial the special prayer for the dead, the Kaddish is recited for the first time by the male relatives. A special meal is provided of eggs, salt-herrings and bagels. Peas or lentils are also a suitable food to serve on this occasion as, according to Jewish tradition, roundness signifies life.

In orthodox families, from sunrise to sunset during the seven days of intensive mourning, close relatives of the deceased must wear their torn garments and special slippers that are not made of leather. Prayers are said throughout the day. Neighbours and friends visit to offer condolences and help.

The ritual prescribed for women ends with this seven-day period. Men, however, are forbidden to cut their hair or shave for thirty days. The sons or other male mourners go to the Synagogue every day to say the Kaddish for eleven months. The gravestone is then erected, symbolising the end of the official period of mourning.

Every year on the anniversary of the death, the family say the Kaddish and burn a candle for twenty-four hours. The grave is visited at least once a year, especially before the Jewish New Year, to ensure that cherished memories do not fade.

SUMMARY

- Jews believe in one God and that there is only one life to be lived.
- After death the body is washed, dressed in a white shroud and placed in a coffin.
- Whenever possible, burial should take place within 24 hours.
- No flowers or music are provided, ensuring that there is no discrimination between rich and poor.
- Mourners ritually cut a slit in their outer clothes as a sign of grief.
- There are seven days of intensive mourning during which close relatives say prayers throughout the day, and neighbours and friends visit to offer condolences and help.
- For the following eleven months the Kaddish is said every day.
- Every year on the anniversary of the death, the family say the Kaddish and burn a

candle for 24 hours.

MUSLIM BURIAL CUSTOMS AND RITES

There are approximately two million people in the UK who are of the Muslim faith. This group is composed mostly of families originating from the Asian sub- continent. There is also a sizeable number from the Middle East, Africa, and Turkey, Asian languages and Arabic are spoken at home, though English is perhaps the most widely used and understood among them all.

The Islamic concept of death is quite simple, the idea being that “from God (Allah) we have emerged and to God we return.” Consequently, the official mourning period tends to be relatively short, usually not more than three days. Widows mourn for a year in the Middle East and North Africa. The next of kin mourn for forty days, however this does not include the deceased’s spouse or children.

When death is imminent, the person is asked to declare their faith by repeating the simple formula: “God is One and Muhammad is His Prophet”.

The Imam (prayer leader at the mosque) is informed as soon as possible after death and prayers from the Qur’an (Koran) are recited over the body.

The body is then taken to the Funeral Director’s premises where it is washed by family members of the same gender as the deceased. This ritual is usually performed in a room that has been purified and from which all statues and religious symbols have been removed; special arrangements can be made with the Funeral Director to ensure that these beliefs, fundamental to the Islamic faith, are respected. After the body has been washed, it is swathed in a simple white cotton sheet or shroud; all Muslims are dressed alike to symbolise their equality before God. The body is then placed in a unlined coffin.

According to Islamic religious traditions, the prescribed mode of disposal of the body is burial. The burial of the body should take place before noon. If a person dies in the afternoon or during the night, they are buried the next morning before noon. If they die midday or thereabouts, then they are most likely to be buried the next morning, as burying after sunset is not customary. However, in Britain delays are inevitable, as there are various legal formalities that have to be completed before a certificate for disposal is given by the Registrar of Births and Deaths. Nevertheless, custom prescribes that the burial should take place with the minimum delay.

The usual practice is for the deceased to be taken to the mosque, where special prayers are recited, before proceeding to the graveyard. A brief prayer session is also held at the cemetery. The body is then buried in the grave with the head and right hand side facing Makkah (i.e. south east in the UK).

On the first three days after the burial the official mourning takes place, where the Qur’an

is recited throughout the day by a professional reciter or with the aid of audiotapes. On the 40th day, a remembrance ceremony is held in the mosque (for men) and at home (for women), where a meal is shared in the evening. Women come to visit the family of the deceased and to share in the remembrance day. The next of kin, especially the first next of kin, wear black for the first forty days. The wife and adult daughters of the deceased wear black for a year in the Middle East, except Saudi Arabia where they wear white for the first three to five days only.

In addition to the specific rituals described above, the dead are commemorated in various ways. On Thursday evenings, prayers are offered to the dead after the magrib namaz, the prayers recited at sunset. Similarly, after Eid at the mosque, the family visits the cemetery and offers prayers for the dead. It is customary for Muslims to visit families that have been bereaved to offer condolences in the course of the year.

SUMMARY

- Muslims believe that there is one God, Allah.
- Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the prophet of God.
- There is only one life to be lived. There will be a day of judgement when each soul is judged according to their deeds on earth.
- Extravagant expressions of grief are against the will of Allah.
- Mourning is demonstrated by readings from the Qur'an (Koran).
- The burial should take place before noon, and with the minimum of delay.
- The body is washed and wrapped in a simple white cotton sheet or shroud. All Muslims are dressed alike to symbolise their equality before God.
- The body is buried with the head towards Makkah (south-east in the UK).
- On the first days after the burial prayers are said at home of the deceased.
- After the Eid celebrations visits are made to the cemetery to say prayers at the family grave. This is a reminder that even in the middle of happy celebrations, life is temporary and that it is important to live correctly to ensure eternal life with Allah.

SIKH CREMATION CUSTOMS AND RITES

Most Sikhs living in the UK are of Punjabi origin. They have come here either directly from the Punjab or from former British colonies (e.g. those in East Africa or South East Asia) to which members of their family had previously migrated. The first gurdwara (Sikh place of worship) in the UK was established in Putney in 1911. The Sikh population in the UK is the largest community outside India, that in the West London area being the largest within the UK.

Sikhs believe that birth into the faith is a result of good 'karma'. Death is the door to union

with God.

The cremation is a family occasion attended, as far as possible, by the close relatives of the deceased and friends.

Prior to the funeral the body is washed and clothed by the members of the family. The dead person is attired with the symbols of the faith known as the 5K's – Kesh (uncut hair), Kanga (comb), Kara (steel bangle), Kachs (shorts) and Kirpan (short sword) – and the turban for a man and sometimes a woman. On a route to the crematorium the deceased is taken to the gurdwara where a rumalla is placed on top of the shroud. At the crematorium, prayers (Sohilla and Ardas) are said. The button is then pressed by a close male relative, usually the eldest son of the deceased. The next day, the ashes are collected and then – in both India and Britain – taken to a designated area of running water and immersed. In Britain, after the funeral, the mourners go back to the gurdwara and wash their faces and hands. In India, for reasons of personal hygiene the mourners bathe after the body has been cremated on the funeral pyre.

Beginning on the day of the death, adult relatives, or if they are unable to do so grathis from the gurdwara (people who perform readings), usually take part in a complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) at the home of the deceased or at the gurdwara. This reading is usually spaced over a period of ten days, and close family members, including children, would usually be expected to be present throughout. At the completion of the reading, a passage from the Guru Granth Sahib about belief and practices regarding death is read, followed by kirtan (songs in praise of God); the prayer Ardas is then said, followed by the sharing of karah parshad (specially blessed sweet pudding) and the eating of langar (a communal meal). If the deceased was the head of the family, the oldest son is given a turban to symbolise the taking of responsibility for the family.

SUMMARY

- Sikhs believe that death is welcomed as opening the door to the complete union with God.
- The body is washed and clothed by members of the family and attired with the symbols of the faith. The body is then wrapped in a plain white sheet or shroud, and a rumalla placed on top.
- The body will be cremated and the ashes will be immersed in running water at a designated area. Sikhs in the UK sometimes take the deceased person's ashes back to India.
- Both male and female relatives attend the cremation. They then return to the gurdwara or home of the deceased to read the Guru Granth Sahib. At the end of the reading, and after kirtan, Ardas is said, followed by the sharing of the karah parshad and langar.

Appendix 2: Case Studies

CASE SCENARIO 1

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

The police contacted the Headteacher first thing in the morning, at the beginning of a school day. They were seeking information about the listed next of kin of four siblings (aged 7, 5, 3 and 2), three of whom attended the school. Their mother had been killed in the early hours of the morning and their father was in police custody.

It transpired that the children had been at the police station since the early hours of the morning. The listed next of kin was a paternal aunt and the children were then taken to her home by the police.

The Headteacher and her administrator visited the paternal aunt later that morning, having found that she was on her own with the children and understandably, in a state of great distress. The children were extremely confused as they had not been told of their mother's death. The Headteacher released the administrator (who was a family friend) to stay with the aunt and the children.

The Headteacher telephoned the LA designated officer to seek support.

Relevant issues in this scenario.

- The mother was well known by most school staff and many children, as she was a regular visitor to the school. She had also worked in the local community home and was very well known locally.
- The Headteacher had previously been involved in counselling the mother.
- The eldest child had been seen by the Educational Psychologist for behaviour problems.
- The police had not contacted Social Services who were therefore not involved in the early stages. The school felt a heavy responsibility in relation to care issues.
- The incident happened on a Friday.
- The children could not be given immediate information about the circumstances of their mother's death as the police did not know if they wanted to interview them.
- The paternal aunt was a single parent with two teenage children. She lived in a two-bedroom accommodation some distance from the school.

SUPPORT FROM THE LA

School Management Support

On receiving the Headteachers phone call the LA designated officer informed the LA

Senior Management Team and the Educational Psychology Service. The designated officer kept in touch with the Headteacher by telephone and through personal visits.

The Educational Psychology Services (EPS)

Two members of the EPS visited the school on the afternoon of the incident to meet with the Headteacher. This was to offer some immediate support to the Headteacher but also to ascertain what support the school was likely to require over the coming weeks. Some practical issues were discussed in terms of information to staff, children and parents.

The next week, the link Educational Psychologist for the school, together with a colleague, offered support in the following ways:

- Attended a staff meeting to discuss issues arising.
- Offered sessions to staff to discuss the impact of the incident on children in their classes.
- Discussed how to support the children on their return to school.
- Held regular meetings with and made phone calls to the Headteacher.
- Liaised with other relevant agencies, e.g. Social Services, trauma clinic.
- The Educational Psychologist for the school monitored the situation over the following weeks and kept in regular contact.
- The Principal Educational Psychologist telephoned and made a personal visit to the school.

Other Schools

The Headteacher received messages of support and offers of resource materials from other schools. This was highly valued.

CASE SCENARIO 2

WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

Towards the end of the morning play in a primary school, a piece of lead guttering broke away from the top of a two storey, Victorian building and fell into the playground hitting a 10 year old boy on the head. The youngster had been playing football with a group of friends. Two or three of them were close by at the time of the accident.

The nursery nurse responsible for first aid was summoned and the other children were moved away back into class. There was a large volume of blood. It was clear that the injury was very serious affecting the side of the boys head. The ambulance arrived within 10 minutes, but paramedics made a decision to summon a specialist head injury team that arrived by helicopter a few minutes later. The helicopter had to land in a confined space in the school playground. The youngster was airlifted to a specialist hospital.

The Headteacher had to make a decision to close the school at the end of the day to ensure safety on the site. The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher and Administrator remained at school for the duration of the school closure, which lasted for four days. They were also in school over the weekend so that parents had a point of contact.

The Headteacher contacted the LA designated officer and the Safety Officer to seek support.

Relevant issues in this scenario:

- The incident was witnessed by a large number of children.
- Staff directly involved in caring for the boy while waiting for the ambulance were extremely shocked.
- Staff had to cope with remainder of the school day – the arrival of the helicopter, children who had witnessed the accident, worries about safety etc.
- The incident happened near the beginning of the academic year.
- The school had to be closed. Normal routine was disrupted.
- The injured boy remained critically ill for the first week or so. Fortunately, he went on to recover. Also, he was in a hospital some distance away.
- Staff kept in close contact with the family and visited regularly.
- There were a number of staff who experienced family bereavements within a few weeks of the incident.
- Building works had to be carried out immediately to ensure safety and in the longer term to refurbish the school.

SUPPORT FROM THE LA

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT SUPPORT.

On receiving the Headteachers phone call, the LA's designated Officer informed the LA's Senior Management Team and other departments. The designated officer kept in touch with the Headteacher by telephone and through personal visits. LA support staff were involved in arrangements to be made because the school was to be closed (e.g. cancelling transport and meals etc.)

Education Safety Officer

The Education Safety Officer worked closely with the Headteacher to advise on safety issues, to carry out a site survey and to initiate and monitor subsequent building works.

Communication Unit

Dealing with the media proved to be extremely stressful, particularly over the first few

days. The Communications Unit offered vital support and help to the Headteacher to ensure that appropriate information was passed on and to provide a buffer zone.

Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

The Educational Psychologist for the school visited on the day of the incident to meet with the Headteacher and offer support. Practical issues were discussed in terms of offering support to staff and pupils. The Principal Educational Psychologist visited with the Educational Psychologist the next day. The Educational Psychologist spent most of the next few days based at the school in order to offer support, practical help and to be available to staff, parents and children who were experiencing distress. The following support was offered over the next week:

- The Educational Psychologist was at the school to consult with Headteacher and Deputy headteacher and to answer telephone queries.
- The Principal Educational Psychologist and the Educational Psychologist attended a staff meeting on the day the school re-opened.
- The Educational Psychologist for the school continued to offer support over the next few weeks.

Other Support

- The school received support in the form of messages and personal visits from the Chair of Education, the local MP, and the Executive Director of Children and Adults.
- There were many messages of support and offers of help from other schools.
- There were many messages of support from parents and friends of the school.

Appendix 3: Assisting Statutory Investigations

Schools need to be aware that a critical incident such as the sudden death of a pupil or member of staff can trigger an investigation that may involve a number of statutory agencies.

The sudden death of a pupil or member of staff is an extremely difficult and emotionally charged time for all concerned. Schools should be aware that alongside a coroner's inquest there may be other officially established reviews, such as serious case reviews (SCRs) or inquiries into the pupil's or member of staff's death and the circumstances surrounding it.

It is important that schools anticipate being asked to contribute information about the pupil to any such review or inquiry and ensure that all relevant records relating to the pupil are secured. It is important to stress that the purpose of such reviews is not to

inquire into how a child or adult died or who is culpable. It is to learn from the experience on how best to protect children and staff in the future and if there are ways of improving the practice of all professionals working with children particularly in relation to multi-disciplinary and inter-agency working.

Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

The death of a child is always tragic. Talking and thinking about a child's death is a sensitive and painful subject which is particularly upsetting for parents, families and carers. The reviewing of Child Deaths became mandatory for Local Safeguarding Children Partnerships (LCSPs) in England on 1st April 2008. Child Death Overview Panels (CDOPs) are also a statutory requirement of Working Together 2010.

All LSCPs are required to have suitable CDOP arrangements in place. These arrangements include: A rapid response by a group of key professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death of a child.

The purpose of the processes is to try to understand why children die and then put in place interventions to protect other children and prevent future deaths wherever possible. It is intended that these processes will:

Document and try to understand the cause of death so that parents can come to terms with the death of their child.

Enable parents and professionals to take steps to prevent the deaths of any other children where possible.

Identify patterns of deaths in a community so that preventable or avoidable hazards that may contribute to deaths can be recognised and reduced.

Contribute to the improved collection of forensic evidence in the very small proportion of deaths where there might be concerns about the cause of death being non-accidental.

All families should be treated with sensitivity, discretion and respect at all times, and professionals should approach their enquiry with an open mind.

Contact details of the people in child death overview panels (CDOPs) who are responsible for receiving child death notifications. Can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-death-overview-panels-contacts>

Metropolitan Police

In the case of a sudden death, the Metropolitan Police will assist the school in any way that they can. However, in a situation whereby the death is immediately unknown or sudden and unexplained e.g. where there is no evidence of a previous illness or working with equipment which may have contributed to the cause of death. Then the area will be treated as a crime scene.

In all cases the police will require statements from those that were present at the time of death or linked to the incident.

Whilst the police are investigating the incident, they may also call upon the Health and Safety Executive who will attend site to inspect the crime scene. They may also be accompanied by representative professionals such as mechanical or electrical inspectors. The school will be required to provide statutory documentation on request e.g. electrical test and inspection certificates, maintenance records etc.

Coroner's Service

Doctors or the Police must report deaths to a coroner in certain circumstances. These include where it appears that:

- no doctor saw the deceased during his or her last illness;
- the cause of death is unknown;
- the death occurred at work;
- the death was sudden and unexplained;
- the death was in other suspicious circumstances etc.

The coroner's office will be contacted by the police and they have three hours in which to attend to the deceased. In the case of adults, the deceased can only be dealt with by the coroner's office. The police may not allow next of kin to attend the deceased until the coroner is in attendance.

When a death is investigated by a coroner, the coroner's office will contact the next of kin, where known, and where possible, within one working day of the death being reported, to explain why the death has been reported and what actions are likely to follow.

A guide to the coroner's service can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363879/guide-to-coroner-service.pdf