



# Hillingdon Critical Incident Policy for Schools, Settings and Colleges

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

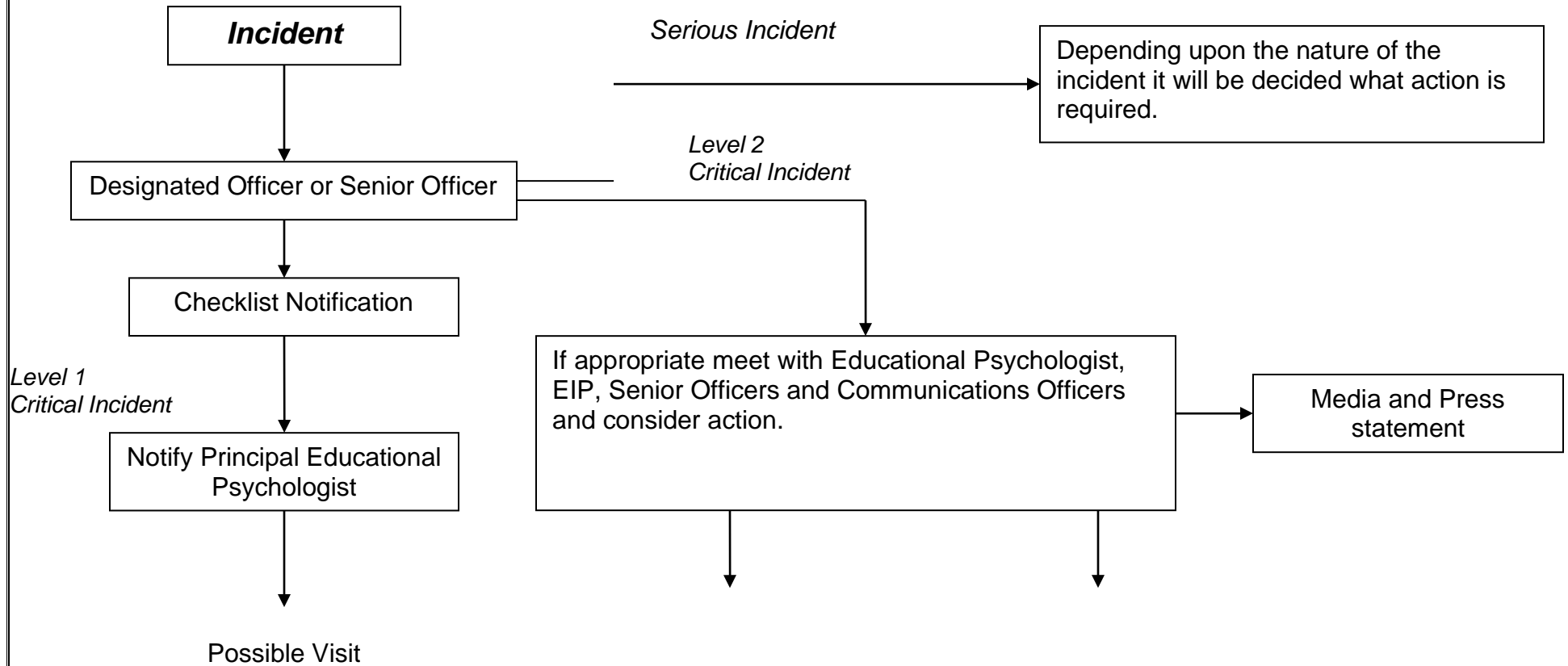
Dial 999 and request the relevant emergency service, making sure to provide the exact nature of the incident and the location as a priority (if appropriate).

Job title	Name	Contact details
<b>Officer Contacts:</b>		
<b>Director of Education &amp; SEND</b>	Abi Preston	<a href="mailto:apreston@hillingdon.gov.uk">apreston@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> 07596 044119
<b>Principal Educational Psychologist</b>	Ingrida Stankeviciene	<a href="mailto:istankeviciene@hillingdon.gov.uk">istankeviciene@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> Tel: 01895 558101 Mob: 07850 064 547
<b>Head of Education</b>	Michael Hawkins	<a href="mailto:mhawkins@hillingdon.gov.uk">mhawkins@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> Tel: 01895 556 084 07542 855595
<b>Stronger Families Hub</b>	<a href="#">Stronger Families Hub</a>	<a href="mailto:lbhmesh@hillingdon.gov.uk">lbhmesh@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:strongerfamilieshub@hillingdon.gov.uk">strongerfamilieshub@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> 01895 556006
<b>Head of first response and out of hours</b>	Anthony Madden	<a href="mailto:amadden@hillingdon.gov.uk">amadden@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> Tel: 01895 556 006
<b>Lead Child Protection Schools &amp; Deputy LADO</b>	Nicole Diamond	<a href="mailto:ndiamond@hillingdon.gov.uk">ndiamond@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> Tel: 07943 097366
<b>Assistant Director Ed and Vulnerable Children</b>	Kathryn Angelini	<a href="mailto:Kangelini@hillingdon.gov.uk">Kangelini@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> Tel: 07850 075034
<b>Communications Support</b>		
<b>Hillingdon Communications Team</b>	<a href="mailto:corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk">corporatecommunications@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> or call 01895 250403 (9am-5.30pm) or 01895 250111 (out of hours)	
<b>Met Police Comms Bureau</b>	<a href="mailto:DMC-Mailbox-.PressBureau-DMC@met.police.uk">DMC-Mailbox-.PressBureau-DMC@met.police.uk</a> - 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.

<b>Hillingdon Communications Team</b>	<a href="mailto:corporatecommunications@hillington.gov.uk">corporatecommunications@hillington.gov.uk</a> 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.

### 13. List of Useful Organisations

<p><b>Child Bereavement Trust</b> 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><b>Childline</b> 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><b>Child Death Help line</b> 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><b>Hillingdon MIND</b> 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 - <a href="mailto:info@hestia.org">info@hestia.org</a></p>

<p><b>CRUSE Bereavement Care</b>  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: <a href="mailto:helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk">helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>National Association of Bereavement Services</b>  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><b>The Single Point of Access</b> is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.  You can them on <a href="tel:08000234650">0800 0234 650</a> or email <a href="mailto:cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net">cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net</a>  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 &amp; Chelsea and Westminster, and also Milton Keynes (out of hours).</p>	<p><b>Samaritans</b>  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><b>DA impact on children</b>  To book a place on the programme please contact us by email: <a href="mailto:info.care2talk@gmail.com">info.care2talk@gmail.com</a> or call 07564 016066 <a href="http://www.Care-2talk.co.uk">www.Care-2talk.co.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Domestic Abuse support for victims</b>  <a href="mailto:HDAAS@hillingdon.gov.uk">HDAAS@hillingdon.gov.uk</a> 07874 620954 National DA line: 0808 2000 247</p>

## 14. Appendices

Appendix 1: Case Studies

Appendix 2: Assisting Statutory Investigations

### Appendix 1: 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 2: 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 LCSPs 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](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/363879/guide-to-coroner-service.pdf)