



**For School and Nursery Communities**

# **CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND SUDDEN BEREAVEMENT GUIDANCE**

**Guidance for minimising risk to staff  
and pupils and promoting effective practice**

Name of School/Nursery:

**THIS DOCUMENT IS TO BE USED AS AN AID TO MANAGE A CRITICAL INCIDENT FOR BOTH PUPILS AND STAFF.**

**SECTION 1 – SUPPORTING PUPILS**

promotes a pre-planning approach with practical tasks as a guide on how to respond and recover from a critical incident.

**SECTION 2 – SUPPORTING STAFF**

addresses the provision of Critical Incident Debriefing for staff working in schools. This is in line with Dundee City Council’s provision for all personnel working across departments and services within the Council.

**DOCUMENTS FOR YEARLY UPDATING**

Core Response Team and contact numbers.

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# **SECTION 1**

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## **SUPPORTING PUPILS**

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**



## 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT GUIDELINES

When faced with a critical incident, schools need to have a well-rehearsed plan with agreed tasks to be carried out in order to manage the response required at a time of crisis. It is, as far as possible, about promoting the safety and well-being of the community with clearly defined tasks, roles and responsibilities.

Steps have to be taken to support the whole school community to identify, minimise and promote the recovery from the possible adverse effects of trauma and grief.

The tasks within the plan exist to support physical and emotional well-being in the face of a critical incident and provide practical guidance for staff and community partners in responding.

## 2. DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

**A critical incident is an event outside the range of normal human experience that would be distressing to anyone.**

Examples of critical incidents which can occur while at school may include:-

- The traumatic death or injury of pupil(s) and/or members of staff on or offsite.
- Pupils lost, injured or killed on an excursion.
- Major fire, vandalism or intruders causing harm to others in school.
- An event where anyone seriously harms himself/herself/others or attempts/completes suicide.
- Events which occur outside school which have an impact on pupils and staff.
- Any incident or situation which managers consider require Critical Incident Stress Management Debriefing.

Incidents such as these can occur in the school environment and any one can suffer a post-traumatic stress response following a critical incident. Even persons who have witnessed or experienced similar situations in the past, without significant effects may be affected by the incident. Response reactions are described in detail in **Appendix 1 - Coping with Trauma - Signs and Symptoms** (p22).

### 3. PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

Critical incidents are a tragic reality facing schools. By their very nature, critical incidents catch us unaware, stretch and sometimes overwhelm our coping strategies and throw systems into confusion. Basic training, raising awareness, good preparation and guidance based on effective practice can however ensure that the impact of events is reduced.

In the same way we prepare and plan for emergencies such as fire, we can also prepare and plan for critical incidents. When we know there is a plan, people feel safer knowing there are people in charge and everyone knows what to do. At a time where our systems may be overwhelmed it is having a rehearsed plan that will give us the best chance to respond and recover.

The planning and rehearsal of processes to be undertaken when a critical incident occurs include planning, policy and procedural guidance development, and staff development.

#### Pre-Planning Tasks:

- Staff to familiarise themselves with this and other documents mentioned in **Appendix 3** (p27).
- Identify a core response team (**Appendix 10** (p38) who will facilitate and complete tasks in the immediate aftermath of an incident.
- Identify useful contact names and numbers (**Appendix 11** (p39).
- Identify safe places or recovery room for pupil support or debriefing.
- Ensure emergency contact numbers are up to date and accessible. **This will include designated staff numbers at weekend, generic and education support services including voluntary sector agencies. The contact page should be updated promptly as required and at each new term.**
- Involve administration staff in relevant core tasks associated with this plan (school roll, contact details, managing phone calls etc.)
- Coordinate staff training.
- Awareness raising for staff and pupils for signs/symptoms/helpful responses.
- Appropriate curriculum delivered through PSE programme.
- Table-top discussions to rehearse response, coordination and preparedness.
- Clear procedures should be identified for incidents occurring when school is closed i.e. roles and responsibilities.
- Prior to school holidays, identify vulnerable pupils for support through the holidays. Arrangements can be organised through school staff i.e. SFDW and voluntary agencies. For serious concerns, then Education Managers should be notified.
- This document is linked to schools' knowledge of pupil vulnerability through the information recorded in ABLe and Single Child's Plan.

#### 4. NAMED PERSON SERVICE OVER HOLIDAY PERIODS

Senior Locality Officers will represent the Named Person within Education as part of Children and Families Services. Where necessary (critical/significant incidents etc.) They should liaise with the Senior Management Team within Children and Families Service as appropriate, see **Appendix 11** (p39).

#### 5. SMALLER SCHOOLS PRE-PLANNING

Large schools will have access to staff who can share responsibilities and tasks when responding to a critical incident. Smaller schools may want to contact a neighbouring cluster school to discuss any anticipated support role following a critical incident. Decisions may need to be taken to ensure that members of the school's management team can work together during the day in coordinating the school's response. As well as school-based universal services, when particular issues arise the named person may refer to the appropriate staff in school.

#### 6. CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE

For **Critical Incident Plan Checklist** see **Appendix 2** (p24). This covers:

1. The first 2 hours.
2. Break and lunch times.
3. End of day.
4. The following days.
5. Future.

#### 7. COMMUNICATION WITH STAFF, PUPILS AND PARENTS

It is important that the Head Teacher (or delegated member of staff) communicate with groups of staff and pupils promptly following an incident.

Staff providing the information should stick to known facts and deliver any information in an age-appropriate manner avoiding any euphemisms. It is especially important for staff to acknowledge feelings and thoughts as part of modelling a normal human response. Staff should be vigilant and respond consistently to examples of inaccurate stories, blame or scapegoating.

There is also a need to ensure pupils all hear the news from staff at roughly the same time or before a break/lunch so large groups of pupils aren't hearing it from peers before staff have been able to inform them.

## 8. MANAGING A DEBRIEFING SESSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The first principle of offering a debriefing session is to reassure people and offer support.

Debriefing is not counselling or therapy (indeed some research shows that counselling can be harmful immediately following a critical incident).

Debriefing is a supportive opportunity to normalise reactions and share information about an incident. It is important that groups of pupils or members of staff with similar levels of exposure to an incident are identified. There is a risk that bringing together a group with a mixed experience can itself contribute to a secondary traumatic response.

Where possible information should be shared with pupils in small groups e.g. classes or tutor time rather than in a whole school or year group assembly. This is to make it easier to identify and support children/young people most obviously distressed by the news in a more nurturing setting and preventing mass hysteria.

**If the child or young person actually witnessed the event and there are concerns about the impact this will have on them, then advice can be sought from the Educational Psychology Service.**

## 9. STAFF BEHAVIOURS THAT HELP IN DEBRIEFING EITHER AS A WHOLE CLASS OR IN SMALLER GROUPS

It is expected that the staff involved are skilled communicators with children and young people and that existing pastoral skills will be used in any debriefing session with them. This would include:

- Provide the space for everyone to speak – sitting in a circle can help.
- Provide non-judgemental comment.
- Summarise and clarify any misunderstandings.
- Reassure pupils that their reactions are understandable and normal.
- Encourage group interaction and talking to each other.
- Promote examples of good coping skills and connect networks of support.
- Keep a focus on next steps and moving forward.
- Note any specific actions and keep a log of who was involved in the debriefing, including any children who seemed particularly affected.
- Consider age-appropriate methods for children and young people to express themselves (drawing, play, or reading a suitable story may help children experience a sense of control over an experience).

## 10. FORMAT FOR A DEBRIEFING SESSION

**To be used if Children/Young People are directly involved.**

In most cases it will be best if two members of staff conduct the de-briefing meeting together. The structure of the session should be as follows:

- Provide an introduction and explain any ground-rules i.e. respecting others feelings, posting on social media, etc.
- Establish the facts in the correct order they occurred as best you can.
- Provide an opportunity to explore any images, thoughts, feelings and reactions connected with the incident – ensure everyone in the group experienced the incident in a similar way.
- Normalise the thoughts/feelings/symptoms, etc as normal human reactions to an unusual overwhelming incident.
- Include an opportunity for children and young people to ask any questions.
- Before closing the meeting agree any specific actions and explain what might happen next.
- Ensure parents are aware of the incident and able to offer support.
- Follow-up - symptoms may not show up at first so check in and monitor for any unusual behaviours (see **Appendix 1** (p22)).

## 11. USEFUL QUESTIONS FOR DEBRIEFING – EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY CAN GIVE FURTHER ADVICE IF CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON WITNESSED THE EVENT.

- “Let us explain why we’re together as a group (include the ground-rules)”
- “Let us have a turn in explaining what happened, what you were thinking and how you reacted?” – keep it sequential, if you can.
- Start by what they were doing before the incident when everyone was safe to when the incident was over i.e. when the police arrive or they are home.
- “What would you as a group like to happen next?”

## 12. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

In order to provide a consistent approach to a media enquiry, any approach for comment should be referred to the Corporate Communications Department. Staff members should not offer comment themselves. Contact with the Corporate Communications Department will usually be made by the Head Teacher or Senior Manager.

After certain critical incidents a decision may be made for there to be one spokesperson. This is a decision which may be made by the Critical Incident Management Team. (Contact a Senior Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership for further information - **Appendix 10** (p38)).

Media interest following a traumatic incident can place additional pressure on school staff. However, if dealt with frankly and openly, the media can be helpful. The media provide an accessible route for communication with the local community and an official response can avoid speculation and maximise the chance of accuracy in what is published or broadcast.

Members of the press do not have right of access to school premises. If their presence on public property (e.g. the pavement outside the school) is aggravating a difficult situation then the Police may be called to move them on.

## 13. SUMMARY OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

For both pupils and adults involved in a critical incident or bereavement, it is the everyday community or family, friends and colleagues who can provide the most effective support and help.

The following is identified as core effective practice in responding to a traumatic incident or bereavement:

- Promote a coordinated response
- Provide clear information promptly to everyone in the school.
- A range of emotional and physical responses following an incident should be understood as normal coping.
- For some individuals, recovery following an incident may require specific follow up support.
- Those involved in responding to an incident may themselves require some support.



## **SECTION 2**

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### **SUPPORTING STAFF**

# **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR STAFF**

*(Adapted from DCC Critical Incident Protocol)*



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The DCC Critical Incident Protocol represents a commitment to the provision of Critical Incident Stress Management in Dundee City Council. It specifically addresses the provision of Critical Incident Debriefing for personnel working across departments and services within the Council.

DCC recognises the crucial role played by staff in the delivery of services to support, care for and protect people in Dundee. Elected members and Chief Officers are aware of their responsibilities which include a duty of care for their employees. This involves the provision of care following a critical incident which has occurred in the workplace.

Critical Incident Stress Management including Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (or Psychological Debriefing), is a recognised system of care providing an organisational response to help promote normalisation and recovery for employees who may experience stress following a critical incident.

## 2. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is an adaptive, short-term helping process that focusses solely on an immediate and identifiable problem. It spans pre-incident preparedness to acute crisis to post-crisis follow-up. Its purpose is to enable people to return to their daily routine more quickly and with less likelihood of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

## 3. CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing is a confidential discussion of a critical incident relating to the feelings and perceptions of those directly involved prior to, during, and after a stressful event. Debriefings are not counselling, nor an operational critique of the incident, but are intended to provide support and an outlet for views and feelings associated with the event. (See **Appendix 5** (p30) for Checklist).

## 4. DEATH IN SERVICE

There will be situations where a member of staff dies, unexpectedly or suddenly, but which will not fulfil the criteria of a critical incident. Where the team and manager feel there is a need for extra support in their situation, contact can be made with the **Senior Officer, Health and Social Care Partnership** (see **Appendix 11** (p39) for contact details) who will give advice and/or arrange for a Death in Service meeting to be facilitated.

## 5. THE PURPOSE, PHASES AND CONTENT OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

### 5.1 Purpose

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is designed to help people deal with their trauma one incident at a time, by allowing them to talk about the incident when it happens without judgment or criticism. All interventions are strictly confidential, the only caveat to this is if the person carrying out the intervention determines that the person being helped is a danger to him/herself or others. If this was to happen, the employee should be kept informed of all steps to be taken. The emphasis is always on keeping people safe and returning them quickly to more *normal* levels of functioning.

*Normal* is different for everyone, and it is not easy to quantify. Critical incidents raise stress levels dramatically in a short period of time and after treatment a new *normal* is established, however, it is always higher than the old level. The purpose of the intervention process is to establish or set the new *normal* stress levels as low as possible.

### 5.2 The 5 Phases of Critical Incident Stress Management

The 5 phases of aspects of critical incident stress management are:

#### 1. Prevention

The identification of risks that are specific to staff working in Dundee City Council and those contracted to provide services on the Council's behalf.

#### 2. Preparedness

The planning and rehearsal of processes to be undertaken when a critical incident occurs including planning, policy and procedural guidance development, and staff development.

#### 3. Critical Incident Response

Implementing planned procedures to ensure that information is shared, immediate changes are implemented and people are helped to deal with their trauma, are supported and helped to return to normal levels of functioning as soon as possible.

#### 4. Post Critical Incident Response

Implementation of recovery processes to facilitate the return to routine including Critical Incident Debriefing and on-going monitoring of reactions. It may also include the development and implementation of a response plan.

#### 5. Long-term Response

This involves the resumption of regular routine, the review of existing plans and may include memorials, counselling or other employee specific support.

## 5.3 Types of intervention

The type of intervention used depends on the situation, the number of people involved, and their proximity to the event. The optimum is a three-step approach that addresses the trauma at various stages of progression: defusing, debriefing, and individual follow-up.

### a. Defusing (Head Teacher)

Where practical, defusing is done by the Head Teacher on the day of the incident before the person(s) has a chance to sleep. The defusing is designed to assure the person(s) involved that their feelings are normal, tells them what symptoms to watch for over the short term and offers them a lifeline in the form of a telephone number where they can reach someone to whom they can talk. Defusing is limited only to individuals directly involved in the incident and are often done informally. They should not focus on the specific details of the incident, but are designed to assist individuals in coping in the short term and address immediate issues/needs.

### b. Debriefing (Educational Psychologist)

Debriefings are usually the second level of intervention for those directly affected by the incident. A debriefing is normally done around 12 - 72 hours after the incident. Debriefing gives the individual or group the opportunity to talk about their experience, how it has affected them, discuss coping mechanisms, identify individuals at risk and inform the individual or group about services available to them.

### c. Follow-up (Educational Psychologist)

The final step is to follow-up with the individual or group 3-4 weeks after the debriefing to ensure that they are safe and coping well or to refer the individual for further support, including professional counselling.

This is generally done formally by the initial debriefer. It is likely further follow-ups by Head Teachers will be included in any response plan which is developed. This will depend however, on the particular situation. Follow-up by Head Teachers can also be referred to as 'watchful waiting'. Through this, the Head Teacher continues to give support while looking for any signs of stress reactions. It is important that a Head Teacher continues to review an employee's progress as reactions can be delayed.

## 6. WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING? (CISD)

Critical Incident Debriefing is part of a comprehensive spectrum of techniques and approaches called Critical Incident Stress Management. It needs to take place in this context and not be seen as a 'one-off' debriefing or as a stand-alone method of crisis intervention. Carried out as part of a continuum of support, it is a well-received intervention for most people. It is known to be useful for enabling screening, education and support.

It promotes normalisation and recovery by having involved personnel discuss their thoughts, emotional reactions and the stress symptoms they are experiencing. Critical incident debriefing **is not** a forum for discussion of the circumstances or details of the event.

It should be provided after an event which is **outside the usual range of experiences and which challenges one's ability to cope**. Such a crisis event will have an impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or group. It should be conducted by experienced, well-trained practitioners for example, Educational Psychologists have been trained in this approach and should be consulted with if you are considering the need for debriefing for staff.

### **The main aims of Critical Incident Debriefing are to:**

- Reduce the impact of the traumatic event.
- Mitigate against acute signs and symptoms of distress, dysfunction or impairment.
- Accelerate the normal recovery process from a traumatic event.
- Normalise the stress response.
- Provide education in stress management coping techniques.
- Restore adaptive independent functioning.
- Provide a screening opportunity to identify group members who might benefit from additional support services or a referral for professional care.
- Facilitate access to a higher level of support or care, where necessary.

A Critical Incident Debriefing usually takes place as an individual or group discussion at a time when the emotional impact of an event sets in (ideally 12 -72 hours days post incident). It promotes normalisation and recovery by having the involved personnel discuss issues such as their thoughts, their emotional reactions and the stress symptoms they are experiencing. The individual/group setting provides a forum for communication and helps to re-establish order and a sense of safety. **It is not a forum for discussion of the circumstances or details of the event**, (See **Appendix 7** (p33)).

It would appear that CISD is most effective when used with small homogenous groups who have encountered a powerful traumatic event. In such instances, as well as reducing distress, it can also help to restore group cohesion and unit performance.

Involvement of staff in Critical Incident Debriefing should be seen as automatic in certain circumstances and all staff are expected to attend.

This Protocol sets out expectation within Dundee City Council and should be considered in conjunction with the Multi-Agency Protocol for the Support of Employees Affected by Critical Incidents.

## **7. CRITICAL INCIDENT - ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **All Staff**

It is essential that good communication channels are maintained by those involved directly or indirectly when a critical incident occurs.

### **Teaching and Support Staff**

Staff must report any significant incident in which they have been involved or connected to as a result of their employment. They should, as soon as is practicable after the event, report the incident to their line manager in line with the Council's policies.

### **Head Teachers/Managers**

An e-learning module is being developed and, when available, will be compulsory for all.

In addition to Head Teachers/Managers having a duty to respond when staff report an incident, they should also be proactive in the identification of situations when Critical Stress Debriefing should take place.

Head Teachers/Managers have a duty to be aware of and, as part of their defusing/support role, make staff aware of the signs and symptoms of stress and acute stress reactions. (**Appendix 1 - Coping with Trauma - Signs and Symptoms** (p22)).

This Debriefing process will often take place within the school/service. Incidents may involve staff who work together from more than one department/school.

**Senior Managers**

Line Managers can expect to receive support from their own line manager throughout this process. Where the incident involves staff who work together in a multi-agency setting or team a Senior Manager will make a decision whether to initiate multi-agency debriefing (see Multi-Agency Protocol for the Support of Staff Affected by Critical Incidents).

**Lead Officers to Chairs of Protection Committees**

When the critical incident involves the death from abuse or neglect of a child or young person - **PHONE MASH**. If a child, young person or an adult is at risk of harm and it has been agreed that multi-agency debriefing should take place, the debriefing process will be coordinated through the appropriate Lead Officer reporting to the CYPC or Adult Support and Protection Committees or MAPPAs Strategic Oversight Group. The Senior Manager or Head Teacher will make contact with the appropriate Lead Officer

**Critical Incident Management Group**

In cases involving the sudden death of a child, young person or adult, from suspected violence, neglect, in any other suspicious circumstance or as a result of any other condition which may have a lasting effect on personnel, the Chief Executive of the Council should give consideration to the setting up of a Critical Incident Management Group.

As well as addressing the need for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing, such a group might address the management of press releases, the conduct of pre-inquiry or pre-trial management reviews and other matters that emerge.

The Chief Executive will make this decision in consultation with his/her Chief Officers.

The Chief Executive will make this decision in consultation with his/her colleague Chief Officers from Police Scotland and NHS Tayside. Where there is, or is likely to be, a criminal investigation, the Procurator Fiscal (or a representative from the Procurator Fiscal's Office) must be a member of this group.

## 8. STAFF ATTENDING INQUIRIES/COURT (REFER TO LEGAL DEPARTMENT FOR ADVICE)

After a critical incident a member of staff may be required to give a statement to the police and thereafter attend an inquiry or court to give evidence in either a civil or criminal law case, connected to his/her employment. This might be anything between two or three months to many months after the event. The waiting alone, in the knowledge that a citation is inevitable, can be very stressful. Members of staff should be aware that the law dictates that copies of any statement that they make to the police in criminal proceedings will be disclosed to the defence, together with the details of any convictions that the member of staff might have.

As part of our duty of care towards employees, Dundee City Council will ensure that staff are supported throughout the investigatory and court processes. The police can insist on interviewing a member of staff on his/her own during the investigatory process although support in the form of a colleague, manager or Trade Union representative may be permitted in certain circumstances. The court will decide if a witness can be accompanied by a support person while giving evidence during court proceedings. Any member of staff who receives a citation to attend court and who would like to be accompanied by an identified support person should seek permission for this to happen as soon as possible. Witnesses must attend court unless formally excused by the person citing them or upon the acceptance by the court of a 'soul and conscience' certificate from a doctor.

It is impossible to provide detailed guidance to cover all possible circumstance, however, the greatest care must be taken to ensure that nothing happens which could have an adverse effect on the prosecution process. In particular, a staff member who is a potential prosecution witness **must not discuss with any other potential witness** a matter on which he/she is likely to have to give evidence. Those conducting the debriefing or otherwise offering support to staff must ensure that matters which may be the subject of evidence in court are not discussed (orally or in writing) in circumstances where a witness's recollection could be compromised.

Training should be made available for staff in order to prepare them for attendance at court. Any such training needs to be done in conjunction with advice from the Procurator Fiscal and the Crown Office (It should be noted that when there is a criminal investigation **any matters** can be referred to the Procurator Fiscal for guidance.)

## 9. CONFIDENTIALITY

It shall be mandatory that staff involved at all levels maintain strict confidentiality in matters discussed. It should be noted that circumstances may exist which may compromise the rule of confidentiality. This may be the case where the professional assessment indicates a level of risk to the employee, child/young person or third parties, or there is a potential for serious professional misconduct.

Where circumstances dictate that it is necessary to disclose certain information this will be done with the consent (or at least the knowledge) of the employee and the Council.

# APPENDICES 1-4

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## SECTION 1 - SUPPORTING PUPILS



# APPENDIX 1

## COPING WITH TRAUMA - SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

### What is a traumatic event?

A traumatic event usually leaves the person with intense fear, helplessness, or horror that can affect his/her ability to carry out daily duties or responsibilities. For many people the worst time is when all the fuss has died down but the strong feelings remain.

### Typical reactions to Trauma

Not everyone experiences the same set of responses to trauma, but people typically experience reactions that fall into four basic categories. Below are some examples of reactions that you may experience:-

Psychological and Emotional	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shock, feeling like it isn't really happening</li><li>• Numbness</li><li>• Anxiety</li><li>• Sadness, low mood</li><li>• Re-experiencing of the traumatic event e.g. nightmares and/or flashbacks</li><li>• Hyper-vigilance (scanning environment for possible danger)</li><li>• Guilt at not having done something or having survived</li><li>• Anger at the sense of loss</li><li>• Phobias</li><li>• Mortality or death/obsession with their safety and those close to them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Forgetfulness</li><li>• Absent mindedness</li><li>• Low attention span</li><li>• Impulsivity</li><li>• Poor judgement/decision making</li></ul>
<b>Children and young people may also experience:</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Returning to a much younger age</li><li>• Fear of the dark, being alone</li><li>• Pretend play, acting out what has happened</li><li>• Deterioration in school performance, concentration in particular</li><li>• Separation anxiety</li></ul>	

Physical	Behavioural
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headaches</li> <li>• Nausea</li> <li>• Changes in appetite</li> <li>• Exaggerated startle response</li> <li>• Fatigue</li> <li>• Shortness of breath, dry mouth</li> <li>• Trembling</li> <li>• Feelings of panic e.g. sweaty palms</li> <li>• Fight/Flight/Freeze response to events and the environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyperactivity or less activity</li> <li>• Short tempered</li> <li>• Withdrawing from others</li> <li>• Avoidance of activities or places that remind you of the traumatic event</li> <li>• Sleeping difficulties</li> <li>• Risk taking e.g. taking drugs, increased alcohol intake, impulsive behaviour</li> <li>• Changes in eating behaviour</li> </ul>

Information supplied by Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Service

When an event is connected to school, such as the loss of classmates or violence at school itself, an unhealthy reaction could take the form of **avoiding school**. While episodes of depression, heightened anxiety, trouble sleeping, and a fixation on the accident may be transient, avoiding school is a clear sign that something is wrong. For the most part, everyone is going to experience some form of those things, altogether or in pieces, but if, over time, it's not really lifting and it's continuing, it may result in school refusal altogether. At that point we definitely know the child or young person needs help. They can also be traumatised even if the incident did not happen to them directly but to someone else.

### Things you can do:

- Listen.
- If they want, let them talk about what happened, what they think and what they understand.
- Let them know they are not to blame.
- If their behaviour is challenging or aggressive, understand that it may be due to the trauma they experienced.
- Use consequences not punishments. A consequence is something that is naturally caused by a behaviour i.e. if they are obnoxious, they can't be around people at the moment, if they make a mess they clean it up.
- Don't avoid talking about events but let them talk at their own pace, making gentle corrections to their understanding. Take the age of the child/young person into account in your reply.
- For very young children, do not leave the television on or newspapers and magazines around with disturbing pictures showing.
- If they do see reports then talk together to agree that this is horrible but also that it doesn't happen very often.

## APPENDIX 2

### CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN CHECKLIST

Task	Responsible	Completed
<b>First 2 hours:</b>		
Ensure all staff and pupils are safe from injury or harm.		
Where necessary follow school evacuation drill, taking the list of emergency numbers and guidance.		
Ensure prompt communication with emergency services.		
Convene the school core response team and allocate roles/ tasks.		
Make contact with the parent(s)/carer(s) of any affected or injured pupils. This ensures that the parent(s)/carer(s)/staff know how to maintain communication and address issues like informing other siblings in school.		
Contact Dundee House/Director/relevant managers.		
Begin to keep a record of all actions taken – liaise with admin team; manage and record information including details from telephone calls, text, email and social media.		
Establish accuracy of the school roll and attendance record.		
Establish facts and identify any witnesses related to the incident.		
Identify a dedicated mobile phone number for on-going information.		
Maintain normal school functioning whenever possible.		
Plan to inform staff. (If incident occurred outside of the school day or during holiday period inform and convene staff as soon as possible.)		
Agree initial briefing for staff and for staff to share with pupils. Keep to factual information and explain how updated information will be communicated to avoid rumour. Indicate how pupils can be supported during the day but also emphasise the benefits of maintaining the normal routine. (If incident occurred out of school day, delay school bell on the first school day after the incident to hold special information sharing assemblies.)		

Task	Responsible	Completed
<b>First 2 hours (continued):</b>		
Depending upon the nature of the incident, identify a recovery room for affected staff and pupils.		
Staff who do not feel able to inform their classes should not have to. Arrange for other staff to cover this duty.		
HT to meet with any staff member <b>directly involved</b> to assess the situation as to whether there is a need for DEFUSING, DEBRIEFING AND FOLLOW UP (See Section 2 of Guidelines).		
Contact relevant agencies (MASH, Police, DEPS, Chaplains, Barnardo's Choose Life Co-ordinator, etc.).		
Contact Chair of Parent Council.		
Liaise with Corporate Communications and prepare positive public statement to deal with any media attention.		
Take an active role in containing pupils' use of social media reminding them of the responsible use of social media communication.		
<b>Break times/lunch</b>		
Provide sanctuary areas for pupils to receive support.		
Provide cover for relevant staff who will provide support.		
Organise special assemblies for year groups.		
Email staff confirming informal optional staff meeting at end of day to share knowledge of the day's events and future planning.		
Amend group call to remove any siblings or close friends or pupils involved.		
Prepare letter to inform parents and members of the school community. Letters should state the facts: what the school has done; the schools plans for the immediate future; how children or young people may react and how to get help. Include a copy of the Dundee City leaflet in this guidance.		
Review any cultural or ethnic implications as part of the school response.		
Contact associated schools (siblings, friends, former teachers, colleagues).		

Task	Responsible	Completed
<b>End of school day</b>		
Staff meeting. Check on staff welfare before staff go home or follow-up individually with phone call. Arrange cover arrangements for any affected staff and classes.		
Identify any other affected pupils and add to list. Other pupils may be affected due to past experiences of trauma and loss.		
Review and debrief admin team (ensure no group alerts, automatically generated letters etc. go out to affected pupils).		
<b>Next day</b>		
Provide follow-up support for those in care-giving/support roles in the school.		
Discuss preparations and attendance for any funeral.		
Review any records and information related to the incident (this may be required in any subsequent legal proceedings).		
Be aware that some pupils and staff may experience a stronger response to the incident in the subsequent day(s) following an incident. Continue to monitor for the more vulnerable.		
<b>Future days</b>		
Discuss school event to commemorate the contribution made by staff and pupils.		
Provide support for those pupils and staff experiencing trauma and grief.		
Provide space and materials for pupils and staff to record expressions of grief and connection.		
Possibly look into financial support for family if necessary.		
Cover support for day of funeral.		
Pupil consultation with regards to memorial.		
Plan for anniversaries (calendar reminders, support).		

Note:

When allocating responsible person(s) to carry out tasks it is important to plan for who will cover these responsibilities should the designated member of staff not be available.

## APPENDIX 3

### LINKS TO CONTEXTUAL MODELS OF COORDINATED INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

DCC Critical Incidents Protocol for employees

<https://onedundee.dundecity.gov.uk/document/critical-incident-protocol>

DCC Supporting Learners Policy Framework Aug 2017

[Internal Link](#) [External Link](#)

Nurturing Approaches in Dundee 2017

[Internal Link](#) [External Link](#)

Physical Intervention Guidelines Sept 2017

[Internal Link](#) [External Link](#)

ABLe (see trauma and bereavement section) Child and Young Person

<https://www.bing.com/search?q=ABLe+schools&qs=n&form=QBRE&sp=1&ghc=1&pq=able+schools&sc=4-12&sk=&cvid=C711924EF854483C8ECF26A72B29A02B>

Mental Health and Well Being Policy (publication in progress)

## APPENDIX 4

### SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

**THIS MAY NOT ALWAYS BE APPROPRIATE AND IF USED WOULD NEED “SCHOOL” PERSONALISATION TO FIT IT WITH SCHOOL ETHOS**

Date:

Dear Parents

One of our pupils died suddenly on (date). We have spoken with his/her parents and offered them our heartfelt sympathy of our whole school community as well as any support or help we are able to give.

We intend to hold a memorial service for ( ) on ( ) at our school. Further details will follow.

Although your sons and daughters may be affected by this tragic death, it would be best for school routine to continue as normally as possible, and pupils should continue to attend school regularly.

Reactions of pupils will vary and may include crying, not wanting to talk (or wanting to talk), wanting to be alone, showing anger, lack of concentration, sleeping and eating problems.

We have all been saddened by this event. For both children/young people and adults it is their naturally available network of family, friends, classmates and colleagues who can provide the most effective support and help.

We have in place a school support system which involves educational psychologists and staff from the education department and voluntary agencies. Should you or your child or young person feel the need for additional support please contact your child's teacher in the first instance.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

# APPENDICES 5-9

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## SECTION 2 - SUPPORTING STAFF



## APPENDIX 5

### CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING – CHECKLIST FOR HEADTEACHERS & MANAGERS

#### Day of incident Defusing

Defusing is limited only to individuals directly involved in the incident. Defusing is designed to address immediate needs to assist individuals in coping in the short term but will not go into detail about the incident itself.

#### The Manager will:

- Meet and talk informally with the staff member(s) directly involved in the incident (the focus is on general support rather than specific details of the incident itself, as this is done at the later Debrief);
- Let them know what reactions are ‘typical’ to such an event (see **Appendix 1 – ‘Coping With Trauma – Signs and Symptoms’** (p22));
- Consider the need to re-prioritise the employee’s workload, including diversion of phone, change of duties, etc and, where appropriate, offer basic support;
- Ensure, where possible, the workers directly involved are taken home rather than drive themselves and there is someone there for them;
- Ensure they have a telephone number where they can reach someone to whom they can talk;
- Complete a record of the initial support meeting using the proforma attached as Appendix 2 – ‘Record of Initial Support Meeting’;
- Ensure other staff members who may not have heard about the incident are advised – manager to decide how this should be done, by whom and when;
- Identify situations requiring a Critical Incident Debriefing. This should be discussed with and agreed by a Senior Manager. Where agreed, staff members should be advised of this. Appendix 4 – ‘Critical Incident Debriefing – Staff Information Sheet’ should be given to relevant staff.
- Where it is agreed that a Critical Incident Debriefing is not required the Manager’s role of support and ‘watchful waiting’ continues.
- Where a staff member has died, but a Critical Incident Debriefing is not appropriate, the Manager can discuss with their team whether a ‘death in service group session would be helpful.
- Keep the staff member(s) involved up-to-date with any news relating to the incident (e.g. if the victim of the incident is in hospital, advise the staff member of their on-going situation).

**Before Debriefing - The Manager will:**

1. Discuss and agree this with their Senior Manager within one/two days.
2. Contact the Senior Officer, Social Work Department (**Appendix 11** (p39) at the earliest point possible, who will arrange for a trained staff member to undertake the Debrief, ideally 3-5 days after the incident.
3. Talk with the identifies Debriefers about the staff member(s) involved in the incident – their work, any previous incidents, any other relevant information such as possible legal action or health and safety executive investigations.
4. Assist the Debriefers in terms of setting up an appropriate venue, time for the Debrief and Follow-up.

**After Debriefing and Follow-up - The Manager will:**

- Receive a report from the Debriefers which may suggest future supports/on-going needs for them to action;
- Continue to have an on-going ‘watchful waiting’ role in supporting their staff member(s) throughout the process and afterwards.

## APPENDIX 6

### IF YOU HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN A CRITICAL INCIDENT, WHAT CAN YOU DO TO COPE?

- Give yourself time to heal and anticipate that this will be a difficult time in your life. Your body and mind will tell you what to do - your job is to listen to them.
- Talk to people as much as you need to. Reach out. Try talking with family, close friends, or keep a diary expressing how you feel.
- Focus on your basic needs, eat something even if you don't have an appetite and get plenty of rest.
- Do things that feel good to you, for example, take baths, read, exercise and spend time with people who make you feel safe.
- Allow yourself to cry, rage and express your feelings when you need to. Try not to numb your feelings with alcohol and/or drugs as this will only complicate the situation.
- Avoid making major life decisions as this time as this will only add to the stress you may currently be feeling.
- Avoid excessive alcohol and/or drug use.

## APPENDIX 7

### CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING - STAFF INFORMATION SHEET

#### What is it?

- A confidential discussion following a traumatic incident at work.
- A research-based way of helping staff members to adjust to their experience.
- Covers the feelings and perceptions of those directly involved.
- Advises about the physical and emotional responses which usually follow.
- A chance to think about your supports and signpost to others if needed.

#### It is not:

- Counselling.
- An investigation.
- Focused on procedures and whether you, or others, followed them.
- An alternative to support from your manager and colleagues.

#### What will happen?

The session may be with you alone, or in a group, depending on the incident and who was involved. It will be led by a staff member who has been trained in Critical Incident Debriefing. The focus will be on you, and where relevant other people's, experience of the incident. There will normally be a follow-up session within 3-4 weeks.

#### Do I have to go?

Staff are expected to attend but the focus will be positive, helping you to work through your experience so you will benefit from the session. If you are off ill, someone will contact you to arrange to see you.

#### Confidentiality

All sessions are strictly confidential except where the person carrying out the debrief feels that someone involved is a danger to themselves or to others. If this happens they will talk to you and you will be kept informed of any steps to be taken.

A short report will be completed at the end of the process which will note that it took place (who, where and when) and what supports have been discussed. No details of the content will be shared unless in the exceptional circumstances noted above.

# APPENDIX 8

## REFERENCES AND OTHER RESOURCES

Title	Author	Publisher	ISBN No.
Grief in Children – A Handbook for Adults	Atle Dyregrov	Jessica Kingsley Publishers 11 6 Pentonville Road LONDON N1 9JB	1-85302-113-X
Good Grief – Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Under Elevens	Barbara Ward and Assoc.	Jessica Kingsley Publishers 11 6 Pentonville Road LONDON N1 9JB	1 85302 324 8
Good Grief – Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Over Elevens and Adults	Barbara Ward and Assoc.	Jessica Kingsley Publishers 11 6 Pentonville Road LONDON N1 9JB	1 85302 340 X
Lifetimes – the beautiful way to explain death to children	Bryan Mellonie and Robert Ingpen	Bantam Books Inc	0-553-34402-1
“Let’s talk about” Death and Dying	Pete Sanders	Watts Books 9 6 Leonard Street, LONDON EC2A 4RH	0 7496 0431 X

Charity for supporting bereaved children, their families and the professionals who support them  
[www.winstonswish.org](http://www.winstonswish.org)

OHSAS Critical Incident Management Policy  
 Access details: [www.ohsas.co.uk](http://www.ohsas.co.uk)

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service Website – Key Information for staff required to attend court as a witness

Access details: [www.COPFS.gov.uk](http://www.COPFS.gov.uk)

Refer to the heading ‘Key Information’ then the link ‘Are you a witness?’

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Signs and Symptoms

Access details: [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/ptsd/posttraumaticstressdisorder](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/ptsd/posttraumaticstressdisorder)

Samaritans – Confidential emotional support 24/7

Access details: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) or telephone 08457 909090

[www.apa.org/practice/traumaticstress.html](http://www.apa.org/practice/traumaticstress.html)

Education Department Guidance

Access details: [www.dundecity.gov.uk/dundecity/uploaded\\_publications/publication\\_1203.pdf](http://www.dundecity.gov.uk/dundecity/uploaded_publications/publication_1203.pdf)  
[www.dundecity.gov.uk/dundecity/uploaded\\_publications/publication\\_1279.pdf](http://www.dundecity.gov.uk/dundecity/uploaded_publications/publication_1279.pdf)

## APPENDIX 9

### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

If you have any doubts or concerns about children/young people or your responsibilities regarding their support and care, you can seek support and information from the following:

#### **Dundee Educational Psychology Service (DEPS)**

St Ninian's Primary School

Dochart Terrace

DUNDEE, DD2 4HB

Tel: 01382 432980

Email: [dundee.eps@dundeecity.gov.uk](mailto:dundee.eps@dundeecity.gov.uk)

#### **Barnardo's Scotland Rollercoaster Service**

Family Services Dundee

3 Fleuchar Street

DUNDEE, DD2 2LQ

Tel: 01382 432631

Email: [rollercoaster@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:rollercoaster@barnardos.org.uk)



# APPENDICES 10-11

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DOCUMENTS FOR YEARLY UPDATING



# APPENDIX 10

## CORE RESPONSE TEAM AND IMPORTANT CONTACTS

### Core Response Team

Name	Designation	Area of Responsibility	Specific tasks



## APPENDIX 11

### USEFUL CONTACTS

Contact	Name	Telephone	Out of hours
Education Manager			
Senior Locality Officer (Holiday Periods)			
Health and Social Care Partnership (Death in Service)			
Corporate Communications			
DEPS			
Primary Mental Health Worker			
Chaplain			
Choose Life Coordinator			
School Nurse			
Chair of Parent Council			
Voluntary Service Partner			
Child Protection Coordinator			
MASH			
Social Work Manager			
Lead Officer Protecting People			

