



## **Critical Incident Policy**

This policy has been drawn up from the guidance document 'Dealing with a Critical Incident' from the Department for Education <http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/pupils-emotional-health-and-wellbeing/dealing-with-a-critical-incident.htm>

### **Managing a Critical Incident**

Definition of a critical incident:

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

Examples of critical incidents that could impact on the school:

- death or serious injury as a result of violence, accident, self-harm and/or sudden or traumatic illness;
- child protection incident (individual or collective abuse)
- events which result in higher than normal absences (e.g. infectious diseases such as influenza or meningitis)
- major fire;
- building collapse;
- riot and/or civil disorder;
- natural disaster such as flooding;
- terrorism;
- missing person(s)/abductions;

Intense media interest arising from incidents such as those listed above. Such incidents can occur, for example:

- on the school site during school hours
- on school transport
- whilst the pupils are taking part in activities away from the school site
- on school premises as part of after-school activities
- Within the local community involving pupils from the school.
- within the vicinity of the school

### **The key role of the School Incident Management Plan**

On many occasions, incidents that involve bereavement, loss and/or trauma, or property damage can be effectively managed by a school through the implementation of a well-constructed incident management plan. This may involve the school accessing County Council or other outside services as required.

## **Preventative and precautionary measures**

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. It is expected that:

- All staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's routines for fire and the evacuation of the school building on hearing the fire alarm.
- All staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (as detailed in this policy).
- All staff and pupils should be familiar with the school's security procedures, in particular that all visitors not wearing a visitor's badge should be questioned and escorted to the appropriate office.
- All staff organising school trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Headteacher
- All staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems.
- All staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to pupils before carrying out a curriculum or other activity.
- All staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

A major incident may be defined as:

- An accident leading to a serious injury or fatality;
- Severe injury or severe stress;
- Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness;
- Circumstances in which any part or whole of the school is unable to function as normal due to external influences and:
- Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved.

As such, major incidents include:

- Death of a pupil or member of staff;
- Death or serious injury on a school trip;
- Epidemic in school or community;
- Violent incident in school;
- A pupil missing from home;
- Destruction or major vandalism in school;
- A hostage taking;
- A transport accident involving school members;
- A disaster in the community;
- A civil disturbance or terrorism;
- Arson attacks on schools;
- Major fires at a school;
- Significant vandalism;

### Critical Incident Policy

- Pupil suicides and sudden deaths or violent attacks on pupils and staff members;
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of members of staff;
- Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on school premises;
- Road traffic accidents, involving fatalities within a school community;
- Abductions / disappearances;
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against pupils by staff and by staff against pupils;
- Incidents involving the murder of schoolchildren that attracted the attention of national and international media over prolonged periods;
- Floods at School used in an emergency.

In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the school or trip at the time must be able to:

- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of pupils and staff
- Minimise loss and to return to normal working quickly.

This must be time framed:

- Immediately
- In the medium term
- In the longer term.

#### **The Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will comprise the following:**

Headteacher	Mrs Hiller
Deputy Headteacher	Mrs Dolman
Administration Assistant	Miss Stephenson

In situations such as: vandalism, fire, flood etc.

The Proprietor:

will make up part of the CIMT.

Mr Allsworth

In the event of any of the above being involved in a serious/fatal incident the CIMT will include a member of staff designated by the team to assist where necessary.

#### **Action**

These are the typical actions the school may need to undertake to manage the incident. This plan makes it clear who will undertake each task and, in their absence, who would cover for them, in a range of possible scenarios (such as out of school/office hours, on/off school site and during school or out of school activities).

Those with lead responsibilities within this plan have 24-hour contact numbers. These persons will have 24-hour contact numbers for all other persons named within the plan. The plan will have other appropriate numbers that may be required.

## Critical Incident Policy

It is helpful to recognise that an incident typically consists of three phases:

- Phase 1 - Immediate actions
- Phase 2 - Managed response
- Phase 3 – Return to normality

### **Phase 1 – Immediate actions**

Actions 1-7 should be undertaken straightaway; however, the order of the actions will be determined by the needs of the situation.

#### **Action 1 - Ensure the safety of all children and adults – assess the continuing risk;**

- Contact the emergency services as appropriate
- Enter in 'Incident Log' all contacts made, actions taken and times.

Recording what has happened in a log of events with times and details of actions taken will be important for any subsequent inquiry which could range from an internal school/ECC inquiry to a formal inquiry with legal implications such as a Coroner's inquiry or an insurance claim.

Those involved may be required to give a statement to Police and/or attend court as a witness. The original contemporaneous record of events and actions is crucial in these circumstances.

- If off site, establish arrangements for reuniting children, adults and staff with their families.
- Determine that adults and staff involved in the incident are safe to drive or if they need transport arranged.

#### **Action 2 - Implement the school's Incident Management Plan**

- Person(s) with lead responsibility are released from all duties.
- Collect school's Incident Management Plan and contact numbers.
- Open a log of events, actions and times.
- Establish an independent telephone line (a dedicated mobile or land line).

#### **Action 3 - Obtain information about the incident**

- Obtain information about the exact nature of the incident, for example:
  - When and where the incident occurred
  - Names of children and adults involved in the incident, including those who witnessed it.
  - Nature of injuries/fatalities sustained.
  - Hospitals where the injured have been taken.
  - Names of adults with injured children.

### Critical Incident Policy

- Actions taken by emergency services, including arrangements for caring of those who do not require hospital treatment.
- The location of the uninjured.
- Remaining hazards at the scene
- Collect relevant pupil/staff lists and contact numbers as appropriate.
- Note relevant contact numbers of those involved.
- Control the information released to avoid inaccurate or inappropriate information being leaked from within the group.
- 

#### **Action 4 - Contact key people**

- Contact the Schools Children and Families Service at KCC and agree with them if there is a need to initiate critical incident support and other actions as appropriate. Where notification of a critical incident is received from a school the SCFS team will establish what form of support is required immediately and in the near future, for example the death of a pupil with a terminal illness may be imminent and a counselling service may be needed in the forthcoming days.
- Any SCFS personnel visiting the site will agree with the Headteacher or Lead person the duration and nature of the support needed. The team will continue to liaise during and immediately after the incident, calling on LA support as the situation develops.

#### **Out of hours incidents**

- Alert the Children's Social Care Emergency Duty Service for both serious situations affecting vulnerable children and adults and for other incidents affecting the school, who will alert the appropriate contacts within the Directorate and elsewhere.

#### **Action 5 - Mobilise the school's CIMT**

- Brief the school's CIMT
- Clarify tasks, make plans and assign roles.
- Set up a timetable of meetings to review management of incident. A senior officer from the LA may be present (see Action 4).

#### **Action 6 - Contact families of pupils, adults and staff involved in the incident**

- Designate key members of staff to make contacts.
- Ensure persons making contacts are fully briefed, (it may be appropriate to rehearse and/or have written down as to what information is to be said).
- Use record of contacts to avoid confusion and distress through duplication of contacts and to ensure no one is missed out.
- Establish and offer useful telephone numbers, either for support or for more information, such as emergency disaster number or hospital.
- Check that families/parents are not left alone in distress; suggest that they make contact with other relatives/families.
- Where appropriate, share the contact number of other families involved in the incident (only where they have given permission for this).

### Critical Incident Policy

- Where appropriate give advice to parents and families (in line with KCC advice) on responding to contacts from the media.
- Where appropriate, give information about arrangements for uniting or putting in contact children, adults and staff with their parents and families.
- Where a parent or family cannot be contacted, consider asking the Police or another professional to visit the home.

Guidance should be taken from the Police if the incident involves injury or death or if the incident is very serious, but the full facts are not yet known. It may be necessary, particularly in a small school, to enlist the help of the ECC Human Resources (Schools) team, governors, local religious/community leaders, GPs, police and so on, if there are a large number of parents to be contacted and supported. Some families/parents may need to be brought to school to receive information about what has happened.

#### **Action 7 - Brief staff, pupils, parents and other members of the school community**

- Hold briefing meetings for all teaching/non-teaching staff consider setting up a schedule to keep staff informed and updated.
- Issue a prepared statement for all parents.

If a press statement is required, take advice from the County Council's Media Team. A prepared statement should give the known facts of the situation, initial actions that the school is taking and appropriate expressions of sympathy and concern.

- Inform all pupils in the most appropriate way, identifying pupils, adults and staff who are absent. Make appropriate arrangements for them to be briefed.

Ensure that staff tasked with telling children are able to undertake this task. Make special arrangements to protect and support staff, adults and children who were close in any way to those affected.

#### **Phase 2 – Managed Response**

##### **Action 8 - Plan management of the incident (with identified KCC staff and other agencies as appropriate)**

- Meet with senior KCC officers, the school CIMT and other professionals as mobilised by the School's Children & Families critical incident arrangements.
- Review plans clarify tasks, assign roles and make future plans accordingly.
- Ensure that school and other agencies' actions are properly coordinated.
- Establish a timetable of meetings to review the management of the incident.
- Clarify criteria for withdrawal of outside agencies at appropriate stage.
- Access further advice from the Emergency Services if required.

##### **Action 9 - Set up arrangements to deal with enquiries**

- At the earliest opportunity, and certainly before speaking to any representative of the media, contact the KCC media team.

### Critical Incident Policy

- Ensure that all media contacts are dealt with in line with advice from the KCC's media team.

Names of those involved in the incident should not be released or confirmed to the media or other callers until the statutory authorities (such as the police) have confirmed the identity and the parents and families have been informed and have given permission.

- Provide those answering the phone with a written statement as to what is appropriate to say.
- Caution staff about talking to the media/posting on social network sites talking to those uninvolved in the incident.
- Organise staff to deal with phone enquiries and people coming to the school as necessary.
- Designate separate areas for parents, media, staff and agencies managing the incident and others; avoid too many people in any one space.
- Ensure all important contacts made and their details are entered into the Incident Log.

#### **Action 10 - Make arrangements to support children and adults**

- Identify those children and adults who will be in need of most support.
- Arrange for school staff/support agencies, including LA's Trauma Support Team to provide support. **Please note:** it is good practice to inform and seek consent from parents/carers where their child is to be involved with an outside agency.
- Ensure pupils, adults, parents/carers and staff are aware of the support arrangements that school is making and how these are being accessed.
- Consider setting aside and staffing an area for children who are becoming too distressed to continue with their lessons.
- Consider setting aside and staffing an area for people coming into the school who are distressed.
- In addition to those individuals directly affected, children and adults who are most likely to suffer distress as a consequent of an incident are those who:
  - Are uninjured but were at greatest risk.
  - Directly witnessed death/injury/violence as part of the incident.
  - Are siblings.
  - Have any possible perceived culpability for what has happened, however indirect or incorrect; for example, those who may blame themselves or be blamed by others.
  - Are experiencing instability at home.
  - Have learning difficulties.
  - Have pre-existing emotional and behavioural/mental health difficulties.
  - Are vulnerable due to cultural and/or language difficulties.
  - Have previously suffered bereavement or loss.
- Maintain normal school routines wherever possible.

If the school has to close, ensure all staff and parents are briefed on the arrangements for the collection of children. Supervise children being collected and make arrangements for those who are not able to be collected. Ensure that staff and parents are clear as to the arrangements for re-opening the school.

### Critical Incident Policy

- Consider holding staff meeting with support agencies to discuss appropriate management strategies for distressed children.
- Plan how to manage distress that may be caused by ongoing police/legal proceedings and media attention.
- Give children permission individually and collectively to discuss what has happened and their reactions.
- Consider putting on a special class session to give pupils information about the grieving process and to enable them to talk through their experiences.
- Plan appropriate support for staff to enable them to cope with children's questions and discussion.
- Ensure that all staff, including those co-ordinating the school's response, do not neglect their own need for support.
- Schedule staff co-ordinating the school's response to be 'off duty'.
- Ensure staff are alert to physical and/or emotional change or any other signals of distress among staff as well as children.
- Refer staff, adults and, with parental consent, children to outside agencies for support.

Deal sensitively with open expressions of distress. Allow children to discuss what has happened in lessons where they clearly wish to do this. Do not discourage them from talking.

#### **Action 11 - Make arrangements for personal effects, registers and area(s) of the school affected**

- In discussion with parents/families decide what to do with the personal effects of those critically injured or who have died.
- Consider what would be appropriate for work (including work in displays) and belongings such as desks, books, pegs belonging to individuals who have died or critically ill.
- Make adjustments to class registers and other pupil/staff lists accordingly.
- Make appropriate arrangements for the part of the school where the incident occurred.

#### **Phase 3 – Return to normality**

#### **Action 12 - Make arrangements for expressions of sympathy and/or acknowledgement of what has happened**

- Make arrangements to express support sympathy to families, children and adults who have been hurt or bereaved.
- Make arrangements to support the plans the family may have for a memorial.
- Make plans for attendance at funerals. Find out if school representatives are welcome. Ensure school representatives feel able to cope with these tasks.
- Make arrangements for someone from the school to visit the injured in hospital or bereaved at home.
- Consider sending cards and messages from children and staff to those affected.



### Critical Incident Policy

- Consider organising a special assembly/service to acknowledge collectively what has happened and how the school is coming to terms with this. Consider involving local religious leaders. Consult with families of those affected.
- Consider setting up an area of the school where writing, photos, art work can be dedicated to individuals affected.

#### **Action 13 - Plan for the return to school of those involved in the incident**

- Arrange a home visit by an appropriate member of staff to discuss the return to school; this may involve visits, staggered or part time attendance.
- Plan support for emotional needs (such as how to cope with the comments and questions of other pupils or permission to remove themselves from lessons to go to an agreed place if they are becoming distressed).
- Plan support for physical needs such as mobility difficulties or disfigurements.
- Arrange a rota for home visits from school friends.
- Where appropriate organise school work to be sent home during recuperation.
- Brief staff how best to support individuals returning to school.
- Arrange differentiation for work (missed coursework, special arrangements for missed exams).
- Adjust workloads for members of staff returning to school.

#### **Action 14 - Plan memorials and commemorations**

- Consider an appropriate memorial, taking into account the wishes of those bereaved or involved.
- Discuss how to mark anniversaries, for example: commemorative service/assembly, concert, display.

#### **Involvement in funerals and special services**

##### **Attendance at funerals**

There are many different religious and cultural views about the participation of young people in funeral rites. The school will want to respect these views and customs as well as the wishes of parents and the children themselves. The current consensus among mental health professionals is that most children (and adults) come to terms with their grief more quickly if they say farewell formally. Whenever possible, survivors should be encouraged and enabled to attend the funerals of those who died, and the parents of those who died should be encouraged to allow it.

##### **Special assemblies and memorial services**

In addition to funerals that families may choose to be private, schools may wish to mark the event with a special assembly or a memorial service. Discussions could be held with staff, governors, parents, pupils and the local community on what form this \* for reasons of safety and support it is recommended that staff making home visits do so in pairs 13 should take and who should be involved. Planning the ceremony often becomes an important therapeutic act in itself. For many who have been affected by a major incident, a memorial

### **Critical Incident Policy**

service acts as a way of acknowledging that it is now over. Even so, many staff and pupils may be upset during the service and this needs to be considered in planning, for example, where it is to be held and if access should be given to the media. Some schools have planted special gardens in memory of pupils or staff members; others have installed seats in the playground in their memory or have commissioned sculptures or paintings.

## Appendix 1

### Flood planning

There are some very simple steps that can be taken to develop preparation for your location.

Step 1: Find out if your location is at risk of flooding by checking on the Environment Agency website, [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk), and enter the postcode for your location. If you are at risk of flooding:

Step 2: You should register for free on the Environment Agency's Floodline Warning Direct by calling 0845 988 1188.

Step 3: Understand what the flood warning codes are and what the implications are for your location. Flood Watch: Flooding of low-lying land and road is expected. Be aware. Be prepared. Watch out! Flood Warning: Flooding of homes and business is expected. Act now! Severe Flood Warning: Severe Flooding is expected. There is extreme danger to life and property. Act now! All Clear: No further is expected. Water levels will start to go down.

Step 4: Check with your District Council, Borough Council or Unitary Authority to find out what their "Sandbag Policy" is, as this varies between local authorities.

Step 5: Investigate purchase of flood mitigation equipment. This is not just a case of buying sandbags. There are many different types of flood protection products available. However, it is not one size fits all and a serious degree of investigation is required to ensure you purchase the most appropriate product for your location and type of flood risk. For example, if you are at risk of flooding from sea water, some of the polymer filled bags do not inflate in salty water. A good source of information is an independent organisation, The National Flood Forum, who produces "The Blue Pages", a directory of flood product suppliers. [www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk) and follow the links to Blue Pages.

Step 6: Check your insurance and confirm what you are actually covered for.

Step 7: Make a list of important telephone numbers. You may well already have such a document to cover other emergency such as evacuation due to fire.

Step 8: Know where and how to turn off your utilities, electricity, gas and water supplies.

Step 9: Store valuable, sentimental or important documents and objects out of the reach of flood water.

Step 10: Consider vehicles you may have parked, whether those of staff, visitors or business vehicles and where they could be re-located to in the event of a flood.

Step 11: Prepare an emergency kit suitable to your location. Ensure it contains First aid kit, torch, battery, rubber gloves, and buckets, whistle other appropriate items for the purposes of your location.

### Critical Incident Policy

Step 12: Follow advice given by Local Authority and / or Emergency Services.

Step 13: Monitor information being given via the media, local television and local radio. This will be the main way information will be passed out to the community.

Step 14: Monitor local weather forecasts to develop understanding of how intense periods of rainfall or extreme tides may affect your location.

Step 15: Ensure there is sufficient drainage from hard standing areas. To help protect buildings during short intense periods of rainfall.

Step 16: Avoid contact with flood water, it will be contaminated. Don't walk on sea defences, river banks or cross river bridges, they may collapse. Don't walk, swim or drive through floodwater. There may be hazards such as missing manhole covers or underwater obstructions. Flowing, ankle deep water is enough to knock a person off their feet. Only use 999 if you believe there is risk to life. Do not try to return to your location unless you have been told it is safe to do so.

Step 17: After a Flood Call your insurance company Contact your utility suppliers to arrange re-connections. Investigate alternative accommodation if your location is un-useable. Keep a record of flood damaged property.

Step 18: Don't eat fruit or veg that may have been growing in the school veggie patch, (if you have one).

Step 19: Open doors and windows to help ventilate your building/s. Don't attempt to start repairs until the flood is over. Monitor the weather forecasts. If you are not at risk of flooding..... Check to see if your location will become isolated on high ground. Check to ensure your access and egress routes will remain clear and not become flooded.

Some thoughts and ideas.....

During the next Fire Drill, consider how this would work if you have just received a flood warning and advice to evacuate your location?

1. Who do you need to contact?
2. Where would the students go?
3. How do you contact the parents? Telephone lines may be down.
4. How do you continue the education of those students affected? The flooding event may be quite protracted, with a long recovery phase.
5. What if this occurred during the exam season?
6. Many of these points are probably already covered under your Fire Plan or similar document. However, it's a good idea to apply these considerations to a flooding scenario. For more information on how to prepare for and respond to flooding events visit the Environment Agency website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Pandemic 'flu planning**

The latest guidance on national and local arrangements for managing an outbreak of pandemic 'flu may be found on the:

[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/11340/krf-pandemic-influenza-contingency-plan.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/11340/krf-pandemic-influenza-contingency-plan.pdf)

The above link will take you straight to it.

### **Covid 19 and other virus/infectious diseases**

For the latest information see:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public>

And

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>

Advice is likely to change and be updated regularly. NHS guidelines as of 02.03.2020 states:

*'Most people can continue to go to work, school and other public places. You only need to stay away from public places (self-isolate) if advised to by the 111 online coronavirus service or a medical professional.'*

In the event of a school closure being advised due to the incidence of Coronavirus or any other epidemic/pandemic, parents will be notified according to the 'school closure policy'.

Critical Incident Policy

**Appendix 3: Incident Log**

Note: Copies of this template should be made so that the log sheets are ready for use if required.

Incident:

Location of Incident:

Date:

Time:

Maintain a log below of your actions taken as the incident progresses

Date	Time	Event/Action Taken	Reason(s)
<b>Please attach emails sent and received</b>			

Name:

Signature:

Date: