

**Harrow Educational Psychology Service**

# Loss, Bereavement and Critical Incidents

**Guidance for schools and other children's  
services - June 2010**

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# Introduction

Death touches the lives of all of us, and children are by no means immune. Thousands of school-aged children die every year, and 1 out of 7 children lose a parent to death before the age of 10. Every day around 50 children and young people in the UK are bereaved by the death of a parent - that is approximately 20,000 children and young people annually, while 6% of 5 to 15 year olds have experienced the death of a close friend of the family (Winston's Wish – Bereavement Facts and Figures: Children and Bereavement).

On a day-to-day basis, schools and other establishments caring for and working with children and young people may have to respond to the bereavement that children experience from the loss of a family member or even a pet. On a larger scale, schools may also have to respond to bereavements as a result of a critical incident, such as a coach accident or a fire on school premises.

Many children and young people will have had some experience of separation and loss in their lives outside school through relationship breakdown, refugee displacement or disability. Children often do not understand how a separation or divorce could have come about. Many children blame themselves, whilst others keep their feelings to themselves or show their upset, anger and confusion in behavioural or learning difficulties. In ideal circumstances children will have had adequate explanations and support to come to terms with the situation, but the reality is often different.

There is no one set procedure to respond to loss and bereavement, and every situation will be surrounded by circumstances specific to it. Those involved will be affected differently and as a result, a sensitive flexible approach is needed. It is also acknowledged that it is not possible to take away the fear that a child may have about death, as that fear is realistic. It is also not possible to take away the pain that a child may have experienced as a result of the death or loss of someone close to them. What schools and other settings can do, however, is attempt to share feelings, thoughts and beliefs and to support and comfort children and/or staff who have been affected.

By having a procedure in place this can be formulated over a period of time with input from all the staff, rather than being a response to a crisis. The procedure could provide a structure to be drawn on as a framework at times of crisis, yet still retaining the ability to react to each bereavement or loss individually.

These guidelines aim to offer advice to schools and other settings such as Children's Centres to respond to every day occurrences of loss or bereavement as well as critical incidents. Settings should also be aware of courses that are on offer related to this area.

# SECTION 1

## *Loss and Bereavement*

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## A: General information

Where children have to deal with loss and death, the support that they receive is crucial to their ability to cope and recover from their personal trauma. Grief is unique for each individual – its manifestation is very varied, and it is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to grieve. While some children and young people are able to cope and come to terms with the loss, there are some children that don't and these would be the ones that need support.

It is often forgotten that death is a natural phenomenon and is part of the normal process of life. Children need to be helped to see death as a part of life.

## B: Needs of different groups of children

### **B1: The age of the bereaved child**

When staff are considering their response to bereaved pupils, it is necessary to recognise that the age of the pupils can affect their response to death. Young children process information differently from adults. Typically, depending on emotional development, children react to death in the following ways. The age categories given are guidelines only and children may not fit neatly into them : -

- **1- 3 years**

Very young children do not understand that death is permanent. They may constantly ask when the dead person is coming back. They sense when adults are upset and react to the emotions of those around them. They may become insecure and become frightened when separated from a parent. They may regress and behave like a baby.

- **3 - 7 years**

Ward (1995) describes this as the 'magical thinking' stage. Children of this age are very egocentric. They believe that they are responsible for whatever 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 - 12 years**

At this age, children begin to realise that death is permanent. They also recognise that they will die one day. They may also feel resentful if there is less attention at the time of the death or immediately afterwards.

- **12 years onwards/Adolescents**

Teenagers understand the impact of loss and death but may not be emotionally prepared for it. As young people of this age are already experiencing a mixture of emotions, their response to death may be more extreme and variable than an adult's would be. Some adolescents may experience depression.

## **B2: Sex differences**

Boys generally show their emotions and talk things through much less than girls do and as a result may find it a lot harder to grieve. Culture and society have a part to play in this, as there can be pressure on boys to 'act like a man' and not show their feelings as 'big boys don't cry'. Very often, however, boys' unresolved grief can manifest itself in poor behaviour at a later date.

Girls, on the other hand, are considered to be the expressive sex, and are thus more able to talk about and show the way that they feel, which makes the grieving process slightly easier.

Whatever the reasons for these differences, it is important to be aware that they exist.

## **B3: Religious beliefs**

It is very important that schools are sensitive to different religious beliefs and customs when teaching about death and bereavement. Appendix 1 offers some advice on how different religions view death.

**B4: Refugee children**

In schools where there are large proportions of children who are refugees, it is likely that there may be issues surrounding the traumas that they have experienced. Refugee children have experienced enormous losses, which they may or may not have been able to mourn. These children may not even know whether a close relative is dead or alive, and additionally they may have been witnessed high intensity destruction and violence. Sometimes it is easier for these children to forget than to face the pain of loss. As a result, it is particularly important that schools feel adequately prepared to support children who have been through such atrocities.

**B5: Children with learning difficulties**

Children with learning difficulties may be more likely to take things at face value, thus if they are told that 'mummy has gone to sleep', they may believe this is the case. As with all children, therefore, it is important to be particularly careful with the language used to explain death to children with special educational needs.

Another issue to take on board is that children with learning difficulties may not have the language to be able to express their grief. Thus it is important that alternative means are found in order to allow them to grieve properly, such as art therapy and play therapy.

**B6: Children with life-limiting conditions**

Death of a pupil is thankfully rare, but does occasionally occur, and in particular in special schools, where a high proportion of the children may be suffering from a terminal illness. When any pupil dies, the rest of the community is affected, and allowance has to be made for the impact of the death on staff and pupils alike. Attention must be paid to practicalities, such as what to do about the child's seat in class and name on the register, and it can be helpful to involve older pupils in these discussions. Special schools also face the added problem of the 'Who is next' question, as staff and pupils consider the health status of other pupils in the school. It is very painful to be asked by a child 'Am I going to be the next one to die', and there is no easy way to take the pain away for the pupil or the teacher.

The importance of an adult who is able to address these issues and discuss difficult subjects, and whose presence is a support for the child cannot be over-estimated.

## C: Grief reactions in children

### C1: Stages of grief

Grief is a normal, essential response to the death or loss of a loved one. It can be short lived or last a long time depending on the personality involved, the closeness of the relationship, the circumstances of the loss, and previous losses suffered.

In many cases, this grief can take the form of several clearly defined stages

- **Shock and disbelief**
- **Denial**
- **Growing awareness**
- **Acceptance** (adapted from Kubler-Ross model).

This is not necessarily a linear process and can be viewed as a cycle. A person can move back and forward through these stages. Difficulties may occur at any of the stages described.

#### **Shock and disbelief**

This happens when our model of the world is upset.

#### **Denial**

This generally occurs within the first 14 days and can last minutes, hours or weeks. In this stage the bereaved person behaves as if the dead person is still there, no loss is acknowledged.

#### **Growing awareness**

Some or all of the following emotions may be experienced:

- **Yearning and pining** - The urge to search; going over the circumstances of the death, trying to find a reason for the death or visiting where it happened.
- **Anger** - This can be against any or all of the following: the medical services, the person who caused the death, God for letting it happen, the deceased for leaving them.
- **Depression** - The bereaved person begins to feel the despair, the emptiness, the pain of the loss.
- **Guilt** - This emotion is felt for the real or imagined negligence or harm inflicted on the person who has just died. There is a tendency to idealise the person who has died and feel they could have loved them better.
- **Anxiety** – In extreme cases anxiety can even become panic – as the full realisation of the loss begins to come through.



## Acceptance

This generally occurs during the second year, after the death has been re-lived at the first anniversary, but it can take longer (e.g. Carr ,1999). The bereaved person is then able to look at the world again and see new situations and possibilities without the deceased person.

## C2: Reactions of younger children

In children, the stages of grief may manifest themselves in the following reactions:

- Children, like adults, will enter a period of shock, which will last for a few hours or up to a week. It can manifest itself by the child going through daily life mechanically, automatically smiling on cue or being apprehensive. They may have periods of panic. Alternatively, they may become withdrawn and gaze into space for long periods.
- The death or loss of a close relative heightens our sense of vulnerability and for children death and separation are synonymous. They may:
  - become very anxious about being separated from parents for any reason;
  - be reluctant to go to school; be depressed;
  - be prone to infection, i.e. colds, ear infections and tummy upsets;
  - bite nails or cuticles, pick themselves, twiddle with their hair;
  - develop a fear of the dark (which may last for years);
  - have difficulty in going to sleep;
  - possibly have nightmares;
  - develop a phobia about hospitals, nurses and doctors.
- Regression to an earlier stage of development is common.
- Loss of concentration for children at school.
- Food can become important. Some children will eat and eat to fill up the emptiness they feel inside. They may hoard food and secrete it away. Others though will lose interest in eating. This phase usually only lasts a comparatively short time.

- Sadness and anger need to be expressed but children are often afraid and confused about venting their feelings as they do not know what is allowed.
- Some may be frightened to ask questions and will only talk to 'outsiders'. Other children only want to talk about the tragedy to the immediate family.
- Although no time limit can be put on the grief process, it is generally felt the grief process for children is the same as adults – approximately two years.

### **C3: Reaction of Adolescents**

The adolescent's experience of grief, especially as they get older, is similar to that of adults. A sense of desertion, feelings of anger, loneliness, yearning for the dead person and physical symptoms are all common. However, their grief will be influenced by the many changes of adolescence such as becoming independent from their family and establishing their own identity. They may have had a stormy relationship with the person who has died and following the death may experience regret and guilt.

Some adolescents cope with death by suppressing their emotions and may appear withdrawn. In addition they may exhibit psychosomatic stress or depressive symptoms or may become more concerned over body image and changes; they may show fear through inappropriate behaviour, sarcasm or joking. It is common for adolescents to seek support outside the family.

### **C4: Difficulties in grieving**

Many people do not pass through the 'stages of grief' smoothly. Once problems have been worked through the person is able to move forward. Listed below are some of the problems that are common to many bereaved people:

- *opposition to letting go – refusal to accept death*
- *not prepared to allow themselves to grieve*
- *doubt about the reality of the loss e.g. no body*
- *mixed feelings towards the deceased*
- *the social, cultural or religious customs that demand self-control may result in delayed grief*
- *not being allowed, or able, to attend the funeral*

- *when things have been left unsaid, a visit not made, or any other unfinished business*
- *a succession of losses – no time allowed to be able to grieve*
- *external circumstances such as a major crisis.*

There are three ways commonly used for coping with bereavement, which are not helpful over a long period of time. A child may need help in overcoming these.

- ***Substitution.*** The child may want to find a substitute mother or father.
- ***Aggression.*** The child may be often involved in fighting, or may avoid coming to school. A variety of discipline problems may occur both inside and outside of school, e.g. drug abuse and general anti-social behaviour.
- ***Helplessness.*** This leads to a lack of curiosity and so impairs learning.

## D: Working proactively with Bereavement and Loss

Although schools are specified within this document, the policies and procedures could also be applied to Children's Centres and other educational provisions for children and young people.

### D1. The school's role

School staff have a very important role to play in supporting and educating children about loss, bereavement and grief. However, staff may not feel at ease exploring ideas and feelings among pupils and will need the support of colleagues.

#### How to help someone who is suffering from loss:

Adapted from 'Good Grief' (B. Ward et al. 1995 see Appendix 3):

- DO let your genuine concern and caring show
- DO be available to listen or to help with whatever else seems needed at the time
- DO say you are sorry about what happened and about their pain
- DO allow them to express as much unhappiness as they are feeling at the moment and are willing to share. Let the child know it is natural, normal and acceptable to be upset and cry. Don't be afraid to cry with the child.
- DO encourage them to be patient with themselves, not to expect too much of themselves and not to impose any 'shoulds' on themselves
- DO talk about the special, endearing qualities of what they've lost
- DO reassure them that they did everything that they could
- DO offer practical help – this can be the most important thing in the early stages.
- DO make sure all adults working with the child know the situation.
- DON'T let your sense of helplessness keep you from reaching out
- DON'T avoid them because you are uncomfortable (being avoided by friends adds pain to an already painful experience)
- DON'T say you know how they feel (unless you've experienced their loss yourself you probably don't know how they feel)
- DON'T say 'you ought to be feeling better by now' or anything else which implies a judgement about their feelings
- DON'T tell them what they should feel or do

- DON'T change the subject when they mention loss
- DON'T avoid mentioning their loss out of fear of reminding them of their pain (they haven't forgotten it)
- DON'T try to find something positive (e.g. a moral lesson, closer family ties etc) about the loss
- DON'T point out at least they have other .....
- DON'T say that they can always have another .....
- DON'T suggest that they should be grateful for their .....
- DON'T make any comments which in any way suggest that their loss was their fault (there will be enough feelings of doubt and guilt without any help from their friends)

## **D2. Curriculum issues**

Education about death removes the scope for fantasies. Loss and death education had no major part in the school curriculum until recently, but now should be an integral part of the Personal and Social Education programme at each Key Stage. The subject is also included in all stages of Religious Education. Schools are expected to develop their own syllabus for class work.

Ideally, a small group of staff should work together in developing the curriculum content. The curriculum for death and bereavement should include:

- *Understanding loss* – growing up, going to school, moving home, losing an object, birth of a sibling, death of a relative, family separation.
- *Understanding feelings* – for example, encouraging children to talk about happiness, excitement, anger, fright, sadness.
- *Understanding death* – ageing, the life cycle, seasons, funeral customs

Projects can be undertaken which include creative writing, stories and poems, drama work etc. It is also recommended that the school have resources available about loss, death and grief (see appendix 3).

Children who are not told about death are likely to make things up for themselves and these 'stories' are likely to be worse than the true story. It is good to be open and honest with children in such experiences and to help them see a wholesome picture of death as a part of life. Teachers also need to have knowledge themselves about

the development of a child's understanding of the concept of death as well as their reactions to it. They also need to be aware that children's attitudes and opinions related to death will be affected by what their life experiences have exposed them to and what they have been told at home.

### **D3. School procedures/policy**

#### **How do you prepare the class before a bereaved child returns to school?**

- Check with the pupil and their family if they want to explain or would they rather the teacher/head explain.
- Be honest, and if possible, tell the class what has happened before the pupil returns.
- Explain how their friend may be very quiet or just start crying unexpectedly.
- Re-assure them that they can help just by listening and being with their bereaved friend.
- Do not worry if their friend wants to be alone.

The following points are intended as a guideline for schools to accommodate the needs of bereaved children:

- When a child in school is bereaved, ensure that ALL members of staff know, including the premises manager, SMSAs and school crossing personnel.
- If possible, ask the bereaved family and child what they would like said to the class and school community, remembering that some may want to attend the funeral or to send flowers.
- Communicate with other parents of the class, as appropriate. They will hear from their children anyway and it will come better as a letter from you.
- Tell the bereaved family what has been said and done so that the child is aware on his/her return to school.
- Prepare as a staff group for the child coming back to school. Is there anyone in the staff group who finds this particularly upsetting? Bereavement brings up

strong emotions for everyone, and there may be staff who are themselves facing a personal loss.

- Help the tutor group or class prepare for the child's return. What fears and fantasies are there and how will they approach them?
- Help a few close friends of the child explore how they can be supportive.
- Offer the child an opportunity to talk if they want to and work out with them how to signal to you if they do want to.
- Is there a quiet room or corner the child can go to for 'time out' if the child is upset or angry? Children may not realise that anger is very much part of grief.
- Don't isolate the child by giving him or her too many special privileges or allowing persistent breaking of rules. Children need to understand that the limits of behaviour still apply, and that they still occupy the same place in the school community as before the bereavement.
- Bereaved children often experience a loss of concentration at school, which will inevitably have an impact on their work. Give them encouragement and reassurance. It is normal and does not usually last very long.
- Give the parent or carer feedback and encouragement whenever possible about their child's progress in school.

# SECTION 2

## *Responding to Critical Incidents*

### *Contents*

**Introduction**

**Suggested Action Plan in response to a Critical Incident**

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## Introduction

Handling crises is not a normal part of school life, but they do sometimes occur. Some incidents, however, are of a more critical and overwhelming nature in which staff, pupils and parents may experience acute, even prolonged distress.

A critical incident can be described as an event or events outside the range of normal human experience, of significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and coping strategies and which is likely to have emotional and organisational consequences.

A list of critical incidents may include:

- the sudden death of a pupil or member of staff;
- a serious accident involving children and/or school personnel on or off the premises;
- a violent act on school premises by malicious persons, either in person or by means such as arson, bomb, vandalism etc;
- a school building becoming unsafe as a result of fire, flood or other incident
- a more widespread emergency in the community, for example the release of hazardous substances, severe weather, etc;
- public health threats (e.g. meningitis).

Other events may also be deemed to be emergencies in school because of the impact they have on pupils and staff, sometimes over a long period of time. Such events could be:

- an incident in the community which is seen or experienced by pupils or staff;
- an incident affecting relatives of pupils which is known about in the school;
- an incident affecting a nearby or comparable school;
- civil disturbances or terrorism.

Headteachers in Harrow with experience of dealing with critical incidents have indicated a number of important factors, including:

- the suddenness of the occurrence;
- the shock effect;
- the apparent uniqueness of the occurrence;
- the need for any support to be available very rapidly;

- the publicity and attention which sometimes follow;
- the need to communicate with a number of people quickly;
- the need for support for those directly affected, and for the large number who might be indirectly affected (pupils, teachers and parents).

This section draws upon the experience of schools in order to address the issues faced by headteachers and their colleagues. It offers guidance on:

- immediate action by the school;
- action within hours of the incident;
- longer-term action.

When schools face a critical incident, research suggests that they cope best when they have clear procedures and know how to use support networks. Staff need to be as fully prepared as possible before any such incident occurs. Many schools and organisations have found it useful to have a Critical Incident Team (CIT), which may be part of their emergency planning procedures and policies, such as evacuation procedures. This section aims to assist schools in making such preparations. (See appendix 5 for process map).

The following guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive, or an attempt to cover all possible events, but to act as a model that is flexible and can be adapted to deal with a number of different situations. Each school or educational provision will need to develop and adopt its own critical incident policy and plans in line with government and council guidelines, as recommended in the audit carried out by the Council.

This document should be read in conjunction with most up to date version of *Harrow Council's Requirements for Educational Visits*. It should also be read with HASLOC (Health and Safety of Learners Outside the Classroom), which replaced Health and Safety of Pupils on Educational Visits: a good practice guide 1998 (known as HASPEV) and the 3-part supplement published in 2002.

HASLOC has a wider audience across all children's services (not just schools). It sets out the enabling nature of sensible risk management and how to reduce 'red tape'. It flags up the lessons learned from serious incidents and also sets out how and why staff can expect to be treated fairly if a participant is injured despite their care.

DCFS documents relating to emergency planning, including templates for emergency plans can be downloaded from the Teachernet website:

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/emergencyplan/index.html>

In the event of an emergency the priorities are to assess the situation, safeguard uninjured, attend to the casualty(ies) and inform the emergency services and school. The Council Emergency Planning team, which facilitates the co-ordination of Council resources in formally declared major incidents, may also be involved (see Appendix 4).

## A : Immediate action

Take the following action **immediately** after a critical incident.

### A1: Gather information

It is important to collect as much information as possible about the incident. This information should be documented and kept as a written log. You should include:

- what happened
- where and when the incident took place
- whether there is still a continuing danger
- if the incident happened off-site, what help is required from your school
- the numbers and names of those injured and the extent of their injuries
- the current location of those injured, and the name and contact number of an adult present
- the location of children who were involved but not injured, plus the name and contact number of an adult present
- the name and contact number of an adult at the incident site (if off-site).
- notify the appropriate emergency services.

### A2: Assess continuing risk

Is it likely that further injuries or damage may occur?

- If there is a continuing risk, your first priority must be to safeguard the welfare of the children, staff and visitors.
- Ensure that any immediate action to protect people or property does not give rise to further risk.

**A3: Brief the Senior Management or Critical Incident team**

This would be a predetermined group, although there needs to be flexibility. Additional members may be needed when the incident involves a particular group in the school and in the absence of key personnel, school should build in contingency plans to their policy.

The headteacher has responsibility for what happens in the school, and is therefore responsible for the actions of the support team. However, he or she may choose to delegate the leading of this team to a pre-arranged member of staff. The team will not necessarily comprise of the senior management team in the school, but might also involve representatives of the wider school community, such as the office staff and premises manager.

The purpose of the briefing is to share information gathered about the incident and allocate responsibility for immediate and short-term tasks, as suggested in this booklet.

The headteacher should call a meeting of this team at least annually to update names, contact numbers, checklists and procedures.

**A4: Contact appropriate agencies**

In all circumstances, contact the directors in Children's Services immediately to initiate council support and to obtain advice on whom else to contact (See Appendix 8 for contact numbers). You should also inform your chair of governors. The Educational Psychology Service and Social Care Service can also offer assistance (See Section 3).

## **B : Action within the first hour**

### **B1: Contact the families of those involved**

Your school/setting should maintain an up-to-date list of emergency contacts for children and staff, and ensure it has an effective procedure for knowing who is on site.

In the event of serious injury or death, the police will be involved and are likely to take responsibility for informing relatives in person. However, it may be helpful for them to be accompanied by a member of staff.

In other circumstances, contacting the families of those involved should be done quickly and sensitively by the school. If the contact person cannot be reached by telephone, leave a brief message asking them to telephone a particular number. Try to avoid leaving complex messages as these can become distorted when conveyed.

When releasing information to a wider audience, e.g. parents, prepare the information with care. Give the appropriate facts and express sympathy or concern. Blame and liability should not be attributed. Remember that the media may get access to this statement.

### **B2: Telephone communication to and from school**

When the news of an incident reaches the community, a large number of people will want to contact the school for details. This could jam the main telephone line, making it difficult for outside calls to be made and for others to get through. If possible, dedicate a particular line to outgoing calls. You could use a telephone plugged into an existing fax line, school kitchen phone, community office phone, caretaker's house phone or personal mobile phones.

Callers phoning the usual school line should be given a factual statement and reassurance that action is being taken to manage the situation. If further details are requested, ask the caller to leave a name and number on which they can be contacted. Be courteous but concise to keep the line free for other callers.

Parents will need to know whether to come to the scene of the incident, or whether their child will be returned to school or home. Pupils' use of mobile phones to contact home, particularly on school journeys would need to be monitored / discussed.

The Corporate Director and Directors in Children's Services would notify the chief executive and may be able to provide guidance or contact appropriate agencies, such as the School Health Service and Social Care, on your behalf.

### **B3: Inform school staff**

Provide staff with the factual details of the incident so that they can feel confident when handling questions and issues. Tell them when this information will be updated. Encourage staff to refer enquiries to the support team when in doubt. Ask them not to talk to the media. This minimises the risk of mixed messages and misinformation.

### **B4: Inform pupils**

Tell pupils what has happened and allow them to ask questions. Decide whether it is better to talk to large groups, small groups or individuals. This process is often best managed in small groups, by a member of staff who is well known to the pupils and confident in handling their reactions.

### **B5: Handling the media**

Communications with the media should be handled through the directors and the communications unit (020 8424 1857). The headteacher should concentrate on the welfare of the school community and let officers deal with press interest, which can be intrusive. There are instances when the headteacher is the most appropriate spokesperson but this can be agreed on an individual basis with the communications office.

It may be necessary to control access points to the school site, allowing parents in but not the press. Remember, you are entitled to say who can enter the school and who cannot. Members of the press should not enter without permission. If necessary, schools should ensure that all official calls have been made before allowing pupils to ring home.

## C : Action within the next few hours

### **C1: Arrange debriefing for staff and pupils involved in the incident**

The nature of debriefing sessions will depend on the incident. You might find it helpful to consider a different process for:

- casualties
- witnesses
- the wider community.

Also bear in mind:

- whether separate briefings might prevent the incident from escalating
- the differing needs of children of various ages and at different stages of development
- whether all parties need to know all the facts, thereby exposing everyone to the same levels of stress
- the closeness of individuals to the incident
- whether there is good reason to respect the confidentiality of someone involved.

Appendix 7 provides a useful checklist when dealing with a critical incident.

### **C2: Inform the wider community**

It may be helpful to contact neighbouring schools. This is important on a shared site and between phases, especially where siblings are at other schools.

### **C3: Identify any inappropriate content of the school curriculum**

Pupils who have recently been traumatised are especially sensitive to reminders. Children's literature, assembly stories and episodes in history all provide sources of likely triggers.

Do not avoid such references altogether, but anticipate likely reactions and ensure that teachers feel able to manage them.

### **C4: Develop a plan for handling the feelings and reactions of others**

Be alert to possible staff reactions, even among those who are not directly involved but for whom the incident triggers difficult emotions. Be aware of pupils' response to the death, particular where death is a suicide. Outside agencies can offer support and advice to staff. (See Section 3 and Appendix 3 for contact numbers).

## D: Longer-term action

### Support available to schools

Schools facing a major critical incident will invariably galvanise the resources of their community - teachers, governors, parents, other agencies - to support each other through the difficulties.

In some circumstances schools will need extra help to provide emotional support, and debriefing for example from the Educational Psychology Service and other sections of the council or from external agencies (e.g. health trusts, counselling services, religious or voluntary organisations). It is essential that your school seeks, commissions and manages any such external support offered.

In the aftermath of a major incident, especially one attracting media attention, schools can be inundated with offers of help from voluntary groups and individuals.

You will need to select and manage such offers carefully to meet the best interests of pupils and staff. It is clear that anticipation of a critical incident, through basic planning and staff training, will be invaluable if such an event occurs.

The council can make available three specific types of support to schools in the first days and weeks after a critical incident (in addition to technical and practical services).

#### **D1: Telephone contact for advice and support**

Advice can be obtained through the Directors and Heads of Services in Children's Services, Educational Psychology Service, Educational Welfare Service, and other agencies (see Section 3). Such contacts can be useful, particularly for headteachers, in providing specific information, moral support, advice and a trusted sounding board at a difficult time.

During the course of a critical incident or bereavement, a pupil may be identified as having additional needs. In such case it may be beneficial for a school to initiate a CAF (Common Assessment Framework). Further guidance on whether to carry out a CAF and the advantage of such can be found within the Partnership Working section



on the Harrow LSCB website <http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk/partnershipworking.aspx>, e-mail [caf@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:caf@harrow.gov.uk) or call the Information Sharing Team on 020 8424 1035.

When a child or young person dies there are procedures which take place depending on whether the death was expected or unexpected. For example unexpected deaths could be subject to rapid response procedures. Further information can be found at [www.harrowlscb.co.uk/cdop.aspx](http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk/cdop.aspx). There is a single Point of Contact (SPOC), which professionals can use to notify of a death – 020 8869 3068.

## **D2: Information sharing and planning with staff**

School staff, especially class teachers or form tutors, may feel responsible for supporting the pupil or class during a period of crisis. However, they also have to deal with their own emotions. A new loss may evoke memories of a previous one. Grief or other reactions may return for a while.

In addition, there are several reactions connected with being a professional person having responsibility for the support of children and young people. Feelings of helplessness and inadequacy in the face of others' grief and pain are not uncommon. Shock, embarrassment, guilt and a wish to push down the emotions are all natural reactions at such times.

It is important that staff members have support networks readily available and feel able to ask for help. Senior staff and governors need to be aware that these reactions may occur and should seek appropriate guidance from outside agencies. (See section 3 and Appendix 3).

It may be helpful for teachers to discuss the difficulties they may face collectively. Schools should endeavour to maintain as normal an atmosphere as possible, therefore providing a stable environment that will help children and younger people cope with any stress arising from their personal circumstances.

It is also important to remember that school staff, including teachers and welfare assistants, are not trained counsellors. They are not expected to offer bereavement counselling. Listening and being available for comfort are the main skills required. However, if a member of staff feels unable to offer support because of their own

reactions, this should be acknowledged and accepted, and another colleague should be considered for the role.

Specialist support can be provided to help a group of staff come to terms with a critical incident and to plan their responses to pupils, colleagues and parents. This might, in a small school, be a structured half day to talk over individual reactions and concerns with all staff.

Some follow-up support could be agreed for the whole group or part of it. Where, over a few weeks, it is clear that individual staff need more substantial support or counselling, the council can help with referral to appropriate agencies. (See Section 3, also Appendix 8 for contact numbers.)

### **D3: Information sharing sessions for pupils**

Evidence suggests that when pupils are directly involved as witnesses to a traumatic incident they benefit from structured debriefing sessions. Debriefing can also benefit pupils on the periphery of an incident. This enables them to express what they saw or heard, how it affected them and how they feel about it in retrospect.

Schools can often handle this process themselves. For more demanding and emotive situations, however, specialist support is valuable. The Educational Psychology Service can provide this support. Specialist help needs careful planning and is likely to be given between one and four weeks after the incident. It is essential to get parental consent to children's involvement.

## **E: Managing trauma**

### **E1: Introduction**

The management of a critical incident can result in a great deal of stress for those involved. It is therefore important to:

- acknowledge the emotional state of staff and children and allow time and space when needed;
- acknowledge that some staff may not wish to or be able to be directly involved in supporting children;

- be aware that the burden of support may fall disproportionately on a small number of staff;
- acknowledge that the incident may act as a trigger to children who are emotionally vulnerable, even if they are not directly involved. This may result in difficulties in behaviour and relationships;
- be sensitive to the effects on staff or children's concentration and performance;
- be sensitive to the effect on home and social life for families and peers.

## **E2: Providing opportunities to talk through or otherwise express personal reactions**

While attempting to ensure continuity and normality, staff should encourage children to talk about their feelings and be prepared to listen to them.

It is often difficult for children to make sense of, and talk about, what has happened because of their limited thinking and communication skills. It is therefore helpful if familiar adults are particularly alert to the signals that show that the children are still working through what has happened.

Some children may require support, which cannot be provided in a class or small group. If needed, short-term counselling should be offered by appropriately trained and supported staff, possibly outside the normal timetable.

Groups of children may be offered support from outside professionals who can debrief them, to help them understand their reactions and develop coping strategies. Parental permission should be sought in this instance.

Staff closely associated with the children involved should be offered opportunities for debriefing and counselling. Be aware of the possible delayed reactions of those actively involved in responding to a critical incident. Staff who are co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and scheduled for relief periods.

Some children and staff may need therapeutic help for a considerable time or at some time after the event. New staff would need to be made aware of loss, etc.

**E3: Continuing or quickly re-establishing normal routines**

- every attempt should be made to provide as much continuity as possible for children;
- maintain the normal school day so that children are unsettled as little as possible.

**E4: Formal and informal recognition and rituals**

Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families directly affected by the incident, for example:

- injured children can be visited in hospital;
- children can be encouraged to send cards and letters;
- plan to attend a funeral, if welcomed by the family involved;
- discuss the desirability of holding special assemblies and memorial services;
- anniversaries are key times and your school should ensure such times are planned for and handled with sensitivity.

**E5: Return to school by pupils or staff**

Pupils and staff who were injured or distressed as a direct result of the incident will need significant support to reintegrate back into school life.

Remember to provide help to others returning to school after an absence, for example:

- staff and pupils on sick leave at the time of the incident;
- anyone who missed the debriefing sessions;
- those who were not at school on the day of the incident and who learned of events afterwards.

**This information is summarised as a table in Appendix 6**



# SECTION 3

## *Organisations offering support to schools*

### *Contents*

- 3.1 Educational Psychology Service
- 3.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
- 3.3 Education Welfare Service
- 3.4 Other services

## 3.1 Educational Psychology Service

The Educational Psychology Service puts critical incidents as a top priority and will respond to those involved helping them to understand and cope with its aftermath. Our starting point is to help identify and acknowledge existing expertise/experience and to assist those concerned to build upon this at a stressful time. The service therefore sets out to be available to help monitor and assist in meeting the psychological needs of pupils and staff in a manner which complements, rather than replaces, the skills of others.

A range of psychological skills are brought to this process as we listen, examine, plan and provide support. It is important to remember that no two incidents will be the same and that all children, and adults, will deal with these incidents in individual and unique ways. Our response, therefore, needs to be flexible.

The role of the educational psychologist (EP) can be seen at different levels - they can be involved in helping schools in preparation for any form of loss or bereavement, and they can be there to provide support on occasions where a reactive approach is required.

The Educational Psychology Service can provide support to school staff after a critical incident in a number of ways by:

- working with staff groups to plan how to respond to individual and group needs (possibly via the curriculum, including grief reactions and support systems across different cultures);
- helping the school implement the guidelines in this document;
- providing information about typical reactions to traumatic events;
- providing advice on ways to support individual pupils;
- Some EPs are able to provide short-term therapeutic interventions, where appropriate.

All types of support are negotiated between staff and the educational psychologist concerned. The Educational Psychology Service will be undertaking specific training in this area in order to provide support to schools.

The Educational Psychology Service can be reached on 020 8966 6480.

## 3.2 Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS)

CAMHS consists of staff qualified in the field of child and adolescent mental health, including child psychiatry, clinical psychology, social work, psychiatric nursing, art therapy, family therapy and child psychotherapy. They provide a service to children and young people with emotional, behavioural and developmental difficulties. Involvement may arise from long term concerns which could include eating problems, school refusal, unresolved grief, chronic illness or when there are relationship difficulties in the family. All of these issues may arise following bereavement. However, CAMHS do not offer stand-alone bereavement counselling.

CAMHS can be reached on 020 8966 6479 (Alexandra Avenue Health & Social Care Centre).

## 3.3 Educational Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service can also offer advice and support when there are difficulties, which have an impact on a pupil's school attendance. In situations where these may be linked to a critical or traumatic incident, an education welfare officer may be able to provide direct support, or assist in making a referral to those who may be better placed to help. The education welfare officer may also work with other services such as the Educational Psychology Service in providing appropriate advice and support. The Educational Social Welfare Service can be contacted either by schools or directly by parents. The Service operates a daily duty system (9.00 am to 5.00 pm) and can be contacted on 020 8963 5544. This system also operates during school holiday times.

If you are worried about the safety or welfare of any child you can contact the Referral and Assessment Team at: 429-433 Pinner Road Harrow HA1 4HN, on 020 8863 5544 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm). For emergencies outside office hours please telephone the Emergency Duty Team on 020 8424 0999.

## 3.4 Other agencies and services

Other agencies can also be contacted for advice and support. These might include:



- Emergency Planning Team - This service maintains corporate emergency plans for major incidents and other emergencies affecting the borough. In an emergency this service is contacted via Children's Services. (For further details see appendix 4)
- Ethnic Minority Achievement Service (020 8416 8844)
- Human Resources and Development Advice line (020 8424 1110)
- Occupational Health (020 8424 1449)
- Achievement and Inclusion Division (020 8736 6500) M -F 9-5pm
- Health and Safety (020 88424 1512)
- Children's Services Duty and Assessment Team (020 8863 5544)
- Council Employee Assistance Programme - First Assist or Well Being programme
- Teacher Support Network – (08000 562 561)
- Voluntary Organisations (see appendix 3)
- Religious Organisations
- Health Services – Northwest London Hospital have a bereavement Co-ordinator located at Northwick Park Hospital, who provides information for families following death of a child in the hospital setting.
- Contact Point (020 8424 1369). It can be used by designated professionals to access contact details for other practitioners working with the child or young person.
- Resource directory from [www.harrowlscb.co.uk](http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk), which contains a list of resources and services available.
- Schools can contact Legal Service if appropriate.
- Schools can direct parents and carers to, [www.harrow.gov.uk/schoolopenstatus](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/schoolopenstatus), which will let them know if the school is opened following an emergency or critical incident. Information regarding whether a school is opened or closed can be also be obtained by calling 020 8408 7508, which is an automated service and when prompted key in a school's 7-digit number. For further details, see [www.harrow.gov.uk/info/17/school-information-and-advice/1664/is your school open or closed today](http://www.harrow.gov.uk/info/17/school-information-and-advice/1664/is-your-school-open-or-closed-today).

# APPENDICES

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# APPENDIX 1

## Religions and beliefs about death.

The ways in which people deal with death and the funeral rites they carry out are usually very closely linked with their beliefs about life after death. Below are a brief description of the beliefs and customs from some of the main world religions and information on non-religious funerals.

### BUDDHISM

Types of Buddhism:

- Theravada - has remained closest to the original Buddha's teaching
- Mahayana - collection of Buddhists traditions which includes: Zen, Pure Land, and Tibetan Buddhism

#### Buddhists believe:

- in reincarnation
- everything is impermanent and that through meditation become 'awake' to this reality
- there is no permanent 'soul', people are made up of interrelated elements:
  - physical form
  - sensations/feelings
  - perceptions
  - will
  - consciousness

which disintegrate at death

- believe in **Karma** (deeds/actions). It is only the result of previous actions that ensures a new set of elements is reconstituted to create a new person
- believe in **Nirvana** – state of enlightenment and permanent liberation.

#### Practices:

- ◆ There is a wide variety in Buddhist belief and practice of death. The funeral is not usually viewed as a 'religious event'.
- ◆ The coffin may be taken in a decorated carriage to the hall where the funeral takes place.
- ◆ It is surrounded by flowers and gifts, which are given to the monks after the ceremony.
- ◆ Prayers are said.
- ◆ There is music and food.
- ◆ Death and reincarnation takes one nearer to Nirvana so usually there is no display of grief or tears.
- ◆ Emphasis is on new life, not on death.
- ◆ The attitude is of calmness and acceptance of death.
- ◆ White is often worn at funerals.
- ◆ Coffin may be opened.
- ◆ A photograph is placed near the coffin to remind those present of the transient nature of life.
- ◆ The body is cremated.

## CHRISTIANITY

The most common groups within Christianity are:

- Anglican/Church of England
- Roman Catholic
- Orthodox
- Protestants

### Christians believe:

- in God
- in Jesus as the Son of God
- in eternal life - a quality of being
- that human beings are in continuing fellowship with God - throughout life and after death – soul goes on after life.
- in resurrection – the body is resurrected at the Day of Judgement
- in heaven/hell (some)
- in judgement
- For Roman Catholics, there is a state called purgatory - a place in which the soul of a person is purified ready to enter heaven.
- There is only one life to be lived

### Practices:

- ◆ The practices associated with death re-affirm essential Christian beliefs and are a means of reaffirming faith in God - which will help to cope with the loss and sorrow.
- ◆ When a Christian dies, it is seen as the end of his/her life on earth. A funeral is held for friends and family to grieve for the person who has died and give thanks for their life.
- ◆ Burial was inherited from the Jews - but cremation is also common today
- ◆ The funeral service usually takes place within a week.
- ◆ The body is placed in a coffin and taken to a church.
- ◆ Funeral service consists of bible readings/prayers/music. The actual service structure varies according to which branch of Christianity is followed. For example, in the Roman Catholic faith there may be a Mass.
- ◆ In Protestant/Anglican rites there is a great emphasis on Hope of resurrection
- ◆ Diversity in practice e.g. Irish 'wake' – body laid in at the coffin with the lid open at dead person's home. Family and friends will sit around the coffin, talking praying and sometimes singing.
- ◆ Wreaths: traditionally these are round to symbolise continuity and eternity
- ◆ Colour of mourning = black (until 8th Century white)
- ◆ It is acceptable to display grief with tears - this has been encouraged by the 'church' as a means of coping with loss.
- ◆ Memorial service may be held later. Memorials can be affected more by social pressures rather than beliefs, so it is not necessarily a religious event.

## HUMANISM

### Humanists believe:

- that death is a natural end to life
- that death should be as painless as possible, hence support for voluntary euthanasia
- that there is no 'future life' or 'heaven', punishment/reward
- that there is no supernatural dimension

### Practices:

- ◆ Legally there need be no ceremony at all, the undertaker could dispose of the body. However, humanists are extremely sensitive towards the needs of the living. So there may be non-religious funeral ceremonies or memorial meetings.
- ◆ The form of the ceremony is determined by the relatives and the wishes of the deceased. Usually there is a simple ceremony at the crematorium or burial ground. This can be taken by a Humanist Official – celebrant.
- ◆ A key and distinctive element of the ceremony will be the remembrance and commemoration of the dead person's achievements in life.
- ◆ The ceremony can include, music, poetry and readings.

## HINDUISM

### Hindus believe:

- that each person has a soul which is permanent and unchanging
- that at death the soul sheds its body and 'puts on' another body (not necessarily human) in an endless cycle of re-births. Finally it will reach God
- in the transmigration of souls
- that during life one passes through 16 stages. The stages are called SAMSKARAS
- in one God - Brahman
- that the physical body is made of Fire, Air, Earth, Water
- cremation returns the body to fire/air
- burial returns the body to earth
- that death brings impurity into the home
- in the law of KARMA (deeds)

N.B. There is tremendous diversity/range within Hinduism particularly as it is affected by regional factors/practices.

### Practices:

- ◆ A priest usually conducts the funeral.
- ◆ The body is wrapped in a new cloth and placed in a coffin. Sometimes gifts are included e.g. piece of gold or silver and garland of flowers/beads.
- ◆ The body is usually cremated within 24 hours of death.

- ◆ The coffin is carried to the place of cremation by 6 male relatives. Close female relatives are discouraged from attending the cremation - distress (cultural rather than religious)
- ◆ The coffin is covered with flowers. Ghee is poured over it to help it burn. The eldest son should set the coffin alight. In Britain - press button at crematorium
- ◆ Readings about reincarnation are selected from the Holy Books
- ◆ 3 days after cremation the ashes are collected and scattered on a river - River Ganges if at all possible
- ◆ Colour of mourning = white.
- ◆ Friends and relatives bring gifts to the family, keep them company, share grief and support them on 11th/ 13th day - all will gather to offer 'Pinda' (rice balls) and milk - to the dead person - this is to show they are grateful for the acts of kindness which they received during his/her lifetime. The eldest son or other male relative will have their head shaved as a sign of bereavement and cleansing.
- ◆ After the 13th day, public mourning ends in a large feast, after which only private, personal grief remains.
- ◆ Memory is preserved in daily worship
- ◆ Some Hindus hold feast and make donations to charities at 3,6,9 month or yearly intervals.

## ISLAM

### Groups within Islam:

- Sunni
- Shia
- Ahmadiyya
- Sufi
- Ishmaeli

### Muslims believe:

- there is one God - Allah
- that Muhammad is the prophet of God
- that they must submit to the will of Allah
- that there is only one life to be lived
- in physical resurrection of the body
- in judgement - Paradise everlasting - no intermediate stage - Hell is strict and impartial justice
- that there will be a day of judgement - cosmic upheaval, each soul will be judged according to deeds while on earth
- that when a person dies their soul is looked after by the angel of death in a place called Barzakh (for one day) until God finally judges the world
- that death is temporary separation
- that extravagant expressions of grief are rebellion against the 'will of Allah'

### Practices:

- ◆ Mourning is demonstrated by readings from the Qur'an - in this way the bereaved are supported and comforted by their faith.

- ◆ Prior to death, friends and relatives will gather and read from the Qur'an. The dying person always tries to say the Shahadah.
- ◆ Burial takes place within 24 hours. (Bury as believe in physical resurrection).
- ◆ The body is washed, perfumed and wrapped in three pieces of white cotton (shroud) - men by men and women by women.
- ◆ Coffins will not be used – unless required by law. The body will be buried with the face towards the MAKKAH.
- ◆ The grave will not be marked by a monument or tombstone
- ◆ The family (traditionally) stays indoors for 3 days after the funeral - they will not cook. Friends and relatives will bring food to them.
- ◆ The grave may be visited every Friday for 40 days.
- ◆ The mourning period will last up to 3 months. During this time there will be no celebrations or weddings.
- ◆ During EID celebrations, visits will be made to the cemetery to say prayers at family graves - this is a reminder that even in midst of happy celebrations - life is temporary and it is important to live correctly to ensure eternal life with Allah.

## JUDAISM

Groups within Judaism:

- Orthodox:
  - Hassidic(Ultra orthodox)
  - Sephardic (Mediterranean/ Middle Eastern)
  - Ashkenazi (European)
- Reform
- Liberal

**Jews believe:**

- in one God
- that there is only one life to be lived
- that after death the soul goes to the 'world to come' (OLAM HA'BA)
- that they should focus on what is involved in being faithful to God in this life and contributing to humanity.
- orthodox believe in resurrection of the body (cremation forbidden)
- orthodox believe in the coming of a Messiah - at which time all souls will return to their bodies -Reform Jews use the expression of 'life eternal' for resurrection of the body (cremation permitted)

**Practices:**

- ◆ The key in relation to practice is to concentrate on support for the close relatives whilst ensuring that the memory of the individual is retained.
- ◆ The last words a Jew will say before death is the SHEMA. Within 24 hours the body will be ideally buried. The body will be washed, dressed and placed in a plain coffin.
- ◆ There will be no flowers - to ensure that there is no distinction between rich and poor. Mourners will cut a slit in their outer clothes as a mark of grief.
- ◆ The cemetery – Bet Hayyim- means 'house of life'. Everyone will participate in the interment by filling the grave with earth. The closest male relative will say the prayer - Kaddish - to help the dead person's soul to Olam Ha'ba.

- ◆ For one whole week the family will 'sit in mourning' - friends will provide food for them, they are encouraged to express their grief and talk about their loved one. For a month they will not participate in any entertainment. There is a gradual reduction in the intensity of the mourning in order to aid re-adjustment.
- ◆ For the following 11 months Kaddish is said every day. Mourning is for 12 months.
- ◆ Each year on the anniversary of the death the family say kaddish and burn a candle for 24 hours. The grave should be visited at least once a year - especially just before the Jewish New Year to ensure that cherished memories do not fade and to comfort the bereaved.

## SIKHISM

### Sikhs believe:

- in one God
- in reincarnation
- in heaven and hell - a soul may rest for a while before returning to earth. The soul will be corrected and/or rewarded. Heaven/Hell are temporary dwelling place—person's soul may be reborn several times.
- that there will be union with God - after human beings have progressed upwards through many existences from the lower forms of life. This union is described as 'merging' with God
- that death is to be welcomed as removing the last obstacle to the complete union of God and the believer (hence do not encourage mourning).

### Practices:

- ◆ Before death - friends and relatives say the Sukhmani - psalm/song of peace from the Holy Book (**Guru Granth Sahib**)
- ◆ The body is washed and dressed by friends and relatives will make gifts of money and oil. The coffin is taken to the Gurdwara. The Gurdwara is the focus for all ceremonies rather than the home.
- ◆ In the Punjab, the body would be cremated.
- ◆ Only male relatives attend the service and then they will return to the Gurdwara for readings/prayers/hymns. The service ends with the distribution of Kara Parshad (offering of food) and a feast. This to symbolise the continuity of social life as opposed to the isolation from human contacts and normal activities - also the rejection of fasting and other ritual manifestations of grief.
- ◆ The ashes of the dead body are scattered on a Holy River.
- ◆ Money is donated to charities.
- ◆ For 10 days the family will read from the Guru Granth Sahib (mourning period).
- ◆ Relatives and close friends will keep the family company, comfort them, share grief and support them.



## APPENDIX 2

### Examples of involvement from the Educational Psychology Service

*Support to schools and parents in the light of world events is also part of the work of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS).*

*Following the tragedy in Beslan in September 2004, when school children were held hostage and many were killed, a Harrow school contacted the EPS, as a number of parents were concerned about what to tell their children about this event. Harrow EPS responded by holding an evening workshop for parents to help explain their children's possible reactions to the news and to suggest strategies that parents might use to help their children. The response from parents to the workshop was very positive.*

After the tsunami in January 2005 all schools in Harrow were sent a document developed by the Harrow EPS from the Beslan evening, to help school staff and parents support children who may have been affected or distressed by information and pictures in the media.

*An e-mail from an anxious parent, concerned by her child's reaction to a family bereavement, resulted in communication with the parent over a number of weeks, offering support, strategies and sources of further advice. On another, similar occasion the EP was able to undertake a home visit to give initial support to the family. Both these situations were followed up by contact with the relevant schools.*

The EPS was contacted by a school dealing with a sudden death, as a result of a suicide. An initial, priority visit allowed the EP to assess the needs of the school community. A member of the EPS team worked with individuals as well as groups of staff and pupils, using counselling skills to enable them to express and work through their emotions and move forward. This work took place over time, with on-going monitoring of the situation.

On other occasions the initial visit has been sufficient to enable the school to put in place their own appropriate support strategies. Resources and materials for further work in school have also been provided.

*The EPS was contacted by a school concerned about how best to respond to a member of the school community diagnosed with a terminal illness. The EP was able to work with school staff to help them with their own reactions to the situation and how they could best support the child emotionally as well as educationally.*

*Where appropriate the EP would also work with the student and/or parents, providing such support and information about other support organisations as might be needed. The EP may also work with the child's peer group, in order to support them through the stages of grieving.*

The Educational Psychology Service was contacted by a school who was dealing with a difficult situation. The degree to which support was required emerged steadily. The school's senior management team discussed this with the educational psychology service and it was decided that the situation should be considered as a critical incident.

As a result support was made available from the Educational Psychology Service and used in a sensitive, flexible and low-key way. It was also provided at short notice when necessary. This enabled staff to have a 'listening ear' and emotional support at periods of heightened anxiety.

*Training is offered by the EPS to all schools in the borough, aiming to raise the awareness of school staff about the process of grieving and the possible reactions of bereaved children in school, so as to be more confident in their approach should bereavement occur. Practical activities are part of the training as well as discussion of ways to integrate the subject of loss and bereavement into the curriculum.*

## APPENDIX 3

### Suggested reading and other resources

Publications marked with an asterisk (\*) are highly recommended. Some of the information found in this publication has been drawn from sources listed below.

Abrams Rebecca, ***When Parents Die***, (Charles Letts, 1992). A book for young adults. The Author has written the book from personal experience.

Barnard P et al (Jessica Kingsley ,1999) ***Children Bereavement and Trauma: Nurturing Resilience***. Derived from the authors' experience of working with bereaved children after the Hillsborough disaster. It promotes the idea of healthy coping, and explores ways in which children and their families can be enabled to do this.

Department of Health (2008) ***Help is at Hand: a resource for people bereaved by suicide and other sudden, traumatic death***. It aims to meet the needs of the bereaved and also those health and other professionals who are in contact with them. It contains a comprehensive list of resources for further advice and support.

DCFS Emergency Planning [www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies) \*

Dyregrov A, ***Grief in children: A Handbook for Adults*** (Jessica Kingsley 1991, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2008)\* A guide to reactions to death in children of preschool and school age.

Grollman EA, ***Talking about Death: A Dialogue between Parent and Children*** (Beacon 1990). A guide for adults on how to talk to children about death, with a read-together section for the adult and child (under nines).

Heegaard, Marge ***When Someone has a very Serious Illness***, (Woodland Press). A workbook for 6-12 year olds. Also ***When Someone Very Special Dies***

Hindmarch C, ***On the Death of a Child*** (Radcliff Medical Press 1993)\* Guidelines for the support of both adults and children affected by a child's death.

Holland, J et al ***Loss, Bereavement and Awareness Training***. (Jessica Kingsley 2005)

Jewett C, ***Helping children cope with separation and loss*** (Batsford 1982)

Kibble D, ***Safety and disaster management in schools and colleges*** (David Fulton 1998)\*

Krementz Gollancz J, ***How It Feels When A Parent Dies***. (1983)

Leaman O, ***Death and Loss - Compassionate approaches in the classroom*** (Cassell 1995) A practical guide for teachers concerned with pastoral care.

Mayled J, ***Death Customs***. (Wayland 1986). Looks at death customs in all major religions.

Pennells M and Smith S (Editors), ***Interventions with bereaved children***

(Jessica Kingsley 1995). Covers different approaches and includes a chapter on managing tragedy in a secondary school.

Smith S, ***The Forgotten Mourners: Guidelines for Working with Bereaved Children: 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition.*** (Jessica Kingsley 1999)\* Concise guidelines for supporting bereaved children, including a section on what teachers can do and a useful resource section.

Rowling L, ***Grief in School Communities: Effective Support Strategies*** (Open University Press 2003)

Rutter, J. ***Refugee Children in the Classroom: A Handbook for Teachers.*** (Trentham Books, 1994)

Salmon, K. ***Dealing with Death.*** (Special Children January 2006)

Teachernet website ***Planning for Emergencies***

<http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies/planning/emergencyplan/index.html> \*

Ward B et al, ***Good grief 1: exploring feelings, loss and death for under 11s: Second Edition (1995)*** and ***Good grief 2: exploring feelings, loss and death for over 11s (Second Edition (1996))*** Jessica Kingsley Publishers \* A wide range of excellent resource materials and ideas for the curriculum.

Wells R, ***Helping children cope with grief*** (D Fulton 1998)  
Includes suggestions for primary school teachers.

Worden JW, ***Grief and grief therapy*** (Tavistock 1983) A good general textbook. Children aged 7-16 years talk about their experience of bereavement. Useful book, shows variation in reactions.

Yule W and Gold A, ***Wise before the event*** (Calouste Guibenkian Foundation 1993). A more detailed review and planning guide for schools working to anticipate critical incidents. All schools received a copy in the past.

### **Books for children.**

***Two Weeks with the Queen.*** M Gleitzman (1989). Piper Books.  
Suitable for 10 year olds and over.

***Am I Still a Sister?*** A Sims. Big A Company Publications.  
*Excellent book on sibling's death.*

***Someone Special Has Died.*** St Christopher's Hospice, Social Work Department. A booklet for children up to 10 years old explaining death.

***Grandpa and Me.*** M and B Alex. Lion Books. The death of a grandparent seen from a Christian viewpoint.

***Grandpa.*** J Burningham. Cape.  
Poignant story of a young girl's relationship with her grandfather.

***Dada Maa Dies.*** J Jones. Blackie. The death of a grandparent in a Hindu family.

**Goodbye Max.** H Keller. J MacRae. Deals with the death of a pet.

**Waterbugs and Dragonflies: Explaining Death to Children.** D Stickney. Mowbray. Highly recommended by workers in the field

**I'll Always Love You.** H Wilhelm. Hodder and Stoughton Children's Books. A moving story about the death of a much loved pet. Highly recommended book.

**When Uncle Bob Died** - Althea Dinosaur Pubs. Simple clear book for younger primary age children.

**Badger's Parting Gifts.** S Varley, Picture Lions. Highly recommended book.

**A Dragon in Your Heart** -S LeBlanc, Jessica Kinsley Publishers

Board game: **All about me** (Peta Hemmings from Barnardo's) Useful for work with primary age children.

NAPCE (National Association for Pastoral Care in Education) **Children and Bereavement, Death and Loss: What can the School do?**

c/o: Education Department, University of Warwick. Tel: 02476 523810

A selection of these materials is held by the Educational Psychology Service.

## Organisations offering support for parents and children

**ACT (Association for Children with Terminal and life-threatening conditions and their families)** - an umbrella organisation providing information about available services: Orchard House, Orchard Lane, Bristol, BS1 5DT. Tel: 0117 922 1556 Monday - Friday 9am - 4pm [www.act.org.uk](http://www.act.org.uk) or email: [inof@act.org.uk](mailto:inof@act.org.uk)

**Barnardo's** - The Future Matters Project - offering work with children and families suffering terminal illnesses. Mersey House, 9 South John Street, Liverpool, L1 8BN. Tel: 0151 708 7848

**Barnardo's** - The Orchard Project – offering work with children, young people and families affected by death. Barnardo's Orchard Project, Orchard House, Fenwick Terrace, Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE2 2JQ. Tel: 0191 240 4813

**Brent Bereavement Service** – Provides counselling to bereaved living in Brent. 020 8458 6818. [www.brentbs.org.uk](http://www.brentbs.org.uk).

**British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**  
BACP House, 35-37 Albert Street, Rugby, Wark CV21 2SG. Tel: 0870 4435252. [www.bacp.co.uk](http://www.bacp.co.uk)

**The Child Bereavement Charity** - A National Charity. Support and counselling for grieving families and training and support for professionals. Ashton House, High Street, West Wycombe, Bucks HP14 3AG. Tel: 01494 446648 [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

**Childhood Bereavement Network** – A national, multi-agency network of organisations and individuals offering support, advice and training for bereaved

children and young people. 8 Wakley Street Childhood Bereavement Network EC1V 7QE Tel: 020 7843 6309 Email: [cbn@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cbn@ncb.org.uk)  
[www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/index.htm)

**Child Death Helpline** - a freephone helpline for anyone affected by the death of a child. Evenings: 7.00 pm - 10.00 pm and Wednesdays: 10.00 am - 1.00 pm. Tel: 0800 282986

**Child Line** - Freepost 1111, London N1 0BR. Tel: 0800 1111. [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**The Compassionate Friends (TCF)** – A Nationwide self-help organisation for bereaved parents; resource library and advice leaflets. The Compassionate Friends, 53 North Street, Bristol, BS3 1EB. Tel: 0845 1232304

**Cruse Bereavement Care** - a national organisation for the widowed and their children Central Office, P.O. Box 800, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1RG. Tel: Helpline 0844 477 9400. Admin: 020 8939 9530. [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk) or [www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk) Email: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

**RD4U** is a website designed for young people by young people. It is part of Cruse Bereavement Care's Youth Involvement Project and is here to support people after the death of someone close. [www.rd4u.org.uk](http://www.rd4u.org.uk). Freephone helpline: 0808 808 1677

**Grief Encounter Project** – A charity set up to help bereaved children and their families. Based in Barnet, it will work with young people and their families in Harrow. PO Box 49701, London, N20 8XJ. Tel: 020 8446 7452  
[www.griefencounter.com/index.php](http://www.griefencounter.com/index.php). email: [contact@griefencounter.org.uk](mailto:contact@griefencounter.org.uk).

**Harrow Bereavement Care** – A local registered charity which offers support to bereaved families in their home, training to schools and support to children in schools. The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 4HZ. Tel: 020 8 426 5720. email: [harrowbereave@btconnect.com](mailto:harrowbereave@btconnect.com)

**H.O.P.E (Harrow Offering Parents Encouragement)** – Can provide workshops on bereavement. Contact HOPE at The Lodge, 64 Pinner Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 4HZ. Tel: **0208 863 7319** Email: [info@hopeharrow.org.uk](mailto:info@hopeharrow.org.uk)

**Macmillan Cancer Support** – Provide practical, medical, emotional and possible financial support for those affected by cancer. [www.macmillan.org.uk](http://www.macmillan.org.uk) Tel: 0808 808 000. A Macmillan Cancer Information Centre is located at Northwick Park Hospital (Main Entrance) Mon-Fri 10.30 to 3.30pm. Tel: 020 8868 2099 email: [macinfo@nwlh.nhs.uk](mailto:macinfo@nwlh.nhs.uk)

**Papyrus** (prevention of young suicide) - [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org). A voluntary UK organisation aimed at the prevention of young suicide and the promotion of mental health and emotional well-being. They offer UK resources and support for those dealing with suicide, depression or emotional distress, particularly teenagers and young adults.

**Winston's Wish** – A registered charity providing a grief support programme for children and parents, with a wide range of excellent resource materials available. Head Office Westmoreland House 80-86 Bath Road, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire GL53 7JT. Tel: Enquires – 01242 515157 Helpline - 0845 2030405. [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

## APPENDIX 4

### **The Role of the Emergency Planning Team**

#### **Staffing**

The Emergency Planning Team is made up of an Emergency Planning Manager (EPM), two Emergency Planning Officers (EPO) and a group of around 20 Emergency Response Officers (EROs).

#### **Planning**

The EP Team maintain the Corporate Major Incident (MI) plan which outlines a generic council response to a declared major incident.

A major incident is an emergency that demands the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services or other responding organisations. The Corporate MI plan clarifies directorate responsibilities and communication and co-ordination arrangements.

Directorates regularly deal with emergencies without the involvement or support of other directorates or the Emergency Planning Team and most maintain their own emergency plans. This is the same as for individual schools who are expected to have their own emergency plans in place (following guidance and templates available on the DCFS website, see page 16).

To ensure a consistent regional approach in emergency arrangements and in responding to emerging risks the Emergency Planning team liaises closely with partner agencies (fire, police and ambulance etc.) and other authorities, local and regional. Some of the areas we regularly review include the Council's ability to respond to flooding, pandemic flu and severe weather.

#### **Incident Response**

If a major incident affecting the borough required a council response, the EP Team would support a corporate group in coordinating the work of affected directorates. Typically this would see the establishment of a Borough Emergency Control Centre (BECC) and the convening of a Corporate Incident Management Team (CIMT). This CIMT, chaired by the Chief Executive (or nominated deputy) would consist of Heads of Departments and sets the strategic agenda for the Council's response. Trained



staff in the Borough Emergency Control Centre (BECC) use strategic goals to direct the tactical response for those on scene. The staff in the BECC are either EROs or volunteers trained for the role.

### **EROs**

Through the Duty ERO rota, the Emergency Response Officers (EROs) provide a 24 hour point of contact for the emergency services and are able to take early decisions on the level of response to any reported emergency.

Generally these officers are all middle management grade officers with a broad knowledge of Harrow Council.

### **Contact**

In the event of a crisis or emergency affecting any council service initial reports should be directed through normal management chains for action. In many cases directorates maintain their own effective arrangements for dealing with such occurrences.

Incidents requiring a large-scale emergency service response or coordination across council directorates may require the support that can be provided by the emergency planning arrangements outlined above.

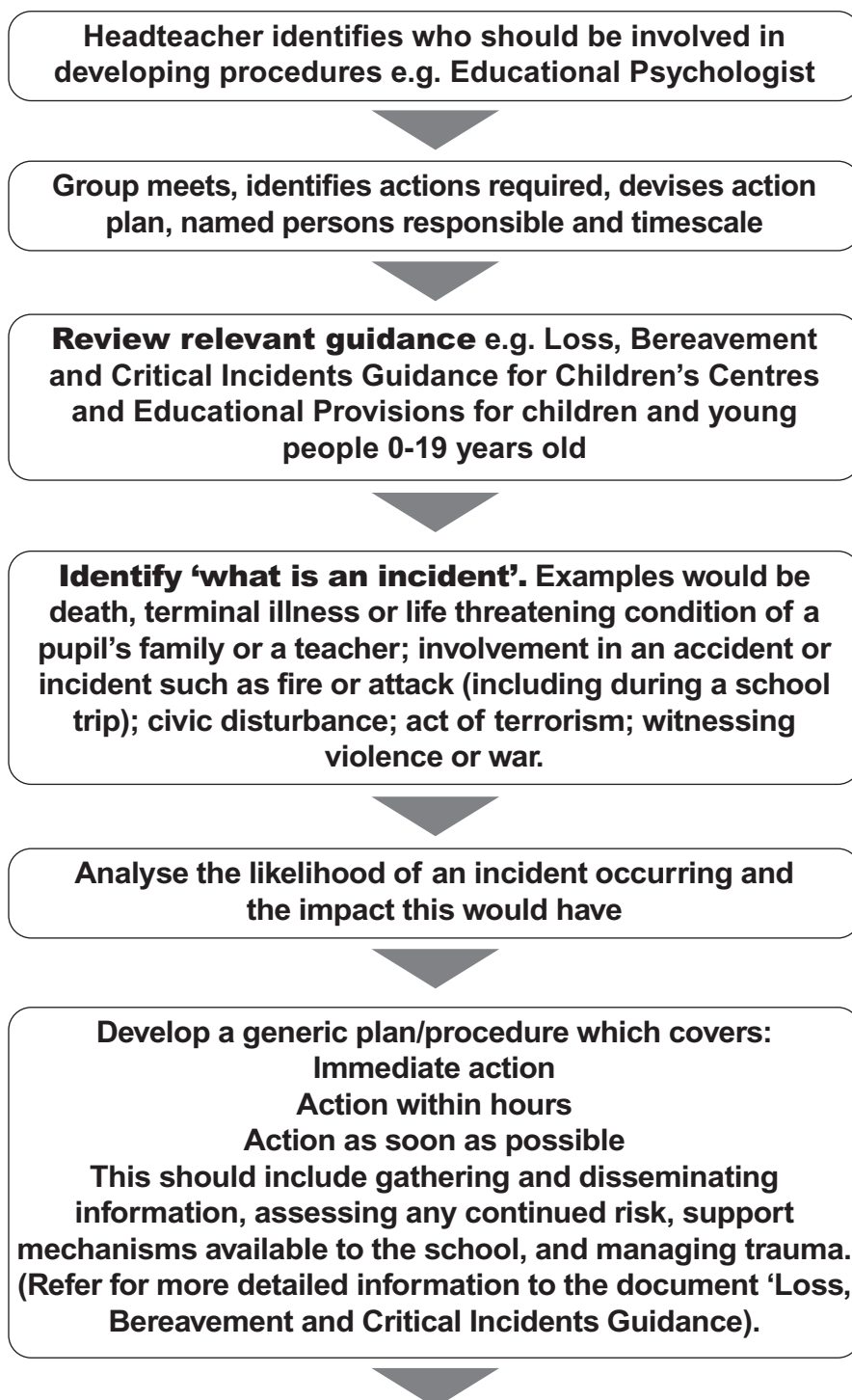
During business hours contact with the Emergency Planning Team should be through the Director of Children's Services (see appendix 8 for numbers) or if Out of Hours via Security (ask for the Duty Emergency Response Officer).



# APPENDIX 5

## CRITICAL INCIDENTS PROCESS MAP

(This process map is designed to assist schools and other educational settings in developing their own procedural documents with regards to identifying what is a critical incident and what action should be taken following such an incident. It could also be used by Children's Centres and other educational provisions to support their policies and procedures)



**Implement procedure within school ensuring staff receive relevant training on this.**



**Headteacher responsible for ensuring review of procedure following an incident.**



**Headteacher responsible for ensuring procedure is amended as appropriate.**

# APPENDIX 6

## Suggested Action Plan in response to a Critical Incident

	Task	By Whom
<b>Immediate action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information</li> <li>• Assess continuing risk</li> <li>• Brief the Senior Management Team or School Critical Incident Team (CIT), as appropriate</li> <li>• Contact appropriate agencies and services</li> </ul>	Person receiving first notification of incident/ Headteacher/ nominated other
<b>Action within the first hour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact Directors and/or Executive Director of People First (Emergency Planning Team, if applicable)</li> <li>• Contact the families of those involved</li> <li>• Telephone communication to and from school</li> <li>• Inform school staff</li> <li>• Inform pupils</li> </ul>	Headteacher/ nominated other
<b>Action within the next few hours</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange debriefing for staff and pupils involved in the incident</li> <li>• Inform the wider community</li> <li>• Develop a plan for handling the feelings and reactions of others</li> <li>• Handle the media via the Communications Unit</li> </ul>	CIT/ People First contact/ School Staff / Outside Agencies (e.g. EPS, EWS, Social Care)
<b>Longer-Term Action:</b>		
<b>Support available to schools</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telephone contact for advice and support</li> <li>• Debrief and planning with staff</li> <li>• Debrief sessions for pupils</li> </ul>	School Staff/ Outside Agencies (e.g. EPS, EWS, Social Care)
<b>Managing trauma</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide opportunities to talk through or otherwise express personal reactions</li> <li>• Continue or quickly re-establish normal routines with sensitivity to how pupils could respond to curriculum</li> <li>• Carryout formal and informal recognition and rituals e.g. funeral</li> <li>• Plan for return to school by pupils or staff</li> </ul>	As above  Voluntary Organisations/ Community Groups

**These actions would form part of a general emergency plan within a school.**

# APPENDIX 7

## CHECKLIST for dealing with a CRITICAL INCIDENT in School

### Have I...

- Informed the Corporate Director of Children's Services and Director of Schools and Children's Development?
- Assessed continuing risk? Is it likely that further injuries/damage may occur?
- Contacted emergency services, if needed?
- Established an intervention team and identified a 'key worker' who will coordinate action?

### Do I need to...

- Arrange for senior staff to meet key personnel?
- Decide on the need to involve outside agencies and contact as necessary?
- Contact families as appropriate?
- Call a staff meeting to give information?
- Inform governors?
- Inform pupils in small groups as appropriate?
- Contact the communications office? Discuss this with the directors.
- Call a debriefing meeting of staff involved in the crisis?
- Debrief pupils involved in the crisis allowing for health and safety?
- Set up strategies for dealing with enquiries?
- Inform parents (with care and sensitivity)?
- Identify high risk pupils and staff and consider need for counselling support?
- Promote discussion in classes?
- Identify need for individual or group counselling or other help across the school?
- Organise any counselling / support in collaboration with appropriate services?

**Where possible it is helpful to stick to normal routines.**

# APPENDIX 8

## Contacts

Add details of contacts relevant to your school in the spaces provided below.

<i>Contact</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Number</i>
Chair of governors .....		
Attached Advisor .....		
Link Educational Psychologist .....		
Senior Education Welfare Officer .....		
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Team .....		
Police .....		
Police - Child Protection Referrals Desk .....		020 8733 3562
	<u><a href="mailto:scd5mailbox-harrowcjit@met.pnn.police.uk">scd5mailbox-harrowcjit@met.pnn.police.uk</a></u>	
Fire Brigade .....		
Hospital .....		
Harrow Children's Services Duty and Assessment Team.....		020 8863 5544
Emergency Duty Team (EDT) .....		020 8424 0999
Religious leaders .....		
.....		
.....		

**The Corporate Director of Children’s Service must be contacted:**

	Office*	Mobile
Catherine Doran, Corporate Director of Children’s Services	020 8424 1356	07949 636570
Heather Clements, Director of Schools and Children’s Development	020 8736 6502	07976 958015

Contact Harrow Local Safeguarding Board on 020 8424 1147 or [lscb@harrow.gov.uk](mailto:lscb@harrow.gov.uk) if there are safeguarding issues

Child Death notification - contact the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) on 020 8869 3068 and fill in a notification form from [http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk/contentsection/documents/notification\\_form\\_A.doc](http://www.harrowlscb.co.uk/contentsection/documents/notification_form_A.doc)

Additional Contacts within Children's Services:

Gail Hancock, Head of Service..... 020 8863 5544  
Safeguarding, Family Placement and Support

Adrian Parker, Head of Service, Achievement .....020 8736 6500  
and Inclusion

Roger Rickman, Head of Service, Special Needs Services .....020 8966 6334

Wendy Beeton, Head of Service, Integrated Early Years .....020 8416 8830  
and Community Services

Richard Segalov, Head of Service, Young People's Services ..... 020 8420 9344



**Educational Psychology Service**  
**Alexandra Avenue Health & Social Care Centre**  
**275 Alexandra Avenue**  
**South Harrow**  
**Middx**  
**HA2 9DX**  
**Tel: 020 8966 6480**

These guidelines were drawn up by Harrow Council's Educational Psychology Service with the Emergency Planning Team and Harrow Local Safeguarding Children's Board