

**RESPONDING TO AN UNEXPECTED  
CRITICAL INCIDENT RESULTING IN  
SIGNIFICANT HARM OR DEATH OF A  
CHILD, YOUNG PERSON OR ADULT IN  
SCHOOLS OR OTHER SETTINGS**

**GUIDANCE TO SUPPLEMENT:**

**A SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO MANAGING  
EMERGENCIES**

## **Introduction**

Incidents resulting in serious harm, injury or death of a child, young person or adult are subjects that are often difficult to address. It is almost inevitable though, that at some point in every teacher's career, the school community will be affected by a critical incident that may result in a tragic outcome in some way or another. At the time when a critical incident occurs, it can cause immediate shock, panic and confusion for those who are responsible for having to deal with co-ordinating a response to the situation.

This guidance is intended to offer a quick reference point for staff based in schools or other educational settings, should the unthinkable happen. It provides the protocol for who should be notified initially, and where to request support from at the time of the incident, through to longer term support for children, parents, staff and communities.

This guidance does not replace the School's Guide to Managing Emergencies; it should be used in conjunction with that guidance as it provides advice and guidance for many more eventualities than offered here.

In addition to the direct response that is necessary in notifying relevant partners, and in addressing immediate and practical/emotional support for pupils, staff and parents, there will also be a multi-disciplinary professional rapid response running alongside which will set out to enquire into and evaluate each unexpected child death. A brief outline of what this entails is contained towards the end of this guidance. A web-link is also provided to enable further understanding for this process.

## **Procedures**

A flowchart is attached for ease of reference in notifying the appropriate departments and in requesting support. The flowchart provides a reference to 'working hours-term time', and 'out of hours-term time and school holidays' guidance. (Appendix 1)

### **Working hours-term time/school holidays**

The head teacher or other responsible professional should contact:

- Emergency Liaison Officer (Asset Management Team)  
0161 778 0447/0420

No further calls should be necessary at this point as internal procedures will be activated (See appendix 1)

### **Out of hours-term time/school holidays**

The responsible person/professional e.g. police officer should contact:

- Emergency Services Team 0161 794 8888

No further calls should be necessary at this point as internal procedures will be activated (see appendix 1)

Where GMP (or other) convenes a multi-disciplinary meeting following a critical incident, the locality manager within the child's home locality should be notified and invited to attend.

The locality manager's role will be to ensure:

- That notification procedures have been followed and activated, and that the Educational Psychology Service has been notified.
- The head teacher for the school, or manager of the setting if other than a school, where the child attends/attended, is contacted by telephone (contact telephone numbers requested via HR during school holidays), and notified of the incident and made aware of the support available. It may also be necessary to notify head teachers and/or managers of other schools/settings attended by family or friends of the child or adult that the incident relates to.

Should the home locality manager not be available, the locality manager with strategic lead for critical incidents should be notified and invited (Gaynor Phillpotts, South locality team).

### **What support is available and what can these services offer?**

#### **1. Trauma Advice and Support Team**

*Eligibility Criteria for TAST Team call-out:*

The Trauma Advice and Support Team provide a service in the event of a major or critical incident, as part of the City Council's response to the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, under which the Council is a Category One Responder.

The services of the Team are available to the staff of Salford City Council and the citizens of Salford, who have been involved in a critical incident.

A critical incident can be defined as follows;-

*A critical incident is something which is outside the usual range of a person's experience, which may overwhelm them and impair their ability to cope.*

This can include:

- Involvement in or witnessing a major disaster such as a train crash
- Dealing with sudden or expected death
- Witnessing a traumatic incident
- Experiencing personal danger

- Being physically threatened
- Being subject to verbal abuse
- Racial or sexual harassment
- Destruction or theft of property
- Being subject to bullying

This is not an exhaustive list, and the policy of the Team is to consider the circumstances of every referral on its merits to assess whether it is appropriate to mobilise the team to respond.

The Team have responded to a wide range of critical incidents, for example;-

- The Kosovan Refugee Crisis
- The Adelphi St murder
- Armed robbery involving City Council staff
- Sudden death of colleagues
- Major incidents involving children being injured or killed
- Major incidents involving death or serious injury to Salford citizens

In these and similar circumstances the Team can offer:

- Defusing
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- Ongoing time limited Social Work Intervention
- One to one support following an incident
- Advice to managers following an incident
- Training on Defusing and De-briefing

*Defusing* is the first part of an intervention with people following a traumatic or critical incident. It is a technique used to ‘take the heat’ out of the situation and generally involves allowing people to talk about the situation. Defusing should happen as soon as possible after the incident. This can be carried out by the manager or senior person in the work base. However, there are times when it is more appropriate for someone from the TAST team to be deployed, as in the case of a major incident it may lead on to Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

#### *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.*

This is a specific technique in which all Team members are trained.

The aim of this is to reduce the unnecessary effects of trauma which can be emotional, psychological or physical. This is done partly by allowing people to talk about their thoughts and feelings surrounding the incident. Members of the Team doing the debriefing can give people information about the effects of trauma. This can help those affected by it to make sense of any reactions they may be having to it. It can be used to anticipate any future difficulties.

***Critical Incident Stress Debriefing should only be used by someone who is trained in the technique.***

This can be a “one off” intervention or follow up debriefings can be arranged as necessary.

## Appropriate Referrals

Often, it is easy to identify the circumstances in which the Team may be called upon. The circumstances of a major incident are usually self-evident. However there are circumstances where the criteria for Team intervention may not be clear.

In these circumstances, the Team Co-ordinators will be able to help managers and other referrers to clarify whether particular events are an appropriate referral for the team.

The City Council, and its partner agencies, provides a wide range of services to the public, many of which are focused on delivering appropriate services to troubled and vulnerable people and to people who may display challenging behaviours, for a variety of reasons.

There have been instances where the Team have been called upon to respond in situations which are not related to a critical or major incident, and which could be anticipated to occur at times within the above services.

These include instances such as

- The disclosure of previous experiences of abuse by children in residential or foster care or residents in care homes
- Physically threatening behaviour by mentally unwell or cognitively impaired service users

Services dealing with both children and adults in these circumstances *should* have policies and procedures in place to deal with this type of incident, and staff should have received relevant training to enable them to deal with these situations in a sensitive and appropriate manner. It is also expected that managers in these services will have the necessary skills to support staff appropriately in these circumstances.

It is expected that services *where such incidents may be anticipated to occur from time to time* will have developed policies and procedures which will provide an appropriate response in such circumstances, and that both staff and managers will be familiar with these arrangements.

Incidents such as these, which may be *anticipated* to occur from time to time in certain services, do not constitute an appropriate referral for the Trauma Advice and Support Team.

Managers should refer to their service area policies and procedures, and if necessary, senior managers in circumstances where such incidents occur.

## **2. Educational Psychology Service (EPS) Critical Incident Team:**

TAST as the first point of contact, will take responsibility for liaising as appropriate with the EPS following a critical incident.

### **What is the purpose of the Educational Psychology Service Critical Incident Team?**

- To enhance the school's/setting's own support and coping strategies, following a critical incident;
- To help the school/setting to understand and manage the range of responses to the incident.

### **What can EPS offer?**

- Support from an EP who knows your school/setting context;
- Telephone advice and guidance;
- In consultation with TAST, provide an initial visit, within 24 hours of your call to support you in your response to the incident. This visit will usually be made by two Educational Psychologists. They can provide guidance on immediate, medium term and long term action relating to your specific incident. Their aim will be to support you to support your children, staff and parents.

Further work may also be agreed, e.g.

- A briefing provided to all school/setting staff;
- Small group work with the school/setting staff most affected;
- A drop-in session for parents;
- Follow up visits and phone calls to the Head Teacher or Setting Manager.

***N.B.** EP's will not usually carry out direct work with children in these circumstances. This is because research shows that, following a critical incident, children are best helped by those adults they know and trust. However, EPs are able to carry out direct work with children if this meets an appropriate need and is considered by the school/setting to be beyond the resource of its own staff. Where possible, this work would be carried out jointly with the school/setting staff.*

The EPS Critical Incident Team evaluates its work with those who have received the support. This is in order to check that the team is working effectively and to modify practice in accordance with the range of need encountered.

### **3. Behaviour and Educational Support Team (BEST) support in the case of a critical incident.**

TAST as the first point of contact, will take responsibility for liaising as appropriate with the BEST following a critical incident.

BEST provide ongoing support to children and schools following critical incidents which have so far involved e.g. the death of a child, loss of a parent and longer term support for children who have experienced bereavement,

including suicide, sudden death and long term illness.

***Immediate response:***

TAST will contact BEST and co-ordinate support at the initial stages. Once support has been requested from BEST, they will provide an immediate response to the need which may include working alongside TAST colleagues initially offering activities e.g. circle time, small group work or individual support to children, families and school staff.

***Longer term response:***

BEST intervention may also include as follows:

- working with individuals referred to them;
- group work;
- whole class support;
- individual staff support;
- staff training sessions;
- Development of appropriate programmes of work to meet the needs of both school and families, dependant on the nature of the incident.

**4. Salford City Council Counselling Service**

In addition to the above services, employees of SCC can access support for themselves from the following:

***BDMA - Counselling Service***

Salford City Council provides a confidential counselling service via the BDMA Occupational Counsellors Ltd. This service:

- Provides a free independent confidential counselling service open to all employees of Salford City Council.
- Is available from 7.00 am to 11.00 pm 365 days a year.
- Ensures all calls are answered by a qualified counsellor;
- Can offer face to face sessions with a BDMA counsellor by appointment via the same number Monday-Fridays 9.00 am to 5.00pm.
- Can be contacted on 0800 919 765.
- <http://intranet.salford.gov.uk/communications/choosinghealth/campaign2.htm>

**Role of Salford Safeguarding Children Board in responding to unexpected child deaths.**

Salford Safeguarding Children Board is charged with the responsibility for responding to and learning from all childhood deaths through the Child Death Overview Panel, a requirement as outlined in Chapter 7 of Working Together to Safeguard Children, DfES, 2006.

As a professional working with the child and/or family, you may be asked to contribute to the multi-agency child death overview process.

Chapter 7 describes the key requirements with regard to child death.

The two basic components to this are:

- a **rapid response to unexpected deaths** by a group of professionals who come together for the purpose of enquiring into and evaluating each unexpected death;
- An **overview of all child deaths** in the area undertaken by a Child Death Overview Panel.

An unexpected child death is one which was not anticipated as a significant possibility 24 hours before the death, or where there was a similarly unexpected collapse leading to, or precipitating the events which led to the death. This includes all accidents, apparent suicides and sudden unexpected death in infancy.

There are three prime objectives of the child death overview process:

- establishing cause of death
- identifying contributory factors
- supporting the family

Further information regarding the role of the Child Death Overview Panel can be found at:

<http://www.gmsafeguardingchildren.co.uk/procedures/child-deaths/rapid-response-team>

Salford Safeguarding Children's Board has developed an e-learning training course entitled, 'When a child dies-an introduction to the child death review process'. The target audience for this training is all professionals who may be involved from time to time in the child death overview processes and their managers. This will include e.g. GPs, Health Visitors, School Health Advisors, Accident and Emergency staff, midwives, paediatricians, police, social workers, education managers, voluntary organisations and possibly others. For some staff, this will be all they require, but for others it is a lead into further training. This can be found at:

<http://e-tutor.salford.gov.uk/course/category.php?id=28>

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