

Managing

# **Critical Incidents in Schools 2016-2017**

## **Advice and Information for Schools**

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Including advice form Public Health Somerset.

EPS0304.CI – March 2015

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# **SECTION 1**

## **MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

- **Introduction - What is a Critical Incident?**
  
- **Developing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan**
  
- **LA Support for Schools Affected by a Critical Incident**
  
- **Educational Psychology Service Structured Support for Schools**

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 What is a Critical Incident?

We are only too well aware from the local and national media that unfortunately traumatic incidents affecting schools and local communities seem to be on the increase.

Such incidents come in many forms from major disasters such as Lockerbie, Hungerford, Herald of Free Enterprise, and Dunblane, to smaller scale incidents involving the death or serious injury of pupils, staff or parents. Whatever the scale of the incident, the effect on the individuals involved can be equally devastating.

It is now recognised that children are no more or less resilient than adults to traumatic events and their reactions are basically the same. Schools, therefore, have an important role to play in helping children to understand and cope with the impact of such events. School is a normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity. Teachers have many skills and techniques which they use routinely to help troubled children and, with some further training and confidence building, these skills can be adapted to help children cope with a range of traumatic incidents.

A **Critical Incident** may be defined as a single incident or sequence of incidents which;

- are sudden and unexpected
- contain real or imagined threats to a person
- overwhelm usual coping mechanisms
- cause severe disruption
- are traumatic to anyone

### **Critical Incidents affecting schools may include:**

- The death of a pupil(s) or member(s) of staff through sudden accident, murder, terminal illness or suicide.
- A serious accident involving pupils and school personnel on or off school premises.
- A violent attack or violent intrusion onto school premises, e.g. involving an armed intruder or a bomb alert.
- Fire, flood, building collapse or major vandalism in school.
- A hostage situation.
- A significant event in the community, e.g. transport accident, terrorism.

## 1.2 Developing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan

- Although it is not possible to predict when and where a disaster will strike, there is much that schools can do to be prepared should the "worst" happen. Foremost in this is the development of a **Critical Incident Contingency Plan** so that in the event of a disaster, on whatever scale, staff can act quickly to cope with the distress and confusion and begin to regain a sense of control.
- The experience of schools which have been involved in a critical incident shows that those which have made preliminary plans are able to act promptly and cope most effectively with the traumatic consequences of a critical incident. These plans would include clearly defined roles and responsibilities and actions, which can be initiated promptly in the event of a critical incident.
- Foremost in this planning is the creation of a **Critical Incident Management Team**, based on the Senior Management Team but also including staff most suited in terms of their personal and practical skills and their availability and reliability. This team should aim to meet at least annually to review and update the Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- The school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan will have prepared procedures and responses that can be put into action in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident. It will need to be flexible enough to cope with a wide range of possible incidents which may occur either on or off site.
- The advice contained in this booklet is designed to help schools develop a Critical Incident Contingency Plan (see Section 4) and to give clear guidance about steps that will need to be taken in the unfortunate event of a critical incident affecting their school.

## 1.3 Local Authority Support for Schools Affected by a Critical Incident

The **Educational Psychology Service** has a key role in:

- Providing schools with training to ensure confidence in their preparation to manage in the event of a critical incident.

**The Educational Psychology Service offers a training session for school Senior Leadership Teams and Governors entitled: "Is Your School Wise before the Event." (Appendix 2)**

- Offering direct support to schools immediately following a critical incident

**This work is considered a priority for the EPS and therefore may mean postponement of other planned work in schools. This work is funded directly through the DSG.**

- Offering on-going support to schools including work with individual pupils or members of staff as appropriate.

**This will be delivered through the schools Educational Psychologist through their allocated or additionally commissioned time.**

## 1.4 Educational Psychology Service Structured Support for Schools

On receiving a request for support from a Heateacher the Somerset Psychological Service will respond promptly with a level of support which is judged to be appropriate to the nature, size and severity of the event as follows:

### **LEVEL 1     Bereavement and Loss**

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent, out of school.
- Event is not sudden or/and traumatic.
- School able to cope, support strategies in place.
- Low impact/awareness for majority of pupils/staff.
- Advice needed for staff – coping with bereavement and loss, normal grieving process.

**Response:** Telephone conversation with Heateacher, with follow up visit by area EP as necessary.

### **LEVEL 2     Critical Incident**

- Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent at or near school, or on a school trip.
- Event is sudden and traumatic.
- School feels unable to cope, significant numbers of distressed pupils and staff.
- School request EPS support and advice to help manage the critical incident.

**Response:** Immediate support from the Educational Psychology Service by telephone (including an out of hours service.) Same day attendance in school if appropriate in order to support the Heateacher and Senior Leadership Team.

### **LEVEL 3     Major Disaster**

- Large scale disaster affecting the school and/or the local community.
- County's Emergency Planning Team implement disaster plan.
- EP's response is part of a much larger multi-agency response led by SSD and Emergency Planning Team.
- National as well as local impact – high media interest.

**Response:** Full EPS involvement co-ordinated by the Senior EP in liaison with lead personnel in other agencies.

## 1.5 Communications Team (Press Office)

The Communications Team (Press Office) can advise and give practical help to Headteachers on dealing with the media – tel: 01823 355020

## **SECTION 2**

### **COMMUNICATION**

- Critical Incident Management Team and Contingency Plan**
- Gathering Information**
- Accessing Support**
- Informing Staff**
- Informing Governors/LA**
- Informing Parents – of Children Directly Involved**
- Informing Parents – of Children not Directly Involved**
- Informing Pupils**
- Dealing with Enquiries**
- Dealing with the Media**
- Dealing with Social Media**

## 2. COMMUNICATION

### 2.1 Critical Incident Management Team and Contingency Plan

In the event of a Critical Incident the school's Critical Incident Management Team or identified key personnel will need to act promptly and be responsible for dealing with the following issues:

- **Implementing the School's Critical Incident Contingency Plan**
- **Emergency Services**

Check that these have been contacted as necessary.

### 2.2 Gathering Information

A vital first task is to obtain accurate information about the incident. Rumours spread quickly and can add to the distress of those involved. Find out:-

- What has happened
- Where and when
- Extent of injuries, numbers and names
- Location of injured and uninjured

### 2.3 Accessing Support

The school should contact the Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist at the Area Base who will initiate the Critical Incident Response Procedure.

#### **Contact Telephone Numbers:**

|                                         |                            |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Val Fry - Sedgemoor and Taunton:</b> | Tel: 01823 334475          |
|                                         | Fax: 01823 323656          |
|                                         | Out of Hours: 07766 602531 |

|                                                  |                            |
|--------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Julia Severn - Mendip and South Somerset:</b> | Tel: 01935 476130          |
|                                                  | Fax: 01935 382039          |
|                                                  | Out of Hours: 07766 602534 |

**Rick Beaver – Principal Educational Psychologist:** 07766 602568

### 2.4 Informing Staff

- Ensure all staff are informed promptly of the incident - it may be necessary to convene a short staff meeting.
- Establish procedures for keeping staff up to date with incoming information.
- Agree how and when pupils will be informed (see page 9).
- Be sensitive to the feelings of staff, particularly those who are closest to the pupils and adults involved in the incident and to those who have had recent personal traumas.



## **2.5 Informing Governors/LA**

The Chair of Governors and the Principal Educational Psychologist should be informed as soon as possible after a major incident.

## **2.6 Informing Parents - of Children Directly Involved**

- Parents of children directly involved should be contacted quickly and with sensitivity.
- Consistency and reliability of information is essential. Avoid relying on a chain of communication.
- The school may need to set a room aside in school for meetings with parents.
- Schools should always have an up to date list of pupils' next of kin and where to make contact with them. Ensure all adults with parental responsibility are informed.
- In the event of an incident involving death or serious injury, particularly off site, the police will often make the first contact with families.

### **If using the telephone:**

- Fully brief the member of staff making the contact, recognising that this can be a very stressful task.
- Take careful note of those parents who have been contacted and those who still need to be informed so that duplicate messages are not given.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport arrangements.
- Check that the parents are not on their own. Make suggestions for contacting relatives or neighbours as appropriate.
- Inform parents of the telephone number in school that has been dedicated to receiving enquiries.
- Inform parents how to obtain more information and when they can expect this to be available.
- Where appropriate and with permission, give the contact numbers of other families involved in the crisis.

## **2.7 Informing Parents - of Children not Directly Involved**

Wherever possible, parents of all other children in the school should be informed that the school has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset.

### **Prepare a letter to parents:**

- Prepare a letter to parents for distribution as soon as possible which gives:
  - brief details of the incident without names;
  - an explanation about the involvement of the Educational Psychology Service or other services supporting staff and pupils at the school;
  - how parents can get more information.

(See Appendix 1 for example letter).

### **2.8 Informing Pupils**

- Some staff may find it difficult to be involved in the dissemination of information to pupils and the Critical Incident Management Team should be sensitive to this.
- Pupils should be told simply and honestly what has happened. This is probably best done in the smallest groups possible - classes, tutor groups or year groups.
- Questions should be answered in a straightforward way, passing on only facts and avoiding speculation.
- Some classes, tutor groups or year groups may be more directly affected by the incident and will benefit from extra consideration, support and sensitive handling of information.
- Siblings and other close relatives of victims should be informed separately and, where possible, in liaison with parents.

### **2.9 Dealing with the Enquiries**

The school may be inundated with telephone calls. People will need to staff the telephone which can be a stressful task.

- The confidential nature of the task should be emphasised to all telephone operators and clear guidance given on what it is appropriate to say.
- An agreed factual statement should be available for the telephone operators, which includes reassurance about the action being taken at the school/incident site.
- Those answering the telephones should keep notes and have them checked against school records so that there is certainty about who has telephoned in and who should still be contacted. This should include media, governors, etc.

## 2.10 Dealing with the Media

- Identify a senior member of staff to liaise with the media.
- Prepare a brief written statement which can be read out or handed to reporters. Stick to the facts - do not be tempted into speculative comments.
- Liaise with LA Communications Team (Press Office) - who will advise on the content and presentation of the statement. This will be provided at point of request to academies at no charge. Any additional support will be invoiced.
- Tell reporters when they can expect further information and aim to work co-operatively with the press.
- In the event of a death prepare some positive comments about the pupils/staff who have died and expressions of sympathy for the bereaved family.

## 2.11 Dealing with Social Media

- Identify a member of staff to take responsibility for dealing with social media

Social media can be defined as being web based platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, blogs etc. They are distinct from web pages as they encourage a high level of user generated content and interaction. One features of this media is the speed at which messages can be transmitted.

When dealing with a critical incident and social media it is important that the school acts quickly because others may post information.

- Staff should be informed that in accordance with the Teaching Standards and the school e-safety policy they should not make any comment on any social media without the permission of the Senior Management Team.
- A message should be placed on the school website and within any school social media accounts. The message could follow these lines:

*'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the relevant family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on Social Media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments.'*

- If in the rare circumstance schools are made aware of posts that are against the rules of the relevant Social Media service then they should get in contact with that service to ask them to remove the comments. Schools might like to consider getting in contact with The UK Safer Internet

Centre's Professional Online Safety helpline by phoning 0844 381 4772 who will offer advice in these circumstances.

- If further advice or guidance is needed then schools should contact the eLearning and Information Management Team at [elimadmin@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:elimadmin@somerset.gov.uk) or by phoning 01823 356832.

## **SECTION 3**

### **PROVIDING SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

- Support from the Educational Psychology Service**
  
- Supporting Staff in the Event of a Critical Incident**
  
- Supporting Pupils in the Event of a Critical Incident**
  
- Supporting Parents in the Event of a Critical Incident**

### **3. PROVIDING SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT**

#### **3.1 Support from the Educational Psychology Service**

The Educational Psychologists who respond to the school's request for help in dealing with a Critical Incident work alongside the Headteacher and Senior Management. This support is aimed at helping school staff manage and cope, both professionally and personally, with the impact of the incident on their school and local community. It is designed to be flexible and responsive to the school's needs at all times.

The team will be able to offer a range of support including:

- Advice and help for staff in dealing with distressed pupils, parents and colleagues.
- Psychological support for those pupils and adults most closely affected by the incident.
- Advice on dealing with the media and other demands made on school staff at this time
- Advice on dealing appropriately with social media such as Facebook and Twitter. This will include strategies for dealing with the spread of information.
- Advice on issues such as "marking the event" and "getting back to normal".
- Advice on ways to manage the likely short term and long term effects of the incident on individuals, the school and the local community.

#### **3.2 Supporting Staff in the Event of a Critical Incident**

- It is expected that schools will have already given careful thought about which members of staff may be best suited to particular jobs and responsibilities.
- There should be recognition of the differing needs of each affected individual.
- All staff need to be familiar with the school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.
- Teachers need to consider their own feelings related to either the present incident or past experiences, so they can feel comfortable in dealing with children's distress.
- Some teachers may wish to take a less active role in supporting others.
- School staff need to be supportive of each other at this time, e.g. staff may wish to schedule staff meetings in order to receive further advice on

how to support bereaved children.

- All staff need to be aware of possible delayed reactions, particularly of those actively involved.
- Staff who are co-ordinating the school's response should be supported and scheduled for relief periods.
- Arrangements may need to be made for staff to see a counsellor or talk with an outside agency/support worker, either singly or as a group.
- Some staff may find it helpful to make a personal gesture, such as by sending cards/flowers, letter of condolence, attending the funeral.

### **3.3 Supporting Pupils in the Event of a Critical Incident**

**Pupils need access to clear and concise information.**

- Teachers should stick to the facts and not be tempted to give speculative comments.
- Act promptly to dispel rumours and mis-information which can cause unnecessary distress.
- Be explicit in acknowledgement of the event.

**Give opportunities for pupils to talk through personal reactions whilst wherever possible maintaining school routines and timetables.**

- It is helpful to provide a quiet, private place for pupils to go to during unstructured times of the school day which should be appropriately staffed.
- Allow pupils to express feelings.
- Anticipate and understand pupils' reactions.
- It is important to help pupils realise that grief is a *natural* and *normal* reaction to loss.
- Children with previous bereavement/loss/separation experiences and those with special educational needs may need extra support.
- Be alert to the possible occurrence of unhelpful grief responses such as anger, bullying and scapegoating - act promptly and positively to defuse and deflect such behaviours.

**Formal grieving.**

- Give opportunities for pupils to write and draw, send cards or flowers, letters of condolence, attend funerals, plant a tree, etc. A special assembly or memorial service may be appropriate.

- ensure that you are prepared for flowers being brought into the school. Identify a safe area where these can be left and inform pupils when they will be removed.
- Be aware of differences in cultural, spiritual, religious values.

### **Establish normal routines.**

- School is the normal place for a child to be and offers security at a time of insecurity.
- Children will look to teachers for role models of how to deal with death and crisis.
- Trauma reactions are normal reactions and are best helped in a normal and familiar environment.
- Returning to the normal routine of school also reinforces a feeling of security.
- Encourage and support the return of school of pupils and staff most affected.
- Recognise that emotions and feelings may differ from pupil to pupil.
- Strong feelings and emotions are perfectly normal reactions in the immediate aftermath.

### **3.4 Supporting Parents in the Event of a Critical Incident**

- Whether the incident has occurred at the school or off site, parents are likely to look to the school for information, advice and support.
- Prepare a room with tea/coffee making facilities where parents can congregate.
- Allocate a member of staff to be available to talk parents and keep them up-to-date with information as it becomes available.
- Provide information Leaflets about the impact of trauma and sudden death and likely reactions - these can be prepared and collected in advance by the school as part of the Contingency planning process. In the event of a Critical Incident these leaflets can be made available electronically.
- Provide information about the types of support that are available to them and their children both in school and within their local community (this information can also form part of the Contingency planning process).



## POINTS TO REMEMBER

- You may do no more than your best.
- Expect to feel a range of emotions, e.g. anxious, guilty, frightened, and upset.
- Mistakes may happen - we are only human.
- Do not expect instant results.
- Do not expect to please everyone.
- Learn from what has happened.

**NB: *You will* be affected - remember to ask for help if needed.**

## **SECTION 4**

### **PREPARING A CRITICAL INCIDENT CONTINGENCY PLAN**

- Assigning Roles and Responsibilities**
- Prepare and Maintain Up-to-Date Lists of Contact Telephone Numbers**
- Telephone Lines**
- Roles for Office Staff**
- School Trips Offsite**
- Planning for a School Evacuation**
- Further Issues to Consider**

## **4. PREPARING A CRITICAL INCIDENT CONTINGENCY PLAN**

### **4.1 Assigning Roles and Responsibilities**

When preparing a Critical Incident Contingency Plan school staff should identify the key tasks which will need to be carried out in the event of an incident and agree which members of staff would be best suited for each task. It is likely that the Headteacher and Senior Management will be responsible for many, but not necessarily all of these tasks which may include for example:

- Contacting and liaising with support services, including the emergency services, the Educational Psychology Service, and other local support agencies as appropriate.
- Organising and supporting the school office staff.
- Dealing with the media, including social media.
- Managing those aspects of the school that continue to function normally.
- Allocating and staffing rooms for counselling/debriefing/support work, and a meeting room for parents.

The Critical Incident Contingency Team should meet regularly to review and update the school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan.

### **4.2 Prepare and Maintain Up-to-Date Lists of Contact Telephone Numbers**

Prepare and maintain up-to-date lists of contact telephone numbers for:

- Pupils' parents/guardians
- Staff (including part time/supply teachers and assistants)
- Governors
- Support Agencies

**Consider the following points:**

- Who needs to be on the lists?
- Where are they to be kept?
- When will they be updated and who will be responsible for this?
- Do office staff always have a contact number when Headteacher is off site?
- Is there a hard copy of information stored on a computer database?
- Is a copy stored out of school?

- Is there a list of staff who can provide additional help/back-up support both during and after school hours and at weekends - where is this list kept, are the contact numbers up to date?
- Make sure all the information for your school's Critical Incident Contingency Plan is kept together (e.g. lists, this booklet, Bill Yules' book) and that all staff know where to find it! Review its contents regularly and remind everyone about it - don't forget to include it as part of the induction process for new staff.
- List of staff with First Aid qualification.

#### **4.3 Telephone Lines**

- Is there a line that can be kept free for out-going calls and important in-coming calls?

#### **4.4 Roles for Office Staff**

These may include:

- making and/or receiving telephone calls.
- dealing with distressed visitors to the school.
- sorting and collating information.
- organising a parents room.
- dealing with "normal" school business.

#### **Other points to consider**

- Office staff need to be clear about the facts - who they should tell and what they should tell - always maintain appropriate standards of confidentiality.
- Keep records of telephone calls made and received/people contacted, etc. Consider preparing a proforma for this.
- Consider training for staff in how to deal with difficult/distressed people both in person and on the telephone. Is there a procedure for summoning help to the office in the event of any angry/violent visitor? Panic button?
- This work will be very stressful for office staff, ensure that:-
  - time on task is carefully monitored
  - staff take regular breaks
  - they have reserve staff on call to lend a hand.

#### **4.5 School Trips Offsite**

- Keep an accurate list of all staff and pupils involved
- Teacher in charge should also have a copy of this list
- Keep list of contact telephone numbers
- Teacher in charge should have up-to-date medical information about pupils (re allergies, epilepsy, etc).

#### **4.6 Planning for a School Evacuation**

- How will staff and pupils know where to go?
- What should you /could you take with you?
- Can you set up an incident room elsewhere?
- How will people be able to contact you?
- An up-to-date plan of the school site, showing access points, would be helpful for the emergency services.

#### **4.7 Further Issues to Consider**

- Dealing with the media including social media.
  - have a clear and agreed response for the media
  - office staff should not be expected to deal with the media
  - this is a role for senior staff or the LA Press Officer
  - Have a clear and agreed response for posting information electronically where appropriate. When dealing with a Critical Incident and Social Media it is important that the school acts quickly because others may post information. Be explicit about how the CI Contingency Plan links to the school's e-safety policy for staff and pupils.
- Prepare proforma letter to parents - to give some brief facts and information about the incident and availability of support, etc. (see Appendix 1).
- Handouts for staff/pupils/parents about "normal" reactions to trauma/shock - these can be collated in advance but make sure everyone knows where to find them. Make these handouts available electronically e.g. via school website and/or SLP, so these can be accessed at all times.

- How will the Critical Incident Contingency Plan be disseminated to all staff, where will copies of the plan be kept?
- Consider procedures for informing new and temporary staff about the plan.

**Finally:** In the event of a major incident or disaster the emergency services (police, fire, ambulance) will take the Lead role and the Social Care Department have a statutory duty to manage and co-ordinate the situation in line with Somerset County Council's Emergency Planning Procedures.

## SECTION 5

### RESPONDING TO SUICIDE

**Taken from:** <http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools/step-step/providing-local-support-step-step-response-service/prepare-respond-suicide-schools>

Although a school can be affected by many challenging incidents and accidents it is suicide that presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

The key to coping with a crisis is to plan. It is particularly important that the school responds to a suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

Schools with crisis plans in place are best equipped to deal with a suicide when it happens. Good planning for the aftermath of suicide makes it easier for people to respond effectively at a time when resilience may be low.

A postvention<sup>1</sup> protocol is an agreed approach to responding to a suicide. In a school setting, this protocol should ideally:

- be a written protocol, developed in advance of a suicide;
- include working with the local community;
- involve the formation and training of a postvention team – be clear about who will do what;
- include procedures for notifying staff, parents and young people about a suicide;
- include guidelines on how to inform the school community and handle the media;
- identify appropriate postvention services and facilities;
- include procedures for recognising ‘at risk’ individuals (including staff) and identifying where people would be referred;
- include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the postvention and any follow-up protocol.

It is good practice that the whole school community would be aware of essential information included in such planning, including who to tell, what to say and what not to say, and who is vulnerable.

The national guidance produced by the Samaritans – **Help When We Needed it Most** (How to prepare and respond to suicide in schools and colleges) is attached as Appendix 2.

## Sources of support for schools following suicide through:

1. The Educational Psychology Service Critical Incident Response Service led by the Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist will be able provide a first response to support Senior Leadership Teams.

### Contact:

Julia Severn 07766602534 (Mendip and South Somerset)

Val Fry 07766602531 (Taunton, West Somerset and Sedgmoor)

Advice and support can also be provided on the development of a postvention protocol.

2. The Suicide Prevention Strategy (Public Health) currently offers support direct to schools following a suicide. Contact Louise Finnis [lfinnis@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:lfinnis@somerset.gov.uk).
3. 6 months following a suicide (through the Suicide Prevention Strategy,) places are offered to schools on the ASIST training (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training). This course is designed for caregivers to provide suicide first aid to persons at risk of suicide and for schools it would be part of their longer term planning to support students at risk.
4. The Samaritans currently offer: Practical advice and support service for a school community following a suicide. [stepbystep@samaritans.org](mailto:stepbystep@samaritans.org)
5. Somerset Suicide Bereavement Service for anyone bereaved by Suicide. Tel 0300 330 5463 [bereaved@mindtws.org.uk](mailto:bereaved@mindtws.org.uk)
6. POPYRUS – Prevention of Young Suicide. Tel 0800 068 4141 [www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)



## **SECTION 6**

### **SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ADVICE**

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## RELEVANT BOOKS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

### 6.1 Book List for Children and Young People

#### For Children under 7 years

##### **Non-Fiction Books**

"Remembering Mum" by G Perkins and L Morris. Publication A & C Black, 1991

"Someone Special has Died", written and published by The Department of Social Work, St Christopher's Hospice, 1989

"Ewen's Little Brother" by S Lamont. Pub: Victoria Publications, 1989

##### **Fiction Books**

"The Very Hungry Caterpillar" by E Carle. Pub: Picture Puffin, 1974

"Fred" by Posy Simmonds. Pub: Picture Puffin, 1989

"Grandpa's Slide Show" by D Gould. Pub: Puffin, 1990

"Water Bugs and Dragonflies" by D Stickney. Pub: Mowbray, 1984

"When Uncle Bob Dies" by Althea. Pub: Dinosaur, 1982

"Grandpa" by J Burningham. Pub: Picture Puffin, 1988

"Badger's Parting Gifts" by S Varley. Pub: Anderson, 1985

"The Snowman" by R Briggs. Pub: Picture Puffin, 1980

"I'll Always Love You" by H Wilhelm. Pub: Hodder & Stoughton, 1985

"The Velveteen Rabbit" by M Williams. Pub: Heineman, 1991

"The Big Sea" by J Eachus. Publishers: Walker Books, 1994

"Scrumpy" by E Dale. Publishers: Anderson Press, 1996

"This is the Bear on the Scary Night" by S Hayes and H Craig. Publishers Walker Books, 1991

"Christmas with Grandfather" by W Wolf. Publisher: North South Books, 1994

## **For Children 7-11 Years**

### **Non-Fiction**

"Lifetimes" by B Mellonie & R Ingpen. Pub: Paper Tiger, 1993

"Death" by K Bryant-Mole. Pub: Wayland, 1992

"How it Feels When a Parent Dies" by J Krementz. Pub: Gollancz, 1991

"Good Grief (1): Talking and Learning about Loss and Death" by Barbara Ward and Jamie Houghton. Pub: B Ward & Associates, 1992

"Good Grief (2): Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Under 11's" B Ward & Associates, 1989

"When Someone Very Special Dies: Children can learn to cope with grief" by Marge Heegaard

### **Fiction**

"Charlotte's Web" by E B White, Pub: Puffin, 1963

"A Taste of Blackberries" by D Buchanan-Smith. Pub: Penguin, 1986

"Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird" by J Little. Pub: Puffin, 1985

"Walkabout" by J Vance Marshall. Pub: Puffin, 1959

"Why the Whales Came" by M Morpurgo. Pub: Madarin, 1987

"Bridge to Terabithia" by K Paterson. Pub: Puffin, 1980

The Narnia Books by C S Lewis. Pub: Picture Lions, 1950s

## **For Young People 11 Years +**

### **Non-Fiction**

"My Father Died" and "My Mother Died" by S Wallbank. Cruse - Bereavement Care

"Your Parent Has Died" written and published by the Department of Social Work, St Christopher's Hospice, 1991

"Facing Grief: Bereavement and the Young Adult" by S Wallbank. Pub: The Lutterworth Press, 1991

## **Fiction**

"To Hell With Dying" by A Walker. Pub: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989

"Fox in Winter" by J Branfield. Pub: Collins, 1981

"The Friends" by R Guy. Pub: Puffin Plus, 1977

"The Charlie Barber Treatment" by C Lloyd. Pub: Walker, 1989

"Comfort Herself" by G Kaye. Pub: Mammoth, 1984

"Alex" and "Alex in Winter" by T Duder. Pub: Puffin Plus, 1990 and 1991

"In the Springterm Of The Year" by Susan Hill. Pub: Penguin, 1974

"Perfect Happiness" by Penelope Lively. Pub: Penguin, 1985

## **Books for Adults Dealing with Children's Grief**

"Helping Younger Bereaved Brothers and Sisters" by The Compassionate Friends, 1991

"Caring For Bereaved Children" by Mary Bending. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care, 1993

"The Motherless Child" by Dr Dora Black. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care

"On Loving Your Child" by D A Torrie. Pub: Cruse - Bereavement Care

"So Will I Comfort You" by J Kander. Pub: Lux Verbi, 1990

"Beyond Grief: A Guide for Recovering from The Death of a Loved One" by C Staudacher. Pub: Souvenir Press, 1987

Further advice regarding these and other publications can be obtained from Cruse - Bereavement Care, 126 Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 1UR. Tel: 0181 940 4818

**Key Source:** "Wise Before the Event. Coping with Crises in Schools" by William Yule and Anne Gold. Pub: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

## 6.2 Sources of Further Information

### **Child Bereavement Charity**

Tel: 01494 568900

E-mail: [support@childbereavementuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavementuk.org)

Web: [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

### **Child Death Helpline Department**

York House

37 Queen Square

London

WC1N 3BH

Helpline: 0800 282 986

Web: [www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk](http://www.childdeathhelpline.org.uk)

### **Childhood Bereavement Network**

8 Wakley Street

London

EC1V 7QE

Tel: 020 7843 6309

E-mail: [cbn@ncb.org.uk](mailto:cbn@ncb.org.uk)

Website: [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

### **Childline**

NSPCC

Weston House

42 Curtan Road

London EC2A 3NH

Helpline: 0800 1111

Web: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

### **Compass** (Somerset Children's Community-Based Palliative Care and Bereavement Service)

Children's Unit

Old Building

Musgrove Park Hospital

Taunton

Somerset

TA1 5DA

Tel: 01823 344693

Web: **Currently being updated but can be found under**  
[www.tsft.nhs.uk/ Our Services/COMPASS](http://www.tsft.nhs.uk/Our%20Services/COMPASS)

### **Compassionate Friends** (Self-help organisation for bereaved parents)

14 New King Street

Deptford

London SE8 3HS

Helpline: 0845 123 2304

E-mail: [helpline@tcf.org.uk](mailto:helpline@tcf.org.uk)

Web: [www.tcf.org.uk](http://www.tcf.org.uk)

### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

PO Box 800  
Richmond  
Surrey  
TW9 1RG  
Helpline: 0844 477 9400  
E-mail: [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)  
Web: [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk)

#### Local Branches:

Bristol area: 0117 926 4045 – [Bristol@cruse.org.uk](mailto:Bristol@cruse.org.uk) – 9A St James Barton,  
Bristol, BS1 3LT  
Somerset: 01458 840898 – Crispin Community Centre, Leigh Road, Street, BA16  
0HA

### **Mandala**

(Groups for bereaved children and young people in Somerset)

St Margaret's Hospice  
Heron Drive  
Bishops Hull  
Taunton  
Somerset  
TA1 5HA  
Tel: 01823 365621  
Tel: 0845 0708910  
Web: [www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](http://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)

Papyrus – prevention of young suicide: <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

St Margaret's Hospice  
Little Tarrat Lane  
Yeovil  
Somerset  
BA20 2HU  
Tel: 01935 709480  
Email: [Kacey.Leader@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](mailto:Kacey.Leader@st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)  
Bereavement Service: 01935 709497  
Web: [www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk](http://www.st-margarets-hospice.org.uk)

Somerset Suicide Bereavement Support Service <http://mindtws.org.uk/somerset-suicide-bereavement-support/>

**Samaritans** provide a 24-hour service offering confidential emotional support to anyone who is in crisis.

Helpline: 08457 909090  
E-mail: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)  
Web: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

## Responding to a suicide

<http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools/step-step/providing-local-support-step-step-response-service/prepare-respond-suicide-schools>

### **The Rainbow Centre for Children**

(For children affected by cancer, life threatening illness and bereavement)

27 Lilymead Avenue

Bristol

BS4 2BY

Tel: 0117 985 3343

Web: [www.rainbowcentre.org.uk](http://www.rainbowcentre.org.uk)

Email: [contact@rainbowcentre.org.uk](mailto:contact@rainbowcentre.org.uk)

### **Together for Short Lives**

(Association for Children with Terminal and Life-threatening conditions and their families)

4<sup>th</sup> Floor

Bridge House

48-52 Baldwin Street

Bristol BS1 1QB

Helpline: 0117 989 7820

Web: <http://chw.togetherforshortlives.org.uk/>

**Winston's Wish** for anyone caring for a child who has been bereaved:

Winston's Wish

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

Cheltenham House

Clarence Street

Cheltenham

Glos

GL50 3JR

Helpline: 08452 030405

E-mail: [info@winstonswish.org.uk](mailto:info@winstonswish.org.uk)

Web: [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

**The Young Minds Parent Information Service** provides information and advice on child mental health issues.

Tel: 0808 802 5544

Web: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)

### 6.3 Useful Telephone Numbers

As part of a contingency plan, this list should be regularly updated and attached to a Staff Notice Board or in a Staff Handbook.

| <b>Contact</b>                                                    | <b>Name</b>                                                                          | <b>Telephone Number</b>                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| LA PRESS OFFICER                                                  |                                                                                      | 01823 357143                                                                  |
| EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE                                    | Rick Beaver<br>Julia Severn<br>(out of hours)<br>Val Fry<br>(out of hours)           | 07766 602568<br>01935 476130<br>07766 602 534<br>01823 334475<br>07766 602531 |
| SPECIALIST CAMHS<br><br>Yeovil<br>Bridgwater<br>Taunton<br>Wells  |                                                                                      | 01935 384140<br>01278 720275<br>01823 368368<br>01749 836561                  |
| E LEARNING AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT eLIM (SOCIAL MEDIA/ESAFETY) |                                                                                      | 01823 356832                                                                  |
| CRUSE                                                             |                                                                                      | 0844 477 9400                                                                 |
| SOMERSET DIRECT                                                   | Mon-Fri 8 am – 6 pm<br>Sat 9 am – 4 pm<br><br>Out of Hours –<br>Emergency Duty Team  | 0300 123 2224<br><br>01458 253 241                                            |
| CHILDLINE                                                         | FREEPHONE                                                                            | 0800 11 11                                                                    |
| LOCAL HOSPITALS                                                   | Royal United Bath<br>Musgrove Hospital<br>Weston General<br>Yeovil District Hospital | 01225 428331<br>01823 333444<br>01934 636363<br>01935 475122                  |
| NHS Emergency Duty Team                                           |                                                                                      | 01458 253241                                                                  |
| This List was updated on:                                         | ..... /..... 20 .....                                                                |                                                                               |
|                                                                   | ..... /..... 20 .....                                                                |                                                                               |



# APPENDIX 1

## Proforma Letter

### FOR SCHOOLS TO SEND TO PARENTS IN THE EVENT OF A TRAGIC INCIDENT

Dear Parents

You may have heard that/it is with sadness and regret that I have to inform you .....  
*(brief details of the incident, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person(s) lost, and the sense of loss).*

*Explain that the pupils in the school have been told this sad news today by their teachers. And that we will/have remembered ..... in a service/assembly.*

Our thoughts are with .....’s parents at this sad time.

*[In the event of a sudden/traumatic death in the school or local community – “During the day we have been supported by the Educational Psychology Service and this help will continue as necessary during the coming days”.]*

I hope this information is helpful.

Yours faithfully

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Help When We Needed it Most**

#### **How to Prepare for and Respond to Suicide in Schools and Colleges**



# HELP WHEN WE NEEDED IT MOST

How to prepare and  
respond to suicide  
in schools.



**SAMARITANS**  

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**STEP BY STEP**

Nobody likes to think about a death in school, let alone suicide. Yet suicide is a leading cause of death for young people in the UK and ROI. Sadly it is always a possibility that a student, parent or member of staff might choose to take their own life.

However upsetting this must be, schools play an important role in reducing the likelihood of copycat behaviour and helping recovery by preparing and responding to the situation properly.

This document guides you through the process of preparing for and responding to suicide appropriately and constructively, in order to help rebuild the well being of the school community and reduce the risk of further deaths. We based this guidance on research and best practice concerning suicide response within school communities from across the world.

Every situation is different and Samaritans has been learning from the communities we have supported so that we can share our learning with others. We have specialist knowledge and skills. In the event of a suicide, we can offer support, advice, guidance and local contacts all based on 60 years' experience working towards our vision that fewer people die by suicide.

### Our Step by Step service aims to:

- Reach out to high risk people and communities to reduce the risk of further suicide;
- Support a school community to prepare for, respond to and recover from a completed or attempted suicide;
- Provide information and support to help the school community come to terms with what has happened and prevent stigma and isolation in the school community.

**SAMARITANS**  
STEP BY STEP

Further information about suicide grief, the myths and facts about suicide can be downloaded from the Samaritans website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



# CONTENTS

This guidance forms part of Samaritans' Step by Step service to schools, which offers specially trained volunteers who can assist school leadership teams with their suicide response.

Contact [stepbystep@samaritans.org](mailto:stepbystep@samaritans.org) or **Freephone\*** 0808 168 2528 for further information.

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\*Calls are free from landlines and some mobile providers.



How to prepare and respond to suicide in schools **5**

## Creating a response plan

Although a school can be affected by many challenging incidents, including sickness and accidental death, it is suicide that presents the unique risk of potentially being the trigger for another suicide.

The key to coping with a crisis is to plan. It is particularly important that the school responds to a suicide within 48 hours. This is necessary to maintain the structure and order of the school routine, while facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide.

Schools with crisis plans in place are best equipped to deal with a suicide when it happens. Good planning for the aftermath of suicide makes it easier for people to respond effectively at a time when resilience may be low.

A postvention<sup>1</sup> protocol is an agreed approach to responding to a suicide. In a school setting, this protocol should ideally:

- be a written protocol, developed in advance of a suicide;
- include working with the local community;
- involve the formation and training of a postvention team – be clear about who will do what;
- include procedures for notifying staff, parents and young people about a suicide;
- include guidelines on how to inform the school community and handle the media;
- identify appropriate postvention services and facilities;
- include procedures for recognising ‘at risk’ individuals (including staff) and identifying where people would be referred;
- include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the postvention and any follow-up protocol.

It is good practice that the whole school community would be aware of essential information included in such planning, including who to tell, what to say and what not to say, and who is vulnerable.

1 Postvention “is the term given to activities and programmes that are intended to assist those who have been bereaved by suicide to cope with what has happened. Suicide prevention and postvention are closely related in that postvention can also prevent further deaths.” (p.3, New Zealand Ministry of Youth Development, ‘Guidance for community organisations involved in suicide postvention’, 2005)

## Accessing support

We are available to offer practical support and advice to schools both in preparing for and reacting to a sudden death.

Contact our Step by Step service ([StepbyStep@samaritans.org](mailto:StepbyStep@samaritans.org)) or Freephone\* 0808 168 2528 and we will do all we can to help you deal with a situation you may never have faced before.

Your local authority and other organisations listed at the end of this guidance may also be able to provide emotional support and advice on specific issues.

It is important that the school returns to normal routine as soon as possible but some students and staff may need further support.

Samaritans is available round the clock, every day of the year by phone, email, text, letter or face-to-face visits in a branch for anyone who might be struggling to cope. We have provided contact details for emotional support at the end of this booklet.

We can also assist with raising awareness of emotional health among young people, by offering talks in schools. Contact your local Samaritans branch to find out more.

\*Calls are free from landlines and some mobile providers.



## Breaking the news

Samaritans' Step by Step service can work with you to consider the ways in which a school may become aware of a suicide, and how to respond to these to prevent rumour and misinformation and to consider the best actions to take in such cases.

- Establish the facts before acting on news of a suicide. Contact the police or the family as soon as you can to confirm the death and whether or not it is being treated as suicide. Be aware that it is likely to be many months before an inquest (or fatal accident inquiry in Scotland) is held, and that in many cases narrative verdicts may mean that the death is not officially recorded as suicide. It is important to note that there may be a great deal of speculation within the school community, and that schools often have to act on the basis that the death is being *treated* as suicide.
- Notify the school (or local authority) incident management team. It is important to act quickly, while at the same time preparing the school leadership team and administration for continuous enquiries once the death is made known.
- Breaking the news to young people can be extremely difficult. Tell staff first and give them time to take in the news before addressing students. Make sure that staff know where and to whom they can turn for emotional support.
- Best practice suggests that, where possible, it is better to break the news to students in small groups or classes.
- When breaking the news it is important to be factual but to avoid excessive detail about the suicidal act itself. Rumours may be circulating and people may ask directly but try not to disclose details about the method used, whether there was a suicide note, or its contents.
- Consider preparing a statement for staff to use to ensure consistency across the school.
- Consider providing immediate counselling or emotional support to students and staff at the school. This may be arranged by the local authority.
- Try to strike a balance between sensitivity to those who are grieving and in shock, on the one hand, and the need to maintain the school routine, on the other. It may be helpful to set aside a room where students can go if they are upset.



## Handling the media

Dealing with the media can add to what is an already stressful situation. We advise you to appoint a single media spokesperson for the school and discourage other students and staff from making public comments.

The media spokesperson should prepare a statement for the media, and not deviate from it. Avoid giving details of the suicide method or any suicide note, or giving simple 'explanations' of the suicide such as '*...was stressed about exam results*'.

### Use phrases like:

*A suicide*

*Die by suicide*

*Take one's own life*

*A suicide attempt*

*A completed suicide*

*Person at risk of suicide*

*Help prevent suicide*

### Avoid phrases like:

*A successful suicide attempt*

*An unsuccessful/failed suicide attempt*

*Commit suicide*

*Suicide victim*

*Just a cry for help*

*Suicide-prone person*

Samaritans has published guidelines for the media, to ensure that reporting of suicide is sensitive and responsible. Samaritans' media team can help support you and the family in handling the media during a crisis situation and advise you on options available if you are unhappy with coverage.

Contact the press team (including out of hours) on: **+44 (0)7943 809 162**.

## Contacting the school community

If a suicide has affected the school community you will need to consider how to inform them. The Samaritans Step by Step service can advise and assist with this and can provide template letters on request.

### Parents/carers and all staff need to know:

- In brief what has happened (see 'Breaking the news' on page 8).
- What support the school is putting in place.
- What actions the school will take with regards to funerals and memorials.
- Where to find further information about suicide and grief.
- Where to access support for themselves.
- What to do if they are worried about someone else.

## Communicating sensitively and appropriately about suicide

### Information provided to the school community in the immediate aftermath of suicide should include and reinforce:

- facts (not rumours);
- an understanding that death is permanent;
- an exploration of normal and wide-ranging reactions to suicide (expressions of anger and guilt are entirely normal);
- an understanding that, with support, people can cope;
- an understanding that fleeting thoughts of suicide are not unusual;
- an awareness of suicidal warning signs and resources available to help;
- an understanding of funeral expectations.

### When discussing any suicide that has occurred, it is strongly recommended that the information given:

- is factually correct but does not include detail of the suicidal act itself;
- does not romanticise, glorify or vilify the death;
- does not include details of any suicide note;
- does not include speculation over the motive for suicide – suicide is a very complex issue and there is a danger in drawing overly simplistic conclusions about causality.

## Identifying and supporting vulnerable students

Those affected by suicide are themselves at increased risk of serious upset and may potentially be at greater risk of taking their own life. School staff should be asked to identify any young people who are vulnerable, and efforts should be made to provide additional support or referral to specialist services.

Suicide is a complex issue, usually with no single cause, and it is therefore not possible to generalise. However, there is some evidence to suggest that people who have previously experienced bereavement or undergone a personal crisis, people with mental health problems, and people in marginal groups may be more vulnerable. Teachers who know the students best should be alert to any students who are excessively upset or disturbed by the death. These young people should be offered appropriate support without delay.

## Starting difficult conversations

**If you're worried about a young person, try to get them to talk to you.**

- Often people want to talk, but won't speak until someone asks how they are. Try asking open questions, like *'What happened about...'*, *'Tell me about...'*, *'How do you feel about...'*
- Repeat back what they say to show you understand and ask more questions.
- Focus on their feelings instead of trying to solve the problem - it can be of more help and shows you care.
- Respect what they tell you. Sometimes it's easy to want to try and fix a young person's problems, or give them advice. Try and let them make their own decisions.

### **How do I start a conversation with someone I'm concerned about?**

You might feel that you don't know how to help someone, because you don't know what to tell them or how to solve their problems. You don't need to be an expert. In fact, sometimes people who think they have the answers to a problem are less helpful.

Don't forget that every person is different, so that what worked for one will not always work for another.

## Find a good time and place

**Ask gentle questions, and listen with care.** Ask them how they feel. If you're gentle and calm it's ok to bring up the subject of self-harm or suicide.

**The more open the question the better.** Questions that help someone talk through their problems instead of being able to say 'yes' or 'no' are the most useful.

Questions such as:

- 🕒 **When** – *'When did you realise?'*
- 📍 **Where** – *'Where did that happen?'*
- 🗨️ **What** – *'What else happened?'*
- 👉 **How** – *'How did that feel?'*
- 🤔 **Why** – be careful with this one as it can make someone defensive. *'What made you choose that?'* or *'What were you thinking about at the time?'* are more effective.

## Find out how they feel

**Revealing their innermost emotions – anger, sadness, fear, hope, jealousy, despair and so on – can be a huge relief.**

It sometimes also give clues about what the person is really most worried about.

## Check that they know where to get help

Useful questions you might ask them include:

- 👤 *'Who else have you talked to about this?'*
- 👤 *'What do you think about getting some help?'*
- 👤 *'Would you like me to come with you?'*

**If you say something that appears to cause more upset, don't panic:**

- 👤 show you are listening;
- 👤 look after yourself, and talk to someone too.



## Memorials

**This is a difficult issue that needs to be carefully managed, taking account of the wide range of feelings that are likely to be displayed.**

It is natural to want to pay tribute to those who have died. However, it is important not to sensationalise or glamorise suicide as that may act as a trigger for anyone who is deeply affected. School managers should set a time limit for memorials [about two weeks]. They may offer to forward cards and other tribute material to the family afterwards. Permanent memorials following a suicide are generally to be discouraged.

Schools cannot control online memorials and other social networking activity following a suicide. However, students should be warned about the risks of online memorials – their comments may become public/published without their permission, online memorials can attract negative and hurtful comment and anything that romanticises suicide can be harmful to those who are vulnerable. Schools could consider establishing an online memorial on their own website, which they can then moderate and remove after an agreed time.

## Funerals

**The nature of the student's death should not by itself encourage greater attendance at the funeral than it would for any other tragic death at the school.**

We recommend that parents or guardians accompany students who want to attend.

Those who don't attend should have normal classes to go to.

If appropriate, engage the faith leader prior to the funeral to suggest that eulogies should be fitting and do not sensationalise what has happened.

## Responding to suspected suicide

It can take many months for an inquest (or fatal accident inquiry in Scotland) to be held, and in many cases unexplained deaths are not given a verdict of suicide. Schools and authorities often have to act on whether an unexplained death is being treated as suicide.

In some cases, where there is an ongoing investigation or where the family does not want the cause of death to be disclosed (or reported as suicide), it can be challenging for a school to decide how to proceed.

In this situation, schools should state that the nature and cause of death are still being determined and that additional information will be forthcoming.

Acknowledge that there are rumours (which are often inaccurate), and remind students that rumours can be deeply hurtful, distressing and unfair to the deceased person, their family and their friends.

If there is an ongoing investigation, schools should check with local police before speaking about the death with students who may need to be interviewed by the authorities.

## If the family does not want the nature or cause of death to be disclosed

While the fact that someone has died may be disclosed immediately, information about the nature and cause of death should not be disclosed until the family has been consulted. If the death has been declared a suicide but the family does not want this disclosed, someone from the school who has a good relationship with the family should contact them. They should explain that students are already talking about the death, and that having adults in the school community talk to students about suicide and its causes can help keep students safe.

If the family refuses to permit disclosure, schools can simply state that the family has requested that information is not shared. Schools can still take the opportunity to acknowledge rumours about suicide, and to address the topic of suicide in a responsible way to assist other young people who may be depressed or suicidal.

In addition, it is suggested that mental health professionals should be working alongside the school in helping to meet the immediate counselling needs of affected students.



## Responding to attempted suicide

While suicide is the second most common cause of death among young people aged 10-24, most suicide attempts do not result in death.<sup>2</sup>

Young people may return to school following a suicide attempt, and schools should not underestimate the impact of this on other students.

**It is imperative that anyone who has attempted suicide is appropriately referred to and cared for by mental health professionals. Mental health professionals will be able to work alongside the school in the following key areas:**

- 🕒 Planning support for a student who has attempted suicide.
- 🕒 Helping meet the immediate counselling needs of affected students.
- 🕒 Identifying other vulnerable young people.

If a school is informed of an attempted suicide that took place away from the school or the attempt occurred without the awareness of other students, there is a small possibility that the spread of information may be contained. If complete containment of information is a real possibility, it should be discussed with the family as soon as possible. In such circumstances, any communication with staff, students and parents will be on a “need to know basis” only, in consultation with the young person, their family and appropriate mental health professionals

If the details of the attempted suicide are already known in the school population, schools may understandably be anxious about addressing this. Advice should be sought from the mental health professionals caring for the young person as they may be able to provide considerable assistance. It is essential that a support plan is developed and approved by an identified staff member (the school counsellor if the school has one), the student, the family and the mental health professionals before the student returns to school.

**When meeting with the young person’s family, critical areas for sensitive discussion are:**

- 🕒 What information is provided to which sections of the school community.
- 🕒 The support plan for their child’s return to school.
- 🕒 The support for any siblings in the school.
- 🕒 Liaison with the mental health professional.

2 The World Health Organisation states that “...suicide attempts... are up to 20 times more frequent than completed suicide.”  
[www.who.int/mental\\_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en](http://www.who.int/mental_health/prevention/suicide/suicideprevent/en) downloaded 3 December 2012.



## Further Information about Samaritans

For further information and support either about suicide or developing a critical incident plan that includes suicide, please contact us.

[stepbystep@samaritans.org](mailto:stepbystep@samaritans.org)

Freephone\* 0808 168 2528

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

### Samaritans can assist schools by offering:

- Assistance and advice about dealing with suicide or unexplained death.
- Schools talks to raise awareness of emotional health issues among young people.
- Information from our website.

\*Calls are free from landlines and some mobile providers.



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**Someone to talk to** – people contact us when things are getting to them. They don't have to be suicidal.

**We're always here** – round the clock, every single day of the year.

**A safe place** – as volunteers we're ordinary people, and keep all our conversations private.

**People can be themselves** – whoever they are, however they feel, whatever life's done to them.

**We're a charity** – it's the public's kind donations that keep our helpline open.

## FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



08457 90 90 90\*<sup>(UK)</sup>  
1850 60 90 90\*<sup>(ROI)</sup>



jo@samaritans.org



www.samaritans.org



Chris, PO Box 90 90  
Stirling FK8 2SA



visit us – find your nearest  
branch on our website

Samaritans Registered Office

The Upper Mill, Kingston Road, Ewell, Surrey KT17 2AF

T 020 8394 8300 F 020 8394 8301

\* Please see our website for latest call charges.

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales. Founded in 1953 by the late Prebendary Dr Chad Varah CH CBE. A charity registered in England and Wales no. 219432, in Scotland no. SC040604 and no. SC009843, and in Ireland no. CHY11880. Incorporated in England and Wales in 1963 as a company limited by guarantee no. 757372, and in Ireland no. 450 409.

AUGUST 2013

**SAMARITANS**

# APPENDIX 3

## Training Available for Schools

### Somerset Educational Psychology Service Support For Schools Affected by a Critical Incident

#### Is Your School “Wise Before The Event”?

- How ready is your school to deal with a critical incident?
- How aware are you as a school of the potential impacts of a Critical Incident on the school community?
- Do you have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place?
- Do you know what support is available to you in the event of a Critical Incident?

We have run many very successful twilight training sessions which invite Headteachers, members of Senior Management teams, School Bursars and School Governors from all schools within a Community Learning Partnership, to work together to ensure that all were confident that they could put together a Critical Incident Management Plan that would best meet the needs of their school.

#### **Training Offer**

We offer this training session to individual schools or groups of schools or to Community Learning Partnerships. It is important that at least 2 representatives from each school attend. We can run a twilight or evening session or during the school day. The course is approximately 90 minutes. Ideally there should be a maximum group size of 30.

#### **Cost**

Total cost for the session £200.

#### **Details**

**Contact:** Julia Severn, Assistant Principal Educational Psychologist  
**Tel:** 01935 476130  
**Email:** JSevern@somerset.gov.uk  
**Address:** Buckland House, 8 Buckland Road, Pen Mill, BA21 5EA