

Coping with Crisis Policy



Chilton Trinity

It is sincerely hoped that this is one policy which will be implemented infrequently. That being said, it is clear that the School must ensure that all know what their role would be and what support is available should there be a tragedy or crisis of any kind.

We have to be prepared to cope with and respond to the following (which may well be in combination):

1. A major disaster which involves directly or indirectly students, staff and the community (such as a major fire, a large scale road accident).
2. The death through accident of an individual or several students/staff :
 - I] on site;
 - ii] off site, as part of a School activity/transport arrangements; and
 - iii] off site, not connected with a School Activity.
3. Serious injury through accident of an individual or several students/staff
 - I] on site;
 - ii] off site, as part of a School activity/transport arrangements; and
 - iii] off site, not connected with a School activity.
4. A major incident within the School which affects an individual, a group or the whole School (such as threatening behaviour from an intruder, bomb alert, fire).
5. Personal bereavement/loss for an individual student/member of staff. This may not directly be for the School to deal with in an immediate way, but the grieving process may well have an effect on the individual in a way which has an impact on his/her performance.

This document therefore attempts to provide :

- guidance and plans as to the action to be taken
- information as to where support can be obtained

- procedures and information to support people in the immediate and longer term.

It must be recognised that a family separation may well affect a student in such a way that staff will need to support and understand in order that the guidance offered here will be helpful.

In the event of a major incident on site:

1. Render First Aid as soon as possible
2. Alert the Emergency Services
3. Report to the Headteacher who will inform :
 - a] County Hall – Children & Young People’s Directorate
 - b] The Chair of Governors

In the event of a major incident off-site where the school is involved:

1. Render First Aid as soon as possible
2. Alert the Emergency Services
3. Contact the School – 01278 455631 during office hours. Out of office hours – please see relevant section under page titled "Office", under sub-heading "Emergency Procedures".
4. The School will then inform :
 - a) the Headteacher (if not the contact) who will inform
 - b) County Hall – Children & Young People's Directorate
 - c) The Chair of Governors

OFFICE PROCEDURES

Should there be an emergency, the main Admin Office staff will:

- ensure that there are lines clear for incoming and outgoing calls.
- keep a log of calls and actions taken.
- ensure that internal lines are kept clear; and
- set up an 'incident room' and team in the main Admin Office. These people will need to be relieved of their other duties for the necessary period and there may need to be 'reserves' to take over.

It is vital that there is only one source of information.

There must be clear understanding of the message which is being given (checked with both the giver and the receiver).

It must be made clear when further information will be made available.

It must be clear what (if any) other contact and information numbers will be passed on e.g. hospital.

A record should be kept of all calls both in and out so that it is possible to check who has been contacted or made contact.

Access will be needed to School records/telephone numbers/addresses etc.

Emergency / Critical Incident Procedures

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 disaster in the community, e.g. transport accident, terrorism.

The Critical Incident Management Team:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| • Incident Officer | Business Manager or Admin Team Coordinator |
| • Site Manager | OR duty cover |
| • SLT | SLT on call |
| • Admin Team Coordinator | or next senior admin assistant |
| • Out of hours | Appropriate member of the SLT |

The Incident Officer: Liaises between the School and the emergency services on the ground and keeps the Headteacher/SLT up to date as events unfold.

The Site Manager: Ensures front of buildings secure to prevent new entry and investigates incident on site, if appropriate, having due regard to personal safety. Liaises with the Incident Officer or SLT as necessary.

SLT: Coordinates with staff/students. Receiving information from the Incident Officer or Site Manager and agreeing appropriate actions. For example assembling all students or requiring them to remain indoors depending on the nature of the incident. Contacts the media if appropriate. Links with the Admin Team Coordinator to get messages to parents as necessary.

Admin Team Coordinator: To stand in for the Incident Officer. To ensure all supporting information and forms are available. For example personnel lists etc as per the Fire evacuation procedures. List of staff who have agreed to attend site out of hours. The emergency telephone contact form for recording contacts made with parents.

Out of Hours: Appropriate member of the SLT will receive information and inform staff/parents/local authority using procedures as per extreme weather arrangements.

If an emergency/critical incident were to occur, the office staff will be informed of this by one of the SLT. If this occurs outside normal hours, the required number of office staff will be telephoned and requested to come in to assist.

The following procedure should be followed:

1. List of office staff contact telephone numbers will be posted on a whiteboard in the Reception Office. This list will include all those who have agreed to assist in the event of an emergency.

In the event of an emergency/critical incident contact:-

- 01278 455631 Main School number or
- 01278 410081

Out of Hours:

- 01278 459209
- 07795 495927

2. Office staff will follow directions of the most senior member of the SLT available. The main number will be used for incoming calls and outgoing call can be made from the Admin Office or by the use of mobiles in the event of the telephone network being down.
3. Office staff should use the Emergency Telephone Contact Form to record contacts made with parents. Copies of this form are available in the Admin office.
4. NO member of staff should give any information to the media. This will be done, if appropriate, by the Headteacher or Deputy. Usual procedures to maintain confidentiality will be followed.

**FROM GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS
(COUNTY HALL INFORMATION)**

SECTION OF EMERGENCY PROCEDURES THAT GIVES THE DETAILS NECESSARY FOR ANY EMERGENCY – ESPECIALLY OUT OF HOURS

1. The School should be kept open, even if only limited numbers can attend, unless to do so would endanger students and staff.
2. The decision to close must be taken by the Headteacher or the most senior member of teaching staff available, in consultation with the Chair of Governors.

Information will be shared with Local Radio stations informing parents/carers of any school closure. Staff will be contacted by their Cluster Leader. The school website will also be kept updated with the latest information.

3. The telephone should be covered by volunteers or staff who have been instructed beforehand what information should be given to callers.

Contact with County Hall should be restricted to the School, NOT parents.

4. Contact Numbers with local Radio :

Total Star	01278 256335
Radio Bristol	01823 252438
Heart	01823 338448
BBC Somerset Sound Radio Bristol	01935 432071

5. If the School has to be closed the arrangements that apply are:

i.e. Telephone County Hall, Education Department giving :

Name of School
Nature of Emergency,
When the School is closing or has closed; and,
Prospects of opening the next working day.

(NB : Closures must be notified on a day to day basis)

The following Taunton numbers can be used to pass information to the Authority regarding Emergency closures :

01823 355 and 020 or 018	Press Office
01823 410101	Youth Service

EMERGENCY TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Dialling

Emergency (9) 999

Area Health 01823 333491
County Hall 08453 459166
Haygrove School 01278 455531
Blake School 01278 456243
East Bridgwater 01278 422841
Bridgwater College 01278 455646

Primary Schools

Cannington 01278 652368
Enmore 01278 671370
Otterhampton 01278 652487
Spaxton 01278 671853
St. Marys 01278 422691
St. Joseph's 01278 422786
Eastover 01278 422693
Westover Green 01278 422943
Puriton 01278 683630
St. Georges 01278 451726
St. Johns 01278 456918
Kingsmoor 01278 683371
Woolavington 01278 683627

Doctors

East Quay Medical Centre 01278 444666
Redgate Medical Centre 08444 772593
Brent House Surgery 01278 458551
Taunton Road Medical Centre 01278 720000
Victoria Park Medical Centre 01278 437100
Somerset Bridge Medical centre 08444 772594

Other Numbers

Bridgwater Hospital 01278 451501
Musgrove Park Hospital, Taunton 01823 333444
School Nurse 01278 451501
Dental Clinic 01278 785977
East Quay Rowlands Pharmacy 01278 423015
Victoria Park Lloyds Pharmacy 01278 429813
Health Clinic 01823 333444 Ext. 2690

Reporting Accidents

Police 0845 4567000
Educational Psychologist 01278 446445
Fax : 01278 446199

MEDIA/PRESS

The Public Relations Officer at County Hall (01823 355018 or 355020) will be able to advise and even possibly deal with the 'media' should this be necessary.

It is vital that only one member of staff – the Headteacher or Deputy – speak to the media.

The media should not be permitted onto the premises without direct invitation and should not be given access to staff/students/parents.

It may be necessary to arrange specific times for press briefings so that there is less harassment.

It is vital that the privacy of all individuals be respected at all times.

PARENTS/CARERS

When necessary a list of parents/carers to be contacted should be compiled (it may already be available in the case of a school trip). A careful check must be kept as to who has been informed of any incident.

If there has been a very serious/life threatening injury the most senior member of staff available should speak with the parent(s)/carer(s). It may be necessary to refer the parent(s)/carer(s) on to the agencies involved, probably the hospital or the police.

If parents arrive at the School (perhaps to wait for information or out of concern) then an appropriate room and refreshments should be provided. Unless the numbers are very small or very large the Common Room should be allocated for use as it has refreshment facilities. Arrangements may need to be made for the use of a telephone.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE ABOUT COPING WITH A CRISIS SEE APPENDIX 1 AND 2

APPENDIX 1

BEREAVEMENT/LOSS

Grief will be experienced to a greater or lesser extent by students or staff when a close relative/friend dies or is 'lost' through separation/divorce. For every two marriages there was one divorce in 1991. One child in five will have experienced parents' divorce by the age of 15.

Following separation about two thirds of children will show marked changes in their School behaviour which may be:

- deterioration in work
- restlessness; and
- low concentration

There is no predictable pattern. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable. Boys tend to re-adjust more slowly than girls and so are often more vulnerable though they may not appear to be so. Recuperation may take 3 – 5 years.

Teachers can help by:

- being available (at an appropriate time and place)
- making contact with the surviving/custodial parent
- helping parent(s) appreciate the young person's perspective
- providing routine stability
- monitoring the stress and grief process; and
- providing information

The grief process

Over time people have to try to:

- accept the reality of the loss
- experience the pain of grief
- adjust to an environment in which the deceased/departed parent is missing; and
- withdraw emotional energy and perhaps eventually reinvest in another relationship
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A leaflet Coping with a Crisis has been prepared and is available which may help people to understand this grieving process.

The School should ensure that 'someone' is available to support the student/member of staff. The individual's choice for a preferred listener should be respected.

If a student or a member of staff dies it may be appropriate to consider using:

- assemblies
- tutorial time; and
- a 'memorial' service, e.g. tree planting

as part of the grieving and remembering process.

AFTER THE EVENT-SHORT AND LONG TERM

Most people show emotional disturbance as an immediate reaction to a disaster but usually recover quite quickly if there is sympathetic management. Different people respond differently according to their constitutional predisposition and previous life experiences. At the time perhaps 12 – 25% respond in a cool and collected way, 75% are stunned and bewildered with restricted responses to the event and maybe 12 – 25% show responses such as confusion, anxiety, crying, screaming and panic.

General advice is that

- those involved should be kept together and provided with 'physical comforts'
- they should be given companionship, reassured and, if possible, given purposeful activities, and
- those with them should be sensitive and alert to a wide variety of possible responses and time and space should be allowed for feelings to be ventilated.

After the immediate stress there is a gradual return of awareness, recall and emotional expression which is not predictable. Survivors need to be with others, appear very dependent, and continue to benefit from venting their feelings.

"Post traumatic stress disorder" is now recognised as "the reaction which may follow an event that is outside the range of usual human experience and would be very distressing to almost everyone".

There are seen to be three main groups of symptoms or reactions :

- the event is persistently re-experienced in thoughts, dreams or flashbacks where the individual thinks it is all happening again.
- there is persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, or there is numbing of general responsiveness, perhaps a refusal to talk about the incident or the responses become inappropriate (such as joking and anger). "Survival guilt" (i.e. why didn't I die and not...) is a possibility, and
- there are signs of increased stress such as disturbed sleep, poor concentration, new fears, irritability, depression, possibly even thoughts of suicide.

Such symptoms can last for months, perhaps years, though children often show remarkable resilience.

These are 'normal' responses which require the help of a professional.

Our recent experiences have shown that there is help of this kind available both from Social Services and from medical services and that it has been offered very readily.

POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON STAFF

At the time support workers may have prime concern for their own safety but usually they will cope with the extra anxiety and responsibility.

Work after Bradford with the Police showed that many officers who had been there at the time or involved afterwards were affected to some extent. The following is intended to help staff be aware of possible effects on them if they have been closely involved in a major incident.

It is likely that the trauma will be re-experienced in recurrent and intrusive flashbacks and dreams. People can feel numb or apparently feel little response to or be detached from other events/daily life and experience disturbed sleep. They may feel guilty that not all that was possible was done (performance-related guilt), their concentration can become impaired and certain activities may be avoided.

Performance guilt

Guilt is experienced when people judge that they have done something 'wrong' or inadequately in relation to their personal standards. If they consider that the results of this were serious and there is no way to 'put things right' then this can have serious repercussions on their effectiveness thereafter. So they tend to go over and over things in the mind working out how it could have been done differently and are not willing to accept reassurance from others that everything possible had been done. Such anxiety generating 'alternative scenarios' can be very upsetting and can be prolonged.

Irritability

A lack of tolerance of others because of anger and irritation is common but can have knock on effects on marriages, work relationships etc. This could be 'one of the most insidious of problems as it tended to erode the support systems at a time when they were most needed'.

Focussed resentment and blame

This may or may not be justified but could lead to furious and near violent exchanges e.g. journalists, management could bear the brunt.

Motivational changes

Understandably other things can seem so insignificant besides the enormity of the disaster that they do not seem worth bothering with. This could be at work or home. So there could be "dysfunction".

On the plus side, treatment through counselling seemed to be rapidly effective.

SECTION 2

COPING WITH CRISES

GUIDANCE AND ADVICE

APPENDIX 2

SOME DO'S AND DON'T'S

- DON'T
 - bottle up your feelings
 - be afraid to share what you are thinking
 - chase pictures away from your mind
 - expect memories to go away. They and the feelings will stay with you for a long time.
 - try to get so busy that you haven't time to think about what happened or say how you feel.
- DO
 - return to the scene, as soon as possible
 - express your feelings
 - go over your experiences with yourself and others whenever you can
 - tell your parents, family, friends and teachers what you feel you need
 - make sure the people around you have seen this leaflet
 - try to keep your life as normal as possible and do things you enjoy
 - explain to people that you need to be alone at times
 - understand that you may be likely to have accidents for a time and take more care at home, on the roads and at school
 - see a counsellor if you think you need to.

COPING WITH A CRISIS

Life can be tough. Sometimes there can be an incident or accident where people we know and care about are hurt or even die.

You may have been involved in what happened or you may know someone who was hurt or frightened by it. Although what you saw and how you feel is personal to you, it may help to know how others reacted in similar situations.

We hope we can help you recover from the effects and avoid some things which could make you feel worse.

People often describe the following feelings when they have had experiences like yours:

- FRIGHTENED** that something like it will happen again, that you and others are not safe anymore, that you will break down.
- HELPLESS** that you can't stop or change things; that you are weak and powerless
- SAD** about your own and other people's injuries and losses.
- LONGING** for the time before it happened.
- GUILTY** that you were not involved or hurt; that you were not able or didn't try to stop it happening.
- SHAME** for thinking about your own safety; for being afraid and helpless; for feeling that you did not look strong; for not having done things you might have wanted to do.
- ANGRY** about what happened; with whoever caused it or allowed it to happen; about being made to feel afraid and ashamed; about other people not understanding how you feel with other people who might not be able to make you feel better.
- LET DOWN** by other people
- REMEMBERING** people whom you have lost and feeling that frightening events and losses are real again
- WHY ME?**

You may not have any of these feelings, but you may be tired and not as well as usual. Normal things like sleeping patterns and girls' periods may be disturbed for a while. It may be difficult to pay attention. Thoughts and pictures you don't want might get in the way, while you are awake or appear as bad dreams when you are asleep.

It might seem that people expect too much of you or that everyone, including yourself, is always angry. This can change the way people around you treat each other for a time.

All these things are normal, and nature heals by allowing you to get the feeling out. Stopping them may make you feel nervous or become ill. Crying, telling someone what you feel, making drawings or acting what happened all help.

DOING THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU ARE BEING WEAK OR DRAMATIC, IT MAY CAUSE PAIN OR SADNESS BUT THESE THINGS LEADS TO HEALING.

If you feel you cannot handle the feelings or are worried about feeling ill or if things are not settling down after a period of time it helps to talk to a counsellor. You can arrange for this yourself or ask your parents or a teacher to do it for you.