

Haringey Educational  
Psychology Service



# COVID-19



# AND TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS DURING LOCKDOWN A PLAN FOR ACTION

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## General emergencies

In an emergency, the safety of staff, pupils and others is the responsibility of schools.

The government expects all schools to plan for emergencies (Civil Contingencies Act 2004).

[http://intranet/sites/intranet/files/an\\_introduction\\_to\\_emergency\\_planning\\_business\\_continuity\\_sept2014.pptx](http://intranet/sites/intranet/files/an_introduction_to_emergency_planning_business_continuity_sept2014.pptx)

Haringey Council offers advice and guidance on how you should deal with a range of national and local emergencies which may disrupt the normal operation of your school or setting. Such incidents include explosions, fires, and the current pandemic Covid-19 which, whilst it has taken place in the wider community, has had a profound effect on your school.

### For advice or in an emergency contact

- Andrew Meek, Head of Organisational Resilience T 0208 489 1171
- or
- Duty Emergency Planning Officer (24 hours) T 0208 489 0000

We recommend that you familiarise yourself with Haringey's document, which can be found on the Intranet under:

*Haringey Council: Health and Safety Guidance note for Schools January 2015.*

[http://intranet/sites/intranet/files/school\\_safety\\_and\\_security\\_procedures.pdf#search=emergencies%20in%20schools](http://intranet/sites/intranet/files/school_safety_and_security_procedures.pdf#search=emergencies%20in%20schools)

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## Acknowledgements

*This guidance is an adaption of the EPS TI guidance for schools to reflect the current circumstances.*

*Information in the Guide is drawn from a number of sources. Acknowledgements are due to Child Bereavement UK, Derbyshire, Hackney Learning Trust, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Hillingdon, Lambeth, Norfolk, Telford, Winston's Wish*

# I. Introduction

## What are traumatic incidents?

- Traumatic incidents are sudden unpredictable tragic events, which come out of the blue.
- They may involve sudden death and serious injury and cause distress and disruption not only to those directly affected, but also to everyone around them.
- This distress often affects a **person's ability to cope**, plan and take effective action.
- The current pandemic is likely to lead to unexpected deaths within the school – children, siblings, staff - and wider community – parents, extended family, close friends - and these will inevitably have an impact on the school.
- Research suggests that when schools are dealing with a traumatic incident, they cope better when there are clear procedures to follow and known support networks available.
- This document outlines the practical steps the school can take to prepare for such events.
- It prepares staff for handling grief and bereavement more generally and provides sample documents which are useful when under pressure.
- It also outlines the support the EP team can provide in the event of such incidents.

## The Educational Psychology Service and traumatic incidents

- The Educational Psychology Service has extensive experience working with schools and other educational settings to support them in managing traumatic incidents which occur during the normal course of a year.
- The practical steps outlined in this guidance is based on research evidence, our own experiences and those of other educational psychology services. The advice provided has been used in Haringey to support schools, head teachers and staff who manage traumatic incidents.

## What the Educational Psychology Service can offer

Depending on the levels of training and experience within the school, the EPS can offer four specific types of support in the first days and weeks following a traumatic incident:

- information and advice about action, together with moral support and a trusted sounding board at a difficult time

- advice to school staff about possible emotional responses among staff and pupils, and how to manage these
- support for groups of staff and pupils in managing their emotions
- support for groups of parents in **understanding their children's responses** and how to manage these

### Preparing for an incident

Ideally, staff should be as fully prepared as possible before any such incident happens.

The EPS can help schools develop their own plans for managing traumatic incidents and either offer some training to staff or signpost staff to relevant online training e.g. on bereavement.

This training might include:

- Developing a school **traumatic incidents'** management plan
- Identifying support agencies and key contacts
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities for all staff.
- Helping schools set up a multi-agency team around the school community.

### A special note re violent incidents involving the police, including suicide (see appendix G)

- In the event of a fatal or very serious incident involving the police you should ask the police for advice and guidance.
- Phone the Non-Emergency Police number 101 which is a 24-hour number.  
The call will go through to the police control room - they will be able to assist or pass the call on.
- Prior to, or preceding, a police investigation, you must never ask for a written account or take a statement – particularly when offering support to witnesses as this could contaminate police evidence.

### Dealing with the media (see appendix E)

Haringey Communications Team is available to assist you with the media and advise on communicating with your school community.

- T 0208 489 8687

## II. Checklist for action

### Immediate action

#### Gather information and keep a written record

- gather as much factual information as possible using the questions on the traumatic incident form – see back page of this document
- start a written log
- see if there are any continuing risks, for example, other family members at risk or, if a parent has died, concerns about the care of their child(ren)
- check information with parents, what information they wish to be made public and whether they give consent for other services to be given information and be involved.

#### Contact your Chair of Governors

#### Contact appropriate support agencies including:

Haringey EPS T 0208 489 3004

Contact Haringey CYPS

**Director of Children's Services** T 0208 489 3883 or 3206 or mobile 07814 514658 or email [ann.graham@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:ann.graham@haringey.gov.uk)

**Assistant Director Schools and Learning** T 0208 489 3607 or mobile 07870157687 or email [eveleen.riordan@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:eveleen.riordan@haringey.gov.uk)

**Assistant Director - Early Help & Prevention** T 0208 489 1114 or email [paul.sutton@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:paul.sutton@haringey.gov.uk)

**Head of Integrated Service SEN & Disabilities** T 0208 489 3190 or email [nathan.jones@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:nathan.jones@haringey.gov.uk)

**Head of Organisational Resilience** T 0208 489 1171 or email [andrew.meek@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.meek@haringey.gov.uk)

All other services will be informed by the personnel above as required

#### Form a school planning group of staff to draw up an action plan for the next two to three days

- decide what information should be shared, and with whom - staff, pupils, parents directly involved, wider community, media, social media.

- agree how to do this sensitively, and who should do it bearing in mind the current restrictions imposed by social isolation.

*NB It is very important that parents of the pupil(s) involved in the incident are in full agreement with whatever is decided and that information is accurate.*

- share responsibilities; designate substitutes if necessary
- ensure several staff have access to next-of-kin list
- find out who will be attending the funeral and make plans for those who, because of lockdown, are unable to attend

### The media

- all calls from the media can be passed on to the Haringey Communications Team

Team Manager Media, Campaigns, Consultations: Laura Wileman T 0208 4894 8687 Email [laura.wileman@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:laura.wileman@haringey.gov.uk)

- the team can help you prepare a press statement, and advise you how to deal with phone calls, the media and social media. They will work closely with you and the family to decide what information should be given to the media.
- decide which member of staff will deal with the media.

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### Action within hours

#### Initial contact with the family

- contact the family of the pupil(s) involved and offer your sympathy
- as and when appropriate, clarify with the family what information they agree to share
- confirm any arrangements (such as funerals), who will be attending and who would have liked to but cannot

#### Keep lines of communication open as far as possible

- sort out telephone communication to and from the planning group
- identify a phone line for calls and keep records of all calls
- agree strategies for dealing with enquiries



### Inform school staff (ideally before pupils hear about it)

- outline the school's basic response and agree who will call staff
- prepare an information sheet for all school staff
- make sure all staff are informed including part-time staff, absent staff, lunchtime supervisors and staff working shifts

### Let the pupils know as soon as possible

- A large school assembly will not be possible and in any case, is not always the best way to tell pupils.
- It is better to let pupils hear about the incident from someone they know while they are in small, familiar groups.
- You might want to inform all pupils in their class groups. Consider whether you can do this in the current situation.
- If there has been a death, try to tell pupils in the deceased's class first
- The EPS can help you decide what to say and the best approach to take
- In other times, you might have wanted to think about calling special assemblies, shortly after the event, where you could review the facts, talk about your personal feelings, outline plans for the school day and dispel any rumours that may have started. This will almost certainly not be possible.
- You might want to offer a short special tribute at this time instead, such as asking pupils to send in photos or memories to one person who will put this together as a video collage or a printed document to share with the friends and **deceased's** family.

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-funerals-alternative-goodbyes/>

### Inform parents and the wider community

- Consider contacting the parents of all pupils in the same class so that they know about the incident before they see their children. Again, this may not be easily done. For example, a member of staff could prepare a script to share the news initially with parents on the phone. Staff could then arrange a video call with small groups of pupils with parents present informing them of the death.
- Consider writing to all parents the same day, informing them of the death
- Contact parents of pupils who may need additional support

## Short-term Action (within 12 hours)

Feeling shocked and numbed or feeling a strong urge to talk are normal reactions for those thrown into a major crisis

- ensure adults and pupils have designated times to share their thoughts and feelings with tutors, class teachers, colleagues. For example, parents could use the information (see appendix). Staff could also arrange a video call with a small group of pupils.

## Keep everybody informed

- consider whether you need to arrange a briefing meeting for staff and how you will do this
- inform the wider community, including other parents and neighbouring schools
- remember to include schools attended by siblings
- develop a plan for handling the media

**Team Manager Media, Campaigns, Consultations: Laura Wileman**  
T 0208 4894 8687 Email [laura.wileman@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:laura.wileman@haringey.gov.uk)

- Social media is now part of everyday communication and information sharing. Act quickly and with caution (see appendix F - guidance on social media use and critical incidents)

**Aim to guide families to return to 'normal' as soon as possible but be flexible – constantly review how things are going. For example, if parents are following the school's guidance of completing school work, encourage pupils to continue with this but be flexible.**

- identify vulnerable staff and pupils and make sure they know about available support services.

## Teaching arrangements

If a teacher has died, and they have been communicating online with their pupils, what will happen to their pupils?

- you may need to replace with another adult.
- consider asking support staff to provide additional support to specific pupils at certain times of the day; consider how they will do this e.g. by phone

## Curriculum content

- identify any inappropriate content in the school curriculum

## Support arrangements

- contact the EPS for support and advice about other agencies and professionals who may be able to help
- see P for details of local and national support. Ensure that everybody is aware of these.
- consider how to arrange debriefing for staff and / or pupils who are directly affected
- plan how you will monitor and deal with **people's** feelings and reactions, including school staff, particularly during this period of social isolation

## Pupils

- decide how you will deal with pupils who are very upset. Is there a named person they could talk to?
- draw up strategies that will allow pupils to express their feelings about the situation if they wish

## Staff

- be available, as a support person, to help pupils or staff experiencing difficulty
- help staff give advice to parents about dealing with pupil behaviour (see appendix)
- have to hand a list of professionals and / or organisations who may be able to help, both in the short and long term
- arrange some informal mutual support online meetings, perhaps at the end of the day, to give staff a chance to share their feelings and reactions

## Yourself

Supporting staff and pupils, as well as managing the processes, can be very stressful – find time to talk about your own personal feelings with someone you can trust. This might include an educational psychologist.

T 020 8489 3004 or email [educationalpsychologyservice@haringey.gov.uk](mailto:educationalpsychologyservice@haringey.gov.uk)

## Medium-term action (24–72 hours)

### Return to the home learning routine for affected pupils and staff

## Pupils

- make sure that a member of staff contacts affected pupils

- make sensitive arrangements for their return to the school routine
- arrange alternative teaching arrangements if necessary and possible
- arrange online consultations for staff with the EPS so that they can better support children. Make sure that everyone has a clear understanding of the purpose of the consultation, and its confidentiality
- discuss whether and how to refer children for individual help such as counselling.
- liaise with the affected pupil's parents

### Staff

- arrange support for staff who have been affected by the incident
- check that monitoring procedures are in place and being followed

### Funerals and memorial services

- find out what the family plans to do about the funeral. Note, very few people will be allowed to attend during lockdown and this in itself will have an impact.
- staff and pupils who want to attend will not be able to because of social isolation.
- find out whether the family would like staff and pupils to send a tribute. If so, try, if possible, to involve them in the final decisions. Click below for some suggestions about other ways of saying goodbye from our members at: [How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible](#), from Winstons Wish; [Guidance for families around funerals](#), from Nelson's Journey; [Organising a meaningful funeral](#) from Quaker Social Action
- consider cultural and religious implications
- consult the deceased **person's family**, and the school community, about plans for a special assembly or memorial service at a later stage
- consider an assembly which celebrates a life at a later stage

### Long-term action plan

- be mindful of school staff working with painful emotions and sensitive subjects
- be aware of multi-cultural and multi-faith issues
- remember that some people will be looking for someone to blame

- find ways to increase levels of support for staff and pupils
- ensure new staff know what happened and are aware of pupils and staff affected and are sensitive to their needs
- remember legal processes, enquiries and even news stories may bring back distressing memories and cause temporary upset in school
- **plan the curriculum to work with 'rites of passage' as a matter of course**
- consult and decide on whether and how to mark anniversaries

Note that in some cases the effects of a traumatic incident can last for years both within the school and the local community.

## III. Appendices

### A. The stages of grief – Kubler Ross

#### Phase 1: early grief

- Shock and numbing
- Alarm
- Denial and disbelief

#### Phase 2: acute grief

- Yearning and pining
- Searching
- Strong feelings of sadness, anger, guilt or shame
- Disorganisation
- Despair
- Reorganization

#### Phase 3: integration of loss and grief

### B. Children's understanding of death at different ages

#### Infants

Concept of death is experienced as 'absence'

#### Age 3 – 5 years

- The child sees death as impersonal
- Death has to do with "not being alive"
- Death is a temporary state
- Egocentric beliefs - "Granny died because I didn't visit her"

## Age 5 – 9 years

- The child becomes more aware of death
- Child develops a fear of death
- Is particularly vulnerable to being overwhelmed by their feelings

## Age 9 onwards

- The understanding that death is irreversible begins to be consolidated and almost matches that of an adult
- Child begins to approach mourning in the way that an adult would

## C. Helping bereaved children and staff in school

### Points to remember

- Children act out their feelings through their behaviour.
- Grief is a normal, healthy response, essential for healing, and is a long-term process. It is painful, but normal.
- All children respond differently.
- Work, attention and behaviour may suffer because of their emotional distress.
- The loss of a loved **one involves the loss of part of a child's own identity.**
- When supporting a bereaved child, keep in contact with their family.
- Dealing with a bereaved child will give rise to feelings in you. These are normal and natural. Make sure that you get support for yourself, too.

### General considerations

Schools and teachers can play a vital part in helping children get through the grieving process. School provides a familiar, predictable and supportive environment. It can also provide some relief from the grief at home. Some children, however, are very anxious about attending school after a bereavement. Often, this is because they are worried that their surviving family may come to harm. Let the child know that you understand their problem, and want to help, but **don't be** tempted to spoil them or treat them differently.

Although it is usually recommended that children return to school as soon as possible after the funeral, you should liaise with their family about the exact timing and arrangements, because returning to school can be difficult for the child.

Returning to school may be difficult for the child and whilst friends usually rally round and offer support, be on the look-out for bullying or teasing.

Teachers must try to talk about death and other taboo subjects, such as stealing, lying, illness and hospitals whenever the opportunity arises - **don't** wait for a tragedy to happen.

Bringing these topics into casual conversation will help children learn that they can talk to their teachers about any subject.

Adults should try to find support and education to help them understand their own grief. By talking about their feelings and receiving support, they will be able to model a healthy reaction to loss.

Children will generally learn how to respond to loss by watching other adults in the family. Children may feel frightened and insecure because they sense **other people's grief and** stress and feel powerless to help. They will need additional love, support and structure in their daily routine.

## **Suggestions for adults**

### **Find time to listen**

Always take your cue from the child. When they want to talk, try to find the time to listen.

**If it's** not possible straight away, tell the child that you would like to talk, and name a time and place when you can have some quiet time together. Be patient and reassuring. Gently encourage the child to talk about their lost parent, sibling or friend, and do so yourself.

### **Expect questions and try to answer them honestly**

The child may become intensely curious about death and burial. For example, children may fear or resent a God that takes to heaven someone they love and need. Try to find out about the family's religious or cultural beliefs so as not to **confuse the child, but don't be** afraid to say **"I don't know"**.

### **Be alert for changes in behaviour in the first few weeks after bereavement**

The child may be withdrawn, feel abandoned, helpless, desperate, anxious, apathetic angry, guilty and/or afraid, have sullen moods and lack concentration. These are common and are often acted out aggressively because the child may be unable to express their feelings



verbally. Try to handle them all **patiently and calmly**; **don't** seem surprised, and **don't** get cross.

### **Help the child to recognise and express their feelings**

This will help the child avoid developing unhealthy defence mechanisms to cope with difficult emotions.

### **Let the child know it's okay to laugh and to cry**

Adults and other children may feel tearful at times. **It's** okay to lighten the mood with memories of happier times shared with the lost parent, sibling or friend.

### **Believe what the child says and acknowledge their feelings and thoughts**

Resist the temptation to **make comments** such as "I'm sure you don't mean that" **if a child believes that they caused their mum's death**, or to say to a distressed child that "You'll soon feel better". The child's strong feelings must be acknowledged, believed and discussed. Children **have 'magic thinking' and may believe** that their behaviour, or thoughts, can cause or reverse death.

### **Close liaison between home and school is particularly important at this time**

This will help the child feel more secure and provide extra information on how they are coping.

### **Be sensitive to special days**

**Mother's Day, birthdays, and even the anniversary of the bereavement**, may all revive **painful memories**. **As always, it's best to take your cue from the child.**

### **'Death' as part of the curriculum**

Children need a clear explanation of the cause of death using terms **such as 'die' and 'dead' not 'going away' or 'asleep'** as this merely confuses.

The patterns for coping with loss and grief begin in early childhood and often continue through to adulthood.

**It's important** that death and dying are not seen as taboo subjects. Children need to understand the cause of death. Give them a clear explanation, **using the correct terms, such as 'die' and 'dead' instead of 'going away' or 'asleep' as these simply add to their confusion.**

## Common questions and answers

### 1. When should you tell children that a person has died?

Children should be told as soon as possible to prevent them finding out from some other, less appropriate, source. Try to use a normal tone of voice and clear direct language.

Avoid speaking in hushed whispers as these may convey spooky or unnatural feelings

### 2. How should you tell them?

Where possible, children should be told by someone close to them, in familiar surroundings where they will feel more secure. Both you and the child may feel uncomfortable and uncertain, so it might help to hold or hug the child to help reduce their fear and insecurity.

### 3. What should you tell them?

It is very important to tell the truth as far as you know it. **Even 'white lies' may** have to be revisited later on, and the truth is the best way to prevent rumours and fantasy building up. This information will stay with the child for a very long time and, if challenged later and found to be incorrect, it may destroy the trust between you and the child.

They may not take it all in at this stage. But they will go over and over the facts later, asking more questions as **they gradually take in the truth. Don't** worry about having to keep giving the same answers.

### 4. How much should you explain?

As mentioned above, children will vary in their ability to take in information. If your own information is limited, tell them what you know and make every effort to find out more.

In the absence of facts our imagination may take over, and children may start to believe that what they were doing might be related **to the person's death**. These fears may need to be brought out and talked about later.

Local gossip, and even newspapers, may exaggerate the real story. An honest, objective account of the truth is the best way to prevent this.

### 5. What if I feel very upset myself and find it difficult to talk?

It is very important to let children know that it is natural and acceptable to be upset and to cry - even for adults. It is better to share feelings, such as crying together, rather than deny them.

Sometimes, however, it may be better to protect a child from witnessing extreme adult grief. If the adult is traumatised with grief, they may need time and space to release their feelings initially.

It is important that adults **'give children permission to grieve'** as well as the opportunity and support to do so, without trying to force them to behave in a certain way.

## 6. In what ways are teenagers different from other children?

During adolescence, young people have very confusing feelings about themselves and the world about them. Grief tends to heighten these feelings, increase the confusion and may lead to severe depression.

Allowing the teenager to talk about their feelings with a caring, supportive adult (who is there when needed) is better than trying to be **'forcefully helpful'**. However, **at this time**, the individual may lean more towards their friends, **and away from their family**. **Don't feel** rejected if they look to friends for support and comfort, just be there for them and tell them so.

Art, music and sport can be good ways of expressing these feelings, and should be encouraged.

## 7. How long does it take to come to terms with bereavement?

Some societies (including Victorian England, which had dress and behaviour codes) had a formal period of mourning. This helped the bereaved person, and others, to behave appropriately for the right length of time. There is no prescribed period in our present society (except in some religions such as Judaism) so each individual has to progress at their own pace. This varies enormously from person to person.

There are several phases of grief. The initial stage of disbelief usually passes quickly, but many people stay at this stage for a long time. The feelings of depression have to be passed through, even fleetingly, before the individual can move on and start to look positively at life.

This makes it particularly difficult when several children are going through the grieving process at the same time, such as a class reacting to the death of one of their peers, because they will all be at different stages at the same time. Grief should be allowed to run its natural course.

## 8. Are some children more vulnerable than others?

This varies according to **the child's age, developmental level** and personal circumstances.

Very young children (under 5 years) are beginning to develop their independence from the security of their home, and loss can be particularly damaging to them. They may also show their anxieties in other, indirect, ways such as bed wetting, nightmares or phobias. They should be reassured and comforted.

## 9. Can we help by seeing the **'positive side'** of the bereavement?

There is a temptation to talk about **'new responsibilities'** within a family, or the **'man of the house'** or the **'little mother'**. This approach may diminish the

**child's own grief. It might be** better to allow the child to regress to more childish behaviour, if only for a little while.

Although it is always good to talk positively about the dead person, especially when remembering events that involved the bereaved, these discussions can be sensitive and might be only really appropriate in the later stages of the grieving process. They should be thought through carefully.

**10. How can I distinguish between children who are attention seeking and those who are genuinely grieving?**

This is the most difficult question to answer, because it really depends on your knowledge of the child. It is true that some children, seeing the care and attention that genuinely upset children are getting, will appear to **'try it on'** to get attention for themselves. It is important to remember, though, that children who are seeking attention may also need to grieve and be handled sensitively.

**11. How should I manage the grieving child?**

Generally, but depending on the situation, the child needs to be part of a group and not singled out. The children should be expected to carry on with their work, although you might want to let them know that **you don't expect** the same standards of performance. **This way, they won't get upset** if they fall below par.

Peer group members can help each other, although you may want to intervene in a helpful way if they seem to be upsetting each other.

**12. Will all children in the school community affected by a bereavement or traumatic event need counselling and therapeutic support?**

In line with NICE guidelines we do not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereaved children/young people and families. Help and support are best provided by a trusted, familiar adult as and when it is needed. Grief is a normal adjustment process and in time most children/young people and adults will recover without the need for professional counselling. Those who are grieving may need to be reassured that whatever emotions they are feeling are perfectly normal. There is no one process or right process of grieving. Only when feelings remain overwhelming over a period of weeks does counselling or therapeutic support become an appropriate offer. If after a period (4 – 6 weeks) there are members of the school community who show signs of continued distress, your EP can discuss this with you and signpost to further sources of appropriate support. Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier, particularly while we remain in lockdown. It will be important to be vigilant and to monitor pupils and staff so that any signs or symptoms of delayed grieving can be identified, and appropriate action taken. Schools may wish to contact CAMHS, particularly to support direct work with families.

**13. Can the school, or a family religion, be helpful?**

These can be very helpful, because they provide explanations, support and, above all, structure for the child.

Problems may occur if the child starts to question the religious explanation, especially if the death was unexpected. You may need guidance from a religious adviser at this stage.

#### 14. What practical things can I do?

There are a number of practical things that children may choose to do. If you are dealing with a class, then an open discussion of possible ideas will make good use of the **children's** natural creativity. They will probably come up with **an idea that 'is right' for them and their friend who has died.**

### D. World religions and the concept of death

Visit [www.bbc.co.uk/religion](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion) to explore a range of the world's beliefs:

- Atheism (Humanism)
- **Bahá'í**
- Buddhism (Mahayana, Theravada)
- Candomblé
- Christianity (Baptist, Catholic, Christadelphians, Church of England, Church of Scotland, Eastern Orthodox, Exclusive Brethren, Methodist, Mormon, Pentecostalism, Quakers, Salvation Army, Seventh-day Adventists)
- Hinduism
- Islam (Shia, Sunni)
- Jainism
- **Jehovah's Witnesses**
- Judaism (Humanistic, Liberal, Orthodox Judaism, Reconstructionist, Reform)
- Mormonism
- Paganism
- Rastafari
- Santeria
- Shinto
- Sikhism
- Taoism
- Unitarianism
- Zoroastrianism

### E. Dealing with the media

#### Try to keep control of the situation

This will be one of the most difficult things to do when faced by the media. Often people feel that by speaking to the media they are keeping control. Certainly you will have no control if you refuse to deal with the media in some form or other.

#### Do not be brow-beaten into talking to the media

Never be bullied into speaking to the media. Be aware, however, that if you refuse to talk they will not simply give up and go away.

### If you decide to speak to the media make sure you are not drawn into talking about areas you do not want to get into

Tell them only what you want them to know. Do not be drawn into discussing any personal matters you are not at ease with.

### Do not be afraid to show emotion

Many people feel it is a weakness to show emotion. This is nonsense, emotional turmoil is an entirely natural reaction and it would be wrong to bottle this up even in front of the media.

### Have somebody you trust with you for support

Do not be afraid to insist on having a friend, member of the family, work colleague, solicitor or any other supporter with you, **at least then you won't feel isolated.**

### Alternatively make a statement through a third party such as a solicitor, friend or police (press) officer

If you do not respond personally they will still expect a comment or statement. It is possible to issue this through numerous sources such as those above.

### Contact a support organisation where you may be able to be put in contact with people who can offer help having experienced media attention themselves

People who have already been through similar bereavement will be able to offer support and also give an insight into what to expect from the media.

### Try not to over-react to media coverage of the tragedy. If necessary avoid watching television, listening to the radio or reading newspapers.

It is a natural reaction to be unhappy about the way the media cover a story and many people claim they have been misquoted. One way of dealing with this is to avoid 'seeing' the coverage entirely.

### Be aware that the initial interest will be followed by renewed coverage of the inquest

The immediate aftermath of the tragedy will not be the only time media interest will be aroused. Even if you do not co-operate or speak to the media, they will cover the **coroner's inquest. They may even approach you at the end of the inquest for further comments.**

## Two sample statements

### Statement One

The family of \_\_\_\_\_ are deeply shocked by his/her death. \_\_\_\_\_ was a well respected member of the community and a loving husband/wife/partner/father/mother/son/daughter.

You will understand that the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ has come as a tremendous shock to us all and we would ask you to respect our privacy at what is a very difficult time for us all.

## Statement Two

The family of \_\_\_\_\_ are deeply shocked by his/her death. \_\_\_\_\_ was a well respected member of the community and a loving husband/wife/partner/father/mother/son/daughter. \_\_\_\_\_ was (*insert here any message you wish to add about the person, such as personal history or personal tribute*).

He/She will be sorely missed by all his/her family and many friends.

You will understand that the loss of \_\_\_\_\_ has come as a tremendous shock to us all and we would ask you to respect our privacy at what is a very difficult time for us all.

Under the present circumstances we feel unable to make any further comments, issue any further statements or undertake any media interviews.

## F. Guidance on social media use and traumatic incidents

The following information is taken from the Department of Education and Skills (2015) *Responding to Critical Incidents – resource materials for schools*

Social media is now part of everyday communication and information sharing. Most school students are avid and competent users. Social media messages speed up the rate at which information is shared. This can have a significant influence on the behaviour of young people during a critical incident. Some social media communication may occur without the knowledge of school staff that leads to distress among students or their parents/guardians.

The following information may help schools to consider issues related to social media use when dealing with a critical incident.

- It is essential that schools take account of the need to have competency in the use of social media among management and staff. If the members of SLT have particular concerns or fears about social media, they should consult those familiar with its use. Senior-students could also be asked for help. Normalising social media use by the students during a critical incident is very important.
- Schools should include social media literacy in the school curriculum. It is essential that school management, staff and students understand the role of social media, and its positive and negative aspects. A positive disposition to social media by the school may encourage thoughtful use by students during a critical incident.
- Agreement on appropriate use of social media during a critical incident should **be included in the school's Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)**. All school staff should follow agreed online professional protocols. *“Teachers should ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social media etc.”*

- When dealing with a critical incident it is advised that schools act quickly and with caution. A message could be placed on the school website and on any other school social media account along the following lines:  
*'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the 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.'*
- School can use social media to provide up to date information for all concerned throughout the various stages of the incident. Positive messages and appropriate advice for young people and their parents/guardians can be provided. One important message would be to remind parents/guardians to discuss social media use with their children and monitor use more actively following a crisis.
- It is important that CIMT members are familiar with safe messaging guidelines and the document *Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self-harm*. Safe messaging guidelines should be followed when sending messages to staff, students, community or the media following a death by suicide. Media personnel if making contact with the school during a critical incident should be provided with the guidelines. Should the need arise during a crisis, schools can contact the Department of Education and Skills Press Office for advice and support.
- Young people often post Rest In Peace (RIP) messages on social media sites when tragedies occur. These posts can be heartfelt and emotional particularly in cases of death by suicide. Messages such as "*I miss you and will see you soon*" or "*I will follow in your path*" should cause concern and be followed up with the individual concerned. The death by suicide of an individual may influence others. Young people are especially prone to contagion. Those who are emotionally vulnerable may act on suicidal impulses.
- Activity on social networking sites during a critical incident can be a source of potentially important information, such as suicide pacts, identification of vulnerable groups or individual young people who may be at increased risk of suicide. Given **privacy restrictions to people's personal web pages, distressing** information may be posted without the knowledge of parents or school management. It is likely that users will block access so activity of this nature will not be accessible to everyone.
- Monitoring sites raises issues of privacy and surveillance. Schools are not advised to engage in monitoring. However, should schools become aware of inappropriate posts by students, they could inform the parents /guardians and encourage them to request that it is deleted. The easiest way to have a post removed is for the person who originally posted it to delete it from their account or request its removal. Service providers will not usually remove posts unless content is contrary to their AUP.  
The following advice for journalists is provided in the Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self- harm.
- The internet has created additional opportunities and challenges for journalists due to the speed and ease of accessing and publishing information. Points of view can now be presented more quickly and easily but sometimes without review or factual basis. It can be difficult for some readers to understand the



distinction between what fact is and what is opinion. If you are posting your story on a news website or blog please consider the following points:

### General tips

- Avoid linking to or mentioning the names of websites that encourage or glamorise suicide.
- Try to exercise care and judgment in the creation of news stories that will appear online, as they can often be surrounded by adverts and commentary which are outside the control of the author. Additional features on the page can create a negative context, allowing, for example, adverts promoting depression aids to appear alongside articles on mental health.
- Add hyperlinks to sources of support to ensure that people in distress can access useful resources quickly. Consider promoting [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org) within the UK

### Use of Reader Feedback

- The ability to comment on articles or blog posts gives readers the opportunity to glamorise suicide or present controversial opinions about suicidal tendencies and mental health. The relative anonymity of these comments can encourage debates that are inappropriate for a news website, and potentially damaging to other readers.
- Responsible websites ensure that the terms and conditions each commentator agrees to when contributing online are explicit in what constitutes inappropriate material, and how it will be dealt with. In addition, site owners and moderators should understand the implications of allowing these comments to be published on their website.
- Wherever possible, attempt to educate your audience to understand how to use the feedback section with full **consideration for everyone's health**, safety and wellbeing, and the right of the publisher to remove inappropriate content.
- Consider making it clear to users that feedback services are moderated, whether manually or electronically.

## G. Violent incidents involving the police

- In the event of a fatal, or very serious, incident involving the police, including suicide, you should ask the police for advice and guidance
- Prior to, or preceding, a police investigation, you must never ask for a written account or take a statement – particularly when offering support to witnesses as this could contaminate police evidence.
- Phone the Non-Emergency Police number 101 which is a 24 hour number. The call will go through to the police control room - they will be able to assist or pass the call on.

### What happens when the police are involved following eg an unexpected death or serious youth violence which has resulted in serious injury or death?

In a critical or **fatal incident**, a **'Gold Group' meeting** would be called with key partners from various agencies. In a fatal incident, this would include the Metropolitan Police's Serious Crime Directorate, plus the local investigating team.

The police will provide detailed advice and guidance depending on the nature of the incident.

The police will appoint a family liaison officer (FLO) - all communications with the family should go through the FLO. The FLO can pass on cards and messages of sympathy to the family and convey details of the funeral arrangements and the **family's** wishes to the school.

Schools will be given advice about counselling and support and told where to get other advice and guidance, such as from specialist teams.

At the early stages of an incident, initial reports often prove to be factually inaccurate. As a consequence, any briefings should be kept short and information shared on a **'need to know' basis only**.

Schools should seek advice from Haringey's Communications Team who will help you prepare a press statement, and advise your staff on how to deal with phone calls and so on. Staff should be advised that it is not their role to speak to the press or give their views and opinions. All calls from the media should be passed on to the Communications Team.

### Prior to or preceding a police investigation

You must never ask for a written account or take a statement – particularly when offering support to witnesses. To do so may prejudice any further police investigation.

### Support and witnesses

- If a child, young person or adult thinks that they may be a witness, they should be encouraged to inform the police; or you must report this to the police. Arrangements will be made to obtain a formal statement. In the case of a pupil, this will be via a parent./carer or an adult in loco parentis, as appropriate
- **The school should in no circumstances interview witnesses as this may prejudice the legal process.**
- The police will advise on support for witnesses, including counselling.

## H. Sample letters

### Sample letter 1 – From Schools to Parents/Carers (death of child)

Name  
Address

Tel:  
Date:  
My ref:

Dear [ ]

I regret to have to inform you that, as a result of a tragic accident that took place on [ ], [ ] has sadly died. [ ] was a Year [ ] pupil, popular throughout the school with both children and staff alike.

This is a particularly difficult time for his family and friends and our thoughts are with them. I am sure that you would like to join me in **respecting the family's** privacy.

I will be informing the children about this on [ ] in class group and realise that they are likely to be upset and distressed by the tragic news. This is not currently planned to be discussed with siblings in the Infants. Support from school and trained staff from Haringey Educational Psychology Service will be available to support us if needed.

I would ask you all to be especially understanding and supportive at this time. If you are **particularly concerned about your child's** response to this news, please get in touch with us so that we can discuss how best to support your child and seek professional input if appropriate. Written information will also be available for those parents who would find it helpful. This will be available on the school's website.

Yours sincerely

### Sample letter 2 – From Schools to Parents/Carers (death of child following illness)

Name  
Address

Tel:  
Date:  
My ref:

Dear parent

I am writing to let you know that we have had some very sad news in school today. This morning a year [ ] pupil, [ ] passed away peacefully at home. Some of you may already be aware that [ ] had been unwell for some time and had been receiving treatment for [ ].

[ ]'s class have been told this news and have been given the opportunity to talk about it in a sensitive and age appropriate way. Your children may want to discuss this news further with you at home, or they may not.

If any issues arise from this that you wish to discuss, or you feel you need support with, please contact [ ]. In addition, there is a bereavement charity for children, which provide useful advice. It is called **Winston's Wish** and information can be found on its website [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

We are trying to support our children by continuing with our plans to try to provide some comfort through normality.

All of our thoughts are of course with [ ]'s family at this time.

Yours sincerely

### Sample letter 3 - From Schools to Parents/Carers (sudden death of child)

Name  
Address

Tel:  
Date:  
My ref:

Dear parent

I have the very sad duty to inform you of the unexplained and tragic sudden death of one of our Year [ ] pupils on [ ] in hospital.

**Out of respect for the pupil's family, we have been asked not to confirm the child's name at this point.** We can make it clear however that there is no connection between this tragic death and the current epidemic.

I hope that over the weekend you will be able to share this news with your child in a way that feels appropriate to them and their level of understanding.

The Educational Psychology Service, which is **part of Haringey's Children's Services**, is supporting the school and will be available to help us when we talk to children on Monday. In the meantime, they have advised us to ask parents to be particularly aware of **their children's reaction to** this sad news. If you have any concerns about your child following this event, please do contact your GP or the school, where we will be able to advise you.

You may find the advice and information on the Cruse bereavement care website helpful: <http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/Children.html>

I am sure that you will join me and the rest of the staff in sending our heart-felt condolences to **our pupil's family**. We will ensure that friends and fellow-pupils have the opportunity to express their grief and to celebrate their **classmate's life** over the coming weeks.

Yours faithfully

## Sample letter 4 From Schools to Parents/Carers (death of teacher)

### SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Date:

(Name of member of staff)

It is with the deepest regret that I write to inform you that Mr...died at 3:30pm yesterday, .... (date).

Early this term, Mr... was admitted to hospital with suspected appendicitis. During surgery, a very large tumour was discovered which was found to be malignant. He was given chemotherapy but the tumour was too far advanced and his condition deteriorated very rapidly.

As you will be aware, Mr.. was an outstanding teacher who was voted most popular teacher on several occasions. He taught at our school for ... years of his ... year teaching career.

As a mark of respect, all after school activities are cancelled today.

I will of course keep the whole school community informed of arrangements once the family's wishes are known. At that time we will also consider how we should commemorate Mr ....'s contribution to the life of our school.

This sad event will come as a shock to many. I am sure you will support each other at this difficult time. Bereavement support is available for students and staff and if you feel you need some support, please see your Head of Year.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Mr... 's family and friends.

Yours faithfully

## Sample letter 5 From Schools to Parents/Carers (tragic news re family)

### SCHOOL LETTER HEADED PAPER

Name  
Address

Tel:  
Date:  
My ref:

Dear parents

We are aware that many of you have already heard the tragic news regarding one of our Year [ ] families. This is obviously an extremely difficult time for this particular family, but also our school community as a whole.

We would like to reassure you that we will be monitoring all of the children within this class and supporting them as appropriate over the coming weeks.

In the meantime the following websites may be of use to you. Both are aimed at supporting the needs of children who have been bereaved.

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

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

The following reminders for parents and carers are some key points taken from the Winston's Wish site. These may be of use to you whilst supporting your own child.

#### **Reminders for Parents (from Winston's Wish)**

- **Remember that 'super parents' don't exist.** Just do what you can, when you can. Be gentle on yourself.
- There is more than one way to support your children. Choose the things that you feel most comfortable with.
- **Accept that some things just can't be 'made better' in a short space of time.**
- Talk to children using words they understand and ask questions to check they have understood you.
- Give information a bit at time if your children are younger. **Pieces of the 'jigsaw puzzle' can be put together over time to make the complete picture.**
- Show children how you are feeling: it helps them to know that **it's OK to show their feelings too.**
- Encourage children to ask questions and keep answering them – **even if it's for the 100<sup>th</sup> time.**
- **Answer questions honestly and simply; and be willing to say 'I don't know.'**
- Try to find ways in which children can be involved.
- Keep talking about the person who has died.
- Trust yourself and your instincts – **you haven't forgotten how to parent your child.**
- Look after yourself too.

Our thoughts are with you all at this time.

Remember **that 'super parents' don't exist. Just do what you can, when you can.** Be gentle on yourself.

Yours faithfully

## I. Helplines and support

The outbreak of Covid-19 means that many aspects of children's lives are changing. School is closed for most, lots of parents are working from home, and families are having to spend time apart when they would like to be together. The news is full of talk of the virus and the effect it is having.

Many children will have questions and worries about the virus, but those who have experienced the death of someone important or who have an ill family member might be particularly worried.

### Local helplines and support

#### Choices (Haringey CAMHS)

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

T: 0208 702 3405, which offers emotional **support for children, young people and their families** in Haringey. NB This is not a crisis service.

#### ConnectEd

<http://ccsconnected.org.uk/>

T: 0208 969 5305

Run by The Catholic Children's Society

Website **to assist school staff and parents/carers** to support children who have or may be at risk of developing mental health problems.

#### Haringey 24/7 Crisis Line

Telephone 0208 702 4500 available 24/7 to all Haringey families and young people.

#### Haringey Local Offer Support and Services

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/children-and-families/local-offer/covid-19-guidance>

#### Haringey Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

**Telephone Support Line run by** Mental Health Practitioners

Tel: 0208 702 6035 available 9am-3pm Monday-Friday or email

[Beh-tr.camhstrailblazerinbox@nhs.net](mailto:Beh-tr.camhstrailblazerinbox@nhs.net)

For children/ young people, parents/ carers, school staff.

To listen and offer support with your worries and emotions.

#### Hope in Tottenham

T: 020 8809 3411

[www.hopeintottenham.com](http://www.hopeintottenham.com)

Counselling in schools and youth work

#### KOOTH (Haringey CAMHS)

<https://kooth.com/>

Free, safe and anonymous online support **for young people**

Monday – Friday 12pm – 10pm, Saturday – Sunday 6pm – 10pm

Kooth, from XenZone, is an online counselling and emotional well-being platform for children and young people, accessible through mobile, tablet and desktop and free at the point of use.

#### Mind in Haringey

[www.mindinharingey.org.uk](http://www.mindinharingey.org.uk)

Monday-Friday 9am-3pm - call 0208 702 6035. (April 2020)

In Haringey the Mind Mental Health Support Team have set up a telephone support line **for young people, parents and families.** Offers bereavement counselling for adults with costs on a sliding scale (from £5)

#### **North London Samaritans based in Bounds Green**

To speak to a trained Samaritan, call free on **116 123** at any time or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

### **National support services on bereavement and grief from Covid-19**

#### **Child Bereavement UK**

Helpline: 0800 0288840

<http://www.childbereavementuk.org/>

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

Child Bereavement UK have made a short film about supporting children through difficult times <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children-through-difficult-times> and also Child Bereavement UK have made a short film about supporting bereaved children during the outbreak

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/coronavirus-supporting-children>

#### **Grief Encounter – supporting bereaved children and families**

Telephone: 0808 802 0111

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

Supports bereaved children and their families to help alleviate the pain caused by the death of someone close. Updated to reflect impact of pandemic. Grief Encounter are running activities for bereaved children and families on their Instagram page.

#### **MIND: Contacts for Young People – alleviating anxiety because of Covid-19**

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

**Self Isolation – Recommendations** <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/>

#### **Winston's Wish – Supporting bereaved children and young people**

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

National services includes Family Line 08088 020 021

Winston's Wish have produced guidance on: telling a child that someone is seriously ill <https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-children-young-people-serious-illness/>

talking to bereaved children about coronavirus

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people/>

telling a child that someone has died from coronavirus

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

#### **Cruse Bereavement Care**

The number is **0808 808 1677** Email [helpline@cruse.org.uk](mailto:helpline@cruse.org.uk)

<https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline>

Cruse Bereavement Care have produced some tips about talking to children <https://www.cruse.org.uk/coronavirus/children-and-young-people> among their wider resources about grief and coronavirus among their wider resources about grief and coronavirus <https://www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/coronavirus-dealing-bereavement-and-grief>



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Grief Encounter are running activities for bereaved children and families on their Instagram page

### **MIND: Contacts for Young People – alleviating anxiety because of Covid**

• <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

**Self Isolation – Recommendations** <https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/looking-after-your-mental-health-while-self-isolating/>

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talking to bereaved children about coronavirus

<https://www.winstonswish.org/coronavirus-supporting-bereaved-children-and-young-people/>

telling a child that someone has died from coronavirus

<https://www.winstonswish.org/telling-a-child-someone-died-from-coronavirus/>

## **Other National helplines**

### **Childline**

Telephone: 0800 1111

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

National services include: free national helpline **for children and young people** on any issue or problem 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year; freepost service; and schools outreach programme.

### **Hope Again - a special website run by Cruse for young people**

<https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

A special feature of this site is a message board where young people can share their experiences and receive replies from trained young supporters.

### **Papyrus/Hopeline UK**

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)

HopeLine UK Telephone: 0800 068 4141

Free confidential help and advice line for Young People thinking about suicide and anyone worried about a young person

### **SAMM – Support After Murder or Manslaughter**

[www.samm.org](http://www.samm.org) / [www.sammabroad.org](http://www.sammabroad.org)

Offers emotional support to those bereaved through murder or manslaughter, in this country or abroad. Phone: 08458 723440

### **Support after suicide**

[www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk)

Website containing supportive information and links to organisations supporting those bereaved by suicide.

### **Samaritans HQ**

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

Particularly helpful on suicide and dealing with media and social media. Call national line free any time from any phone on 116 123.

### **Shout**

<https://www.giveusashout.org/>

Provides free, confidential support, 24/7 via **text for anyone at crisis anytime**, anywhere. You can: text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a trained Crisis Volunteer; or text with someone who is trained and will provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving

### **The Mix**

Telephone 0808 808 4994 for free – lines are open from 4pm to 11pm every day for call or webchat

<https://www.themix.org.uk/about-us>

A free and confidential multi-channel service **for young people aged 13 – 25**. - you choose how you access our support - through articles and video content online or our phone, email, peer to peer and counselling services. If you feel like you can't cope or are worried about how you are feeling, you can contact our crisis messenger 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by texting THEMIX to 85258

### **Together for Short Lives**

Telephone free on **0808 8088 100**

[www.togetherforshortlives](http://www.togetherforshortlives)

The helpline is open from 10am until 4pm, Monday – Friday. Outside of these hours and at weekends and Bank Holidays, you can leave a message on our answerphone and we will respond as soon as possible.

**For parents, carers or professionals** who are looking after or know a child or young person who is expected to have a short life. Updated to reflect pandemic.

### **Winston's Wish -**

Telephone 08088 020 021 Email: [ask@winstonswish.org](mailto:ask@winstonswish.org)

<https://www.winstonswish.org>

Free telephone therapeutic advice following a bereavement. Helpline provides bereavement support for parents, carers and professionals who are looking for childhood bereavement advice and support. Online chat service (pilot – may not be available) every Wednesday and Friday from 12 – 4pm, **just click the 'ASK US image** on the website to start a conversation.

Bereavement support **for parents, carers and professionals** who are looking for childhood bereavement advice and support

### Young Minds

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

Parents Helpline Mon-Fri from 9.30am to 4pm. 0808 802 5544

Email Helpline via the online contact link

If you're a young person experiencing a mental health crisis, you can text the YoungMinds Crisis Messenger for free 24/7 support across the UK.

If you need urgent help text YM to 85258. All texts are answered by trained volunteers, with support from experienced clinical supervisors

### Courses on bereavement

<https://www.winstonswish.org/supporting-you/professionals-and-training/>

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/covid-19-critical-care-education-resource>

## J. Supporting a bereaved employee - manager guidance

One of the toughest realities of this pandemic is that we, and the people we work with, are likely to experience a bereavement because of coronavirus – some of us already have. This guidance has been adapted from ACAS guidance for [Supporting an Employee after a death](#). It aims to help you support a member of your staff should they experience a bereavement because of coronavirus, or a bereavement effected by the restrictions currently in place because of coronavirus.

### Supporting an employee after a bereavement

Employers should consider that everyone deals with death differently, and each **employee's needs will be different.**

Supporting an employee can help:

- them feel valued
- reduce their stress or anxiety
- avoid or reduce sick leave
- keep a good working relationship
- keep the workplace productive

### When an employee tells you about the death

When an employee tells you about the death, you should:

- offer your condolences
- assure them they do not need to come to work if they do not want to, and make it clear that work should come second – even if they are a key worker
- **ask how they'd like to keep in touch**
- **ask if there's any important work they need someone else to cover, particularly if they are a key worker**
- if they are self-isolating and if they need any help with food supplies – you may need to link with another borough to make sure they get the supplies they need
- check if they have a support network that they still have access to, they may be isolated from their usual support network

If someone is upset, they might not be able to talk for long, or someone else might contact you on their behalf. If this happens, it can help to follow up with an email, or call them a few days later.

Communicating in a calm, empathetic way can help employees feel supported, and help ease their anxiety about work.

### **Keeping in touch while an employee is off**

**In the first few days after a death it's important to communicate with the employee,** particularly as they may be feeling isolated and lost.

When you get in touch, you should ask:

- how they are
- **how they'd like to be in contact while they're off, for example by phone or email, and how often**
- if they want you to let others know about the death. This may be challenging with the team working remotely and should be done in person (via the phone or video call) where possible
- if they want to be contacted by others from work, for example to offer their support or condolences
- if they need any information or support from you. Signpost them to your assistance programme or services such as [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- **if they've thought about returning to work, if appropriate**

**Be careful not to pressure them into making any decisions before they're ready.**

### **Supporting the team**

This is a particularly challenging and stressful time for everyone in the organisation and when a member of the team experiences a bereavement it can have a big impact on everyone else in the team.

**It's important that you only communicate what the bereaved staff member has asked you to, sensitively and compassionately.** It is also crucial that as a manager, **you check in on individual members of the team's wellbeing on a regular basis – by phone or video call (email can be impersonal and isn't always appropriate).**

The team may want to send a condolences card, consider the best way to do this **while social distancing.** **You may want to send a condolences card on the team's behalf through an online card service.** Avoid doing anything that is contrary to government social distancing guidance.

**It's important that you help the team to find a way to come together in support of your colleague should they wish, this may be a catch up on Teams or something more inventive.** You should facilitate your team in supporting **each other's wellbeing,** regardless of their geographical distance.

### **If they need time off**

Staff will be entitled to one week compassionate leave and two weeks for parental bereavement leave, **however each situation is different so it's important to talk to your employee and:**

- consider their personal circumstances, including different religious and cultural practices
- **look at what you've offered other bereaved employees, to make sure you're treating everyone fairly**
- ask if they need other support

Seek advice if needed.

### **Returning to work**

It might not be appropriate to talk about returning to work in the first days of bereavement. But keeping in touch can allow you to have an open discussion about:

- how the employee is coping
- when they might be ready to return to work
- any adjustments that might help with their return, for example a phased return or a temporary change in duties. This may be particularly relevant for key workers who may be working on coronavirus, having recently suffered a coronavirus related bereavement.

How quickly someone returns to work will be different for everyone. Someone might **be unsure or not be able to judge how they'll feel when they return**. Keeping in touch and talking about adjustments can help plan their return.

**It's also worth thinking** about the fact that bereavement during this pandemic could be quite isolating and so people may wish to come back to work sooner than they may previously, its important to talk openly with them and support them should they wish to return to work.

### Ongoing support

Once they've returned to work, the employee might still need extra support or time off. This might be because of developments following a bereavement, such as:

- grief symptoms affecting their performance, for example not being able to sleep, think or concentrate
- depression or another mental health condition
- extra responsibilities, for example helping a dependant

You should talk to the employee and discuss what's best for your employee's physical and mental health in the long term.

Doing things proactively can help prevent problems. For example:

- encouraging an open and supportive working environment for everyone
- **signposting staff to your workplace's employee assistance** programme (EAP)
- sharing other support that's available outside of the council, for example [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)

### Mental health

Mental health conditions like anxiety and depression are common for anyone who's experienced a death. **If someone has a mental health issue after a bereavement**, it's a good idea to talk to them to find out what support they might need at work.

### Employee assistance programme

Signpost staff to your assistance programme.

## K. Traumatic incident record

School / setting:

HT:

Chair of governors:

Date:

Time of call:

|                        |                      |                       |
|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Message received from: | Message received by: | Message forwarded to: |
| Name                   | Name                 | Name                  |
| Title                  | Title                | Title                 |
| Organisation           | Organisation         | Organisation          |
| Tel                    | Tel                  | Tel                   |

1. What happened, when and where?
2. Who was directly involved? Are there any injuries or fatalities?  
How many?
3. How many staff/pupils were present when the incident happened?  
Who else may be affected?
4. Has everyone been accounted for?
5. What action is being taken? Is there a designated co-ordinator?  
(Name, telephone number)
6. What other agencies are involved? Names, contact details.
7. Are the police involved?
8. Is the media involved?
9. Are you requesting a particular response from the EPS?
10. Are you referring to the guide on Managing Traumatic Incidents