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Developing a School Critical Incident Plan

Guidance for
School Managers and Governors

Spring 2013

INFORMATION

Title of document	Developing a School Critical Incident Plan
Type of document	Guidance
Description	This aim of this guidance is to help schools: • Prepare, develop and update their own School Critical Incident Plan • Access the range of County Council and other support services who are available to support schools in an emergency
Target audience	School Managers and Governors
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FOREWORD

I am pleased to introduce this guidance for the management of critical incidents within schools. The range of activities undertaken by schools is broad, and as the range of activities grows the greater the need to plan for an emergency. A planned response will better prepare schools for the challenges an emergency places on them.

This document provides guidance for School Managers and Governors who have a responsibility to plan for potentially serious incidents. It offers advice on what to include in a school critical incident plan which should guide the actions of those responsible if an emergency occurs.

The general advice can be applied to all schools but some schools may wish to make some adaption's to match their own needs and requirements.

Similarly special schools and other educational settings including pre-school will need to make additional arrangements to reflect the needs of the school and its pupils.

It assumes that other County Council guidelines and standards are being applied, and that data protection principles are followed.

It is not a statutory requirement to have a School Critical Incident Plan, but in order to be prepared for the unexpected Northamptonshire County Council strongly advises schools to draw up a plan, regularly review its contents and maintain training for staff.

This document has been produced collaboratively by Northamptonshire County Council's Educational Psychology Service, Learning Skills and Education Department, Emergency Planning Team and Northamptonshire Police.

The County Council wishes to support schools in preparing for and responding effectively to an emergency. This guidance will help schools meet their duties of care in respect of pupils and staff.

 I commend it to you.

Rachel Singer
Assistant Director
Learning Skills and Education

Any feedback on the usefulness of this guidance would be welcomed. Please send any comments to Northamptonshire County Council's Emergency Planning Team: emergencyplanning1@northamptonshire.gov.uk or the Education Psychology Team: EducPsychology@northamptonshire.gov.uk.

INTRODUCTION

School governing bodies are advised to have a plan for responding to an emergency or critical incident which affects their school community.

It is also their responsibility to keep such plans up to date and to ensure that the relevant people are aware of its existence and its implications for them.

Over the past few years there has been increasing concern within schools about critical or traumatic incidents, which have affected individual children or members of staff and the school community. Such events can have a profound impact upon the whole school community, not just those directly affected, and the impact can last for a considerable time.

Whilst schools and Northamptonshire County Council have a record of responding very well to such events, it is important that up to date information and guidance is available

AIMS

This aim of this guidance is to help schools:

Prepare, develop and update their own School Critical Incident Plan

Access the range of County Council and other support services who are available to support schools in an emergency

In responding to an incident the objectives should always be to ensure:

| Rapid and appropriate action is taken | Contact with services is made quickly | Accurate information is provided | Roles and responsibilities are clear | Normal school routines are maintained as far as possible | Appropriate support is offered to all involved |

DEFINITION OF A CRITICAL INCIDENT

An incident becomes a critical incident when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions, and requiring the assistance of the Emergency Services and/or Northamptonshire County Council and others.

Where there has been a death or serious injury arising through interpersonal violence, this will constitute a Critical Incident, regardless of the perceived capacity of the school to cope.

The incident or event may be unanticipated, imminent or in progress. It may occur on the school property, in the local community or out of the school area (eg a school trip).

TYPE OF EMERGENCY / CRITICAL INCIDENT

Examples include:

In or outside the School:

- A deliberate act of violence, such as the use of a knife or firearm on or by a member of staff or pupil;
- A school fire or laboratory explosion;
- The destruction or serious vandalism of part of the school;
- Public health threats (eg Pandemic Influenza);
- The loss of water or heating;
- The death of a pupil or member of staff;
- A transport related accident involving pupils and/or members of staff;
- An incident which affects access/egress for the school;
- A more widespread emergency in the community, for example, the release of hazardous substances, severe weather, etc;
- Death or serious injury on an educational visit;
- Civil disturbances and terrorism.

Not all these incidents will require a full scale response. However, plans must not overlook the long-term effects and wider consequence management issues that can arise during or following on from an incident.

TYPE OF NON CRITICAL INCIDENT

An example of a non-critical incident/event is as follows:

- Death of a person associated with the school
- Expected death of a pupil or member of staff
- Lower scale health issue
- Issue outside of school or in the local community
- External incident/event requiring increased awareness
- Short term loss of a number of staff
- Short term loss of infrastructure systems

A situation may be demoted or escalated depending on the school(s) affected. The criticality of an incident will also alter as the situation develops and circumstances change.

If the incident is deemed as non critical you can still contact your area senior educational psychologist for support (*refer to Resource Sheet 2: Contact Telephone Numbers*).

The School Critical Incident Plan should link to the good practice and procedures currently in place, refer www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesinschools

REPORTING AN INCIDENT

If there is doubt it is always better to consult and err on the side of caution and declare an incident critical.

Schools should contact the County Council Emergency Planning Team in the first instance

(*refer to Resource Sheet 2: Contact Telephone Numbers*)

YOUR SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

When preparing and maintaining your Schools Critical Incident Plan, we advise that:

- If necessary request assistance from your area's Senior Educational Psychologist or the Northamptonshire Emergency Planning Team when preparing or updating your plan.

- A Governor is assigned responsibility for overseeing the Plan.

- The governors and senior management **review and update** the plan on a regular basis, at least annually.

- The School's Critical Incident Plan, these guidelines and contact information are **accessible** on and off the school site in electronic and hard copies

- **All school staff** are aware of the plan and how it is initiated.

- The school's Critical Incident Plan is included in the induction process for new staff

- **The school critical incident management team** is clearly identified with agreed roles and responsibilities, eg:

  - o On scene manager;
  - o lead responsibilities and point of contact for emergency services, media, insurance and outside agencies;
  - o responsibility for obtaining information and contacting parents and families of those involved;
  - o briefing and liaising with staff, pupils and parents; making arrangements for pupil and staff support;
  - o co-ordinating a record of contacts and actions, managing telephone contacts and individuals coming into school; and
  - o maintaining normal running of the school.

  Where these individuals, for whatever reason, are not available, those who will act in their place are identified and aware of this. *Refer to Resource Sheet 3: Critical Incident Management Team Roles*

- The plan is regularly **practised** under different scenarios, eg, during/after school hours, on/off site, on a residential trip.

- Arrangements for an independent outgoing phone line are made.

- Plans are in place to communicate with parents – sample texts and letters are prepared. ***Refer to Resource Sheet 6: Sample Letter – informing parents***

- Staff with First Aid qualifications are identified and training is kept up to date.

- Arrange for a critical friend to review your plan. You could ask your area's Senior Educational Psychologist or Northamptonshire Emergency Planning Team to comment on your plan.

- People named in the plan with responsibilities should provide 24 hour contact telephone numbers.

- The Emergency Planning Team will contact the nominated person regarding a critical incident. Please make sure that you have provided these by going to "Contacting Schools in Emergencies section" www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesatschools

- The plan should include arrangements to contact all members of staff. The plan should contain all the other appropriate contact numbers that may be required (***refer to Resource Sheet 2: Contact Telephone Numbers***) as well as a copy of these guidelines. It may also be appropriate to include an up to date plan of the school site.

SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT PACK

Schools may find it helpful to prepare a Pack which contains essential information/equipment that may be required during an emergency. Suggested contents are given below.

School Emergency Pack

Suggested contents:

1. Copy of School Critical Incident Plan
2. Log book
3. Contact telephone list
4. List of all pupils (names, address, medical details, emergency contacts)
5. Staff list (names, addresses, medical details, emergency contacts)
6. Plans of the school
7. Visitors badges
8. Mobile phone and charger
9. Torch
10. First Aid Kit
11. Pens and paper
12. Wind up radio
13. Identification Tabards (not necessarily hi-viz)

For off-site visits and residential trips

As above, plus:

1. List of all pupils involved in the trip (names, address, medical details, emergency contact)
2. List of all staff involved in the trip (as above)
3. Emergency contact telephone numbers. For residential trips contact needs to be available 24 hours each day.
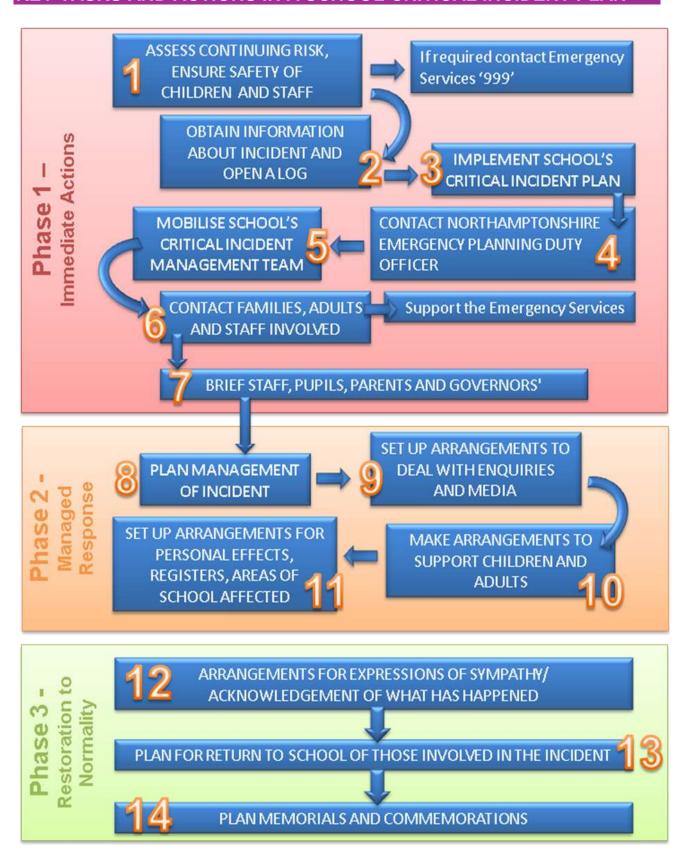4. Transport operator contact details.

On trips abroad

As for off-site visits and residential trips, plus:

1. Photo sheet – each leader should have a photo sheet of all pupils together with each pupil's home and emergency telephone numbers

KEY TASKS AND ACTIONS IN A SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

Phase 1 – Immediate Actions

1. ASSESS CONTINUING RISK, ENSURE SAFETY OF CHILDREN AND STAFF → If required contact Emergency Services '999'

2. OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT INCIDENT AND OPEN A LOG

3. IMPLEMENT SCHOOL'S CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

4. CONTACT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE EMERGENCY PLANNING DUTY OFFICER

5. MOBILISE SCHOOL'S CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

6. CONTACT FAMILIES, ADULTS AND STAFF INVOLVED → Support the Emergency Services

7. BRIEF STAFF, PUPILS, PARENTS AND GOVERNORS'

Phase 2 – Managed Response

8. PLAN MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENT

9. SET UP ARRANGEMENTS TO DEAL WITH ENQUIRIES AND MEDIA

10. MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND ADULTS

11. SET UP ARRANGEMENTS FOR PERSONAL EFFECTS, REGISTERS, AREAS OF SCHOOL AFFECTED

Phase 3 – Restoration to Normality

12. ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY/ ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED

13. PLAN FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT

14. PLAN MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

PHASE 1: IMMEDIATE ACTIONS

Actions 1 - 7 should be undertaken straight away. The order in which these actions should be undertaken will be determined by the needs of the situation.

Action 1

ASSESS CONTINUING RISK, ENSURE SAFETY OF ALL CHILDREN & ADULTS IF REQUIRED CONTACT EMERGENCY SERVICES 'DIAL 999'

- Deploy first aiders, if necessary.
- Account for all pupils and staff.
- Report anyone missing to the Police or other emergency services.

Action 2

OBTAIN INFORMATION ABOUT INCIDENT AND OPEN A LOG

Collate as much information as possible in the log. Information should include the following:

- Overview of incident/description.
- When and where incident occurred.
- Names of children and adults involved in the incident including those who witnessed it.
- If the incident is a crime scene consider preserving the scene and identify witnesses and/or potential offenders.
- Nature of any injuries/fatalities sustained.
- Hospitals where injured have been taken.
- Names of adults with injured children/adults.
- Actions undertaken by emergency services, including arrangements for caring for children/adults who do not require hospital treatment.
- Locations of the uninjured.
- Remaining hazards at the scene.
- Collect relevant pupil/staff lists and contact numbers as appropriate.
- Control the escape of inappropriate / inaccurate information via mobile / public phones from within the group.

Not all this information may be available; however this should not cause a delay in moving to the next action.

Action 3

IMPLEMENT THE SCHOOL'S CRITICAL INCIDENT PLAN

- Person(s) with lead responsibility to be released from all duties.
- Collect School Critical Incident Plan and Emergency Pack (see page 10).
- Set up the pre determined operations room for the co-ordination of the incident.
- Establish an independent telephone line (eg, mobile, borrowing a phone line in a nearby building, etc).

Action 4

CONTACT THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE EMERGENCY PLANNING DUTY OFFICER

- Phone the Emergency Planning Duty Officer, providing the information collated under action 3.
- The Emergency Planning team will co-ordinate a response from all services under the local authority.
- Advise the Emergency Planning Duty Officer of any specific requirements of assistance or support that are known.
- Confirm the contact details of the single point of contact from the school.
- The Emergency Planning Duty Officer should be the single point of contact for the school and all communications should be made via them.
- The Emergency Planning Team will Inform associated schools that could be directly affected by the incident.
-

Action 5

MOBILISE THE SCHOOL CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Brief the team.
- Clarify tasks, make plans and assign roles *(refer to Resource Sheet 3: Critical Incident Management Team roles)*
- Set up timetable of meetings to review management of incident.
- Contact police and the critical incident response team coordinator to be part of the management team.
- Set out first meeting (*refer to Resource Sheet 4: Critical Incident Management team Agenda*)
- Identify how senior staff, including the head teacher, will be supported.

Action 6

CONTACT FAMILIES OF PUPILS, ADULTS AND STAFF INVOLVED IN INCIDENT

- Designate key member(s) of staff to make contacts and liaise with the Police.
- Ensure that persons making contacts are fully briefed with written guidance on the situation.
- If this is a Police led incident then contact with families' should be agreed by both parties.
- Maintain a record of contacts to avoid confusion and distress through duplication of contacts and to ensure that nobody is missed out.
- Establish and offer useful telephone numbers, either for support or for more information.
- Check that families/parents are not left alone in distress, suggest that they make contact with other relative/neighbours.
- Where appropriate, give advice to parents and families (in line with the county council's media advice) on responding to contacts from the media.
- Where appropriate, give information about arrangements for uniting or putting in contact children, adults and staff with their parents/families.
- Where a parent or family cannot be contacted, consider asking the Police to visit the home.

It may be necessary, particularly in a small school, to enlist the help of County Council staff to contact families. Requests for assistance to contact families concerned should be made via the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

Action 7
BRIEF STAFF, GOVERNORS, PUPILS, PARENTS/CARERS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

- Contact and brief chair of governors, request that he/she inform all other governors.
- Hold briefing meetings for all teaching and non-teaching staff, set up a schedule to keep staff informed and updated.
- Issue a prepared statement for all parents – use school website, letter or text whichever seems most appropriate to the situation.
- Inform all pupils in the most appropriate way (the critical incident team can assist you with this).
- Identify pupils, adults and staff who are absent. Make appropriate arrangements for them to be briefed.

If a press statement is required, request assistance via the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

Ensure that staff tasked with telling children are able to undertake this task. Make special arrangements to protect and support staff, adults and children who were close in any way to those affected. *(refer to Resource Sheet 6: Pupil meetings – informing pupils)*

PHASE 2: MANAGED RESPONSE

Action 8
PLAN MANAGEMENT OF INCIDENT

- The school's Critical Incident Management Team should liaise with the Emergency Planning Duty Officer, Critical Incident Response Team, the Police and other agencies as appropriate. *(refer to Resource Sheet 4: Critical Incident Management Team Agenda)*
- Review actions so far, clarify tasks, assign roles and make further actions accordingly.
- Ensure that school and other agencies' actions are properly co-ordinated.
- Establish timetable of meetings to review the management of the incident.
- Clarify criteria for withdrawal of outside agencies at appropriate stage.
- Access further advice from the emergency services if required.

Names of those involved in the incident should not be released or confirmed to the media or other callers until the statutory authorities (eg, police) have confirmed the identity and the parents and families have been informed and have given permission.

Action 9
SET UP ARRANGEMENTS TO DEAL WITH ENQUIRIES AND MEDIA

- All media contacts should be directed to or dealt with in line with advice from the County Council's Communications team.
- Advise the Emergency Planning Duty Officer if you require any assistance or advice.
- Consider providing those answering the phone with a written statement as to what it is appropriate for them to say. (see notes in Action 6)
- Caution staff about talking to the media.
- Organise additional staff to deal with phone enquiries and people coming to the school as necessary.
- Designate areas for parents, media, others. (This could be off site depending on the nature of the emergency – see note below).
- Ensure that the incident log includes a record of all telephone calls made and received and any actions taken.

A Friends and Family Reception Centre is a place where relatives and friends of the victims of an incident can gather in order to share information or to visit the scene or arrange to view a body. This will be set up by Northamptonshire Emergency Planning Team with Northamptonshire Police. Depending on the situation this may be the designated area for parents to gather.

Action 10
MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN AND ADULTS

- Identify those children, adults and staff who are most likely to be in need of support. *(refer to Resource Sheet 8: Identifying individuals who may be vulnerable)*
- Arrange for school staff/support agencies via the Emergency Planning Duty Officer, including the critical incident response team to provide support. *(refer to Resource Sheet 9: Emotional distress – supporting the individual pupil)*
- It is good practice to inform and/or seek consent from parents/carers where there maybe interaction with an outside agency. *(refer to Resource Sheet 10: Sample letter to parents – arrangements for counselling children)*
- Ensure that pupils, adults, staff and parent/carers are aware of the support arrangements the school is making and how these are accessed.
- Consider setting aside and staffing an appropriate area for children who are becoming too distressed to continue with their lessons.
- Consider setting aside and staffing a further area for people coming into school who are distressed.

In addition to the individuals directly affected, children and adults who are most likely to suffer distress as a consequence of an incident are those who:

- **are uninjured, but were at greatest risk**
- **directly witnessed death/injury/violence as part of the incident**
- **are siblings**
- **have any possible perceived culpability for what has happened however indirect or incorrect (ie those who may blame themselves and/or those who may be blamed by others)**
- **are experiencing instability at home**
- **have learning difficulties**
- **have pre-existing emotional and behavioural/mental health difficulties**
- **are vulnerable due to cultural and/or language difficulties**
- **have previously suffered bereavement or loss.**

- Try to maintain normal school routines wherever possible.

If the school has to close, ensure all staff and parents are briefed on the arrangements for the collection of children. Supervise children being collected and make arrangements for those who are not able to be collected. Ensure that staff and parents are clear as to the arrangements for re-opening the school.

- Consider holding a staff briefing with support agencies to discuss appropriate management strategies for distressed children.
- Plan how to manage distress that may be caused by ongoing police/legal proceedings and media attention.
- Give children permission individually and collectively to discuss what has happened and their reactions.

Deal sensitively with open expressions of distress. Allow children to discuss what has happened in lessons where they clearly wish to do this. Do not discourage them from talking. (refer to Resource Sheet 11: Emotional distress – class management)

- Consider putting on a special class session to give pupils information about the grieving process and to enable them to talk through their experiences.
- Plan appropriate support for staff to enable them to cope with children's questions and discussion.
- Ensure that all staff including those co-ordinating the school's response do not neglect their own need for support.
- Schedule staff co-ordinating the school's response to be 'off duty'.
- Ensure staff are alert to physical and/or emotional change or any other signals of distress among staff as well as children. *(refer to Resource Sheet 12: emotional distress – signs and symptoms)*
- Refer staff, adults and, with parental consent, children to outside agencies for support.

Action 11
MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR PERSONAL EFFECTS, REGISTERS AND AREA OF SCHOOL AFFECTED

- In discussion with parents/families, and, if necessary the Police, decide what to do with the personal effects of the individuals who have been affected.
- Consider discussing with relevant class members what would be appropriate for work (including work as part of any displays), desks, books, lockers, etc, belonging to individuals who have been affected.
- Make arrangements to adjust class registers, rotas, any other pupil listings accordingly.
- Make appropriate arrangements for the part of a school where the incident occurred.

PHASE 3: RESTORATION TO NORMALITY

Action 12

MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXPRESSIONS OF SYMPATHY AND/OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED

- Make arrangements to express support/sympathy to families, children and adults who have been affected.
- Make arrangements to support the plans that the family may have for a memorial.
- Make plans for attendance at funerals. Find out if school representatives are welcome. Ensure that school representatives feel able to cope with these tasks.
- Make arrangements for someone from school to visit those who have been affected.
- Consider sending cards and messages from children and staff to children, adults and staff affected.
- Consider organising a special assembly/service to collectively acknowledge what has happened and how the school is coming to terms with this. Consider involving local religious leaders. Consult with families of individual affected.
- Consider setting up an area in the school where writing, art work or other mementos can be dedicated to individuals affected.

Action 13

PLAN FOR RETURN TO SCHOOL OF THOSE INVOLVED IN THE INCIDENT

- Home visit by class/form teacher/member of staff to discuss arrangements for return eg visits, part time attendance, etc.
- Planned support for emotional needs eg how to cope with the comments and questions of other pupils, permission to remove themselves from lessons to go to an agreed place if they are becoming distressed, etc.
- Support for possible physical needs eg mobility difficulties, disfigurements, etc.
- Rota of home visits from school friends.
- Where appropriate, organise work to be sent home prior to return.
- Brief staff and children on how best to support individuals returning to school.
- Arrangements to differentiate work, manage missed course work, special arrangements for exams.
- Adjust working arrangements for staff returning to school.

Action 14

PLAN MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

- Consider an appropriate memorial, taking into account the wishes of those who were involved or bereaved eg special garden, tree, furniture, painting, sculpture, photograph, memorial prize.
- Appeals and donations are a complex area and advice should be sought from the British Red Cross. (via the Emergency Planning Team).
- Discuss how to mark anniversaries. eg commemorative service/assembly, concert, display, etc.
- Brief staff who subsequently join the school about the incident, also about the long term emotional needs of children and staff affected by it.

Good practice tip:

Keep a log of events with times and details of actions and decisions taken. This could be important for any subsequent inquiry which could range from an internal school/local authority inquiry to a formal inquiry with legal implications such as a Coroners inquiry or an insurance claim.

Those involved may be required to give a statement to Police and/or attend court as a witness. A record of events and actions is crucial in these circumstances.

Good practice tip:

For all off site activities provide a mobile phone for the leader of the activity so that they can call for assistance in the event of an incident.

Ensure school mobile phones are kept charged and with credit.

Good practice tip:

Maintain contact with the Emergency Planning Duty Officer, they are your single point of contact and will co-ordinate the support and response from Northamptonshire County Council.

Good practice tip:

Keep all contact lists up to date, making any changes as soon as necessary.

Good practice tip:

Always make sure you talk to communications team who will be able to give you advice. If you don't tell people what is going on they will only have media reports and rumour to go on.

MONITORING INCIDENTS AND EVALUATING THE RESPONSE

After managing a critical incident it is good practice to review the procedures and amend the plan in the light of experience and lessons learned.

An evaluation form is included *(refer to Resource Sheet 13: Evaluation Form)* for school use.

In debriefing, participants are guided to assess the effectiveness of their own performance and that of the team, provide constructive feedback and correct any unsafe practises.

Benefits

1. Opportunity for constructive feedback
2. Identify areas that went well and areas for development
3. Gives an opportunity of understanding to participants why strategies / policies and / or decisions were made
4. Improving teamwork
5. Identifying issues connected to communication
6. Identify training needs or confirm skills
7. Engaging participants in reflective critiquing and discussion
8. Identifying new methods of delivery
9. Sharing of information with interested parties for shared organisation learning, joint training and planning.

The timing of a debrief is important to allow individuals to rationalise what occurred and identify the strengths and areas for development within the whole picture after the event. However it is important not to leave it too long so that the meaning and outcomes become distorted, and the appropriate time for change is also lost. Ideally the time scale should be between 3 days and 1 month. Legal implications may affect the timing. Whilst the confidentiality of a debrief may be useful in order to fully understand the issues, information given during it may be disclosable in a public enquiry.

A multi-agency Debrief can be requested by anyone involved. The debrief is similar to evaluation and provides opportunity to reflect on the incident and review procedures (it is not the same as critical incident stress debriefing). All agencies who were involved in the incident should be invited to participate. The Local Resilience Forum (LRF) can provide trained facilitators and a report of the debrief. Contact the Emergency Planning Duty Officer to make a request.

GOOD PREVENTATIVE PRACTICE

In addition to developing and preparing a Critical incident Plan School's can help be better prepared by implementing certain policies and practice.

Curriculum

Issues of loss, death and bereavement should be part of the school curriculum. The Primary and Secondary SEAL programmes provide opportunity to cover these areas so that a critical incident is not the first time they are raised. The non-statutory programme of study for personal well-being in PSHEE (key stage 3 and 4) also provides opportunities to facilitate learning. Schools who address mental health, health and safety and resilience through their curriculum will be helping staff and pupils to be better prepared to cope with a critical incident.

Pastoral Support

Most schools have effective pastoral support policies and structures, which include strong links between pupils and class teachers / form tutors. Where these relationships are well developed and underpinned by a clear school ethos of care, trust and support with strong links with parents / carers, the management of crises is more effective.

Behaviour Policy / Code of Conduct

Schools need to consider Codes of Conduct for all areas of the school and all activities undertaken by the pupils. This is particularly important where activities themselves are potentially dangerous (eg sport) or are taking place in areas of the school which pose hazards (eg laboratories and technology facilities).

Agreeing codes of behaviour with parents and participants before out of school activities and a full risk assessment will help to reduce the potential for serious incidents.

Training

Whole staff training on the prevention, management and response to incidents will raise awareness and understanding of what to expect if an incident occurs. Regular reminders and updates serve to keep the issues live and enhance the sensitivity of staff to preventative measures.

The Critical Incident management team should regularly meet to maintain and practise their skills. School Administrative Staff will require training to help them respond quickly and efficiently to any crisis and to queries from distressed families.

School Security

Effective school security systems should offer protection and enable ease of access to the school for pupils, staff, parents and visitors. Two areas to consider are entry security and out of hours security systems to reduce the potential for damage and vandalism.

Administrative Practice

Established administrative and back-up systems assist effective management of critical incidents and ensure a fast response. Practical measures should include:

- a list of all pupils and staff, with next of kin contact details held on and off site in electronic and hard copy which is updated regularly;
- registers completed promptly at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Names of pupils who are late or leave school after registering should be recorded;
- an inventory of equipment held on and off site in electronic and hard copy which is regularly updated;
- an effective signing in and out procedure for all staff and visitors in school; and
- emergency procedures for all areas of the school site.

School Contact Details

In the event of an emergency situation the Emergency Planning Duty Officer or another person from the Authority may need to urgently contact someone at your educational establishment.

During normal school hours the general school contact number will be used in the first instance. Outside of these hours or where the general school number is unavailable alternative details will be required to ensure contact can be made without delay. To enable this, each school should provide details of who should be contacted to ensure any situation can be effectively dealt with.

Details of at least two emergency contacts and all keyholders should be provided to ensure there is not a delay in speaking to the appropriate person.

Schools should provide these details via an online form in the Emergencies in Schools section of the NCC website: www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesatschools

This information will be maintained securely and used with discretion only by permitted staff.

Schools should maintain their contact details, ensuring any temporary changes are advised accordingly.

School Closures

A headteacher may take the decision to close their School for a number of reasons. Whatever this is, it will be classed as either an Emergency Closure or a Planned Closure:

Emergency Closure: This would occur where there is no advance warning of a situation when the headteacher may take the decision that the school cannot open.

Examples of situations when a headteacher may make this decision include after/during a fire or flood, or the unexpected failure of an essential utility.

Planned Closure: This would occur where the headteacher receives advance warning of an issue which they determine would mean the school cannot open as planned.

Examples could include where a utility company gives prior warning that services will be unavailable for a day or when the school is a polling station.

Note: For Local Authority educational establishments, planned closures will need to be reviewed by the Head of Learning, Skills and Education prior to the closure being approved.

Responsibility for the decision to close sits with the headteacher.

Schools should log their closure using the relevant online form on the NCC website, which is located in the Emergency Plans and Procedures section of www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesatschools.

The school closure will be listed on the NCC website, in Information for Parents within the Education and Learning section. Parents and other members of the school community should be referred to this area for the latest information.

In the event of an emergency closure it may be appropriate to notify the Emergency Planning Duty Officer of the situation if advice, assistance or support is required.

Planning for Trips and Visits

It is essential that schools follow the Department for Education (DfE) guidance.

Guidance is also available on the County Council's education visits website:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesinschools

Each school, or cluster of schools, must have an Educational Visits Co-ordinator.

All Category C visits must have Local Authority approval.

Health and Safety

All whole school policies should include reference to health and safety procedures and how these relate to the teaching and organisation of the subject. This is particularly pertinent for physical education activities, technological / practical work, science and outdoor education.

All schools have clear guidelines and advice on the testing and maintenance of equipment, fixtures and fittings. All electrical, PE and fire fighting equipment should be inspected and tested annually. Regulations are published for the storage and security of potentially hazardous substances and chemicals.

Regular health and safety checks on the buildings and site should be conducted, with any potential dangers reported and dealt with. Schools should follow the guidance provided by the County Council's Health & Safety team.

Details are available on the County Council website:

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/emergenciesinschools

Acceptable use / mobile phone, e-Safety and social networking policies

Having policies in place concerning the acceptable use of mobile phone, e-safety and social networking/use of internet will assist in managing communication at the time of a critical incident.

Due to the widespread use of personal devices it is essential that schools take steps to ensure that mobile phones and devices are used responsibly at school. Staff should also have clear boundaries. This policy should have already advised all members of the school community not to publish specific and detailed thoughts or information. Pupils should be encouraged to think about the ease of uploading personal information and images and the dangers this can present particularly at the time of an emergency incident. Pupils should have been advised never to give out personal details of any kind which may identify them or their location. (If there is suspicion that the material on a mobile phone may provide evidence relating to a criminal offence the phone may need to be given to the police for further investigation).

During an emergency situation parents should be advised not to contact their child via a mobile phone but to phone a dedicated number or wait for information via a textline or email.

Publication of any information online should always be considered from a personal and school security viewpoint. Material such as staff lists or a school plan is better published in the school handbook or a secure part of the website which requires authentication.

Business Continuity

All schools should have their own business continuity arrangements in place in the event of partial or total loss of site/facility and/or evacuation.

These arrangements will be activated in response to an incident causing significant disruption to the School, particularly the delivery of key/critical activities.

Examples of circumstances triggering activation of these arrangements could include:

- Loss of key staff or skills eg above normal levels of absenteeism due to illness or other scenarios such as severe weather, transport disruption
- Loss of critical systems eg ICT failure, power outage
- Denial of access, or damage to, facilities eg loss of building through fire or flood, an external emergency with the School in the Emergency Service's cordon preventing access, School facilities in use for General/Local Elections, severe weather scenarios or utilities failure
- Loss of a key resource eg an external supplier/partner vital to the delivery of a critical school activity such as your catering provider or any providers of transport eg for SEN pupils

All incidents should be reported to the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

If the incident is deemed to be of a 'critical' nature, the Critical Incident Plan will be activated and other Council Services notified to respond as appropriate.

Refer to Resource Sheet 14: Business Continuity Strategy to guide you through any business continuity issue you have.

All incidents affecting the physical infrastructure of the School should be reported to the Emergency Planning Duty Officer who will then take appropriate action to support the School's response to an incident in terms of activating other Council Services and partner agencies as required.