

Managing traumatic incidents



A guide for educational settings in Haringey

Haringey Educational Psychology Service T 020 8489 3004

Acknowledgements

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1. Introduction

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).

<https://www.haringey.gov.uk/environment-and-waste/major-emergencies/emergency-planning>

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 emergencies which have taken place in the wider community but which may also affect your school.

For advice or in an emergency contact

- Andrew Meek, Head of Organisational Resilience T 020 8489 1171
or
- Duty Emergency Planning Officer (24 hours) T 020 8489 1000 (Chris Costa x5792 and Katie Fisher x1208)

We recommend that you also familiarise yourself with the DfE's document on 'Healthy and Safety Advice for Schools: Responsibilities and Duties for Schools, (April 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-safety-advice-for-schools/responsibilities-and-duties-for-schools>

Violent incidents involving the police - see page 23

Tel 101

- In the event of a fatal or very serious incident involving the police 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.

Dealing with the media – see page 21/22

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

- **T 020 8489 2963 Monday to Friday or T 020 8489 000 out of hours**

What are traumatic incidents?

- Traumatic incidents are sudden unpredicted 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 Educational Psychology Service and traumatic incidents

- The Educational Psychology Service has extensive experience working with schools managing traumatic incidents.
- 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.
- It is important that the actions taken are proportionate. In most cases the normal activities of the school can continue while the traumatic incident is dealt with.
- This document outlines procedures and the support the EP team can provide in the event of a traumatic incident such as the death or injury of pupils or staff.
- It also prepares staff for handling grief and bereavement more generally and provides sample documents which are useful when under pressure.
- This information 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 plan for traumatic incidents and train staff. This training might include:

- identifying potential traumatic incidents and safeguarding staff and pupils
- identifying support agencies and key contacts
- developing a school traumatic incidents' management plan
- clarifying roles and responsibilities for all staff.
- setting up a multi-agency team around the school community.
- training staff on bereavement

2. 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 **P28**
 - start a written log
 - see if there are any continuing risks
- **Contact your Chair of Governors**
- **Contact appropriate support agencies including:**

Haringey EPS

T 020 8489 3004 / 3020

Director of Children's Services T 020 8489 3206
Assistant Director Schools and Learning T 020 8489 3607 / 3424
Assistant Director Early Help and Prevention T 020 8489 1114

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

- **Form an in-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.

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
- decide who should go to the funeral and make plans for this – see below

The media

- all calls from the media should be passed on to the Haringey Media and PR Team
T 020 8489 2963 Monday to Friday or T 020 8489 000 out of hours or contact Head of Communications: Lesley Gordan 020 8489 6943 or Head of News: Marc Issacs 020 8489 2275

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.

Action within hours

Initial contact with the family

- contact the families of pupil(s) involved in the incident and offer your sympathy
- as and when appropriate clarify with the families what information they agree to share
- confirm any arrangements (such as funerals)

Keep lines of communication open

- sort out telephone communication to and from school

- identify a phone line for outgoing calls and keep records of all calls
- set up strategies for dealing with enquiries

Inform school staff (ideally before pupils hear about it)

- call an early morning staff meeting and outline the school's basic response
- consider suggestions and answer questions
- prepare an information sheet for all school staff
- inform part-time staff, absent staff, lunchtime supervisors and staff working shifts

Let the pupils know as soon as possible

A large school assembly for all may not be the best way to do this.

- it is better to let pupils hear about the incident from someone they know while they are in small, familiar groups
- the EPS can help you decide what to say and the best approach to take
- if there has been a death, think about telling the deceased pupil's class separately, away from the rest of the school
- you might want to inform all pupils in their class groups. At the same time, you might want to think about calling special assemblies, shortly after the event, where you can review the facts, talk about your personal feelings, outline plans for the school day and dispel any rumours that may have started
- you might want to offer a short special tribute at this time

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
- 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 opportunities to share their thoughts and feelings with each other.

Keep everybody informed

- arrange a briefing meeting for staff
- inform the wider community, including other parents and neighbouring schools
- develop a plan for handling the media

The PR and Media Team is available to help you
**T 020 8489 2963 Monday to Friday or T 020 8489 000 out of hours or contact
 Head of Communications: Lesley Gordan 020 8489 6943 or Head of News: Marc
 Issacs 020 8489 2275**

**Aim to return to normal as soon as possible but be flexible – constantly review
 how things are going.**

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

Teaching arrangements

If a teacher has died, what will happen to their class?

- you may need to bring in a supply teacher for extra support.
- consider moving ancillary staff into specific classes to provide additional support at certain times of the day
- consider changing the times of free periods
- consider extending the tutor time and modifying the timetable

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
- arrange debriefing for staff and pupils who are directly affected by the incident
- plan how you will monitor and deal with people's feelings and reactions, including school staff, and keep an eye on the general atmosphere within the school

Pupils

- decide how will you deal with pupils who are too upset to attend lessons. Is there a private space they could use?
- draw up strategies that will allow pupils to express their feelings about the situation if they wish

Staff

- be visible, as a support person, to help pupils or staff experiencing difficulty
- help staff deal with pupil behaviour
- have to hand a list of professionals who may be able to help, both in the short and long term
- arrange some informal mutual support meetings, perhaps in the staffroom 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.

EPS T 020 8489 3004 / 3020

Medium-term action (24–72 hours)

Return to school for affected pupils and staff

Pupils

- make sure that a member of staff contacts the children at home or in hospital
- make sensitive arrangements for their return to school
- arrange alternative teaching if necessary
- arrange 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
- clarify the procedures and support schools to refer children for individual help such as counselling.
- liaise with parents (including sending them bulletins)

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, and whether they are happy for someone from the school to attend
- identify which staff and pupils want to attend, and sort out practicalities, such as staff cover, transport and so on
- decide whether the school should close or not
- involve staff and pupils in decisions about flowers and/or a collection
- Manual for schools
- consider cultural and religious implications
- consult the deceased person's family, and the school community, about plans for a special assembly or memorial service
- consider an assembly which celebrates a life

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.

3. 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

NB

Adults and children do not necessarily progress through these stages in a linear way. Their feelings may go back and forth. Moreover, they may spend longer at one stage at one time than another.

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 in school

Points to remember

1. Children act out their feelings through their behaviour.
2. Grief is a normal, healthy response, essential for healing, and is a long-term process. It is painful, but normal.
3. All children respond differently.
4. Work, attention and behaviour may suffer because of their emotional distress.
5. The loss of a loved one involves the loss of part of a child's own identity.
6. When supporting a bereaved child, keep in contact with their family.
7. 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 teachers

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 only be 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. 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.

13. 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 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. Local support for individuals following loss, bereavement and/or traumatic incidents

Choices (Haringey CAMHS)

www.haringeychoices.org

T: 020 8702 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: 020 8969 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 020 8702 4500 available 24/7 to all Haringey families and young people.

Haringey Mental Health Support Team (MHST)

Telephone Support Line run by Mental Health Practitioners

Tel: 020 8702 6035 available 9am-3pm Monday-Friday or email

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

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

Monday-Friday 9am-3pm - call 020 8702 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

F. National helplines, websites and support agencies

Child Bereavement UK

Tel: 0800 02 888 40

Website: www.childbereavementuk.org

Confidential information and **support line for families and professionals** when a child has died and when a child is bereaved and web discussion for families and for professionals

Childline

Telephone: 0800 1111

Website: 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.

Cruse Bereavement Care

The number is **0808 808 1677** Email helpline@cruse.org.uk

Website www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/helpline

The helpline is open Monday-Friday 9.30-5pm, with extended hours on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings, when we're open until 8pm. The Cruse Bereavement Care Freephone National Helpline is staffed by trained bereavement volunteers, who offer emotional **support to anyone affected by bereavement**. All calls are answered by trained Cruse volunteers.

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

Website 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.

Grief Encounter

Website www.griefencounter.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 0111

Website griefftalk@griefencounter.org.uk

GriefTalk call, email or instant chat support **for bereaved children and young people** and those caring for them 9am-9pm Monday to Friday
log on to live web chat for confidential support

Papyrus/Hopeline UK

Website 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

Website www.samm.org / www.sammabroad.org

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

Support after suicide

Website www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk

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

Samaritans HQ

Website 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

Website <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

Website 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**

Website 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

Website 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

Website 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>

G. 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 for the media

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.

H. Violent incidents involving the police

- In the event of a fatal, or very serious, incident involving the police, 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, briefings to staff should be kept short and information shared on a 'need to know' basis only.
- Schools should seek advice from HLT'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.

I. Documents

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 throughout the day.

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 when the school re-opens 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 can be located in the library and by the school's front entrance.

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

We are trying to support our children by continuing with our plans to try to provide some comfort through normality (and we have made the decision to go ahead with our carol concert to end school tomorrow).

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 [] at 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 flu 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 each class 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 must 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 closely 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
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 100th 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

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 has been directly involved? Are there any injuries or fatalities? How many?
3. How many staff/pupils were present when the incident happened?
4. Who else may be affected? (siblings?)
5. Has everyone been accounted for?
6. What action is being taken? Who is the designated co-ordinator? (Name, telephone number)
7. Who are the members of the in-school planning group tasked with drawing up the action plan for the next few days?
8. Have you contacted your Chair of Governors?
9. Have you contacted Director of Children's Services - T 020 8489 3206 or Assistant Director Schools and Learning - T 020 8489 3607 / 3424
10. Is the media involved? For support contact Haringey Media and PR Team T 020 8489 2963 Monday to Friday or T 020 8489 000 out of hours
11. Are the police involved?
12. What other agencies are involved? Names, contact details.
13. Are you following Haringey EPS's Guide for Managing Traumatic Incidents?
14. Are you requesting a particular response from the EPS? For support contact 020 8489 3004 / 3020.