Practical guide for dealing with sudden or traumatic death of a child or young person

A comprehensive guide forEducational Settings and Early Years Providers in Berkshire West

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership

Reading | West Berkshire | Wokingham

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Foreword

Whenever a child or young person dies it is a tragedy. First and foremost, for the child and the family, but also for those around them including school professionals who may have worked with them. Every child that dies deserves to be treated with respect and care.

These guidelines provide information for school professionals in responding to the sudden unexpected death of a child or young person. All professionals who have been involved with the child or young person has a responsibility to provide information that may contribute towards understanding and extracting any learning. This is to identify where possible, a cause of death and to learn lessons for the prevention of future child deaths.

Bereavement and loss through illness and natural causes is covered briefly in this guide. The Independent Schools Standards (ISS) produces a guide to assist education providers with bereavement and there are also resources in this pack that can help understand grief and loss.

When there is a child death in any circumstance, the school, preschool, or educational setting will play an essential role in assisting the bereaved family, the child or young person's friends and the staff who worked closely with them. It is hoped that this guidance will be a useful resource.

The mandatory process to review each child death (Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023) draws on national initiatives including the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID), Confidential Enquiry into Maternaland Child health (CEMACH), together with the current high standard of practice and multi-agency working within Berkshire. This has provided the opportunity to establish good practice and working within clear management strategies, enabling a high quality of service to families.

In Berkshire the Pan Berkshire Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) which works across six local authorities in the County: Bracknell Forest Council, Reading Borough Council, The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead, Slough Borough Council, West Berkshire Council and Wokingham Borough Council. The CDOP group reports into each of the Local Authority Safeguarding Partnerships. For more information, please click on the link below:

Child Death Overview Panel | Bracknell Forest Council (bracknell-forest.gov.uk)

The key functions of a CDOP are to:

- review all child deaths, excluding those babies who are stillborn and planned terminations of pregnancy carried out within the law
- determine whether the death was preventable (if there were modifiable factors which may have contributed to the death)
- decide what, if any, actions could be taken to prevent such deaths happening in the future
- identify patterns or trends in local data and report these to the Safeguarding Partnerships
- refer cases to the Safeguarding Partnership Chairs where there is suspicion that neglect, or abuse may have been a factor in the child's death and refer to the safeguarding practice review group if there is a suggestion that there are lessons to learn about partnership working. In such cases a Serious Case Review may be required
- agree local procedures for responding to unexpected child deaths.

1. The statutory processes following an unexpected/sudden/unexplained child death

A Senior Paediatrician will take responsibility for coordinating a multi-agency response to an unexpected child death and will ensure that all health responses are implemented for ongoing liaison with other agencies, including schools.

As soon as possible, once the details of all relevant investigations have been obtained, a Joint Agency Response (JAR) meeting should be held within a couple of days. This meeting will take place during normal working hours to ensure all relevant professionals can attend. The meeting should ideally be face to face and will include the Lead Health Professional, Police Investigator, Primary Care Team, Children's Social Care, and a School representative who know the child or young person and will be accompanied by the Education safeguarding Professional.

The meeting will review all information available at that stage and will identify what further investigations are required and identify the ongoing support needs of the family. Families are offered immediate support from external agencies including school and this will be factored in as part of the wider multi-agency response.

The family will be given information by a Paediatrician, including clear details of whom to contact both in working hours and out of hours if they should have any questions or concerns.

The following professionals may be invited to the JAR meeting, dependent on their involvement during the child's life/death and asked to provide verbal or written reports to an initial meeting:

- Paediatrician(s)
- Child Abuse Investigation Unit, Thames Valley Police
- Children's Social Care
- Berkshire Healthcare Foundation Trust Safeguarding Team (BHFT)
- Midwife/Health Visitor/School Nurse
- South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS)
- Public Health Consultant for locality
- General Practitioner (GP) and Out of Hours GP Service if relevant
- School/Nursery/Early Years setting representative
- CAMHS, Probation Service (if relevant)
- Frimley ICB Safeguarding team
- Berkshire West ICB Safeguarding team (BOB ICB)
- Coroner Office representative

Strategy Meeting (also known as Section 47 Enquiry):

Where there are immediate concerns that abuse or neglect has been a factor in the child's death or contributing to the cause of death and there are concerns for siblings, this will initiate a joint investigation involvingthe Police, Children's Social Care and Health. Child protection procedures and operational processes commence. This is an operational process and the priority will be to safeguard any siblings at this stage.

Rapid Review:

This is the process of gathering information, collating it, analyzing it, and agreeing on learning and whether the case meets the criteria for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR). The Rapid Review is not an operational process but is aboutlearning and should take place within 15 days, but this isnot always possible.

Safeguarding Rapid Review and/or PracticeReview (Working Together 2023):

The rapid review involves the gathering of information which culminates in a meeting to make the decision about whether the case meets the criteria for a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR).

During the process of gathering information, if agencies agree that there is learning and the case meets the criteria for a review, this then becomes a LCSPR. LCSPRs should be completed no later than six months from the date of the decision to initiate a review. Other learning reviews should be completed more quickly, ideally within three months but on occasion this may take longer based on the complexity of the case and any legal involvement/outcome.

They need clear and sensitive communication. They also need to understand what happened to their child and that learning has been identified to improving practice.

Timescale for completion:

Reviews will vary in their breadth and complexity but in all cases, learning should be identified and acted upon as quickly as possible. This includes before the review has formally commenced and while it is in progress.

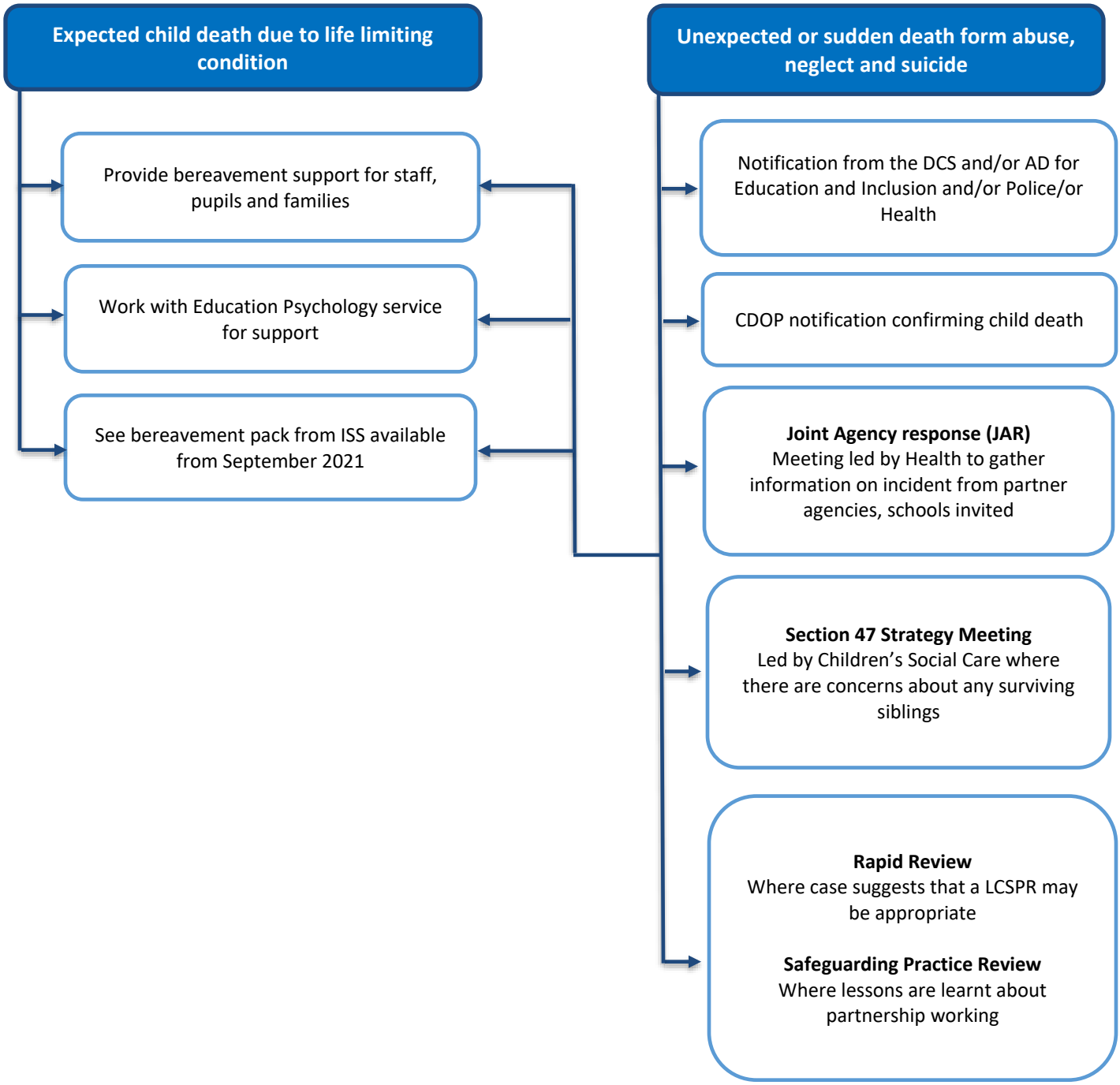
Ofsted and Independent Schools Standards(ISS):

The National Panel will notify Ofsted and the Independent Schools Standards (ISS) that a child registered at your school has died, even if the child did not die in your setting. The letter acknowledges that they are aware a child who was registered at your settings has died. They may ask for information relating to the death.

2. Flow chart for expected and unexpectedchild deaths

Grief is a normal reaction to bereavement and many people find that their inner resources, combined with support from family and friends, are sufficient to help them manage their distress and the life changes triggered by loss. Your setting may be notified at different points through the system including directly from the parents, police, social care, or the hospital.

Please note this guidance and protocol is for child deaths which are unexpected or unexplained.



3. Protocol for safeguarding child death reviews

Single Incident Notification (SIN)

SIN sent to National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (NSPRP) or any partner can refer any serious concerns

Notify Ofsted and the National Review Panel

Letter sent to School & LA from Ofsted/EFSA

Safeguarding Partnership

16C (1) of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by Children and Social Care Act 2017) states: Where a local authority in England knows or suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, the local authority must notify the NSPRP if:

a. The child dies or is seriously harmed in the local authority's area, or
b. While normally resident in the local authority's area, the child dies or is seriously harmed outside England

Safeguarding Partnership must make arrangements to gather an analysis of information from partner agencies to look at the case more holistically

Rapid Review – 15 days

- Discuss whether there is any immediate actioned need to ensure children's safety and share any learning appropriately
- Consider the potential for identifying improvements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Decide what steps they should take next, including whether or not to undertake a Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)

The Partnership information collated throughout the rapid Review process helps inform and agree next steps

Education Safeguarding Professional will collate information from Schools and share with the LCSPR

Next Steps (there are a couple of options here which the SP can take including: A formal LCSPR, or an individual service review or decide that the Rapid Review has provided us with sufficient learning to improve practice)

Local Child Safeguarding Practice Review (LCSPR)

- Highlights improvements needed to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Highlights or may highlight recurrent themes in the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare of children
- Highlight concerns of ineffective working between 2 or more agencies and/or no agency involvement

Learning Review

The methodology should provide a way of looking at and analysing frontline professional practice as well as organisational structures and learning. The methodology should be able to reach recommendations that will improve outcomes for children.

National Safeguarding Practice Review Panel (NSPRP) – 6 months

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023, Chapter 5 Learning from serious child safeguarding incidents

4. Practical Guide: Considerations in the event of theunexpected death of a pupil/child

When a pupil/child dies unexpectedly, staff and pupils will be shocked and distressed. Among other things, unexpected deaths might be due to a sudden illness, a road traffic (or other) accident or abuse or murder. If the death is due to suspected suicide, there will be additional considerations. Staff and pupils are likely to have additional questions and will want to know if they could have done anything to prevent the death.

Death by violence is also extremely traumatic and can result in fear, anger, vengeance, blame, guilt, and confusion. For children/young people there can be the realisation that the world is not a safe place leading to concerns about their own and others' safety. Families also have to deal with the police and media which can be extremely intrusive.

When talking about the death it is important to be honest but avoid emotive language such as 'stabbed' or 'murdered' as simpler words such as killed have less focus on the violent circumstances. If a child/young person witnesses the crime, they are more likely to need professional support in the immediate aftermath and can be at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder.

The school have a significant role in supporting bereaved children, families, and the staff. There is much to do and can feel daunting but there are resources and support on offer to guide you through this process.

What next?

Most grieving pupils do not need a 'bereavement expert' they need people who care. Schools, just by carrying on with their usual day-to-day activities, can do a huge amount to support a grieving child. By gently introducing death and grief into the classroom, the fear is removed, and children will develop coping skills should someone they know die now or in the future.

See page 22 Appendix 5: Bereavement guide for schools for a checklist of things to consider including links resources, templates and suggested communication messages to assist you to manage this really difficult time.

5. Short term actions

Create a critical incident management template/log to record phone calls/visitors etc. because this will assist in remembering things and give clear feedback to CDOP. The checklist on page 19 will help with this and help you focus and organize initial actions following the child death.

Set up a critical incident management team to include key staff to assist you with developing an action plan and gather key information needed. This may include members of SLT, Governors, Pastoral team, and Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Considerations for the agenda may include:

- A statement of the facts as known.
- Delegation of responsibilities
- Pull together a chronology of deceased pupil's file formulti-agency contribution.
- Preparation of what to say at a staff meeting.
- Preparation of what to say to pupils. Inform students (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)
- Compile a list of vulnerable students.
- Initial schedule for the day
- Contact/visit the bereaved family to offer condolences and confirm how much information they wish to share across the school community.
- Preparation of a letter to parents/guardians
- Discussion of support services/agencies whose support may be needed and agreement about who will contact them.
- Preparation of a media statement, work with AD for Education and Inclusion who will be aware of the police communications strategy/possibly involved ina Gold group for high profile cases.
- Hold end of day staff briefing.
- Ensure to meet with staff who were close to the childand knew him/her well to offer them support and ensure they get the help they need.

Check your records and create a genogram for the pupil/child to ensure that you have recognised any family connections including, other relatives attending school/setting e.g. siblings who might have different surnames, cousins etc. who will need support.

Where you know the pupil/child has siblings in another school or attends another setting, you may contact that school/setting to ensure that they are aware. If the school has information regarding an absent parent, you will need to inform the members of the JAR group. Where social care is involved, they need to provide all information like this as soon as possible, so that they can make sure this parent is included.

Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements. With a death that has affected your entire school, communicate with the family as to what they would like to be said and then share with staff first, followed by pupils, as quickly as possible.

This will depend on how well you know the family and the circumstances at the time. Ensure that you treat both parents equally, especially consider this where parents are separated. Be led by what the family wants at this difficult time. Seek advice from appropriate religious leaders when/where appropriate.

Arrange support for pupils and staff. The Educational Psychology Service (EPS) can offer support and advise the school on how best to do this. The EP working with the school will support you in the immediate aftermath of the incident and follow up with you over the next few days to help support with any issues which arise.

Consider additional Pastoral Care and make sure that pupils/children know how to access this. Secondary age pupils are very likely to set up a Facebook account (or similar) to record their thoughts. Ask staff to talk to pupils about this and ensure that they report and request removal of any inappropriate comments.

Counselling: Remember that children do not necessarily need immediate counselling. They need to know that it is natural to feel grief. If in the longer term they are not coming to terms with this grief, then counselling might be appropriate. The charity school packs offer good phase specific behaviours and reactions children, and young people may experience through the grief cycle.

Hold Staff meeting: To break the news and offer of support for their wellbeing. Consider your internal employee assistance program as well as wider external support. Do not overlook the impact on staff. Supporting bereaved pupils will be very stressful for staff who may already be struggling with their own reactions and emotions. Include a list of outside agencies, and access to counselling services (see staff wellbeing guide on page 23). The EPS/School Counsellor can assist in supporting staff who will require reassurance. Information from EPS can help and can be discussed with staff individually or in groups.

Consider some sort of informal mutual support, for example, in the staffroom at the end of the school day, to give staff an opportunity to share feelings and reactions. Inform the pupils/child's immediate friendship group, including any boyfriend or girlfriend who will need pastoral support. Close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately. This should also include known friendships in other schools/settings if you have this information.

Assembly: There are occasions when staff at a school may have to use a gathering such as an assembly to convey information about a death. Following are some ideas used in schools, which have already helped to make the job a little easier for the staff member concerned. First, it is important to acknowledge that this is a serious assembly and that there will be time at the end for discussion back in class groups.

Make use of local charities who can offer support e.g. Samaritans, Daisy's Dream, Winston's Wish. See appendix for a range of charities that offer support on page 23.

Charity business cards with phone numbers left around the school/setting site can be picked up by the wider school community including, pupils, parents, and staff alike.

Alert your school site team to be aware of small groupsof pupils or individuals who may wish to leave the school site and who might need some additional support.

Media attention: Contact the local Communications Office who will be able to guide you through any press interest. Notify your staff, especially administrative staff of this likelihood and offer them assistance in knowing what to say should there be calls from the press. On-line press releases can be especially damaging to pupils, children, and staff particularly when emotive wording is used. Comments pages on websites for press allow outrageous comments from people who did not know the pupil/child. Do not be tempted to react to these but do contact the press office at SBC and DCS, ADfor Education and Inclusion (who are members of the 'Gold Group') for advice before responding to any media. Keep Governors informed of press interest.

Communication with the school community: prepare and a short statement, sticking to a brief note explaining the sad news. Do not share too many details just on overview on the sad news and the support on offer should anyone need it. Always consult with the family if they are happy for you to do so and if possible if they can, do may wish to contribute to the message. Link in with your media contact and governors before releasing the statement as above.

Flowers: It is likely that flowers may be placed perhaps at the school/setting gate or other prominent place. Ensure these are treated with respect and consider a date when you will collect the cards and remove the flowers, possibly on the day of the funeral but discuss this with parents. The cards could be collected (and checked) before given to the family.

6. Medium Term actions: Later considerations

Start thinking about the funeral. Staff and pupils may wish to attend the funeral. Check that this is OK with the family before making arrangements. Think through practical considerations such as how pupils are going to get there, and whether cover needs to be organised for staff, donations/flowers and the safety of pupils who wish to attend (transport). If 6th form pupils wish to attend, consider whether to suggest they do not drive in an agitated state.

Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service. Key staff members and pupils may wish to attend the funeral. It might be helpful to advise pupils that they should have parental consent to attend the funeral (if a school day) and discuss the family's wishes regarding the funeral with them, particularly regarding attendance by school staff and pupils, dress and participation in the funeral itself. Do consider any cultural and religious implications that need to be considered. Guidance on cultural practices can be found in the school pack at the back of this pack. Appendix 5: Bereavement guide for schools (page 15)

Consider a memorial. This may include a book of condolence and or a memory box for pupils, parents, and staff to sign, candles, music to reflect, release balloons, poems, hymns and/or songs.

After a death, we can often be left with a strong urge to 'do something' which marks the significance of the death and which states its importance to us. It is not always either appropriate or possible for school children to attend these occasions though, so facilitating something within the school context is very important.

A book of condolences can be given to the family in slower time (ensure that comments are checked first). Some schools/settings set up a memory box for the family, asking pupils/children and staff to include memories and write them down for the family. Other similar practical ideas might be suggested by the EPS or can be found on the Charity Website at the end of this guidance. Advice from charities is that permanent memorials are not beneficial to the school community in the case of a traumatic death which has been deemed to be suicide. This is because they can become a place to visit for any pupil who feels low or inclined towards suicide themselves.

Exam results/award ceremonies. Discuss with the family if the deceased has taken exams and results are due after the death. How would they like to receive these(If appropriate) and how family wish to receive these?
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family. Consider how best to gather the pupil's/child's possessions and return them to the family. Ensure that lockers/drawers are cleared with respect and items are checked (e.g., exercise books, learning journals) and returned to the family. This needs to be done sympathetically and in a planned way, ensure time is allowed for this. Parents might wish to go through possessions with staff after the funeral.

The Coroner's Inquest will be held within a few months of the death. There is likely to be media interest.

Considerwho will attend the Inquest and plan what your key messages are and stick to these. The Media Communications Office can give advice. Those who have been through this process have advised that it is not helpful for pupils to attend the Inquest.

Parental Requests: Grieving parents' requests might be difficult to accommodate especially around anniversaries/ birthdays etc. Mark the school's calendar in advance with the anniversary date. Anniversaries may trigger emotional responses in students or staff, and they may need additional support at this time. The school may decide to acknowledge the anniversary and should link with the family on any proposed commemoration.
For further advice on issues that arise, contact the EPS, or speak to bereavement charities who might be able to offer further assistance.

Review and evaluate your policy and process -What did you learn?

Where the school/college does not have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place this is a good time to begin working on developing one.

If you do not have a Bereavement Policy (if not already in place) you may want to consider developing one.
The school/college may also decide to review the whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing and student support.

Evaluate the school's response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately.

7. Additional considerations in the case of a suicide

It is important not to talk about a death as being a 'Suicide' until this is confirmed. Usually this does not happen until the Coroner's Inquest, however there might be witnesses to the death or the family might call it a suicide before this time. The traumatic death of a pupil is particularly sensitive and emotive. Staff and pupils will ask themselves if they could have prevented it.

In addition to the points in previous section, when there isa traumatic death from suicide or suspected suicide schools/colleges should also consider the following points:

Questions from parents. Some schools have sent a letter home to parents advising of the death of a pupil. School will need to speak to the bereaved parents first and consider this carefully and use caution but where there are suggestions that something in school might have contributed to the traumatic death e.g., bullying or exam pressure, a response from school might be required.

Having a high staff ratio at the next parents' evening to assist in answering parental questions might also help. While the fact that a student has died may be disclosed immediately, information about the cause of death should not be disclosed to students until the family has been consulted. If the death has been declared a suicide but the family does not want it disclosed, someone from the school who has a good relationship with the family should be designated to contact them to explain that students are already talking about the death amongst themselves, and that having adults in the school community talk to students about suicide and its causes can help keep students safe. If the family refuses to permit disclosure, school can state, *"The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time"* and can nevertheless, use the opportunity to talk with students about the phenomenon of suicide: *"We know there has been a lot of talk about whether this was a suicide death. Since the subject of suicide has been raised, we want to take this opportunity to give you accurate information about suicide in general, ways to prevent it, and how to get help if you or someone you know is feeling depressed or may be suicidal".*

Permanent Memorials. Advice from charities is that permanent memorials are not beneficial to the school community in the case of a traumatic death which has been deemed to be suicide. This is because they can become a place to visit for any pupil who feels low or inclined towards suicide themselves and most charities steer away from these.

School's core values should be reiterated. Suicides are rare but can draw staff in to questioning what the school's core values are. It is important to remember staff might need support and direction (following the lead of the Head Teacher and Senior Leadership Team on messages and actions agreed). Support may be obtained from Occupational Health, School Nurse, GP, School Counsellor and Charities to assist with this. See resources and support at the back of this guide.

The age of the pupil. This can make a great difference to how the school reacts to a suicide e.g. the difference between a year 8 and a year 13 pupil, how their peer group reacts and how staff react. Seek advice from the Educational Psychology Service for further support in managing age specific needs of the school community around this.

Anniversaries of any death but especially traumatic deaths or those identified as suicide need to be handled carefully. It is likely that pupils will return to the site of the death. Speak to pupils about being out of school and ensure they feel supported without dwelling on the anniversary. Remember new/key members of staff may not know what has happened and could be unprepared for the reactions of pupils and staff. Make sure new staff are briefed. Check media sites and social media, Facebook, to help gauge the feelings of pupils.

Suicide Prevention

Many people who are bereaved by suicide will experience a range of emotions which may include guilt, shock, sadness, confusion, rejection, and anger.

Copycat suicides are a well-known phenomenon, but the tributes left on websites such as Bebo have a significant impact. Friends may set up memorial pages where well-wishers post messages. David Gunnell, Professor of Epidemiology at the University of Bristol, said that research had shown a connection between reports of suicide in the media and copycat deaths, and it was likely that discussions of suicide on websites would have a similar effect. He said: *"Young people are more likely to see and read items concerning suicide on the internet than they are in newspapers. One can extrapolate from wider research on responses to newspaper reporting that a medium like Bebo will have an impact on suicidal behaviour in young people."*

The school's goal should be to balance the pupils' need to grieve but to limit the risk of inadvertently glamourising the death. It is likely to be necessary to set limits and to keep things as normal as possible, but it is important to do so with compassion and sensitivity and to offer creative outlets for grief wherever possible. The EPS will assist with this.

Talking to peer groups about their feelings and the comments they are making is also a way of helping them to prevent feelings escalating to suicide. Schools where this has happened have advised on a pulling together of the school community. Pupils are very likely to turn to social media sites to transmit news and feelings about the death. Some of this will be correct and some will be rumored. Memorials are created online, and comments are left.

Media messages

School might not usually engage in such media sites, but they can be an effective way of disseminating correct information and identifying pupils who need additional support. To the extent possible, social media sites should be monitored (including the deceased's wallor personal profile pages if accessible) for rumors, information about possible gatherings, unkind or inappropriate messages about the deceased, messages that bully or victimise current students and comments that show a pupil might be at potential risk themselves. The school might wish to respond by posting a commentto dispel a rumor or speak to an individual thought to beat risk. Local police might wish to know about a planned gathering, especially late at night.
Suicide warning signs can be difficult to identify. Potential signs may include:

- Talking about wanting to die or die by suicide.
- Looking for ways to do this such as searching the internet
- Talking about feeling useless or having no reason to live
- Talking about feeling trapped or being a burden to others
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Appearing anxious, or behaving recklessly
- Sleeping too little or too much
- Withdrawing and feeling isolated
- Showing rage or talking about revenge
- Extreme mood swings.

The Samaritans offer a step-by-step guide and support around suicide. See appendix 6 for full details Support when we needed it most - Samaritans

Appendix 1: Check list for unexpected death of a child

Please note this list is not exhaustive and the order of events may vary case by case and depending on individual circumstances. Letter templates and some suggested wording is available in the links below to help you with communication messages from assemblies to parent communications.

Things to consider	By Whom	Support
Process and confirmation of a child death		
1. Notify the Local Authority • Director of Children Services • AD of Education and Inclusion • Education Safeguarding Professional	Headteacher	Director of Children Services
2. Confirmation of child death from CDOP coordinator	CDOP coordinator	The Pan Berkshire Child Death Overview Panel Coordinator
3. Joint Agency Response (JAR) initial meeting. You may also be contacted by the police separately to gather information.	Designated GP for safeguarding	Designated Doctor for Safeguarding
4. Invitation for Strategy Meetings (sec 47) Where there are immediate concerns that abuse or neglect of any surviving siblings has been a factor in the child's death, the case will be the subject of a joint investigation involving the Police and Children's Social Care. CP proceduresare about surviving siblings only. Criminal investigation is about the deceased.	Children's social care services	Head of Service - Referral & MASH and AssessmentTeams
5. Contact the Education Psychologists for support to staff and pupils.	Headteacher	Principal Educational Psychologist
6. Press Office if case may attract media attention	Headteacher	Communications Manager
7. Safeguarding Rapid Review Process This process will not take place immediately but over the coming weeks.	Education Safeguarding Professional	Safeguarding Partnership Manager

Things to think about in school/college		
8. Create a critical incident log/plan - to record chronology and actions taken	Headteacher	Perhaps allocate a person to be the SPOC to coordinate all this?
9. Gather chronology of events leading up to death of pupil	Designated Safeguarding Lead	This will be required for multi-agency information sharing purposes for JAR, Sec 47 meeting.
10. Call a critical Incident Management meeting including SLT and Chair of Governors	Headteacher	Consider agenda to cover: • A statement of the facts as known. • Delegation of responsibilities • Preparation of what to say at a staff meeting. • Preparation of what to say to pupils. • Initial schedule for the day • Preparation of a letter to parents/guardians • Discussion of support services/agencies whose support may be needed and agreement about who will contact them. • Preparation of a media statement, if appropriate See page 20-28 Responding to Critical Incidents
11. Create a family tree/genogram. Have you considered other siblings in your setting or aware at other settings?	Headteacher and SLT members	
12. Consider contacting the family to offer your condolences and discuss how much they wish to share and how?	Headteacher	
13. Prepare for the return of bereaved pupils friendship group	SLT team	Page 58 Responding to Critical Incidents
14. Consider other vulnerable students impacted by the news	Designated Safeguarding Lead	Page 70 – Checklist - students at risk Responding to Critical Incidents
15. Meet with appropriate staff to review the list of affected staff and students. Identify who will be responsible.	Headteacher and SLT	Page 53 – Students Page 30 – Scripts for whole staff communication Responding to Critical Incidents
16. Prepare and communicate with staff including support for staff	Headteacher	Page 23 Responding to Critical Incidents
17. Alert School site team For additional support of pupils who may wish to leave early	Headteacher	
18. Contact local charities for support	Pastoral Team	Appendix 3 for support and Appendix 4 for related resources

19. Set up additional support from Pastoral Team including additional support from counselling services	Pastoral Team	
20. Communicate to wider school through assembly	Headteacher	See also guidance on Special assemblies – saying 'goodbye' Page 8 Bereavement guide for schools
21. Communication with parents/carers		Letter template on page 54 Responding to Critical Incidents
22. Discuss what the school will do in memory of the student	Headteacher and SLT	Memorial, Condolence book etc. Think about use of social media accounts
23. Flowers/cards by community members at school	Headteacher	
24. Funeral arrangements Consider class teacher, friends/peers, transport	Headteacher	
25. Consider supply teachers to cover if teacher attending funeral or needs time off	Headteacher	
26. Be kind to yourself. Seek peer support from peers who may have been through this process	Headteacher	Education Support 08000 562561 support@edsupport.org.uk
27. You may want to dedicate some lessons to bereavement and loss	PHSE leads	Appendix 4

Later Considerations		
28. Attendance at the funeral	Headteacher	
29. Exam results (if appropriate and how family wish to receive these), award ceremonies, school plays etc.	Headteacher	
30. Return child's possessions - consider memory box/folder	Headteacher	
31. Coroners' inquest	Headteacher/ Press Office	
32. Mark the school's calendar in advance with the anniversary date.	Headteacher	
33. Development of a Bereavement Policy (if not already in place)	Headteacher	Some examples from Bereavement UK Page 59 Bereavement guide for schools
34. Where the school does not have a CriticalIncident Management Plan in place this is a good time to begin working on developing one Headteacher and SLT	Headteacher and SLT	
35. The school may also decide to review the whole school approach to promoting health and wellbeing and student support	Headteacher and Mental Health Lead	
36. Evaluate the school's response to the incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately	Headteacher and Governors	What went well? Where were the gaps? What was most/least helpful? Have all necessary onward referrals to support services been made? Is there any unfinished business? See page 20 for things to consider in your reviews Responding to Critical Incidents
37. Media interest can add to the complexity of the situation		Page 45-50 Sample response on page 55 Responding to Critical Incidents

Appendix 2: Useful Contacts

Organisation	Contact
Local Authority for Schools and Inclusion	Reading – Brian Grady brian.grady@reading.gov.uk West Berkshire – Ashley Milum ashley.milum1@westberks.gov.uk Wokingham – Ming Zhang – ming.zhang@wokingham.gov.uk
Educational Psychology Service	Reading – Vikki Lawrence vikki.lawrence@reading.gov.uk West Berkshire – Melissa Perry melissa.perry@westberks.gov.uk Wokingham – Elaine Munroe CSEPA-EducationalPsychologyAdmin@wokingham.gov.uk
If a pupil dies by suicide, Samaritans provide a step-by step programme to support schools.	Suspected suicide in schools and colleges | How to respond | Step by Step (samaritans.org) 0808 168 2528 See appendix 6
Charities support for schools/colleges • Daisy's Dream • Samaritans • CRUSE • Winston's Wish • MIND • Child Bereavement UK	Daisy's Dream is a local Berkshire charity that supports childrenand their families who have been affected by the bereavement of someone close to them. www.daisysdream.org.uk | 0118 934 2604 www.samaritans.org/ www.cruse.org.uk/get-help/for-schools www.winstonswish.org.uk/ www.mind.org.uk/help/advice_lines www.childbereavementuk.org/
Family Liaison Officer - Thames Valley Police	Family Liaison Officers are appointed in some cases and can assist with contact with the family
Suicide Prevention and Strategy	Reading Wellbeing.Service@reading.gov.uk West Berkshire Publichealthandwellbeing@westberks.gov.uk Wokingham Public.Health@Wokinghamg.gov.uk
Safeguarding for Educational Professional	www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide/introduction-samaritans-media-guidelines
Safeguarding Partnership	bwscp@reading.gov.uk
Berkshire Online Procedures	https://berks.trixonline.co.uk/
Education Support Professional Helpline	08000 562 561 support@edsupport.org.uk

Appendix 3: Resources

BEREAVEMENT

CHILD BEREAVEMENT UK
Elephant's tea party

CHILDHOOD BEREAVEMENT NETWORK
Supporting children and young people bereaved during the Coronavirus outbreak

DAISY'S DREAM
Support for children and their families who have been affected bylife threatening illness or bereavement of someone close to them

IRIS CONNECT
BLOG: School return - how do we talk about bereavement

PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN
Wellbeing activity sheets for children, includes bereavement. VIDEO: Helping parents and teachers talk to children about death

THE KEY FOR SCHOOL LEADERS
Supporting pupils through bereavement

TWINKL
Power point on loss (membership may be required)
Keepsake memory box bereavement activity (membership may be required)

UK TRAUMA COUNCIL
Traumatic Bereavement - UK Trauma Council

WINSTON'S WISH
Supporting children and young people who have special educational needs and disabilitiesafter the death of a parent or sibling
Alternative goodbyes

YOUNG MINDS
Supporting a child with grief and lossduring the Covid-19 pandemic

HOPE AGAIN (youth website of Cruse) - https://www.hopeagain.org.uk

GRIEF ENCOUNTER
Web: https://www.griefencounter.org.uk/
Helpline: 0808 802 0111

SUPPORT FOR SUDDEN UNEXPLAINED DEATH IN CHILDHOOD (SUDC)
HOME - SUDC UK



Local Organisations

Daisy's Dream – Support for children and their families who have been affected by life threatening illness or bereavement of someone close to them

Helen & Douglas House
https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/service.page?id=3G9T4tjmUZI

Alexander Devine Children's Hospice Service
https://servicesguide.reading.gov.uk/kb5/reading/directory/service.page?id=fyVT3Cjp_4k

Newbury Samaritans – Listening service, Face to Face, Phone or Email**:** 116 123 free from any phone or 0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

Reading Samaritans – Phone or Email**:** 116 123 free from any phone or 0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

Bracknell, Wokingham, and Ascot Samaritans – Listening Service, Face to Face, Phone**:** 116 123 free from any phone or 0330 094 5717 local call charges apply

No.5 – Free, confidential counselling and mental health support for young people aged 11-25 who live, work or study in the RG postcode area**:** Phone: 0118 901 5668 Web: https://no5.org.uk/counselling/

Training

Winston's Wish
Online bereavement training for schools. **Web:** https://www.winstonswish.org/bereavement- training-courses-schools/

Samaritans: Step-by-Step
Advice, guidance and support for teachers and other education professionals when a student has been affected by suicide. **Helpline:** 0808 168 2528

TWINKL
This gentle resource is to support teachers who need to explore loss with their pupils. It explains what loss is and that loss can also include death.
Power point on loss (membership may be required)

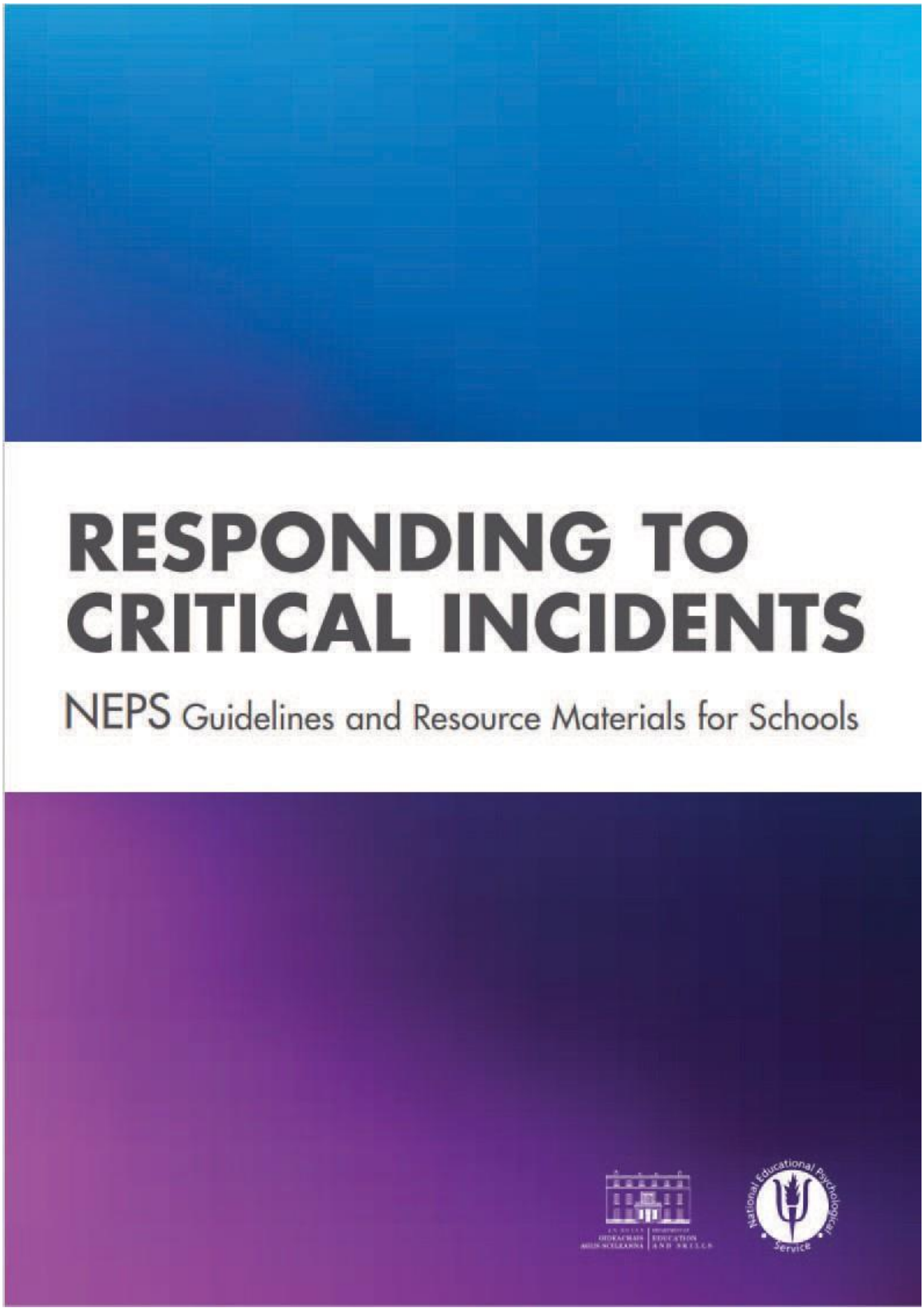
TWINKL
Use this keepsake memory box worksheet for ideas on how to make a special keepsake memory box to keep special memories close at hand. Young people can make a box to keep all their treasures and memories of the person they have lost in one safe place. Keepsake memory box bereavement activity (membership may be required)

PARTNERSHIP FOR CHILDREN
Wellbeing activity sheets for children, includes bereavement. VIDEO: Helping parents and teachers talk to children about death

Berkshire West Safeguarding Children Partnership
https://www.berkshirewestsafeguardingchildrenpartnership.org.uk/scp

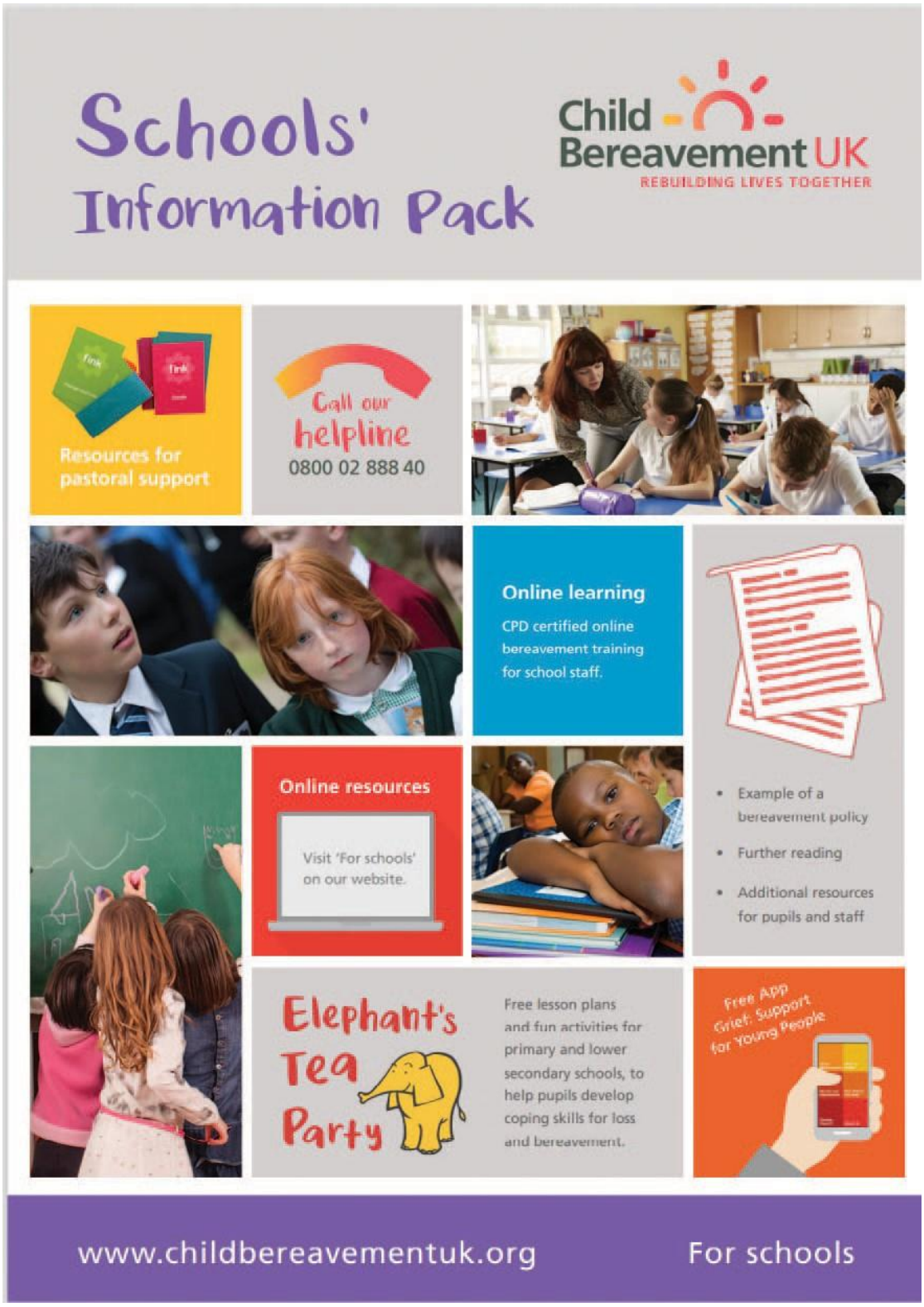
Appendix 4: Guide for managing critical incident including templates

Responding to Critical Incidents (section 6)



Appendix 5: Schools Information Pack from Child Bereavement UK

Bereavement guide for schools



Appendix 6: Suicide support from Samaritans Step by Step support programme

Suicide Support - Step by Step Support Programme



Victim Support

Bereaved by Suicide Flyer



Appendix 7: Critical incident support in schools:

Background

A critical incident may be defined as:
"… Any event outside the usual realm of human experience that is markedly distressing and evokes a reaction of intense fear and helplessness…" (Holowenko, 2015, p.26)

Such events may overwhelm the normal coping mechanism of a school and every member of the school community can be affected both medically and psychologically.

Principles of EP support and intervention

Each Critical Incident is unique. Responses however follow a recognised pattern:

- With time, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. We do not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereavedfamilies. Grief is a normal process and those who aregrieving may need to be reassured that whatever emotions they are feeling, it is perfectly normal, andthere is no one process of grieving for all.

- Help and support are best provided by a trusted, familiar adult as and when it is needed.

- It is usually only when feelings remain overwhelming over a period of weeks that counselling support may become a more appropriate offer. Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier.

When a Critical Incident occurs

- It is important that the school let the Local Authorityknow as soon as possible about the incident. In the first instance schools are asked to contact the Principal Educational Psychologist and their allocatedschool EP directly. Contact details can be found at theend of this document.

- A senior member of the EP team will then contact you to find out what steps have been taken so far and identify with you what needs to happen next. This contact will usually be by phone call or email. Typically, any further and ongoing support will be provided by the allocated school EP

What happens when we work with you following a critical incident?

This depends on the nature of the incident and the needs of the individual setting. We will discuss this with the Head teacher or the designated member of the school's senior leadership team. It usually involves discussions about:

- Clarifying the facts - what is known, what are perceived or potential narratives in the community, including social media.

- Communication with parents - language, messaging, listening, and asking questions.

- What is the family's views on what can be shared/ what they want to be shared?

- How to communicate the information to childrenand staff - to whom, and when

- Share information with school staff to talk about typical responses to critical incidents and how to manage them.

- Reducing anxiety and de-escalating panic responses in families, children, and staff

- Support and signposting for staff and pupils both within school and externally regarding their own wellbeing

- Identification of and planning for vulnerable children who may be affected.

The EP working with the school will support you in the immediate aftermath of the incident and follow up with you over the next few days to help support with any issues which arise. In the current circumstances, this will be done remotely by phone call or email.

If, after a period, there are members of the setting's community who are showing signs of continued distress the EP will discuss this and signpost to further support. We do not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereaved children/young people: grief is a normal process and there is no one process for everyone who grieves. Children/young people may, however, need reassurance that whatever emotions they are feeling are normal. It is only when feelings remain overwhelming over a period of weeks and interfere with the activities of daily living that counselling support may be a more appropriate offer.

Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier, particularly during the phase of acute social distancing.

This service will remain under review and be subject to change as the pandemic evolves, for example if 'lockdown' ceases or as increased numbers of children return to school.

For further information, please contact:
Principal Educational Psychologist

References

- With thanks to colleagues from Child Death Overview Panel, NHS, the Educational Psychology Service, Slough Children First, Slough Safeguarding Partnership, Slough & Eton School, Langley Grammar School, Haybrook College, Arbourvale School and Lynch Hill Enterprise Academy.
- Berkshire Procedures Online – Child Death Reviews
- Child Death Review Guidelines 2018 - Child Death Review Guidance - Statutory and Operational
- Holowenko, H. (2015) Early Interventions for children in the aftermath of a crisis. Early Interventions for Trauma (pp. 26-43). Leicester: British Psychological Society.
- With thanks to colleagues in NAPEP, particularly Merton, Bradford, Camden and York EPS
- Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health – Sudden unexpected death in infancy and childhood
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2023 (chapters 5 & 6) - Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance
- After a Suicide, A Toolkit for Schools, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, Suicide Prevention Resource Centre, Education Development Centre, March 2011

Credit to
Gloucester Safeguarding Board
and RCPCH Guidelines