

Foreward

"There cannot be a crisis next week. My schedule is already full" Henry Kissinger.

"Every little thing counts in a crisis" Jawaharal Nehru.

This guidance is intended to help schools be prepared for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. I recommend that you read this reviewed and updated version of the Critical Incident Guide, it is highly valued by schools and has been developed based on the cumulative experience of school staff in dealing with critical incidents and of personnel from external agencies who support school staff and pupils throughout such events. I hope, therefore, that you will read and heed the guidance contained in this document.

Experience has shown that critical incidents happen when least expected. It is vital to ensure that your contingency plans and procedures are up to date and in place. Although it is increasingly difficult to make time for all the tasks that demand your attention, this is one that cannot be left until you know you need it!

Steve Dunham, Children's Services – Schools Property

Editorial comments

Over the past few years there has been increasing concerns within schools about critical or traumatic incidents which have affected children or members of staff and the school community. A number of reported atrocities and incidents nationally have nurtured these concerns. Such events can have a profound impact upon the whole school community, not just those directly affected, and the impact can be considerable and long lasting.

When a critical incident occurs, there is little time for reflective and inclusive decision making. Just as schools have plans for fire drills and flooding etc., schools should also develop generic plans for responding to other types of crisis events. Emergency procedures need to be practised by staff and students, just as fire drills are practised, to ensure that school staffs are ready to deal effectively with a critical incident.

While very few schools will experience a major crisis, most schools at some time or other experience traumatic situations. The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the impact on students and staff is limited. The plans need to be sufficiently flexible and creative to allow for appropriate responses and to accommodate alterations as events unfold

Each critical incident is unique, and it is not possible to plan for every eventuality, but similarly each critical incident can be shocking and traumatic so a prepared procedure is essential to ensure that the schools reaction is effective and efficient.

This guidance is intended to inform and prepare schools for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation it is essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken. Co-ordinated support will be available to all schools from the Local Authority, and it would be practical to contact them immediately.

Updates to this Guide will be made when necessary (including the contact list) and placed on the Ealing Grid for Learning and notified to schools via gatekeeping. Updates will be dated and should be added to or replace existing hard copy sections.

Tamara Quinn, Assistant Director, Planning Resources and Service Development

Contact:

- **Steve Dunham**, Projects delivery unit: dunhams@ealing.gov.uk 020 8825 7418 / Mob: 07940 546 263

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Last updated: 19 Aug 2025